

**MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR ELECTION REPORTING
IN ZANZIBAR 2010**

Preamble

We, **media** practitioners and other stakeholders in Zanzibar;

Recognizing the significance of the forthcoming General Election;

Guided by the desire to ensure the success of this democratic process, and

Determined to ensure that voters make an informed choices, hereby agree on and adopt this Media Code of Conduct for covering the Fourth General Elections in Zanzibar as follows:

Article (1) Objectivity

Journalists should provide fair, balanced and impartial reporting by giving equitable space and airtime to all sides of an issue.

Journalists should provide seek to the right to privacy and to give any aggrieved party the right to reply.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, all journalists who are contesting political positions must adhere to the journalism practice.

Article (2) Truth

Journalists covering elections must seek to the truth

Article (3) Correction

Journalists should do the utmost to correct any published or aired information that is found to be inaccurate.

Article (4) Response to the needs of voters

Journalists must make effort to provide voters with relevant information and education in a form easily understood at all levels with the aim of helping them make informed choices.

Article (5) Encourage Free Speech

The media should support voters to express their opinion and views fairly without distortion.

Article (6) Confidentiality of Sources

Journalists should observe professional ethics on revealing protection of the source of information secrecy regarding the source of confidential information.

Article (7) Hate Speech and Incitement

Journalists should refrain from reporting hate speech and incitement and if necessary report reasonably.

Article (8) Promote Democratic Values

The media should promote democratic values by fostering public debates and dialogue which champions the rule of law, accountability and good governance.

Article (9) Promote Culture of Tolerance

In the given situation of reconciliation and the formation of the Government of National Unity in Zanzibar, journalists have the obligation of reporting in educating the people of that importance; and direct them towards tolerance among each other to safeguard the existing peace and tranquillity.

Article (10) Commitment by Media Owners

Media owners should commit themselves to contribute toward the achievement of free and fair elections by developing the capacity of their respective media institutions and refraining from interfering in editorial independence.

Article (11) State Media Obligation

1. Public or State Media have a greater and a more formal obligation to provide factual and accurate information to the public and give equitable space and airtime to all political parties, candidates and platforms.
2. State Media should not use its powers as state agents to intimidate and censor journalists, rather promote understanding, and assume the role of mediator and showcase of responsible journalism.

Article (12) Private Media Obligation

Private media have an obligation to report elections in an impartial and balanced coverage of elections and to give equitable access to all candidates and political parties.

Article (13) Religious Media Obligation

Faith-based media houses should be clear of religious fanatics and ensure fair and balanced coverage of the elections by giving aspirants and political parties equitable opportunities irrespective of their beliefs or non-beliefs.

Article (14) Investigate issues

Media have the responsibility to investigate and expose issues and practices pertaining to elections in order to facilitate fair play and level the socio-political playing ground.

Article (15) Advertorials

Media houses should identify and charge equitable rates for advertorials from all political parties. The media should, however, desist from publishing advertorials that seek to create hatred and endanger national peace and security.

Article 16) Media and the Election Acts

Media, like all other stakeholders in the election process, must **strictly** adhere to the Election Acts.

Article (17) Media obligation to Electoral Authorities

Media houses should publish accurate election information and cover the election process in an objective and fair manner.

Article (18) Alternative Stakeholders Views and multiple sources

Journalists should seek and publish alternative views from all stakeholders in the election process.

Article (19) Media and Civil Society

The media should collaborate with civil society in providing civic and voter education, monitoring as well as advocacy for unity, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Article (20) Professional offences

Journalist shall regard the following as professional misconduct:

- plagiarism
- malicious misrepresentation
- calumny, slander, libel or unfounded accusations
- Acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

Article (21) Opinion Polls

- i. Media houses should take care in reporting the findings of opinion polls. Any report should wherever possible include the following information:
 - a. who commissioned and carried out the poll and when
 - b. how many people were interviewed
 - c. where and how they were interviewed
 - d. the margin of error

- ii. In case of a media itself conducting such polls, it should adhere to professional rules and methods governing the exercise.

Article (22) Media and Marginalised Groups

- i. Journalists should refrain from coverage that is biased and that which reinforces prejudices against women and marginalized groups and people with disability

 - ii. Journalists should encourage women contestants by raising public awareness of the importance of women's participation in public life and by rebuking all moves aimed at suppressing them.

 - iii. By the same token, media should encourage and promote the candidature of other marginalized groups such as the disabled, irrespective of their affiliated parties.
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**APPEAL TO STATE ACTORS AND POLITICAL PARTIES
AND RELATED
INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING
GENERAL ELECTION**

For the media to be able to play their role effectively in ensuring free and fair election, State actors, public, political parties and other institutions should undertake to respect the rights of journalists in election reporting and also ensure their physical safety by:

Article (1) Journalists Safety

Refraining from harassing journalists verbally and/or physically, or inciting crowds, groups or individuals to do so;

Article (2) Access to Sources

Facilitating access to news sources;

Article (3) Free Movement

Allowing journalists to operate freely in any part of the country without fear of intimidation; except in the restricted areas.

Article (4) Gifts

Not manipulating journalists covering elections by offering gifts, favours or special treatment;

Article (5) Complaints Channel

Using existing mechanisms **such as the Media Council of Tanzania** Zanzibar Broadcasting Commission and Zanzibar Election Commission to channel complaints about items broadcast or published;

Article (6) Timely Information

Facilitating media's coverage of party conferences and campaign events by informing them sufficiently in advance of dates, times and venues without discrimination

Article (7) Electoral Authorities

The electoral authorities, political parties and other organization should provide the media with relevant, accurate and timely information about the election process.