



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- JANUARY 2022

The monthly 'Media Freedom Review' is a publication of the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) produced from the monitoring and reporting on freedom of expression and of the press, internet freedom, digital and online rights, and safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone.

In January 2022, the MRCG followed incidents and activities of the harassment and intimidation of a journalist; and followed up on matters between a journalist and the Sierra Leone Police and a journalist and a magistrate in Kenema; digital attacks and intimidations on Facebook against Abdul Fonti Kabia and an ethnic group.

Amadu Lamrana Bah, Head of Digital Media of the *Africa Young Voices (AYV)* and President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union was intimidated and humiliated by Airport officials allegedly acting on the orders of 'someone' at the Lungi International Airport on 10 January 2022 (https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10158799418837523&id=747117522). The intimidation was as a result of a Facebook post by the journalist on series of difficulties they had encountered at the airport on their flight to Cameroon for the Africa Cup of Nations. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) 12 January 2022 press release and MRCG 11 January 2022 press alert condemned the harassment and intimidation on the journalist and called for the safety and security of journalists at all times and demanded investigation into the matter.



On a follow up on the alleged physical assault and detention of Ransford Wright, a staff (camera operator) of *AYV Media Empire* by police on 13 December 2021, police said the matter was still under investigation. The police said they had arrested four of the officers involved in the incident and that the four others accused had denied their involvement in the said incident. Ransford told the MRCG that the police contacted him on 15 January 2022 that they had retrieved his phone that got missing during the incident and that they had arrested the police officers involved. He said the police promised to call him for a dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the matter on 17 January 2022, but since then he was yet to receive a call from them.



In a follow up of the complaint at the Human Rights Commission for Sierra Leone (HRCSL) made by journalist, Osman Hardy Jalloh, against Magistrate Joseph Toby of Magistrate Court Number 2 in Kenema on his arrest and detention, Deputy Director, HRCSL Regional Service East, Sylvester Kallon, said they were yet to conclude their investigation into the matter.

On 11 January 2022, an individual on social media falsely reported that the Communication Strategist at the Office of the First Lady, Abdul Fonti Kabia had died. Mr Kabia said that was not the first social media post about his purported death. He said he had faced numerous attacks on social media, but he would not allow such to distract him and that he saw no reason to report to the police because it was now a normal thing for him.

On a follow up on the matter of Tazmo Sliz, an entertainer in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone for allegedly insulting and attacking the Fullah Ethnic group in a Facebook live video in December 2021, the matter had been charged to court. Tazmo was charged with two counts: (i) cyber bullying and cyber stalking, contrary to Section 44(2) (a) & (b) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021 and (ii) misuse of device contrary to Section 38(1) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021.

The details of the cases and issues will be published in the MRCG Bi-Annual Press Freedom Report for December 2021 to May 2022.

The MRCG's freedom of expression and of the press, internet freedom, digital and online rights, and safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone initiative is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America. The MRCG seeks to strengthen democratic dialogue and accountability, consolidate peace and ensure development through professional, independent and sustainable media, based on the right to freedom of expression and of the press.

MRCG is a coordinating Secretariat comprising Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Independent Radio Network (IRN), Guild of Editors (GoE), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), Sport Writers Association of Sierra Leone (SWASAL), Mass Communication (Fourah Bay College), Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), Independent Media Commission (IMC) and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC).