



ASSOCIATION RWANDAISE DES JOURNALISTES  
RWANDA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

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Rwanda has officially **decriminalised general defamation and press offences** with the gazetting of the penal code- Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018. The Rwanda Journalists Association (ARJ) recognises this very important step by the government of Rwanda as it is another major reform towards expanding freedom of the press and free expression in general.

Decriminalisation of defamation and press offences is a culmination of many years of advocacy by the media fraternity and dialogue with government and other stakeholders. While the ARJ considers defamation a major ethical breach -the reason it is proscribed by the Journalists and Media Practitioners Code of Conduct -we uphold that related complaints should be handled by the Media Self-Regulatory Body (Rwanda Media Commission) and in other cases by civil restitution.

We therefore welcome this part of the legislation and call on the public to continue utilizing the so far successful media self-regulation in arbitrating complaints arising from journalists' work.

However, the ARJ is concerned with Articles 233 and 236 in the penal code relating to cartooning of politicians/public officials and defamation against the President of the Republic respectively. Going forward, the Association will carry out consultations and seek legal interpretations on if and how the two articles could affect press freedom and advise members accordingly.

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