

AJTL: Draft Media Law Should Protect Journalists

Dili Weekly, Wednesday, 30 November 2013

The Journalists Association of Timor-Leste recommends the Secretary of State for Social Communications and the team of five responsible for drafting the Media Law should add an article about giving penalties to those who hold back information from the media.

According to the President of the Journalists Association of Timor-Leste (AJTL) Tito Filipe in the draft law on Social Communications from articles one to 24 it does not specifically talk about how to give protection to the media, especially for journalists.

“We want people who try to limit journalists to be punished, for example in the Ministry of Health they’ve given a dispatch to forbid employees from speaking with the media, so that’s already against the freedom of the press and freedom of expression,” said the AJTL President Tito Filipe (09/05) in Kaikoli, Dili.

He recognised that the minister has the political authority to command public servants, but staff also need to express their vision and ideas without limits, that’s why this freedom is guaranteed in articles 40 and 41 of the constitution.

He also observed the draft law was not specific about giving protection but mostly about regulation, and a post-conflict democratic nation like Timor-Leste needs a specific law to give a big priority to freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

Meanwhile the Secretary of State for Social Communications Nelio Isaac said it was not a question about whether to add an article, but the problem was when they create new articles it causes confusion.

“When we start a new article we must have a fundamental reason, it must be relevant with the other articles, not just following what we think and then causing confusion for everything. I want to remind all friends that besides the Social Communication law, we also have the Penal Code already in force, that’s why we should understand that the Social Communications Law doesn’t move out from under the constitution itself,” he said.