

Kenyans unhappy with media

ALLOW me to comment briefly on the report titled 'Kenyan reporter arrested' which appeared in The Namibian issue of April 13.

Incidents of tribal clashes in Kenya were first reported in 1991. Since then, the Government has mobilised all its resources to address the problem. As a result, peace has been restored in nearly all areas which were affected.

The clashes which threatened to erase the traditional Kenyan love for one another had as at March 31 1994 killed 383 people and not 1 500 as reported in your paper. An estimated 250 000 people had been displaced from their homes. Despite the sensitivity of the situation some people have been busy spreading the message of hatred and destruction in the affected areas. For example there have been malicious press reports that the government initiates, encourages, abets or condones fighting among the affected communities. On the contrary the government has been active in preventing and stamping out lawlessness and insecurity in the affected areas. In one place called Burnt Forest, where the clashes erupted recently, the Government has not only sealed off the area but has also stepped up security to protect lives

and property. The Government has also made deliberate efforts to resettle the clash victims in all the affected areas.

Kenya has seen horrific tragedies in neighbouring nations and cannot wait to embrace a Somalia-type of situation in which all become victims with no one able to help anyone. In his meet-the-people tours, H E President Daniel T Arap Moi has painstakingly preached the need for love, peace and unity in order to prevent the country from sliding into chaos.

A responsible press should play an invaluable role in the maintenance of a nation's stability. While the Kenyan press has on the whole not been lacking in this respect, there are sections of the print media who have often

forgotten that the constitutional right of freedom of the press has its obligations. The journalists involved, like all other citizens who break the law, are required to answer for their deeds before the competent courts of the land. That is the situation in which Mutegi Njau of the Daily Nation and a few others landed themselves.

It is a matter of utter misrepresentation, distortion and sabotage for anybody to accuse the government of harbouring intentions to persecute one section of the affected communities allegedly because such section supports the opposition. President Moi himself, while assuring the nation of the Government's firm commitment to the multi-party political system, has repeatedly stated that no

one will be penalised for not supporting the ruling party.

Kenya, like Namibia, remains an island of peace in a region of turmoil. Therefore, only people with questionable knowledge of the country's political and social structure can describe the events which took place in 1991/2 as in the ensuing period as "shaky democratisation".

I believe those who compiled the report under review will find it difficult to substantiate their conclusion.

J SEFU
KENYAN HIGH
COMMISSIONER

Note: To all intents and purposes, despite a lip service to multi-party democracy since December 1992 "laws and

administrative restrictions on freedom of expression used by the Moi Government act as a barrier between the potential of democracy and the reality within Kenya". This in the words of the Robert Kennedy Memorial Centre for Human Rights in its Kenya 1993 publication 'Failing the Democratic Challenge'. The government still undoubtedly fears political expression and this is borne out by the frequent arrests of opposition politicians and journalists. In the course of 1993 alone there were a number of incidents which certainly do not point to tolerance of criticism, or free expression for that matter: in March last year, the British Financial Times was seized as well as copies of The Independent, because of critical editorials. In the same month Nation and The Standard reporters went underground following police searches. Copies of The Watchman and Finance, among others, were also seized. Copies of The People were impounded. Church publications, such as Jitegemae, were impounded and journalists charged with sedition and subversion. The list goes on and on. In view of the above, and for other reasons, the expression "shaky democratisation" is no exaggeration. - Editor.

Letters to the Editor

Iran on airstrikes

I HAVE the honour to refer to the article which appeared in The Namibian of April 13 1994, page 13, 'Iran praises airstrikes'.

I further wish to present you with the correct version of the

news release. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to send a peacekeeping force to Bosnia-Herzegovina, but the international organisations never accepted the Iranian offer until now. Therefore I do not

think that the Nato airstrikes only would stop the crimes committed by the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina".
SM EMAMI
FIRST SECRETARY
EMBASSY OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN