

Readout from the meeting held 07 September 2021 of the NGO Forum Director and the Managing Director of the Media Authority of the Republic of South Sudan

The Media Authority is the body entrusted with media development and media regulations in the Republic of South Sudan. A meeting held on 07 September 2021 between Pius Ojara, PhD, Director of the NGO Forum, and Media Authority's Managing Director Hon. Elijah Alier Kuai clarified the following regulations for NGOs to take note of:

1. Accreditation of NGO communications practitioners

- Accreditation means one has the competence of the media and all accountability for the media in the Republic of South Sudan is with the Media Authority.
- All communications practitioners should apply for accreditation from the Media Authority for identification purposes. NGOs are responsible for the actions of accredited communications practitioners, unlike accredited journalists for which the Media Authority is liable.
- Accreditation of NGOs' communications/media personnel normally takes place under an organisation that is responsible for the work of their media personnel.
- Media accreditation may be for a minimum of three months and a maximum of 12 months, depending on the length of the staff contract. After 12 months, the NGO can apply for renewal of accreditation of the staff. Request for media accreditation should include:
 - a.) A requisition letter from the organization addressed to the Managing Director Media Authority;
 - b.) Two passport size photographs of the staff;
 - c.) Copy of work ID;
 - d.) Copy of passport for internationals and national ID/passport for nationals.
- Note that the accreditation of Journalists entails the following:
 - a) Background check for the journalists before accreditation following which a Letter of No Objection is issued to the journalist before coming into the country.
 - b) No visas are issued to journalists on arrivals except for Kenyan journalists who are not dual nationals
 - c) Permits has a maximum period of 3 weeks
 - d) Nationals are preferred and encouraged
- The accreditation fees of communications practitioners are as follows:
 - Accreditation for less than three months costs \$50 for both national and international staff.
 - Accreditation for six to twelve months costs \$100 for both national and international communications practitioners.
- The processing time for media accreditation card is three days.
- NGOs that need to bring an international journalist into the country should apply for a *letter of no objection* in advance stating the purpose and duration of the visit and the equipment the person will

bring along before obtaining a visa to enter South Sudan. Communications personnel coming to support the in-country office should also apply for a letter of no objection.

- NGOs should not seek accreditation through other government institutions; they should do so independently and directly with the Media Authority.
- The Media Authority requirements for a no objection letter are accessible on <https://docs.southsudangoforum.org/regulation/guidance-documents/media-authorityrequirements-no-objection-letter>. The Media Authority Press Visitor Form is accessible on <https://docs.southsudangoforum.org/regulation/guidance-documents/media-authority-press-visitor-form>.

2. Equipment clearance, permanent and temporary

- An NGO may apply for temporary or permanent equipment clearance depending on whether the equipment will remain in South Sudan. When a regular staff is accredited they are then allowed to use their media equipment.
- Equipment that are normally cleared include the following: a) cameras for people who are in South Sudan and b) equipment that NGOs import for use – normally Media Authority clears this equipment for NGO humanitarian work in South Sudan.
- Media Authority does not clear Thurayas which is done by the National Security Services which in the case of NGOs are done through the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.
- Permanent clearance applies to equipment that an NGO may bring for permanent use in South Sudan.
- Temporary clearance applies to equipment that an NGO may bring into the country for a short time in order to execute a specific task. The duration for the temporary clearance is dependent on the time the equipment will be in the country as determined by the organizations during the time of application.
- Temporary clearance is often once – it expires with the exit from the country.

3. Permits

- Permits are required for media personnel because they interact with the public where public attention can be drawn. Recording draws attention of the public. On the same note, interviews by print media do not require permits.
- When travelling to state locations, NGOs need obtain temporary permits (different from the temporary clearance for incoming equipment mentioned above) to transport cameras even when their staff is accredited. The approval is only valid for a maximum of three weeks from the date of issuance. Upon arrival to field locations, it's the responsibility of the NGO to ensure that staff report to the relevant authorities before commencing any filming and/or photography activities.
- Permits for specific activities serve three purposes: a) identification of the crew/communication persons when shooting or taking photos; b) it clarifies specifics of activities; c) it includes precautions on restricted areas which need to be respected and d) there is a telephone number of the contact person of the Media Authority for specific authorised activities.
- Juba International Airport Special Permit: specific activities at Juba International Airport requires special permit at the Airport for specific time and specific area of the Airport. It is one time off. Media Authority needs to be alerted within 3 days for the activity for the permits to be issued.

- The Media Authority does not give permits for the importation of drones and satellite phones. Whoever needs to import such equipment should seek permission from the National Security Services and is currently forbidden in the country.
- International staff who go on and return from leave with their cameras should apply for a temporary permit to avoid delays at the airport. The Media Authority reiterated that NGOs need to cooperate and act appropriately at the airport to avoid being misunderstood by authorities carrying out their routine duties.

4. Videography and Photography permit

- Should an NGO wish to produce a documentary, it has to seek approval from the Media Authority. The Video Shooting and Photography Taking Application Form is found at <https://docs.southsudangoforum.org/regulation/guidance-documents/media-authority-video-shooting-and-photography-taking-application>.
- An organization can request a special permission from the Media Authority to photograph and/or film sensitive places such as the airport. In some cases, relevant authorities will accompany the NGO or staff.

5. Observations on behaviours of media personnel

- The Media Authority made the following observations in regard to media personnel: a) observe attitude of politeness in engagement with authorities in the country; b) use language of respect in engaging with people and authorities; and c) ensure that you behave responsibly at all times.

6. Matters of clarification

- All clarification regarding accreditation of media personnel or media equipment or activities in the country can be sought from the Media Authority Headquarters.