



## MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- APRIL 2023

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 April 2023, MRCG followed up on the alleged assault on a journalist in Moyamba, the alleged verbal threat against a journalist by a police officer, suspension of the station manager of a radio in Koinadugu, the alleged physical assault and alleged ‘assassination attempt’ on a journalist; the matter of former Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) boss lawyer Ady Macauley, alleged physical assault on a journalist; alleged attack on a radio station in Kono, the matter between a journalist and a magistrate in Pujehun and other media engagements.



The MRCG followed up on the alleged attack and assault of the Station Manager of *Fountain of Peace Radio (FOP)* in Moyamba District, Alie Tokowa, on 28 March 2023 at the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) office in Moyamba by its supporters, on the instruction of the outgoing District Council Chairman Mr. Joseph Gbogba. In an interview the Chairman of Civil Societies in Moyamba, Gerald Foday, told MRCG

that they had filed a formal complaint of the matter to the Sierra Leone Police in Moyamba and that four suspects were arrested, but later released on bail. The Local Unit Commander (LUC) of Moyamba Police station, Assistant Superintendent Franklyn Bawoh, confirmed to MRCG that the police had received the complaint and had sent the matter to the State Counsel for legal advice. The next line of action will be taken after the advice, he said.

There is no new development on the matter between Maada Jessie Jengo of *Voice of Peace and Development Radio (VOPAD) FM 96.5* and officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). Station Manager for *VOPAD radio*, Joseph Lamin had told MRCG that since the officers apologized to the journalist and his family, they were yet to refund the medical bills of the journalist, pay for the items that got missing during the incident and do a public apology on the Radio, as promised.



There had been no progress relating to the verbal threat made by a police officer and the ‘assassination attempt’ on Gibril Gottor, a freelance journalist in Kambia. The Police also maintained that they had not yet got a witness or evidence to substantiate the complaint made by Gibril to aid their investigation of the matter.

There is no new development on the matter between journalist Abdulai Gbla of *Gbla TV Online* and Honorable Muniru Lansana. Mr. Gbla told MRCG that till date he had not received any update either from SLAJ or Parliament on the matter. SLAJ President Ahmed Sahid Nasralla said that SLAJ had contacted the

Clerk of Parliament on the matter, but he was also yet to get any update from him on the status of the investigation. The session of Parliament had officially ended.

On the matter between the Managing Editor of *Night Watch Newspaper*, Emmanuel Christian Thorli, and the staff of Njala University, Mr. Thorli told MRCG that since he reported the matter to the Police, he had neither received any information from the police nor the staff of Njala University on the matter. There is still no response from Njala University on the status of the matter

The matter of the former Anti-Corruption Commissioner, Lawyer Ady Macauley who was arrested and detained at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for expressing his legal opinion on the 1965 Public Order Act (POA) in relation to freedom of assembly in October, was still at the Directorate of Public Prosecution awaiting legal advice.

On the complaint made by management of *Citizen Radio 107.5 FM* in Kono to SLAJ and the Independent Media Commission (IMC) against Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina on 3 September 2022, on his alleged attack and disruption of the radio's live paid-for program, the IMC had ruled on the matter. The Commission noted that: 'the alleged arrest of the alleged fugitive did not take place at the premises of *Citizen Radio FM* and no physical attack was done on the radio'. The Board of IMC at its meeting held on Wednesday 26 April 2023 fully endorsed the recommendations of the complaint committee as follows; that the radio station should take the greatest care in handling sensitive issues that are likely to cause character assassination or breach of peace; make reasonable efforts to give the right to reply; moderators of radio programs must at all-time be neutral; and phone-in programs must be handled with utmost care and responsibility.

On the case of journalist Osman Hardy Jalloh at the Human Rights Commission for Sierra Leone (HRCSL) concerning a complaint against Magistrate Joseph Toby of Pujehun Magistrate Court (formerly of Magistrate Court Number 2 in Kenema), Al Mansaray, the owner of *TV-News24*, in March, had posted on his channel that he had filed a legal paper against the United State Government through the U.S. State Department for failing to take appropriate action when he alerted them about the abuse of power and unprofessional conduct of Magistrate Toby. However, there has been no new development on the said matter.

The matter of Alimamy N'Jai Sesay, who was charged with five counts of various offences in the Cyber Security and Crime Act No. 7 of 2021 for sharing Abdul Will Kamara, alias Adebayor's audios on social media had been committed to the High Court for trial, which is expected to commence in the May session.

In April 2023, MRCG with the renewed support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) trained over 70 journalists from the Eastern and Southern Regions on Promoting Professional Media Coverage and Conflict Sensitive Reporting in Kenema and Bo respectively. The training workshop specifically targeted editors and station managers from different media institutions in a bid to improve the capacity of editors and station managers on how to professionally do media coverage and conflict sensitive reporting of the 2023 general elections in Sierra Leone. [#MRCG concludes the training in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone on #Promoting Professional Media #Coverage and #Conflict Sensitive #Reporting of the... | By Media Reform Coordinating Group-Sierra Leone | Facebook.](#)

On 25 April 2023, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) together with Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED) with support from the BBC Media Action, launched and popularized the IMC's Print and Electronic Media Regulation 2022 at the Country Lodge Hotel in Freetown.

On 27 and 28 April 2023, MRCG and Africa Check with support from National Endowment for Democracy, conducted a two-day Media Literacy workshop for 15 selected journalists across the country to strengthen their capacity to fight election-based dis- and misinformation and to increase accurate information for digitally connected and unconnected audiences, before and after the June 2023 elections in Sierra Leone (<https://www.facebook.com/MRCGinSL/videos/1200435140627766/?app=fbl>).

The details of the cases and issues will be published in the MRCG Bi-Annual Press Freedom Report for December 2022 to May 2023. The MRCG would like to restate that while the country was making progress in press freedom rankings, the general climate for freedom of expression for everybody should be guaranteed.

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 the coordinating Secretariat for media reform, research and capacity building. It comprises 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).**