

MEDIA COMPLAINTS REPORT 2024

NOT HAPPY?
WITH A MEDIA STORY?



Speak Up for Fair Media

You can complain to...

VMCZ

VOLUNTARY MEDIA COUNCIL OF ZIMBABWE

 **0772125658**  **(242)778096**

 **director@vmcz.co.zw**  **www.vmcz.co.zw**



VOLUNTARY MEDIA COUNCIL OF ZIMBABWE

Promoting Media Accountability Today... Tomorrow

MEDIA COMPLAINTS REPORT 2024

Compiled by Caroline Kuhudzai & Fiona Ruzha

Edited by Loughy Dube

Contents

i. Foreword	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Status of Complaints Received	7
3. Nature of Complaints.....	11
4. Media Houses Complained Against.....	12
5. Conclusion	14
6. Summary of Complaints Lodged in 2024.....	15
CASE NUMBER ONE.....	15
CASE NUMBER TWO	16
CASE NUMBER THREE	16
CASE NUMBER FOUR	17
CASE NUMBER FIVE.....	18
CASE NUMBER SIX.....	19
CASE NUMBER SEVEN	19
CASE NUMBER EIGHT	20
CASE NUMBER NINE.....	21
CASE NUMBER TEN	21
CASE NUMBER ELEVEN	22
CASE NUMBER TWELVE	22
CASE NUMBER THIRTEEN.....	23
CASE NUMBER FOURTEEN	23
CASE NUMBER FIFTEEN.....	24
CASE NUMBER SIXTEEN	24
CASE NUMBER SEVENTEEN.....	25
CASE NUMBER EIGHTEEN	25
CASE NUMBER NINETEEN	26
CASE NUMBER TWENTY.....	26
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-ONE	27
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-TWO	27
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-THREE.....	27
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR	28
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE	29
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-SIX	29
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN.....	30
CASE NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT	31
	3

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-NINE	32
CASE NUMBER THIRTY	33
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-ONE.....	33
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-TWO.....	34
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-THREE	34
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR	35
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-FIVE.....	36
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-SIX.....	37
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN	38
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT.....	39
CASE NUMBER THIRTY-NINE.....	39
The Media Complaints and Resolution Process	41
Complaints Procedures	41
National Media Complaints Committee Members	42
Provincial Adjudicators Committees and Contact Details	43

i. Foreword

The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and fostering accountability in society. To uphold these principles, the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) continues to provide a trusted and impartial platform for addressing grievances through its media complaints mechanism. This annual report reflects not only the operational achievements of the mechanism but also the evolving dynamics of its utilization by a diverse spectrum of stakeholders.

In 2024, the mechanism recorded a significant increase in complaints compared to the previous year, signalling growing public confidence in this vital tool for accountability. Notably, the year saw complaints lodged by high-ranking public officials, including the President of Zimbabwe through his Deputy Chief Secretary-Presidential Communications in the Office of the President Mr George Charamba, a Member of Parliament for Ruwa, and a local councillor. This unprecedented engagement underscores the mechanism's credibility and relevance at the highest levels of governance and public life. The willingness of these influential figures to utilize the system is a testament to its effectiveness and serves as a powerful example for all citizens to seek redress through structured, transparent, and fair processes. The increased use of the media complaints mechanism by individuals from all walks of life highlights its significance in promoting ethical journalism, strengthening trust in media institutions, and fostering a culture of accountability.

Complaints received throughout the evaluation period also revealed difficulties the media is facing with unregistered internet platforms that are untraceable and can be aggressive when restitution is requested. Furthermore, there are non-journalistic sites that aggregate and disseminate misinformation without providing a redress system. Given the widespread use of social media, this is a serious worry because online platforms are expanding quickly and are predicted to do so in the future. A significant proportion of the complaints received in 2023 were related to online activities.

An overview of the media complaints that the MCC received and resolved between January 2023 and December 2023 is provided in this report. The VMCZ remains committed to ensuring the accessibility, efficiency, and impartiality of this mechanism, enabling it to serve as a cornerstone of media accountability in Zimbabwe.

1. Introduction

The Media Complaints Report for 2024 highlights significant developments in media accountability and responsiveness to public concerns. This year saw a notable increase in formal complaints filed, with 39 cases recorded compared to 31 in 2023. The rise in complaints reflects growing public awareness of the importance of ethical journalism and the mechanisms available to address grievances.

This report provides an overview of the nature of complaints received, the resolutions achieved, and the collaborative efforts between the Media Complaints Committee (MCC) and media stakeholders to uphold professionalism and fairness in media practice. It also examines trends, key challenges, and opportunities for improving the effectiveness of the media complaints mechanism.

2. Status of Complaints Received

Resolution of complaints

(a) Resolved Complaints

35 (89.74%) of the cases were satisfactorily resolved by the committee (30 were completely resolved and five were finalised). Cases recorded as “resolved” by the MCC are those where a judgement has been made on the facts presented, and there is compliance to these judgements by the parties involved.

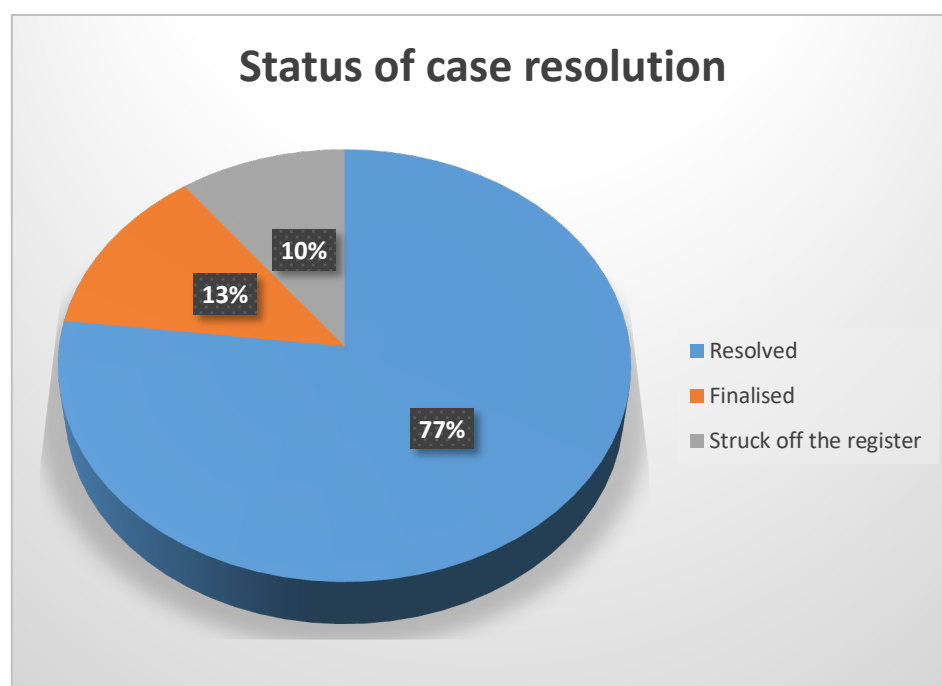
(b) Finalised Complaints

Five cases have been “finalised”. In these cases, parties involved have not reached an agreement using the MCC process and decided to handle their cases using other processes including going to court. The cases are therefore finalised in that the MCC is unable to offer a resolution on the complaint because the parties or either of them decided to use other processes to handle the matter.

(c) Striked off

A total of four cases were stricken off the procedure because the MCC had no mechanism of bringing the media houses on board because of their area of operation. These are online platforms that are not registered in Zimbabwe and some with no known addresses making it difficult to locate them and their editors. The MCC had no option but to strike them off their roll.

Fig 1. Below shows the status of complaints received in 2024



Profile of complainants

The following section profiles complainants and segments them according to their status (individual capacity or representing an organization), sexual orientation and geographical location. Profiling of complainants helps in improving the effectiveness of the mechanism and informing adjustments as appropriate where possible.

Status of complainants (individuals' vs institutions)

34 of the 39 complainants were individuals. These were from all social classes including business people, high profile people in the government structures, leaders of political parties and journalists themselves. Three of the complainants were organizations or institutions. Two are anonymous.

Fig 2. Complaints filed by individuals versus organizations

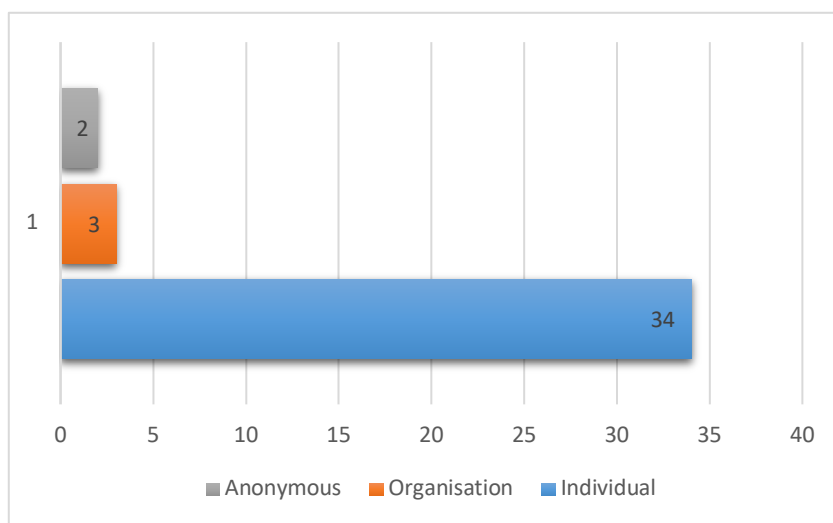


Fig 3. Employment Status

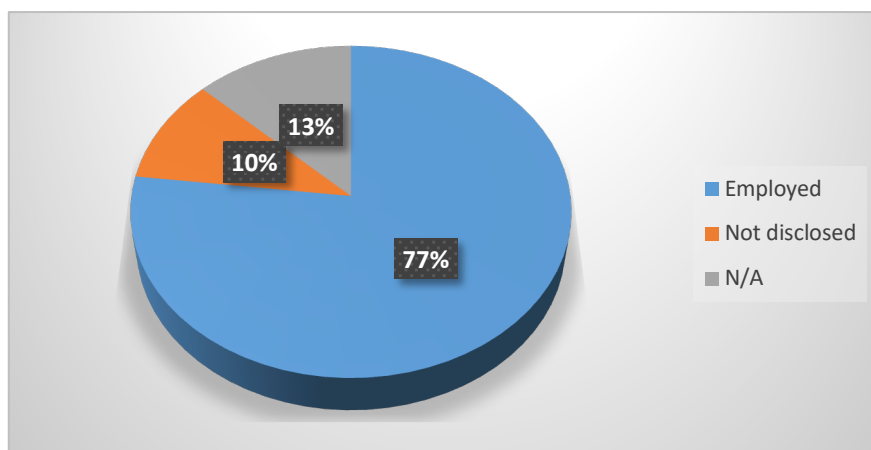
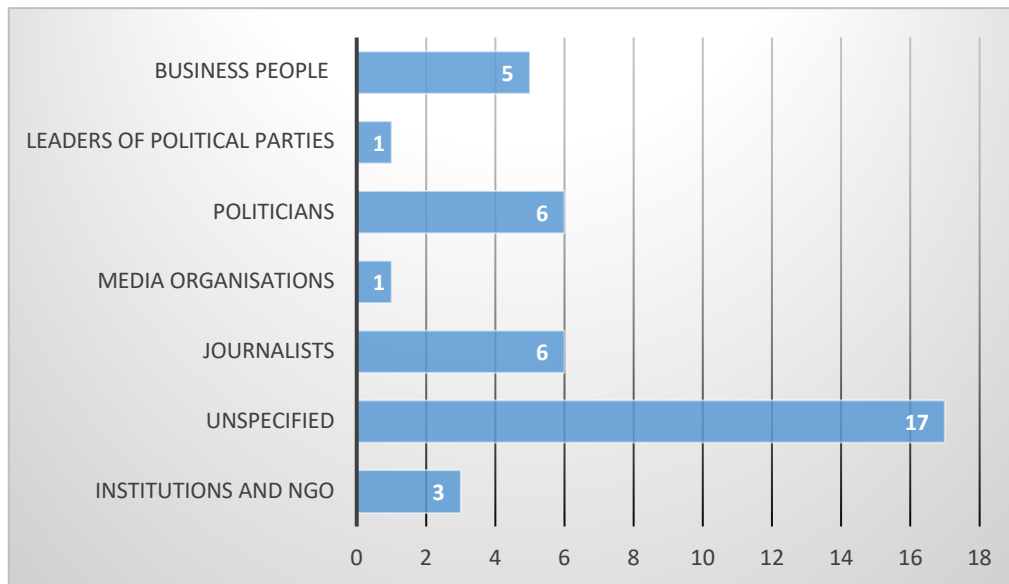


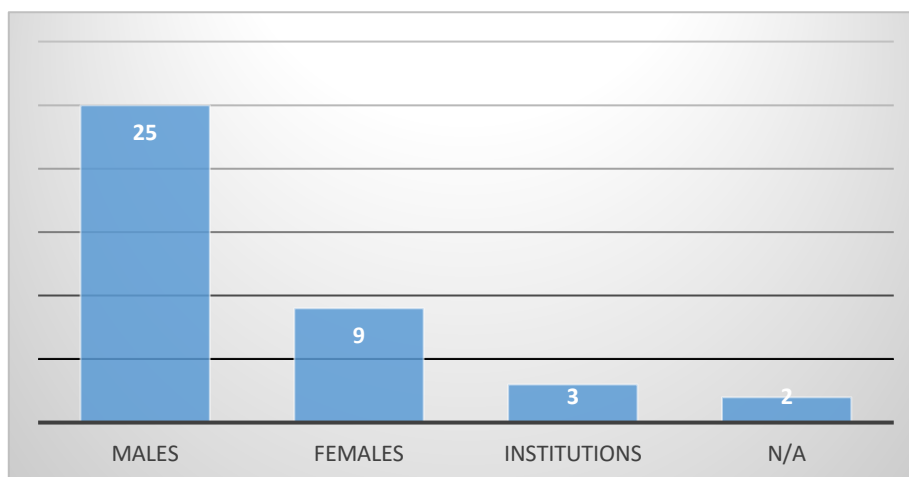
Fig 4. Profile of Complainants



Gender of Complainants

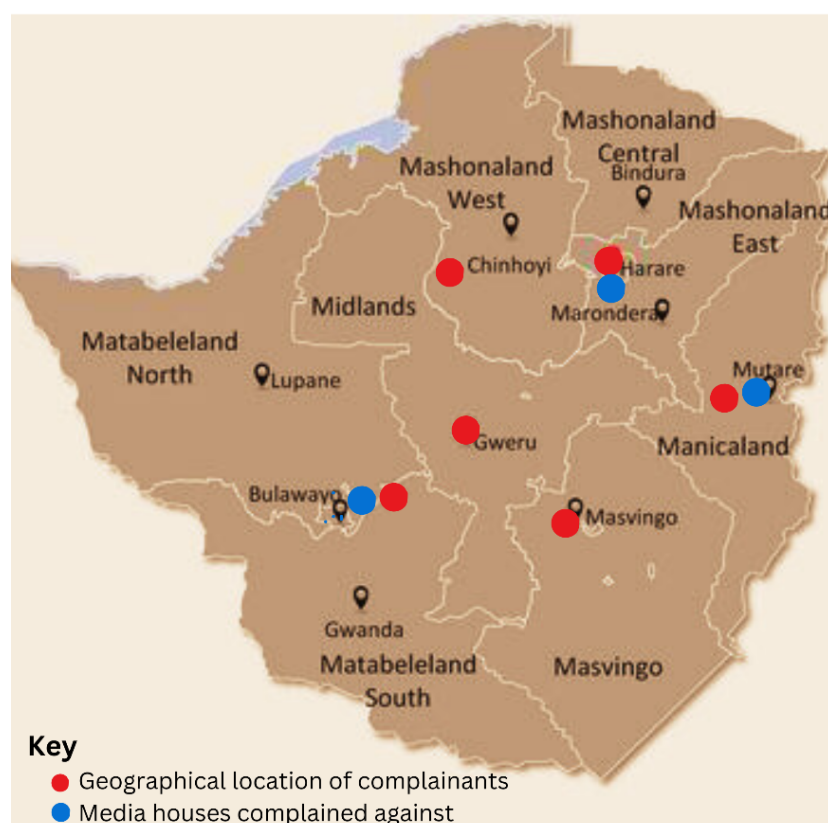
The majority of complainants were males. 25 complainants were males and therefore men made up 64 percent of complainants with women and institutions comprising the remainder. This is reflective of a high sense of awareness by men of their rights and a willingness to assert these in the media.

Fig 5. Overview of gender profile of complainants



Geographical Distribution of Complainants

Fig 6. Illustrates the geographic distribution of complaints



The high concentration of complaints from Harare, which accounts for 30 out of 39 received, is primarily due to the city's status as Zimbabwe's capital and its role as the hub of media activity. Harare hosts the majority of media houses and journalists, making it the focal point for news production and coverage, which naturally increases the likelihood of disputes over media content. Additionally, residents in Harare have greater access to resources such as internet and communication platforms, enabling them to lodge complaints more easily compared to those in other regions. The city's population is also more diverse and engaged, with higher levels of media literacy and awareness of mechanisms for addressing grievances. As such, VMCZ is currently increasing efforts to decentralize awareness campaigns and improve access to the complaints mechanism in all the ten provinces to help bridge the gap and ensure equitable representation across the country. During the year under review, VMCZ conducted targeted awareness campaigns in four cities—Masvingo, Mutare, Kwekwe, and Bulawayo. These campaigns were instrumental in increasing public knowledge of the media complaints mechanism, as evidenced by a rise in complaints lodged from these cities. To sustain this momentum, VMCZ plans to extend outreach efforts to more regions, including underserved and rural communities, to foster nationwide participation and accountability in media practices.

3. Nature of Complaints

Fig 7. Sections of the code most violated

Nature of complaints raised	Frequency	Percentage %
Accuracy and fairness	23	58
Right of reply	1	3
Plagiarism	1	3
Reporting on police investigations and criminal court case	8	20
Misrepresentation	1	3
Consent	1	3
Copyright infringement	4	10

An overwhelming majority of the complaints raised pertained to violations of the Code's section on Accuracy and Fairness, accounting for 23 cases, which represents 58% of all complaints. This highlights a critical gap in adhering to journalistic standards and ensuring reliable reporting. Many media outlets struggle with maintaining credibility, leading to public dissatisfaction and erosion of trust. Addressing these issues may require enhanced editorial oversight, stricter adherence to verification processes, and ongoing training for journalists on ethical reporting standards.

The second most frequent category was Reporting on police investigations and criminal court cases, with 8 complaints, comprising 20% of the total. This underscores the need for careful navigation of sensitive legal matters to avoid missteps that could compromise fairness and public trust.

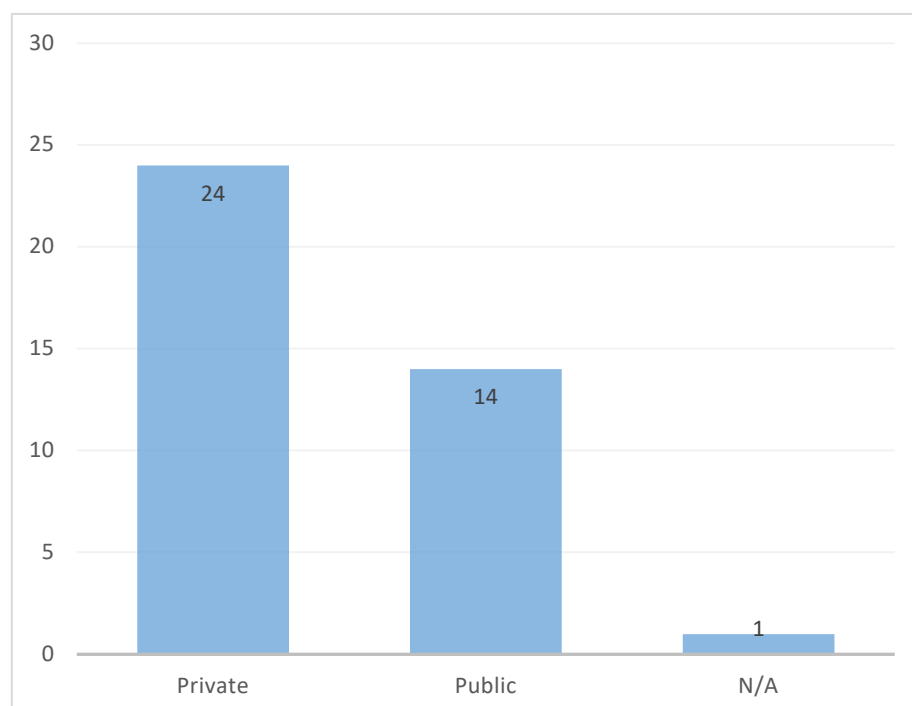
Other categories, though less frequent, emphasize the diversity of ethical challenges faced by the media. These included single instances (3% each) of violations related to Right of Reply, Plagiarism, Misrepresentation, and Consent.

Notably, "Copyright Infringement" accounted for 4 complaints, or 10% of the total. This highlights the challenges posed by the digital era, where content is easily shared, repurposed, or misappropriated without adequate attribution or permission. Collectively, these statistics underscore the necessity for continuous education and enforcement of journalistic standards to address these recurring issues effectively.

4. Media Houses Complained Against

The majority of complaints received were against privately owned media in both legacy and new media followed by complaints against public media. Only one report was made against an individual. The two biggest media groups in the country (Zimpapers and Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) were complained against the most.

Fig 8. Type of Media Houses Complained About



Newspapers had the highest number of complaints against them, with Zimpapers' *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail* newspapers receiving the highest number of complaints.

Fig 9. Complaints by platform

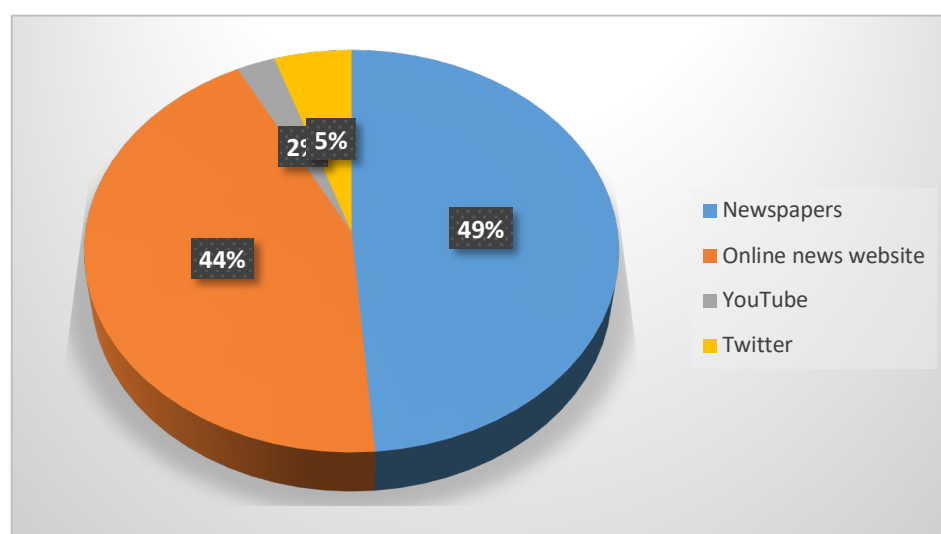


Fig 10. Complaints against the different Media Houses

Media House	Number of Complaints	% complaints of total	Titles complained against	
			<i>Title</i>	<i>Number</i>
Zimpapers	12	31%	The Sunday News	2
			The Sunday Mail	4
			The Herald	4
			The Manica Post	1
			The Chronicle	1
Alpha Media Holdings	6	15%	Newsday	3
			The Standard	2
			Zimbabwe Independent	1
Zimhorizons	1	3%		1
Sonata TV	1	3%		1
Newshawks	1	3%		1
NewZimbabwe.com	1	3%		1
She Corresponds Africa	1	3%		1
Bulawayo24	2	3%		1
The Zimbabwe Mail	2	3%		1
Newsreportzim	1	3%		1
Daily News	1	3%		1
Zim Eye	1	3%		1
Zimbabwe Situation	1	3%		1
Zimbabwe Daily	2	6%		2
Express Mail Zimbabwe	1	3%		1
The Patriot	1	3%		1
iHarare.Com	1	3%		1
My Zimbabwe	1	3%		1
Mr Hopewell Chin’ono X page	1	3%		1

5. Conclusion

The media complaints report highlights significant trends and key areas requiring attention to enhance accountability and ethical standards within Zimbabwe's media landscape. Throughout the year, the Media Complaints Committee (MCC) demonstrated its commitment to resolving complaints through dialogue, fostering trust between media practitioners and the public. While progress has been made in promoting responsible journalism, challenges remain, including the need for enhanced adherence to ethical standards and improved responsiveness to public concerns. Moving forward, the MCC will continue to strengthen its processes, engage stakeholders, and advocate for a media environment that upholds transparency, fairness, and accountability. The lessons learned in 2024 will serve as a foundation for further improvements in addressing media-related grievances and fostering a media landscape that supports informed and constructive public discourse.

6. Summary of Complaints Lodged in 2024

CASE NUMBER ONE

Parties: Mr John Mbizvo vs Mr Hopewell Chin'ono

Date of complaint: January 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr John Mbizvo lodged a complaint on 10 January 2024 against Mr Hopewell Chin'ono, accusing him of intentionally spreading fake news on his social media platforms without properly verifying the information. Mbizvo said this 'egregious' act had damaging repercussions on Mr Obert Mpofu and consequences, sparking unnecessary turmoil and tarnishing the reputation of innocent individuals.

According to Mr Mbizvo, on 24 December 2023, Mr Chin'ono made malicious allegations claiming that Mr Obert Mpofu was involved in the farm invasion at Umvucha farm. However, Mbizvo noted that it has been established and confirmed by the farm owners that these allegations were entirely false. He said Chin'ono's actions not only defamed the ruling party ZANU PF but also intentionally damaged the name and character of Obert Mpofu, all in clear violation of journalism and media ethics. Mr Mbizvo requested that Mr Chin'ono retracts the social media post and apologise to Mr Mpofu.

Status: Resolved

The matter was raised with Mr Chin'ono who distanced himself from writing and posting as a journalist. He stated that his recent post was made on social media in a personal capacity rather than as a professional journalist, indicating that it expressed his personal opinions and thoughts. VMCZ approached the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) to confirm Mr Chin'ono's registration status as a journalist, and ZMC indicated that Mr Chin'ono is not registered with the Commission. VMCZ also established that he is not registered or associated with Zimbabwe Online Content Creators, the Zimbabwe Union for Journalists, and does not subscribe to the VMCZ Code of Conduct. Under the circumstances, VMCZ does not have jurisdiction over Mr Chin'ono's social media platforms. The complainant was however advised to pursue the matter through legal channels and or to engage Mr Chin'ono directly as he indicated that he is open to engage the complainant.

CASE NUMBER TWO

Parties: Ms Sarah Shopera vs The Sunday News

Date of complaint: February 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Ms Sarah Shopera lodged a complaint on 12 February 2024 against **The Sunday News** for failing to publish her acquittal in an alleged drug-dealing case that **The Sunday News** published in 2022 under the headline: “Couple caught with bronco boxes.” Ms Shopera appeared in court and was found not guilty and acquitted. Ms Shopera approached **The Sunday News** Gweru office and the publication refused to publish her acquittal.

Ms Shopera indicated that the failure to report on her acquittal has a profoundly detrimental impact on her reputation. The complainant wanted **The Sunday News** to publish a follow-up story of her acquittal.

Status: Resolved

The Sunday News editor Limukani Ncube was notified of the complaint. The Sunday News ultimately published the follow-up article¹ on 28 February 2024.

CASE NUMBER THREE

Parties: Mr Ross Moyo vs Zimhorizons

Date of complaints: February 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Ross Moyo lodged a complaint on 15 February 2024 over a story published by **Zimhorizons** on 14 February 2024 with the headline: “Techmag Journalist Detained for Fowl Theft².” Mr Moyo argued that the story is false and fake as it claimed that he was arrested and detained at Rimuka Police Station on allegations of stealing four Guinea fowls, which were gifts for education officials.

Mr Moyo said the story has done a lot of damage and caused great harm to his family and more so the organisation where he is employed. He requested **Zimhorizons** to retract the story.

Status: Struck off the register

Zimhorizons is not a member of VMCZ neither is it registered with Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC). The editorial team is unknown to the VMCZ and there are no known contact details of the publication. Despite engaging Zimbabwe Online Content Creators (ZOCC) and ZimFact to assist with identifying the owners of the publication or reporters who

¹ <https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/banned-cough-syrup-woman-acquitted?g=5352378cb8973c09e5dbd4714204c833>

² <https://zimhorizons.wordpress.com/2024/02/14/techmag-journalist-detained-for-fowl-theft/>

write for the online paper, the efforts were futile. VMCZ will continue to advocate for all publications that publish on Zimbabwean content to register with ZMC to ensure that there is a database with traceable contacts for media organisations.

CASE NUMBER FOUR

Parties: Ms Adelaide Chikunguru, Ms Patricia Muchengwa & Mr Julius Toringepi vs The Standard

Date of Complaint: February 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Three former Zimbabwe Broadcasting Authority (ZBC) employees lodged a complaint against **The Standard** on 22 February 2024 over a story published on 18 February 2024 headlined: "ZBC boss in trouble amid salaries war." The three, Ms Patricia Muchengwa, the Corporate Secretary, Ms Adelaide Chikunguru, Chief Executive Officer of ZBC, and Mr Julius Toringepi, the Director of Human Resources through their lawyers Mushoriwa Pasi Corporate Attorneys stated that the article reports as fact that Chikunguru is in trouble after workers accused her of making decisions that made their conditions of service vulnerable. The complainants said the article alleged that the workers singled out Chikunguru, Toringepi, and Muchengwa for undermining decisions meant to improve their welfare. The complainants argued that the article is false, wrongful, and defamatory. They requested **The Standard** to pull down, remove, and delete the article from its website and other electronic platforms.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

A full adjudication was convened. Mr Evans Moyo, the lawyer for the complainants indicated Ms Chikunguru no longer wished to pursue the matter. Ms Muchengwa and Mr Toringepi indicated that they still want to pursue the matter. **The Standard** maintained that the story was accurate and as such a meeting to address the complaint was scheduled for 12 March 2024. However, during the meeting, Mr Moyo informed the MCC that the complainants could not attend due to an emergency board meeting addressing some of the complainants' concerns. The meeting was subsequently postponed, as the MCC does not directly involve legal practitioners in the complaints procedure. **The Standard** editor, Kholwani Nyathi, was unavailable for the next two weeks. The meeting was rescheduled for either 2 or 9 April.

Status: Finalised

The complainants did not avail themselves for the meeting penciled for later dates and did not respond to VMCZ communication. After ceasing communication with VMCZ and remaining unresponsive, the Committee decided to temporarily remove the case from the complaints register. The complainants were informed that they could re-file their complaint when ready to proceed with the matter. This decision was made in line with the expectation that complaints should be resolved within 30 days and their lack of response made it impossible for the committee to proceed within the stipulated timeframe.

Parties: Ms Monica Cheru vs The NewsHawks

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness and Right of reply

Ms Monica Cheru lodged a complaint on 29 February 2024 over four stories that were published by **The NewsHawks**. Cheru said **The Newshawks** reported on a meeting to which the publication sent no representative and reported inaccurately on the proceedings of the meeting. She said the articles stated that the committee which she is a member of, was selected in a dodgy and opaque way, yet minutes of the meeting showed that selection was by nomination and secondment in an open and public forum.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

Status: Resolved

[illegible]

CASE NUMBER SIX

Parties: Dr Olivia Gumbo vs The Sunday Mail

Date of Complaint: March 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Dr Olivia Gumbo lodged a complaint on 20 March 2024 against **The Sunday Mail** over a story published on 10 March 2024 headlined: "*United States spies busted, deported*³".

Dr Gumbo stated that **The Sunday Mail** falsely reported that she is an associate of Navanti Group and that she took part in undercover meetings for the group. She said the allegations are false, misleading, and bordering on character assault and defamation of her reputation.

Dr Gumbo requested that **The Sunday Mail** apologise and write a formal apology letter for the record.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

The Sunday Mail editor, Mr Darlington Musarurwa, noted that the article referred to Dr Olivia Gumbo mentioned in a diplomatic note that was sent by the US Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on 5 February 2024. A meeting was held on 15 April 2024, the committee did a quick search on the internet and the results showed that there were over 15 people bearing the name Olivia Gumbo. The referenced Olivia Gumbo could be anyone other than the complainant who works for or is associated with the Avanti Group. All parties agreed that Olivia Gumbo referred to in the article is not the complainant since she is not employed by or associated with the Avanti Group. Both parties agreed that the MCC verdict was a correct summary of the adjudication process. The complainant requested a written document clarifying that the Olivia Gumbo mentioned in the story is not Dr Olivia Gumbo.

Status: Resolved

Minutes of the meeting were sent to Dr Gumbo.

CASE NUMBER SEVEN

Parties: Mr Cosmas Phillip Mwaita vs Sonata TV

Date of Complaint: March 2024

Code of conduct breached: Misrepresentation

Nature of Complaint

Mr Cosmas Phillip Mwaita lodged a complaint on 22 March 2024 over a video published on **Sonata TV** featuring a boy who allegedly resurfaced three years after reportedly being taken away by a mermaid. Mr Mwaita contended that during an interview conducted by Sonata TV, the boy, hailing from the Bazeley Bridge region, falsely claimed to be Emmanuel Mwaita—a

³ <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/us-spies-busted-deported>

name that actually belongs Mr Mwaita's nephew, the son of Mwaita's elder brother who was never taken by a mermaid.

According to Mr Mwaita, this misrepresentation negatively impacted the family's reputation and social standing. Mr Mwaita requested that **Sonata TV** remove the contentious video from its YouTube channel.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

Sonata TV editor Mr Ngoni Jeché told the committee that the video in question was a fictional drama, not a documentary based on real events. He explained that the child featured in the video randomly used the name, Emmanuel Mwaita, as part of his role in the production. Mr Jeché also noted that he was unaware of the existence of a real Emmanuel Mwaita at the time. To address the concern, Jeché updated the video's description on their website to clearly state that the content is a dramatization and not reflective of true events. A meeting to redress the complaint was held on 26 March 2024, where Mr Mwaita stated that the misrepresentation had severely damaged the family's reputation and social standing, leading to the family being summoned to court by Chief Marange. The complainant also requested that the respondent cover travelling expenses incurred by the family when travelling to the chief's court. The MCC highlighted that committee does not offer redress involving reimbursement of money from one party to the other party. Instead, the committee suggested that Sonata TV clarify that the video was purely fictional and dramatic and that names used in the dramatization were not representative of any person

Status: Resolved

Sonata TV as part of the committee's recommendation updated the video's description and included sub-titles to clarify that the video was purely fictional and created for dramatic purposes.

CASE NUMBER EIGHT

Parties: Mr Shepherd Katuruza vs The Herald

Date of Complaint: April 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Shepherd Katuruza lodged a complaint on 3 April 2024 concerning a story published by **The Herald** headlined: "*Land Baron in court*" on 19 April 2023. Mr Katuruza complained that he was subsequently acquitted and there was no follow-up to the originally published story. He further stated that he had evidence that the journalists who wrote the initial story was bribed to write about him.

Mr Katuruza requested an audience with the editor and demanded a retraction and a follow up story to highlight the acquittal.

Status: Finalised

Mr Katuruza requested VMCZ to halt its proceedings as he had reported the case to the National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe (NPA), the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), which were already investigating bribery allegations against the journalist. The complainant was informed that the case will be reopened once investigations by these entities were concluded.

CASE NUMBER NINE

Parties: *Ms Fortunate Zvikaramba vs She Corresponds Africa*

Date of Complaint: April 2024

Code of conduct breached: *Protection of sources/ Consent*

Nature of Complaint

Ms Fortunate Zvikaramba lodged a complaint on 3 April 2024 over the conduct of a journalist from ***She Corresponds Africa*** regarding a story headlined: "*Perinatal Mental Health: A Neglected Condition In Zimbabwe*". The complainant highlighted that the article published her identity without her consent. The complainant said she was not notified that her identity would be included in the article in question after the interview. Ms Zvikaramba said the article created more stress for her, generated unwanted attention and reduced her self-esteem forcing her to delete her social media accounts. Ms Zvikaramba added that she is at risk of developing a relapse of serious mental health problems she experienced before.

Ms Zvikaramba is requesting ***She Corresponds Africa*** to remove her name from the article.

Status: Resolved

She Corresponds Africa after being engaged by the MCC edited and removed the complainant's name from the article.

CASE NUMBER TEN

Parties: *Mr Lungelo Ndlovu vs The Standard*

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: *Copyright infringement*

Nature of Complaint

Mr Lungelo Ndlovu lodged a complaint on 12 May 2024 concerning copyright infringement by ***The Standard*** over a story published under the headlined: "*EL Nino bites Zimbabwe, takes aim at climate change with new law*⁴."

According to Mr Ndlovu, ***The Standard*** republished his article without adhering to the standard procedure established by Devex Pro. The Devex Pro Republication Policy states that: "*Article republication: Our republication policy allows for the first three paragraphs of a story*

⁴ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/thestandard/amp/news/article/200026809/as-el-nino-bites-zimbabwe-takes-aim-at-climate-change-with-new-law>

to be republished, with a note stating the article was originally published on Devex and a link back to the original article. Devex Pro articles may not be republished."

Ndlovu requested **The Standard** to either adhere to the stated guidelines or remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

The Standard removed the article from its website.

CASE NUMBER ELEVEN

Parties: Mr Lungelo Ndlovu vs Zimbabwe Independent

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Copyright infringement

Nature of Complaint

Mr Lungelo Ndlovu lodged a complaint on 12 May 2024 concerning copyright infringement by the **Zimbabwe Independent** headlined: "EL Nino bites Zimbabwe, takes aim at climate change with new law⁵."

According to Mr Ndlovu, the **Zimbabwe Independent** republished his article without adhering to the standard procedure established by Devex Pro. The Devex Pro Republication Policy states that: "Article republication: Our republication policy allows for the first three paragraphs of a story to be republished, with a note stating the article was originally published on Devex and a link back to the original article. Devex Pro articles may not be republished."

Ndlovu requested the **Zimbabwe Independent** to either adhere to the stated guidelines or remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

Zimbabwe Independent removed the article from its website after engagements with MCC.

CASE NUMBER TWELVE

Parties: Mr Nigel Nyamutumbu vs Sunday Mail

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Nigel Nyamutumbu lodged a complaint on 20 May 2024 regarding an article published by **The Sunday Mail** headlined: "Tuku's 'Love child' tears family apart." Mr Nyamutumbu expressed concern that he had been misquoted, where the words attributed to him were not

⁵ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/theindependent/news/article/200026809/as-el-nino-bites-zimbabwe-takes-aim-at-climate-change-with-new-law>

an exact representation of what he said. He requested the Sunday Mail to retract the article with the attribution to him.

Status: Resolved

Mr Nyamutumbu directly engaged **The Sunday Mail** editor Mr Darlington Musarurwa and advised VMCZ that he no longer wished to pursue the case further. Mr Nyamutumbu said since the matter was ongoing, he believed future articles will clear his name.

CASE NUMBER THIRTEEN

Parties: Mr Stanley Muchena vs Bulawayo24

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Stanley Muchena lodged a complaint on 21 May 2024 against **Bulawayo24** over an article headlined: *"Controversy surrounds Prosper Matondi and Veronica Gundu Jakarasi in the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife."* Mr Muchena complained that the article contained false information and used his business partner Ms Veronica Gundu Jakarasi's images without her consent, causing significant harm to her reputation and their company's image.

Muchena said the dissemination of this false information had the potential to negatively impact their business operations and the trust they had built with clients. Therefore, he requested Bulawayo24 to remove the article from their website.

Status: Resolved

Bulawayo24 removed the article from their website.

CASE NUMBER FOURTEEN

Parties: Mr Nyasha Nyabide vs The Zimbabwe Mail

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Nyasha Nyabide lodged a complaint on 23 May 2024 against **The Zimbabwe Mail** over a story published on 21 May 2024 titled: *"Harare couple's US\$ 95000 home, seized after purchase funds linked to fraud."* The complainant complained that the reporter used his picture and captioned it 'NMB Bank, Nyasha Dumbu' yet he is not Nyasha Dumbu. Mr Nyabide said he is an employee of NMB Bank and the picture used is his and not that of Nyasha Dumbu. Mr Nyabide said the publication's failure to diligently verify the identity of Nyasha Dumbu has caused harm to his reputation and distress caused to his family.

Mr Nyabide requested **The Zimbabwe Mail** to take down his picture from the story and issue an apology, advising members of the public that they indeed used the wrong picture in the article.

Status: Struck off the register

The complainant was informed that VMCZ was unable to contact ***The Zimbabwe Mail*** as it is neither a member of VMCZ nor is it registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. The editorial team is unknown to VMCZ and VMCZ visited offices using the address provided on their Facebook page and was informed that they moved out of the premises a long time ago. Efforts to locate the publication premises were futile. Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact could also not establish contact details of the publication. VMCZ further posted on social media platforms inviting anyone with the contact details of the publisher or reporters that write for the online paper but there were no positive responses.

CASE NUMBER FIFTEEN

Parties: Ms Chishamiso Mhizha vs Newsreportzim

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Ms Chishamiso Mhizha lodged a complaint on 29 May 2024 against ***Newsreportzim*** over a story headlined: “*RCU student in hot soup at Alpha Cottages Children’s Home in Masvingo and Women university student gets protected by boss in a controversial money scandal.*” Ms Mhizha said the article was false and had damaged the image of RCU, Women’s University, and Alpha Cottages Children’s Home. Ms Mhizha added that the falsehoods also had the potential to upset donors who support the home.

Status: Resolved

Although ***Newsreportzim*** did not respond to the communication from VMCZ, it was noted months later, the article was removed from the ***Newsreportzim*** website. ***Newsreportzim*** is neither a member of VMCZ nor is it registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. The editorial team is unknown to VMCZ and there are no known contact details of the publication. Despite engaging Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact to assist, efforts to identify the owner of the paper or reporters that write for the online magazine were futile.

CASE NUMBER SIXTEEN

Parties: Mr Jeffrey Chimombe vs The Herald

Date of Complaint: May 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jeffrey Chimombe lodged a complaint on 22 May 2024 against ***The Herald*** over an article headlined: “*Notice to repossess stands lot 1a of 1, Johannesburg, Norton.*” The article contained a list of names of residential stand beneficiaries under the Diocese of Harare Housing Trust (DHHT) whose stands have been listed as “inactive and non-payment” and are subject to repossession due to failure by the beneficiaries to comply with monthly service

payments. The complainant said he was up to date with his payments and was shocked to see his name on the list of who were up to date with payments

Mr Chimombe requested **The Herald** to correct the misleading information showed he was not paid up.

Status: Resolved

The matter was resolved as it was clarified that the article in question was an advertisement, and **The Herald** had no control over content in the advert. **The Herald** published the list provided by DHHT, and if there was an error, the error originated from the organisation that flighted the advert. The complainant was advised to obtain the correct record from DHHT, and VMCZ will assist in publishing it in **The Herald**.

CASE NUMBER SEVENTEEN

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs The Sunday News

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint on 6 June against **The Sunday News** over an article published in 2015 headlined, “President’s office to investigate corrupt officials⁶.”

Mr Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and **The Sunday News** should remove the article from its website. The complainant stated that the article had a serious impact on his reputation.

Status: Resolved

The Sunday News removed the article from its website after engaging with the MCC over the complaint and as part of a consensus among the parties.

CASE NUMBER EIGHTEEN

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs The Herald

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint on 6 June 2024 against **The Herald** over two articles that were published in 2015 headlined, “Finance Ministry loses 800 000⁷” and “700k fraud 6 get bail⁸” respectively.

⁶ <https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/presidents-office-to-investigate-corrupt-officials/>.

⁷ <https://www.herald.co.zw/finance-ministry-loses-800-000/>

⁸ <https://www.herald.co.zw/700k-fraud-6-get-bail/>

Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and **The Herald** should remove the articles from its website. The complainant further stated that the articles had a serious impact on his reputation.

Status: Resolved

The Herald removed the articles from their website after engaging with the MCC over the complaint and as part of a consensus among the parties.

CASE NUMBER NINETEEN

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs Daily News

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint on 27 June 2024 against **Daily News** over an article published in 2015 headlined: “\$700k Finance ministry scam — More suspects seek bail⁹”.

Mr Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and the **Daily News** should remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

Daily News removed the article from their website after engaging with the MCC over the complaint and as part of a consensus among the parties.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs NewsDay

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint with the MCC on 27 June 2024 against **NewsDay** over two articles published in 2015 headlined, “Treasury officials indicted for trial¹⁰” and “Finance Ministry swindled of 720 000¹¹”.

Mr Mlambo stated that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and **NewsDay** should remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

⁹ <https://dailynews.co.zw/700k-finance-ministry-scam-more-suspects-seek-bail/>

¹⁰ https://www.newsday.co.zw/news/article/108890/treasury-officials-indicted-for-trial#google_vignette

¹¹ https://www.newsday.co.zw/news/article/108890/treasury-officials-indicted-for-trial#google_vignette

NewsDay removed the articles from their website after engaging with the MCC over the complaint and as part of a consensus among the parties.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs The Sunday Mail

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint with the MCC on 27 June 2024 against **The Sunday Mail** over an article published in 2015 headlined: “*OPC moves in to combat graft in Govt*”¹².

Mr Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and **The Sunday Mail** should remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

The Sunday Mail removed the story from the website after engaging with the MCC over the complaint and as part of a consensus among the parties.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-TWO

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs Zim Eye

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint with the MCC on 27 June 2024 against **Zim Eye** over two articles published in 2015 headlined, “*700k theft suspects freed under a cloud of mystery*”¹³ and “*729 000 Finance Ministry cash disappears*”¹⁴.

Mr Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and he is kindly requesting that **Zim Eye** remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

Although **Zim Eye** did not respond to the communication from VMCZ, it was noted that the articles are no longer on **Zim Eye** website.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-THREE

Parties: Mr Jacob Mlambo vs Zimbabwe Situation

¹² <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.sundaymail.co.zw/opc-moves-in-to-combat-graft-in-govt/amp>

¹³ <https://www.zimeye.net/2015/04/21/700k-theft-suspects-freed-under-a-cloud-of-mystery-2/>

¹⁴ https://www.zimeye.net/2015/02/25/729-000-finance-ministry-cash-disappears-2/#google_vignette

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Reporting of police investigations and criminal court cases

Nature of Complaint

Mr Jacob Forgive Mlambo lodged a complaint on 27 June 2024 against **Zimbabwe Situation** over an article published in 2015 headlined: “Finance ministry loses \$800 000¹⁵.”

Mlambo expressed concern that the fraud charges against him were withdrawn and **Zimbabwe Situation** should remove the article from its website.

Status: Resolved

Although **Zimbabwe Situation** did not respond to the communication from VMCZ, it was noted that the article is no longer on their website. **Zimbabwe Situation** is neither a member of VMCZ nor registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. Efforts to identify the owner or reporters behind the online publication, including seeking assistance from Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact, have been unsuccessful.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR

Parties: Mr David Mazana vs Manica Post

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr David Mazana lodged a complaint on 6 June 2024 over a story published by **The Manica Post** on 5 April 2024 headlined: “Blabbermouth: He chose to die than go to jail¹⁶.” The complainant strongly believed this story was not only false but was an invasion of the privacy of the Hondo family that was still mourning their deceased relative. Mr Mazana noted that **Manica Post** did not fact-check information at all to the extent that the columnist at the end of his article said the source of the story was a street rumour. Mr Mazana noted that although the article did not publish the name of the deceased, it was clear that the subject of the story was the late Lovelorn Hondo who died of a heart attack while attending a church service in Zimunya on 28 March 2024.

Mr Mazana requested **The Manica Post** to retract the story and apologize to the Hondo family.

Procedure: Manica Post Editor Mr Cletus Mushanawani was informed of the complaint and asserted that their article was accurate and disputed any grounds for an apology to the complainant. The publication further argued that a deceased person cannot sue, nor can someone litigate on behalf of a deceased individual.

Status: Finalised

¹⁵ https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_w_finance-ministry-loses-800-000-the-herald/

¹⁶ <https://www.manicapost.co.zw/blabbermouth-he-chose-to-die-than-go-to-jail/amp/>

Mazana was informed of the **Manica Post's** response and he expressed concern over the time The **Manica Post** took long to respond and indicated that he does not wish to pursue the matter further. However, the MCC after reviewing the matter, emphasized that media houses must encourage readers to engage critically with their content. The committee said this includes reminding readers that the column is informal and satirical in nature. It further recommended that media outlets avoid columns that prioritize sensational or scandalous content over responsible journalism.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE

Parties: President Mnanganwa vs NewsDay

Date of Complaint: June 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr George Charamba, Deputy Chief Secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet lodged a complaint with Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and copied VMCZ, on behalf of President Mnangagwa over an article published by **NewsDay** on 28 June 2024 headlined: 'US scoffs at ED¹⁷.' Mr Charamba complained that the story maliciously misrepresented and defamed the President regarding his visit to Russia.

Mr Charamba stated that the paper falsely claimed President Mnangagwa told President Putin that Zambia posed a security threat to Zimbabwe due to United States of America (US) funding of its security sector. He also expressed concern over the paper's false assertion that President Mnangagwa described Zambia as an American client-state intent on destabilizing the region. Mr Charamba said claims by **NewsDay** are malicious.

Status: Resolved

As part of process to resolve the complaint, the VMCZ participated at a Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) breakfast meeting on 24 July 2024 with editors across Zimbabwean media outlets and invited VMCZ to the meeting to deliberate on professional issues related to the complaint. During this dialogue, ZMC emphasized the importance of accuracy, fact-checking, and avoiding sensationalism in journalism. VMCZ complemented ZMC's efforts by directly engaging with AMH editor in chief, Kholwani Nyathi, reinforcing the need for ethical and professionalism and protecting the integrity of the press. The complaint sought no punitive action but instead focused on advancing broader conversations around media professionalism.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

Parties: Ms Catherine Murombedzi vs The Zimbabwe Mail

Date of Complaint: July 2024

Code of conduct breached: Plagiarism

¹⁷ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200028870/us-scoffs-at-ed>

Nature of Complaint

Ms Catherine Murombedzi lodged a complaint on 1 July 2024 against **The Zimbabwe Mail** for republishing her article without her consent and attribution. Murombedzi published an article on 29 June 2024 titled, “Innovative methods for diagnosing TB in children¹⁸.” **The Zimbabwe Mail** republished the article on its website the same day¹⁹. Ms Murombedzi requested **The Zimbabwe Mail** to remove the article from their website.

Status: Resolved

Although **The Zimbabwe Mail** did not respond to the communication from VMCZ, it was noted that the article is no longer on the **The Zimbabwe Mail** website. **The Zimbabwe Mail** is neither a member of VMCZ nor registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. Efforts to identify the owner or reporters behind the online publication, including seeking assistance from Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact, have been unsuccessful.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

Parties: Mr Godknows Muzhandamhuri vs NewZimbabwe.Com

Date of Complaint: July 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Godknows Muzhandamhuri lodged a complaint on 19 July 2024 over a story published by **NewZimbabwe.Com** headlined: “Rowdy Zanu PF Councillor Sparks Chaos Over Allocation of Residential Stands in Chinhoyi²⁰.”

Mr Muzhandamhuri complained that the article was a direct attack on his character with the intention of defaming him. He expressed concern that the language used and the manner in which the story was presented aimed at soiling his name and reputation without any just cause. He claims the story is false.

Further, he noted that the claim that council business was conducted in informal meetings is entirely false. He stated that council business is never conducted in such a manner and contended that the reporter based his story on hearsay. He also complained that he was not given the right to respond to allegations raised in the story.

He additionally noted that the article mentioned incidents of violence allegedly involving him that allegedly took place in April 2022. He stated that no such violent incidents occurred, and he has never faced any criminal charges relating to violence. He argued that his portrayal of him as a violent character is unsubstantiated and solely intended to damage his image.

¹⁸ <https://masvingomirror.com/innovative-methods-for-diagnosing-tb-in-children/>

¹⁹ <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/?s=Innovative+>

²⁰ <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/rowdy-zanu-pf-councillor-sparks-chaos-over-allocation-of-residential-stands-in-chinhoyi/>

Cllr Muzhandamhuri requested **NewZimbabwe.Com** to retract the article and publish the retraction prominently on NewZimbabwe.com, along with a statement clearing his name.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

A meeting to redress the complaint was held on 20 August 2024. In the meeting, **NewZimbabwe.Com** provided voice notes, pictures supporting the purported council meeting and the link to a previous article mentioning the Cllr's violent behaviour that they were basing their claims on. Cllr Muzhandamhuri admitted that he has never seen the article attributed to his alleged violence behaviour before and had not been provided with the voice notes prior to the meeting. The committee suggested that Cllr Muzhandamhuri review the evidence provided and respond to the MCC by 22 August 2024 clarifying the kind of redress he seeks. On 28 August 2024 Cllr Muzhandamhuri advised that he was standing by his earlier position that the media house should retract the whole story because the evidence provided did not support their article. The story on his allegedly violent behaviour was written by the same reporter under the same publication (**NewZimbabwe.Com**) who purported to be an eye witness to his violent behaviour, he further said the voice notes did not confirm the accusations against him in the article and the picture of a handwritten list by councillors of housing stands they had selected- could have been written and circulated by anybody. He said the list was not official and could have originated from anywhere.

Status: Resolved

After reviewing evidence presented by both parties, the committee concluded that the evidence **NewZimbabwe.com** provided did not substantiate their version of the story. As a result, the committee ruled that **NewZimbabwe.com** should retract the article. In adhering to the MCC ruling, NewZimbabwe.Com removed the retracted the article on 4 December 2024.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

Parties: Ms Emma Zihonye vs Zimbabwe Daily

Date of Complaint: July 2024

Code of conduct breached: Copyright infringement

Nature of Complaint

Ms Emma Zihonye lodged a complaint on 24 July 2024 regarding copyright infringement and defamation. She expressed concern that **Zimbabwe Daily** used her photograph of a child in prison for a campaign poster without proper attribution. She said she tried contacting **Zimbabwe Daily**, to no avail. Instead, the media house took a copy of her email communication written to the editorial team where she requested **Zimbabwe Daily** to remove her picture from their sites, and they posted her message on their official X handle, labelling her as part of "Varakashi" a Zanu PF affiliated group. She stated that the statements by **Zimbabwe Daily** were defamatory and damaging to her professional standing. She stated that she is not affiliated with ZANU-PF or any other political party. **Zimbabwe Daily** later removed the tweets from their X handle. However, Ms Zihonye further complained that

deleting the tweets from their X account is insufficient; she requested **Zimbabwe Daily** to issue a retraction and publicly apologise to her.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

A meeting to redress the complaint was held on August 20, 2024, during which the complainant was informed that the Committee could not locate the media house in question, as they are not registered with any of the known media professional bodies. The committee had drawn a blank in identifying or establishing the identity of the publisher. As part of the resolution process, the VMCZ offered to issue a press statement highlighting issues of copyright infringement and sought the complainant's permission to use her name and mention the complaint she raised as part of raising awareness to copyright infringement issues.

Status: Resolved

Highlighting issues raised above, VMCZ issued a press statement on 23 August 2024²¹.

CASE NUMBER TWENTY-NINE

Parties: Zimbabwe Association of Female Photographers vs Zimbabwe Daily

Date of Complaint: July 2024

Code of conduct breached: Copyright infringement

Nature of Complaint

Association of Female Photographers Director Angela Jimu on 25 July 2024 lodged a complaint against **Zimbabwe Daily** regarding copyright infringements and defamation against their member Emma Zihonye.

ZAFP requested VMCZ to intervene in the matter and to urge **Zimbabwe Daily** to immediately stop use of Ms Emma Zihonye's copyrighted images, and for **Zimbabwe Daily** to issue a public retraction of the defamatory statements made against Ms Zihonye, and provide appropriate compensation for the copyright infringements.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

A meeting to resolve the complaint was held on 20 August 2024 in the complainant's absence as she was out of the country. The committee noted that the complaint was the same as the one lodged by Ms Zihonye and recommended that the verdict in Ms Zihonye's case be applied to the complaint raised by ZAFP. Consequently, it was resolved that VMCZ would issue a statement referencing this complaint and mentioning Ms Zihonye by name, highlighting the relevant provisions of the Code of Conduct regarding the use of others' people's work.

Status: Resolved: VMCZ issued a press statement on 23 August 2024²².

²¹ <https://vmcz.co.zw/press-statement-voluntary-media-council-of-zimbabwes-vmcz-response-to-complaints-against-unregistered-and-secrective-online-media-houses/>

²² <https://vmcz.co.zw/press-statement-voluntary-media-council-of-zimbabwes-vmcz-response-to-complaints-against-unregistered-and-secrective-online-media-houses/>

CASE NUMBER THIRTY

Parties: Anonymous vs The Herald

Date of Complaint: August 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

A complaint was lodged by a complainant who indicated to remain anonymous on 15 August 2024 against **The Herald** regarding an article published on 14 August 2024 headlined: “Hwange woman airlifted to Bulawayo Hospital after being trampled by elephant²³.”

The complainant stated that the story was inaccurate, as the woman mentioned in the article who was trampled by an elephant was not airlifted but was transported to Mpilo Hospital by road in an ambulance. The complainant requested **The Herald** to correct the misleading story or have the story removed as it was incorrect.

Status: Resolved

The Herald after being engaged by the MCC removed the article from its website.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-ONE

Parties: Anonymous vs The Chronicle

Date of Complaint: August 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

A complaint was lodged by a complainant who indicated to remain anonymous on 15 August 2024 against **The Chronicle** regarding an article published on 14 August 2024 headlined: “Hwange woman airlifted to Bulawayo Hospital after being trampled by elephant²⁴.”

The complainant stated that the story was inaccurate, as the woman mentioned in the article who was trampled by an elephant was not airlifted but was transported to Mpilo Hospital by road in an ambulance. The complainant requested **The Chronicle** to correct the misleading story or have the story removed as it was incorrect.

Status: Resolved

The Chronicle after being engaged by the MCC removed the article from their website.

²³ <https://www.herald.co.zw/hwange-woman-airlifted-to-bulawayo-hospital-after-being-trampled-by-elephant/>

²⁴ <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/hwange-woman-airlifted-to-bulawayo-hospital-after-being-trampled-by-elephant/>

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-TWO

Parties: Mr Clive Chisenye vs Express Mail Zimbabwe

Date of Complaint: August 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Clive Chisenye lodged a complaint on 30 August 2024 against **Express Mail Zimbabwe** over a story published on 12 August 2024 headlined: "Steelmate director Chisenye swims into wetlands storm." Mr Chisenye expressed concern that the article was false and misleading. Mr Chisenye said that he was not developing cluster houses on wetlands in total disregard of Harare City Council's bylaws and or without the necessary permits from the City of Harare. Further, he argued that he did not illegally and corruptly obtain the EIA Certificate in connivance with alleged EMA Agents. He said he had documentation to show that all he did was above board.

Mr Chisenye requested **Express Mail Zimbabwe** to issue a retraction and unconditionally apologise with due prominence.

Status: Resolved

Express Mail Zimbabwe after being engaged by the MCC published a retraction on 16 October 2024²⁵.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-THREE

Parties: Canterbury Mining vs NewsDay

Date of Complaint: September 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Canterbury Mining lodged a complaint against **NewsDay** on 16 September 2024 over an article that was published on 9 September 2024 headlined: "Firm seeks Mohadi's help in dispute over gold claims"²⁶.

Canterbury Mining expressed concern that the claims, which were based on a letter addressed to Vice President Mohadi, were false and defamatory to the company. Furthermore, they argued that they were not given the opportunity to respond by **NewsDay**. The company also said the article damaged its public reputation and could undermine investor confidence in them.

Procedure: **NewsDay** was notified of the complaint and **NewsDay** advised that Canterbury Mining had previously engaged **their** reporter Ms Sharon Buwerimwe and editor, Mr Ndamu

²⁵ <https://expressmailzim.com/matter-of-fact-correct-position-on-steelmate-director-chisenyes-cluster-houses-construction-allegations-t/>

²⁶ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200032077/firm-seeks-mohadis-help-in-dispute-over-gold-claims>

Sandu separately, who advised them that the AMH ombudsman was fact checking the article against the raised complaint. However, during the engagement with VMCZ **NewsDay** advised that they will write a follow-up story and publish the story by 23 September 2024.

Status: Finalised

Before the follow-up story could be published on 23 September 2024, Canterbury Mining filed court summons against **NewsDay** on 19 September 2024. Consequently, the matter was subsequently removed from the complaints records, as VMCZ does not handle cases that are before the courts.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR

Parties: Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition vs The Patriot

Date of Complaint: September 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition lodged a complaint on 13 September 2024 against **The Patriot** Newspaper over two articles published on 22 August 2024 and 13 September 2024. Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition expressed concern that the first story published on 22 August 2024 headlined: "*CiZC caught with hands in the cookie jar*" made allegations that the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition embezzled funds intended for financing protests. CiZC also noted that the story claimed that Dr Blessing Vava, The Executive Director had been implicated in misappropriation of funds. CiZC stated that the claims had a significant impact on Dr Vava's reputation and portrayed him as a fraudster. CiZC added that the allegations in the article were false as Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition never received any funding for the purported claims and further the publication did not attempt to give CiZC a right of reply.

The second article published on 13 September 2024 headlined: "*CiZC in the cold...as US\$200k vanishes*," claimed that the Coalition was removed from a USAID funded Zimbabwe Constitutional Movement (ZICOMO) project for "gross financial mismanagement and embezzlement... and that a "USAID audit revealed that regional director Blessing Vava and chairperson Peter Mutasa failed to account for US\$200 000." CiZC expressed concern that the story further claimed that CiZC embezzled funds earmarked for protests ahead of the SADC summit of Heads of State and Government in August this year. CiZC denied receiving US\$200 000 from any donor to support the protests. CiZC further expressed concern that their dismissal from ZICOMO was not related to any financial wrongdoing, as claimed by **The Patriot**.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition requested **The Patriot** to retract both articles and issue a prominent apology.

Procedure: VMCZ notified *The Patriot* news editor, Mr Evans Mushawevato, of the complaint via email and WhatsApp but received no response. Calls were made on their listed numbers with no response. *The Patriot* finally responded on 21 October 2024 stating that the publication stands by its story and would consult its directors before advising on the next steps. Having received no communication from *The Patriot* by 30 October 2024, the MCC invited them to a meeting to resolve the complaint. *The Patriot* declined the invitation, reiterating that the publication stood by its story. *The Patriot* also refused to provide evidence supporting their claims, citing the need to protect their sources, whom he indicated were linked to CiZC. VMCZ then reached out to *The Patriot* editor, Mr Mutsekwa, who promised to come back to VMCZ on 31 October 2024, to discuss the matter further but he did not. Further follow ups on the matter did not yield any positive results.

Status: Finalised

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) filed legal summons against *The Patriot* on 31 October 2024. Consequently, the matter was closed, as VMCZ does not handle cases that are before the courts.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-FIVE

Parties: Honourable Thomas Muwoderi vs The Herald

Date of Complaint: October 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Tafadzwa Mashumba, secretary for Ruwa Parliamentary Constituency, lodged a complaint on behalf of Ruwa Member of Parliament Hon. Thomas Muwoderi on 17 October 2024 over a story²⁷ published by *The Herald* on 28 October 2023.

Mr Mashumba expressed concern that the article was damaging and without factual basis as it presented serious allegations against Hon Thomas Muwoderi, implying that he offered bribes to Mr Sengezo Tshabangu, to avoid being recalled from Parliament. Mr Mashumba added that the articles violated several key journalistic standards, including accuracy and fairness and right of reply.

Mr Mashumba requested *The Herald* to issue a public retraction and corrections.

Procedure: Full Adjudication of the Matter

An adjudication meeting to address the complaint was held on 4 November 2024. During the meeting, *The Herald* acknowledged that bribery allegations were unfounded, as the publication could not provide evidence to support the claims. As a result, *The Herald* apologized to Hon. Muwoderi for that part of the article. It was subsequently agreed that *The Herald* would retract the article in question.

Status: Resolved

²⁷ <https://www.herald.co.zw/ccc-mps-bribe-tshabangu-to-evade-recalls-2/>

The Herald published a retraction²⁸ on 8 November 2024.



CASE NUMBER THIRTY-SIX

Parties: Honourable Thomas Muwodzeri vs iHarare.Com

Date of Complaint: October 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Tafadzwa Mashumba, secretary for Ruwa Parliamentary Constituency, lodged a complaint on behalf of Ruwa Member of Parliament Hon. Thomas Muwodzeri on 17 October 2024 over a story²⁹ published by *iHarare.Com* on 28 October 2023.

Mr Mashumba expressed concern that the article was deeply damaging and without factual basis as it presented serious allegations against Hon Thomas Muwodzeri, implying that he offered bribes to Sengezo Tshabangu to avoid being recalled from Parliament. Mr Mashumba added that the articles violated several key journalistic standards, including accuracy and fairness and right of reply.

Mr Mashumba requested *iHarare.Com* to issue a public retraction and corrections.

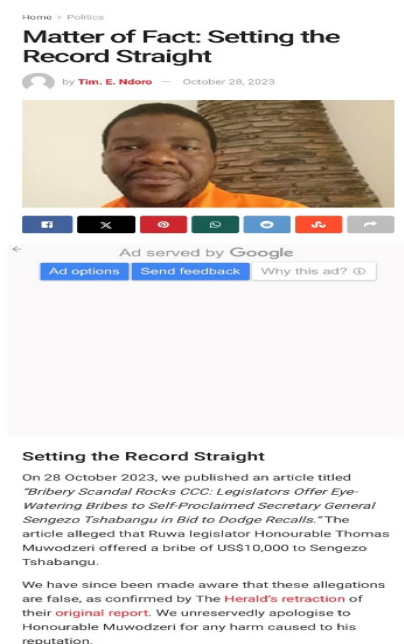
²⁸ <https://www.herald.co.zw/matter-of-fact-62/>

²⁹ <https://iharare.com/ccc-legislators-bribe-sengezo-tshabangu-to-avoid-recalls/>

Procedure: *iHarare.Com* was notified of the complaint and stated that the article in question was based on an earlier report published by *The Herald*. They indicated that they would retract the story if *The Herald* retracted it, since they took the story from *The Herald*.

Status: Resolved

The Herald issued a retraction, and *iHarare.Com* was informed about it. Subsequently, iHarare.com published their own retraction³⁰ on November 20, 2024.



CASE NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN

Parties: Honourable Thomas Muwoderi vs Bulawayo24

Date of Complaint: October 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Tafadzwa Mashumba, secretary for Ruwa Parliamentary Constituency, lodged a complaint on behalf of Ruwa Member of Parliament Hon. Thomas Muwoderi on 17 October 2024 over a story³¹ published by *Bulawayo24* on 27 October 2023.

Mr Mashumba expressed concern that the article was deeply damaging and without factual basis as it presents serious allegations against Hon Thomas Muwoderi, implying that he offered bribes to Sengezo Tshabangu to avoid being recalled from Parliament. Mr Mashumba added that the articles violated several key journalistic standards, including accuracy and fairness and right of reply.

Mr Mashumba requested *Bulawayo24* to issue a public retraction and corrections.

³⁰ <https://iharare.com/matter-of-fact-setting-the-record-straight/>

³¹ <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-236857.html>

Status: Struck off the register

Bulawayo24 is neither a member of VMCZ nor registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. Efforts to identify the owner or reporters behind the online publication, including seeking assistance from Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact, were unsuccessful. The complainant was notified of the same.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT

Parties: Honourable Thomas Muwodzeri vs My Zimbabwe

Date of Complaint: October 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Mr Tafadzwa Mashumba, secretary for Ruwa Parliamentary Constituency, lodged a complaint on behalf of Ruwa Member of Parliament Hon. Thomas Muwodzeri on 17 October 2024 over a story³² published by **My Zimbabwe** on 27 October 2023.

Mr Mashumba expressed concern that the article was deeply damaging and without factual basis as it presents serious allegations against Hon Thomas Muwodzeri, implying that he offered bribes to Sengezo Tshabangu to avoid being recalled from Parliament. Mr Mashumba added that the articles violated several key journalistic standards, including accuracy and fairness and right of reply.

Mr Mashumba requested **My Zimbabwe** to issue a public retraction and corrections.

Status: Struck off the register

My Zimbabwe is neither a member of VMCZ nor registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission. Efforts to identify the owner or reporters behind the online publication, including seeking assistance from Zimbabwe Online Content Creators and ZimFact, were unsuccessful.

CASE NUMBER THIRTY-NINE

Parties: Ms Vimbai Dzingirai vs The Sunday Mail

Date of Complaint: December 2024

Code of conduct breached: Accuracy and fairness

Nature of Complaint

Ms Vimbai Dzingirai lodged a complaint against **The Sunday Mail** regarding an article³³ published on 2 December 2024. She stated that prior to the event, she had informed the organisation honouring young farmers that, for personal reasons, she did not want her name included in any published articles. However, according to Ms Dzingirai, the event organizers provided **The Sunday Mail** with a list of farmers who were honoured, which included her name. Consequently, the article was published with her name mentioned.

³² <https://www.myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/164550-desperate-ccc-mps-offer-bribes-to-sengezo-tshabangu-to-evade-being-recalled-from-parliament.html>

³³ <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/new-young-farmers-honoured>

Ms Dzingirai requested ***The Sunday Mail*** to edit the article and remove her name from the list of farmers honoured.

Status: Resolved

Following discussions with the MCC, ***The Sunday Mail*** edited the article and removed the complainant's name from the story.

The Media Complaints and Resolution Process

Who can complain?

Any member of the public or organisation that has been affected by a publication/broadcast can lodge a complaint. Representatives of affected individuals or organisations can also lodge a complaint provided they have permission to do so.

Lodging of complaints by legal practitioner

As the procedure is designed to be a speedy, inexpensive and informal means of redress for violations of the Code, the MCC will not accept the direct involvement of a legal practitioner in the complaints procedure and a legal practitioner will not be entitled to appear before the Complaints MCC to represent his or her client.

Where a complaint has been lodged by a legal practitioner acting on behalf of a client, the Executive Director will request that the legal practitioner ensures that the correspondence is passed on to the complainant and that the latter be responsible for dealing with the matter.

The only exception will be where the legal practitioner is representing the interests of a child who is alleging breaches of the code. Procedure on receipt of complaint

Complaints Procedures

Unhappy with a news story

Is the story unfair, untrue, or do you feel it violates your rights or that there was violation of the Media Practitioners Code of Conduct?



Lodge a complaint

- Complete the Complaint Form
- Submit the complaint form via email (mediacomplaints@gmail.com or WhatsApp (0772125658) or via Website www.vmcz.co.zw or drop a physical copy at No. 14 Dan Judson Road, Milton Park, Harare
- Enclose a cutting or a clear photocopy or a recording (where available) of the material which is alleged to have breached the Code
- Lodge the complaint within (30) days after the initial publication or broadcast



Adjudication/ Mediation

- MCC reviews the complaint & requests for more information if needed
- MCC sends a copy of the complaint to the media practitioner or media institution who should submit their response to the MCC within fourteen (14) days
- Where a response is not received from the media practitioner, media institution, media owner or publisher concerned, the MCC will adjudicate in favor of the complainant.
- The MCC convene at such time and venue to be decided upon by the Chairperson to consider the complaint.
- The complaint will be made public by the MCC within seven (7) days of the complaint being referred to it by the Chairperson
- Where correspondence is not responded to within the stipulated time limits, the MCC will normally treat the complaint or defence as abandoned, depending on the party in default.



Resolution/ Finalisation

- After a full adjudication & where there was a breach of the Code, the MCC can order the media practitioner/house to offer the following remedies to the complainant: Right of Reply, Audience with the Editor, Retraction, Apology
- The MCC cannot impose a fine & where the complainant insists on such they are requested to do a private settlement or take it up with the court of law
- A party aggrieved by the decision of the MCC may, within thirty days after decision of the MCC appeal to the VMCZ Chairperson who can set up a different committee to deal with the matter. If still unhappy, the aggrieved party can appeal with the applicable Court of law.
- A complaint is dismissed or stricken off at the request of the complainant or when it's not valid, or when its filed 2years after publication, or when there are financial repacations involved

National Media Complaints Committee Members



Retired Justice George Smith (Chairperson) holds BA and LIB degrees from the University of Cape Town. He was appointed Attorney General of Southern Rhodesia in 1964. In 1974, he was appointed director of Legal Drafting and in 1977 he became Solicitor general. In 1979, he became the secretary to the Prime Minister (Muzorewa) and Cabinet of Zimbabwe/ Rhodesia. In 1980, he became the secretary to the Prime Minister (former President Mugabe) and Cabinet of Zimbabwe. He also worked as a judge in the High Court of Zimbabwe.



Cris Chinaka (Vice Chairperson) has over two decades of work at Reuters International News Service where he was the agency's chief correspondent in Zimbabwe since 1995. He has over 30 years' experience in journalism and is one of Reuters' most experienced reporters in Africa. Cris is involved in journalism mentoring projects in Zimbabwe and the region. He has been a board member of the VMCZ since its formation in 2007 and has served on its training committee since.



Precious Chakasikwa- Legal Practitioner and partner at Kantor and Immerman. She holds a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Zimbabwe. Ms Chakasikwa Chairs the Population Services International Zimbabwe Board and is Vice Chair of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. She is a member of the Women's University in Africa Steering Committee, Board member at the National Aids Council and a trustee at the Law Society of Zimbabwe Compensation Fund.



Lenox Lizwi Mhlanga- a media and communications consultant with over 22 years of experience. He is a former television and radio broadcaster and a columnist and thought leader. He is an associate lecturer at the Bindura University of Science and Technology and taught Journalism and Media Studies at the National University of Science and Technology. He sits on the VMCZ Board and is a member of the Media Complaints Committee.

Provincial Adjudicators Committees and Contact Details

Bindura

E. Pasipamire:	0772 724 142
Rev A. Ndogo:	0772 218 191
L. Kuwararika:	0779640392

Bulawayo

A. Phiri:	0775 945 611
S. Nsimbi:	0772 144 163
M. Mpofu:	0772 458 863

Chinhoyi

J. Mafukidze:	0772 396 071
C. Mataruse:	0718 292 109
A. Chipanera:	0786 659 515

Gwanda

S. Masilela:	0773 786 469
M. Ncube:	0779 037 829
L. Mpofu	0772 857 781

Gweru

Z.E. Mugari:	0772 385 317
E. Mutsvedu:	0775 400 419
R. Chidawanyika:	0772 563 923

Harare

Retired Justice L.G. Smith:	(04) 790 103
P. Chakasikwa:	0712 420 332
C. Chinaka:	0712 600 488
L. Mhlanga	0772 400 656

Hwange

B. Dube:	0772 145 218
J. Change:	0782 363 519
J. Sibanda	

Kwekwe

C. Mafuruse:	0772 496 564
H. Masaninga:	0774 380 271
P. Chitsa:	0775 419 919

Marondera

T. Mafukidze:	0772 396 071
T. Chengeta:	0773 809 229
E. Vhikitara:	0779 888 101

Masvingo

Rev. S. Chimbuya:	0778 156 111
P. Shumba:	0772 742 200
E. Hove:	0773464940

Mutare

D. Tandiri:	0773 567 971
E. Ziyera:	0772 486 483
P. Madzikanganwa:	0773 526 650



GOOD JOURNALISM | BETTER SOCIETIES



VOLUNTARY MEDIA COUNCIL OF ZIMBABWE

Telephone: +263778096 WhatsApp: +263 772 125 658

Email: mediacomplaints@gmail.com , programmes@vmcz.co.zw

Website: www.vmcz.co.zw Facebook: VMCZ Zimbabwe

Twitter: @voluntarymedia LinkedIn: VMCZ VMCZ

Instagram: vmcz_zimbabwe YouTube: Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe