

New bill 'will close down the press'

The Swaziland Government has been accused of trying to close down the press with the publication of a new bill to bar public servants from disclosing any information about their work that relates to 'public policy'.

They will also be prevented from talking about the economic strategy of the kingdom.

The new Public Service Bill also states civil servants must not 'publish in any manner anything which may be reasonably regarded as of a political or administrative nature'.

The Bill was published earlier this month and is due to be debated in parliament before being signed into law by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

It is being seen in Swaziland, where censorship of the media is tight, as a further way of keeping information from the Swazi people.

Quinton Dlamini, president of the public service union NAPSAWU, said the Bill was, 'nonsense because it's difficult to draw the line on information that is confidential or not'.

He told local media, 'There is nothing private about government. All that they do has to be public. They use our money, so as citizens, we have to know how our money is spent.'

He added, 'It means we won't know what's happening in government. In short, they're closing down the press. It means everything has to come out through the Government Press Secretary.'

He said the media would find it difficult to break stories because government would demand that journalists divulge sources of information.

Part of the Bill reads, 'Whether on duty or on leave of absence, a public officer shall not (except with due authority) allow oneself to be interviewed on questions of, or connecting with any matter affecting or relating to public policy, security or strategic economic interests or resources of Swaziland.'

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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