

The Government of Malawi controls all broadcast information through the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), but allows a relatively free range of independent print media. Despite donor and opposition pressure, legislation was not passed this year to make the MBC a more independent media voice.

Corruption at all levels of government has grown since the transition to democratic rule. Stories abound of government ministers and senior officials receiving preferential customs treatment or misusing government funds. There are also examples of growing low-level civil service corruption (i.e. acceptance of gratuities for services). While legislation has been passed establishing an Anti-Corruption Board, it is, as yet, non-operational, with only two employees named so far. The ACB is also handicapped by enabling legislation which requires one-week notice to be given to suspects before any investigation can ensue.

An independent Human Rights Commission which reports to Parliament has been established, but only two Commissioners have so far been named (the Ombudsman and the Law Commissioner). Further appointments await Presidential nomination. A National Compensation Tribunal is also in the process of being established. It would hear petitions and use discretionary funds to compensate victims of the former authoritarian Banda government who had been wrongfully imprisoned and/or had property seized.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canadian political and development interests in Malawi are concentrated in supporting a successful transition to democratic governance and poverty alleviation amongst the poorest elements of its society. Canadian assistance to Malawi covers the environment, social sector (education/health), governance (judicial education/auditor general) and food aid. Canada did not make any specific human rights interventions in Malawi over the past year.