

Journalist jailed for 18 months for contempt of court

Zambia's Supreme Court yesterday sentenced Derrick Sinjela, editor-in-chief of the privately owned Rainbow Newspaper, to 18 months in prison for contempt of court.



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Sinjela was [convicted](#) in September in relation to articles that accused the Supreme Court of corruption and questioned its handling of a case between two private companies, said Hyde Haguta, vice-chairperson of the Zambian chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, who attended the sentencing, and Richard Mulonga, chief executive of the online rights group Bloggers of Zambia.

"The decision by the Supreme Court is disproportional and sends a very grave message that journalists, and Zambians in general, cannot criticize the judiciary without risking their liberty," said CPJ Africa program coordinator, Angela Quintal, in New York. "A critical press is crucial for accountability and transparency within the judiciary."

Sinjela, who had pleaded guilty and asked for leniency, confirmed to the court yesterday that he did not have a lawyer, Haguta said.

At least two other people have been charged after criticizing the judiciary's handling of the same case, which involved Stanbic Bank and Savenda Management Services, and one of those was [sentenced to six years in prison](#) in November. Sinjela is currently detained in a prison in Lusaka, according to Mulonga.

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