Rwanda’s Supreme Court has called on journalists to respect professional ethics when reporting on judicial matters, warning that biased or speculative coverage can undermine the independence of the courts.

Chief Justice Domitilla Mukantaganzwa made the appeal on Tuesday during a consultative meeting with journalists and media stakeholders on improving ethical standards in court reporting. The meeting followed growing concern over unprofessional coverage of ongoing trials, especially on YouTube and social media platforms.

Mukantaganzwa said the judiciary recognizes the crucial role of the media in promoting transparency and public understanding of justice, but she urged journalists to act responsibly and within the law.

“Journalists should report without undermining judicial independence or putting the courts under pressure,” she said. “A journalist must never cross the line to pass judgment in their story or suggest how a verdict should go. Reporting should rely strictly on verified facts.”

She warned that when reporters express opinions on pending cases, they risk misleading the public and interfering with the right to a fair trial.

“The media should inform the public, not influence justice,” she added.

Legal expert and former journalist Jean Paul Ibambe, who now practices as a lawyer and represents media practitioners in court, advised journalists to learn the laws that govern both their profession and the justice system. “If you fail to respect courtroom procedures, you may one day find yourself being the subject of a court story,” Ibambe cautioned.

He urged journalists to understand legal terms and verify details before publishing, to avoid spreading misinformation or violating court rules.

Scovia Mutesi, Executive Secretary of the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), called for mutual respect between journalists and judicial institutions, urging courts to facilitate media access to information and hearings.

However, she also emphasized the need to regulate access to courtrooms to

prevent impersonation.

“Any journalist without an RMC-issued press card should not be allowed to cover court proceedings,” Mutesi said, noting that impostors have tarnished the profession’s credibility.

In response, the Supreme Court pledged to publish hearing schedules in advance to help journalists prepare and report more accurately. Officials said ongoing reforms to Rwanda’s media law will strengthen professionalism and address challenges caused by unqualified individuals violating journalistic ethics.

Mukantaganzwa said continued dialogue between the judiciary and the media is vital to ensure justice is both delivered and accurately reported. “We share the same goal of upholding justice and truth,” she said.