



## PRESS RELEASE

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### AFRICA'S TOP FACT-CHECKING AWARDS TO BE OPEN TO STUDENTS IN 2017

JOURNALISM STUDENTS ACROSS THE CONTINENT WILL BE ABLE TO ENTER THE AFRICAN FACT-CHECKING AWARDS NEXT YEAR, ORGANISERS ANNOUNCED LATE THURSDAY, AS THEY NAMED REPORTERS FROM COTE D'IVOIRE AND CAMEROON AS WINNERS OF THE TOP FACT-CHECKING PRIZES THIS YEAR.

**Manféi Anderson Diédri**, of the website *Eburnietoday.com*, was named the winner of the top fact-checking award for francophone African media, for a report exposing as false claims made by the government of Cote d'Ivoire in a land dispute in the centre of the country. **Arison Tamfu**, of the *Cameroon Journal*, was named winner of the award for English-language media for a report revealing that claims by the country's President Paul Biya to have gifted laptops to "each student of a public or private university in Cameroon" were false.

The runners-up, named by Africa Check, the continent's leading independent fact-checking organization, in a ceremony in Nairobi on Thursday, were Swazi journalist Phathizwe Mongezi Zulu, for a report for South Africa's AmuBhungane and GroundUp websites on a plane acquired by King Mswati III, and Dayo Oketola, of Punch Newspaper in Nigeria, for a report into the claims of a publicly-funded communications satellite operator.

The two winners each pick up a first prize of \$2000, while the runners-up take home \$1,000 each. The awards, hosted again this year by the African Media Initiative (AMI), were sponsored by the AFP news agency and the philanthropic Shuttleworth Foundation.

Africa Check, the continent's first fact-checking organization, was set up in South Africa in 2012 by the AFP Foundation in partnership with the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Last year, it launched a French-language website in Senegal and it now operates in four countries, also including Nigeria and Kenya.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Africa Check's Executive Director Peter Cunliffe-Jones thanked the sponsors, and hosts, and the four-person jury headed by AMI CEO Eric Chinje, and said: "In a year when fact-checking has been in the news around the world, the standard of entries has been higher than ever; our winners showing why it is so important that journalists do not just report what public figures say, but question their claims and expose that are not true."

Cunliffe-Jones also announced that for 2017's edition of the awards, a new category has been created for the best fact-checking report published that year by a student journalist at college across the continent, with a top prize of \$500. "Events around the world this year have shown that fact-checking is becoming an essential skill for any mainstream journalist to acquire. And we hope that journalism schools around the continent will want to enter their students for these important awards," he said.

A total of 130 entries were received from journalists in 22 countries for the awards in 2016. Details of the 2017 awards, for working and student journalists, will be announced by Africa Check early in 2017.

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