

Kigali: A call for increased professionalism and adherence to ethical guidelines has been issued to Rwandan journalists, particularly when reporting on matters related to the justice system.

The call comes following a collaborative discussion held on Wednesday between the Legal Aid Forum (LAF), the Ministry of Justice, and the Rwandan Media Commission (RMC). The discussion aimed to address concerns regarding potential unprofessional practices by journalists covering justice-related news.

Rtd Col. Jeannot Ruhunga, the General Secretary of the Rwandan Investigations Bureau (RIB), emphasized the importance of journalists maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias in their reporting. He stressed that while journalists have the right to publish information, they must adhere to legal limitations and protect confidential details, such as witness identities or sensitive case information, to avoid jeopardizing individuals or breaching professional ethics.

Moïse Nkundabarashi, the head of the Rwandan Bar Association, cautioned journalists against rushing to publish information during ongoing trials. He highlighted the potential legal ramifications of publishing unsubstantiated claims or information that could prejudice ongoing investigations or violate confidentiality agreements. He emphasized the importance of allowing the legal process to unfold before drawing conclusions and urged journalists to conduct thorough investigations while respecting ethical guidelines.

Mugisha Emmanuel, the Executive Secretary of the RMC, underscored the importance of journalists possessing a strong understanding of relevant laws and regulations. He emphasized the RMC's commitment to collaborating with the justice system to equip journalists with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of reporting on legal matters responsibly.

The discussion acknowledged past instances where journalists faced legal repercussions for unprofessional reporting practices. According to the RMC, over 300 cases involving journalists have been addressed since the organization's inception in 2013.

The collaborative effort between the LAF, the Ministry of Justice, and RMC highlights a commitment to fostering a responsible and ethical media landscape in Rwanda, particularly within the realm of justice reporting. By promoting adherence to professional standards and fostering a deeper understanding of legal frameworks,

journalists can ensure accurate, unbiased, and ethical reporting that serves the public interest.