

***Nairobi, Kenya, January 31 (Infosplusgabon) - Kenyan authorities shut down three privately-owned TV stations on Tuesday because they colluded with a criminal group to overthrow the Government, Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiangi said on Wednesday.***

The government through communication regulator, Communications Authority (CA), disabled the local TV stations a few hours before opposition coalition (NASA) leader Raila Odinga swore himself in as the People's President.

Odinga, a former Prime Minister, who boycotted the October 26 presidential election re-run, saying the exercise was not going to be free and fair, on Tuesday swore himself in at Nairobi's Uhuru Park, cheered on by thousands of opposition supporters.

Incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta won the re-run, which opposition flagbearer, Odinga, boycotted.

Kenyans who hoped to follow the live coverage of the event on the three stations --NTV, KTN and Citizen TV -- were disappointed when they were met by blunt screens after the government switched off the stations.

Many viewed the government's action as a scheme by the authorities to intimidate the opposition by switching off the stations.

The media houses will remain switched off as investigations continue and the criminal elements brought to book, said the cabinet secretary.

Matiangi accused the television stations of being part of a "well-choreographed attempt to subvert or overthrow the legally constituted Government of the Republic of Kenya."

He said the Government was well aware of the role of some elements in the media fraternity who participated in the furtherance of the illegal act.

Without mentioning the NRM, a pressure group by name, Matiangi said their "complicity would have led to thousands of deaths of innocent Kenyans."

There was no major incident during Odinga's self-swearing in. It was by and large a peaceful event, attended by opposition supporters.

The police, whom the public feared would cordon off the venue after Attorney General declared the act high treason punishable by death, kept off the ceremony.

But House Minority Leader and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) chairman, John Mbadi, dismissed the subversion claims, saying the NRM had no plans to overthrow the Government.

Mbadi, whose party is a member of the opposition coalition, NASA, accused the government of infringing on press freedom and subverting democracy.

He said the freedom of the press was clearly enshrined in Article 34 of the Constitution, as long as the media does not incite violence or engage in hate speech, it was free to hold or express an opinion.

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