

Mutharika's office stops MBC/TVM merger

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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The merger of the state broadcasters, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and Television Malawi, continues to caricature itself with comedy of errors, as in recent twist, Malawian President Bingwa Mutharika has stopped the process of merging the two institutions.

Principal secretary in President Mutharika's office, Charles Msosa told a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament that the process was stopped due to many flaws that characterised its headway.

The order to stop the merging process comes against a backdrop of lawsuits against the MBC management for flouting procedures when it was first initiated.

President asked to explain

Members of Parliament, who are members of the committee, wanted the President, who is in charge of statutory corporations under which the two institutions fall, to explain more of the confusion that has engulfed the state broadcaster which is legally supposed to operate as a public broadcaster.

"The MBC management were over-enthusiastic about the merger and did things without clearing with OPC [Office of the President and Cabinet]," revealed Msosa who said the president was subsequently forced to move in and take over the process to start it all over again.

This statement is in contrast to what management said at the height of the disagreement between fired employees and management, that all that they did was with the blessings of OPC.

At the meeting, PAC also learnt from the president's office that the general observation was that MBC director general, Bright Malopa was an interested party in the whole process and the OPC established that he was not supposed to be signing redeployment and termination letters.

The OPC intervention never came in time as it took 150 employees out of the over 500 affected employees, who took the matter to court after the restructuring, which the High Court then stopped after observing a number of anomalies.

The MPs said they were baffled that MBC took over the show and reduced the OPC to a sideshow.

The revelation that the President has stopped the merger comes hot on the heels of condemnation of the merger by the

Economics Association of Malawi (ECAMA), which said the whole process will be a drain on taxpayers purse.

ECAMA's spokesperson, Dr. Regson Chawenza said that the whole process requires K1.6 billion through direct restricting and tax waivers. Chawenza also told *The Nation* daily that implementation of the merger requires highly trained individuals.

About K659 million kwacha is required to pay pension fund, retirement and retrenchment benefits as well as redeployment expenses while the management also asked for K949 million waivers for all tax-related debts. This total comes up to K1.6 billion.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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