

Speech: British High Commissioner comments on media shutdown and opposition 'swearing in' in Kenya

I have made clear, as have many international friends of Kenya for some time, that what we would like to see is a full, transparent, open dialogue between politicians and between others – business leaders, religious leaders, civil society – designed to heal some of the very deep divisions that were clearly exposed during the election campaign.

I do not believe that any parallel inauguration helps to create such a dialogue, I think that the UK has been very clear that our support is for the constitution and for the law, and that those acting outside those things should not be doing so, but should be acting in the spirit of promoting dialogue.

I will continue to call on both sides, and indeed on Kenyans of good will from all parts of the country, to find ways of talking to each other about how the institutions of the country can be strengthened and about how everybody can feel included in the future of the country. That is an exercise for Kenyans to lead, but I stand ready to support that as I know do my international friends.

On the question of the media, I would just say that one of the strongest things about this country, one of the reasons that so many investors are headquartered here, that so many people come here, that this country's capital is seen as the hub of the region and one of the hubs of the continent, is because of the open, democratic, free media; that sense that means people from country's like mine feel at home, that sense that people can have open debates in public.

I would urge the government, as I have done, to allow the media to operate freely, not simply because it's the right thing to do, but because it contributes very strongly to the positive image that Kenya has in the world.

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