



Media Reform Coordinating Group-Sierra Leone

PRESS RELEASE

MRCG WELCOMES THE REPEAL OF THE CRIMINAL LIBEL LAW

Freetown, 24th July 2020: The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) welcomes Parliament's unanimous approval to repeal the criminal and seditious libel laws in Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965. The House passed the Public Order (Amendment) Act 2020 which repealed the fifty-five year old anti-press freedom legislation. Parliament also passed into law a bill entitled the Independent Media Act 2020.

The MRCG commends His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio for fulfilling a manifesto promise; the Minister of Information and Communications Hon. Mohamed Rahman Swaray for successfully leading the process and piloting the bills; the Speaker and leaders of Parliament, Members of Parliament, the past leaderships and current Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Ahmed Sahid Nasralla and all stakeholders for a job well done.

"The MRCG sees the repeal of the criminal libel law as a major fulfilment of one of the reasons for which the Group was established. It is also a significant step the country has taken in joining other progressive democracies in the world that guarantee media freedom. We call on media practitioners to be always professional and ethical in the discharge of their duties," said Dr. Francis Sowa, Chairman of the MRCG.

The MRCG particularly appreciates UNDP, which over the years, provided massive financial and technical resources for consultations on the review of the IMC Act and repeal of the criminal libel law. It also appreciates the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America for providing funding for advocacies, workshops, meetings, consultations and public education on the repeal of the law in recent years. The Group also applauds the international community, DFID Sierra Leone, British High Commission and Irish Aid for supporting the media over the years.

The MRCG and its constituent organisations will continue to advocate for a free and responsible press.

The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) was established to strengthen democratic dialogue, consolidate peace and ensure development through professional, independent and sustainable media based on the right to freedom of expression and of speech. It comprises ten media organisations, policy-making bodies and academic institutions in the country.

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