



# REPORT ON PRESS FREEDOM, INFORMATION, INTERNET AND DIGITAL RIGHTS IN SIERRA LEONE



**Press Freedom in Sierra Leone  
December 2021 to May 2022**

**Eighth Edition**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms & Abbreviations	Meaning
ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
ADP	Alliance Democratic Party
AIG	Assistant Inspector General
AKA	Also Known As
APC	All Peoples Congress
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police
AYV	Africa Young Voices
CAN	Citizens Advocacy Network
CBD	Central Business District
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CGSL	Chosen Generation Sierra Leone
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CoPP	Coalition of Progressive Political Parties
EDSA	Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority
FoI	Freedom of Information
GOE	Guild of Editors
HRCSL	Human Rights Commission for Sierra Leone
IFPIM	International Fund for Public Interest Media
IG	Inspector General
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IRN	Independent Radio Network
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MRCG	Media Reform Coordinating Group

MRPU	Monitoring, Research and Projects Unit
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASSIT	National Social Security and Insurance Trust
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NGC	National Grand Coalition
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
RAIC	Right to Access Information Commission
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLAJ	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
SLBC	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLBA	Sierra Leone Bar Association
SLRU	Sierra Leone Reporters Union
SLTU	Sierra Leone Teachers Union
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SWASAL	Sport Writers Association of Sierra Leone
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WIMSAL	Women in the Media Sierra Leone

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report, which addresses issues on ‘Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Right to Access Information, and Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Sierra Leone, is the eighth in a series produced by the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG). It is a component of a project titled, “**Enhancing Press Freedom and Media Reforms**”, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America. The Report which covers the period December 2021 to May 2022 is the outcome of the monitoring of the exercise and legal guarantees of freedom of expression and of the press, and internet freedom and digital rights issues in Sierra Leone, including invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecution of journalists and other citizens; and also tracks media performance.

This edition is mainly divided into the following areas: Thematic Issues- Freedom of Expression and of the Press (focusing mainly on the assault, arrest and detention of journalists and other citizens); Right to Access Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights; Media and Good Governance; Performance of Media Institutions; Positions of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and the Government on the said issues; Status of Media and Communication Laws in Sierra Leone; Conclusion, Recommendations, References and Appendices.

The Report has been produced from the monitoring of issues relating to freedom of expression and of the press, internet freedom and digital rights broadcast on radio and television stations, published on newspapers and posted on social media platforms. Interviews were conducted, where necessary, with individuals who were either reportedly attacked or arrested. Officials of institutions named in some of the issues reported were also interviewed.

The cases/issues covered in this Report are:

1. The invitation of the National Chairman and Leader of the National Grand Coalition (NGC) Party, Dr. Dennis Bright, to the Police Headquarters in Freetown on 7 December 2021 by the Inspector General (IG) of Police owing to an interview he granted **Radio Democracy 98.1 FM** in connection with the proposed 2021 Mid- term Census which the NGC and the Coalition of Progressive Political Parties (CoPP) objected to.
2. The physical assault and detention of journalist Ransford Wright of **Africa Young Voices (AYV) Media Empire** on 13 December 2021 by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in Freetown.
3. The arrest and detention of the 2018 presidential aspirant for the Unity Party, Femi Claudius-Cole at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 13 December 2021 for an alleged negative comment she made on **Radio Democracy 98.1 FM** in relation to the 2021 mid-term housing and population census.
4. A verbal attack and insult against Asmaa James, station manager of **Radio Democracy 98.1 FM** on 13 December 2021, by Alhaji Amadu Bah, a popular artist known as LAJ in a Facebook live video circulated on social media platforms as a result of a report aired by **Radio Democracy** on a bench warrant ordered by a magistrate for LAJ.

5. A letter of complaint from the *Salone Compass Newspaper* on 14 December 2021 to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) and MRCG of ‘scathing verbal attacks and threats to the entire editorial team of *Salone Compass* from unknown members of the general public through phone calls.’
6. The arrest and detention of Pastor Septimus Yambasu on 14 December 2021 for allegedly using obscene and insulting words against President Julius Maada Bio.
7. An official complaint by blogger Hawanatu Konneh Fofanah at the CID in December 2021 against an anonymous individual who allegedly attacked her personality on Facebook.
8. The intimidation and humiliation of Amadu Lamrana Bah, Head of Digital Media of the *AYV Media Empire* and also President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU) by Airport officials on 10 January 2022 allegedly acting on the orders of ‘someone’ at the Lungi International Airport.
9. The arrest and detention of Solomon Joe, a journalist working for *KISS 104 FM* in Bo on 7 February 2022 by police for a broadcast concerning a transaction between two businessmen in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone.
10. The invitation and detention of the Acting Spokesperson for the main opposition All Peoples Congress Party (APC), Sidi Yayah Tunis by police at the CID on 8 February 2022 in Freetown, for alleged inciting utterances about the state of affairs in the country he made during an interview he granted *Radio Democracy 98.1 FM* on 7 February 2022.
11. The physical assault of journalist Alusine Antha of *Eagle Africa FM 91.3* on 17 February 2022 by seven community youths in Waterloo community after the journalist had gone to the community to cover a story on a land issue.
12. SLAJ 17 March 2022 press alert calling on the Judiciary of Sierra Leone to allow media access to cover the opening session of a tribunal set up to investigate the suspended Auditor-General, Mrs Lara Taylor-Pearce and her deputy after complaint from some journalists that they were denied entry to the proceedings.
13. The arrest and detention of Mohamed Khan, the Interim Chairman of Teachers Solidarity, by the SLP just outside *AYV*’s premise after Mr. Khan had appeared on *AYV*’s ‘Wake Up Salone’ television program as a guest on 26 April 2022 to discuss concerns and conditions of services of teachers; and the arrest and detention of Lahai Jah and Joseph C Kailie at the Bo West Police Station after allegedly convening a protest without police clearance for “The Teachers Solidarity Movement” on 28 April 2022.
14. The arrest and incarceration of Mohamed Mansaray popularly known as ‘Blacka’ who reportedly suffered from mental illness and roamed the streets of Freetown, and Kadiatu Yankaday, a trader, at the Freetown Correctional Centres on 28 April 2022 for allegedly insulting President Bio.
15. The reported ‘assassination attempt’ on journalist Gibril Gottor and his family through a ‘suffocating smell of petrol’ in their house on 29 April 2022 in Kambia, Northern Sierra Leone.

16. The arrest and detention of journalist Sorie Saio Sesay of *Okentuhun Radio FM 94.0* by police in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone on 26 May 2022 for allegedly “publishing false information” on social media about an incident between the SLP and commercial bike riders in Makeni.
17. The arrest and detention of Ahmed Doyle Kamara popularly known as Tazmo Sliz, an entertainer in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone on 18 December 2021 for allegedly insulting and attacking the Fullah Ethnic group in a Facebook live video.
18. The temporary shut down of the operations of *Justice Radio* in Freetown for 10 hours by the Independent Media Commission (IMC) on 28 April 2022 for a complaint from its Monitoring, Research and Projects Unit (MRPU) against the radio station in connection with its program, ‘Justice Show’ which was aired on 27 April 2022.

The MRCG data show that out of the eighteen cases/issues monitored, twelve have been concluded. The National Chairman and Leader of the NGC Party, Dr. Dennis Bright, who was invited by the police was released on the same day after a closed door interview; the 2018 presidential aspirant for the Unity Party, Femi Claudius-Cole by CID was released the following day; Pastor Septimus Yambasu was discharged from court with his impounded vehicle returned to him; Asmaa James, station manager of **Radio Democracy 98.1 FM** in a Facebook post said she had forgiven LAJ and let go of the matter; Amadu Lamrana Bah, of *AYV* later boarded the flight to Cameroon and there were releases condemning the action of the officials; Solomon Joe of *KISS 104 FM* was later released by the police; the main opposition APC Acting Spokesperson, Sidi Yayah Tunis arrested by police was later released on bail; Mohamed Khan, the Interim Chairman of Teachers Solidarity Lahai Jah and Joseph C Kailie were later released; and the matters of Tazmo Sliz, and Mohamed Mansaray popularly known as ‘Blacker’ and Kadiatu Yankaday, a trader were discharged from court.

Six cases are inconclusive. They are the matters of Ransford Wright of *AYV Media Empire* (some action taken against some police officers), blogger Hawanatu Konneh Fofanah, *Salone Compass Newspaper*, Gibril Gottor, Sorie Saio Sesay of *Okentuhun Radio FM 94.0*, and Alusine Antha of *Eagle Africa FM 91.3*.

The MRCG notes that there were still inconclusive cases as at the end of the reporting period on cases in the first edition of the Press Freedom Reports (June to November 2018), second edition (December 2018-May 2019), third edition (June to November 2019), fourth edition (December 2019 to May 2020), and the seventh edition (June to November 2021). From the First to the Eighth Edition of the Press Freedom Report, fifty five cases were monitored. Forty of them were concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned, because of lack of progress; four were in court; and eleven under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled. See details in the appendices.

The MRCG continues to note that the country is making progress in press freedom rankings. In the 2022 World Press Freedom Index published on 3 May 2022 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Sierra Leone made significant progress moving 29 places higher in the Index ranking, from 75th in 2021 to 46th out of 180 countries in 2022. The improvement according to the report was due to the repeal of Part V of the 1965



Public Order Act. The MRCG therefore continues to call for the general climate for freedom of expression for everybody to be guaranteed. Institutions that implement, interpret and enforce the law should do so within acceptable democratic standards. The State cannot guarantee press freedom without freedom of expression. While the MRCG urges media practitioners to abide by the ethical and legal standards of the journalism profession, it is also calling on the Government, media organisations, civil society and the general public to ensure the safety and security of journalists across the country at all times. The MRCG continues to call on the Government to also unconditionally discharge other criminal libel cases.

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

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This eighth report, produced by the MRCG, is one of the components under a project titled, “**Enhancing Press Freedom and Media Reforms**”, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the USA. The activity continues to track media performance and monitor the exercise and legal guarantees of press freedom and freedom of expression in Sierra Leone, including attacks, intimidations, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecutions of journalists and civil society activists, internet and digital rights.

The report covers a six-month period; December 2021 to May 2022. It is divided into the following areas: Thematic Issues focusing mainly on the cases/issues of Freedom of Expression and of the Press; Right to Access Information; Internet Freedom and Digital Rights; Media and Good Governance; Performance of Institutions Dealing with Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights; Performance of Media Institutions; Position of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists on Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights; Government’s Position on Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights; Status of Media and Communication Laws in Sierra Leone; Conclusion; Recommendation; References; and Appendices.

A total of eighteen cases/issues have been addressed on freedom of expression and of the press in this report. In addition, this report follows up on cases from the first to the seventh edition, from June 2018 to November 2021 that were still inconclusive. From the First to the Eighth Edition of the Press Freedom Report, fifty-five cases were monitored. Forty of them were concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned, because of lack of progress; four were in court; and eleven under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled. See details in the appendices.

Sierra Leone as a country, has specific statutes (Acts) containing laws, regulations, policies and institutions governing the media space in Sierra Leone. The major laws used to regulate the media are the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Section 25 (1) and Section 11), the Independent Media Commission Act, 2020, the Defamation Ordinance, 1961 and the Media Code of Practice. On the professional aspect, there is the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics.

There is the Right to Access Information Act, 2013, that provides for access to certain information held by public bodies. There is also the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021. The Act, among other things, provides for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes; and protection of privacy rights.

The report is produced from the monitoring of issues relating to freedom of expression and of the press. Two monitors contracted by the MRCG take daily records of major issues relating to freedom of expression and of the press, right to access information; internet freedom and digital rights by tracking radio, television and newspaper contents, as well as following up on issues on social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted where necessary, with some individuals who were reportedly attacked, intimidated or arrested. Officials of institutions named in some of the issues were also interviewed.

The MRCG thanks NED for funding the project. Special thanks also go to the authors of the monthly reports, Osman Sesay and Ishiaka Sannoh, and their supervisors, Augustine S. James and Jonette-Ann Matilda O. Greene. This eighth biannual report was written by Francis Sowa (Ph.D.) and Usman Bah.

## 2. THEMATIC ISSUES

### 2.1 Freedom of Expression and of the Press

Journalists in their lines of duties and other citizens have been faced with incidents of attacks, intimidations, assaults, arrests and detentions. The MRCG monthly media monitoring reports from December 2021 to May 2022 documented the following cases.

On 7 December 2021, the Inspector General (IG) of Police invited the National Chairman and Leader of the NGC Party, Dr. Dennis Bright to report at the Police Headquarters, Freetown due to an interview he granted *Radio Democracy 98.1 FM* in connection with the proposed 2021 Mid-term Census which the NGC and the Coalition of Progressive Political Parties (CoPP) objected to. The IG said they were concerned as to the way Dr. Bright put out his messages to the public. The CID, behind closed doors, interviewed Dr. Bright in the presence of his lawyers for close to two hours and he was later released on the same day.

On 13 December 2021, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) physically assaulted and detained Ransford Wright, a staff (camera operator) of the *Africa Young Voice (AYV Media) Empire*. According to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) press release of 14 December 2021, the staff had gone to the Central Police Station in Freetown to get the other side of a story he had filmed earlier on the same day of an accident involving an SLP motorcycle, a commercial motorbike (Okada), and a child victim when the police officers physically assaulted and detained him in a police cell. SLAJ condemned the alleged attack and urged the leadership of the SLP to take appropriate action against the alleged perpetrators. “It’s unfortunate that such an attack on a journalist in the line of duty comes after SLAJ and the national security sector, including the SLP, had signed an undertaking to respect each other’s role in our democracy. Granted, this culture of assault on journalists doing their work will not change overnight even with the signing of an MoU but we urge the SLP to be professional at all times, and this includes ensuring the safety and security of journalists in the line of duty,” said SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla. *AYV* 13 December 2021 press release said it was disappointed and condemned any attack of its own and any journalist or media practitioner as it called on the SLP to speedily investigate the matter. The SLP Management in a press release dated 14 December 2021 acknowledged the allegations and instructed an investigation to be conducted. They also requested the *AYV* leadership to avail the affected staff to the police to assist with the investigations.

In January 2022, police said they 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 Deputy Media and Public Relations of the SLP, Superintendent Samuel Saio Conteh, 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. In February 2022, Ransford told the MRCG that the Head of Media and Public Relations of the SLP, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Brima Kamara, summoned him and some of his senior colleagues from the *AYV Media Empire* to a meeting and promised to compensate him. He said the police promised to call him for a dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the matter, which they were yet to do. The President of SLAJ, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, said the police told him that they had suspended the officials who were involved in the incident, promised to pay for the journalist’s missing pieces of property and to officially write SLAJ when they concluded the investigation. In May 2022, police said the matter was still under police investigation as they were seeking an ‘informal resolution’ of the issue.

On 13 December 2021, Alhaji Amadu Bah, a popular artist also known as LAJ in a Facebook live video circulated on social media platforms verbally attacked and insulted Asmaa James, station manager of *Radio Democracy 98.1 FM*, as a result of a report aired by *Radio Democracy* on a bench warrant ordered by a magistrate for LAJ. SLAJ on same date accompanied Asmaa James to the Cyber Unit of the SLP and filed a formal complaint against LAJ for verbally attacking and insulting her personality. SLAJ, MRCG, Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL) and other groups condemned the actions of LAJ. **SLAJ in a press release stated thus:** “This is not only an attack on one of our respected and outstanding female journalists but also an attack on our journalism profession and the women of this nation. This is absolutely unacceptable and we condemn it entirely. Our society does not deserve this kind of uncouth behaviour. Regrettably, we know the hard-earned reputation of our dear colleague will not be redeemed by any penalty that will be meted on the alleged perpetrator but we will not rest until justice is served.” Asmaa James in response to her attack on her Facebook wall said she had nothing to do with the allegation made by LAJ **stating thus:** “The fact is, last week Monday; *Radio Democracy* aired a story in which a Magistrate of the Court of Sierra Leone is said to have ordered a bench warrant for the musician and rapper, popularly known as LAJ. I honestly don’t know how come he chose to publicly insult me for something I have absolutely nothing to do with.” In an open letter on Facebook dated 13 December 2021, LAJ apologized to Asmaa James and the women of Sierra Leone as he expressed regrets and took full responsibility for his actions. On 22 December 2021, Asmaa James in a Facebook post said she had forgiven LAJ and let go of the matter after some moments of prayers and fasting.

On 13 December 2021, police arrested and detained the 2018 presidential aspirant for the Unity Party, Femi Claudius-Cole at CID for an alleged negative comment she made on *Radio Democracy 98.1 FM* in relation to the 2021 mid-term housing and population census. Madam Cole said she was arrested and detained without warrant and proof of evidence for the alleged crime. She spent the night at the CID and was released the following day.

On 14 December 2021, the Salone Compass Newspaper in a letter brought to the notice of SLAJ and MRCG a complaint about ‘scathing verbal attacks and threats to the entire editorial team of Salone Compass from unknown members of the general public through phone calls.’ It pointed that the attacks and threats started on 13 December 2021 after they had published a story with the banner headline “POLICE PLANS MASSIVE ARRESTS” which was news reported at the SLP presser on 9 December 2021 at the Police Headquarters. The newspaper said it was also accused of inciting the public to boycott the mid-term census and that some of the anonymous callers identified themselves as police officers. The letter further stated that after publishing the concerns, comments and views of members of the opposition parties in relation to the mid-term census, they received more threats from another set of anonymous callers who this time accused them of ‘overpoweringly lambasting’ the government. In May 2022, the Proprietor of *Salone Compass Newspaper*, Ibrahim Alusine Kamara told MRCG that they had also made an official complaint to the police at the time of the attacks, ‘but no action was taken by the police.’ “Apart from that incident, we have been subjected to several intimidations and harassments from unknown callers who usually identified themselves as ‘members of the ruling party’ for what they say is ‘acidic publication’ against their government,” he added. Police said that the matter was still under investigation.

On 14 December 2021, the SLP arrested and detained Pastor Septimus Yambasu for allegedly using obscene and insulting words against President Julius Maada Bio. Pastor Yambasu who is a driver of a

commercial vehicle reportedly made the statement in his vehicle along the Jui-Wilberforce axis and one of his passengers reported the matter to the police. He was charged for insulting conduct contrary to section 3 (1) of the Public Order Act of 1965 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown. Pastor Yambasu was initially refused bail, but was later granted bail during the second court sitting. On 25 January 2022, Magistrate Sahr Kekura of the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 1 discharged the matter. Pastor Yambasu's vehicle which was impounded by the police was returned to him.

On 10 January 2022, 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 ([https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10158799418837523&id=747117522](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. MRCG 11 January 2022 press alert and SLAJ 12 January 2022 press release condemned the harassment and intimidation on the journalist and called for the safety and security of journalists at all times. SLAJ vehemently condemned the behavior of the airport officials, including Air Maroc, and said it found it unfortunate that the journalist was targeted because of his opinion as it demanded an investigation into the matter. "This is outright intimidation and harassment and constitutes a serious attack on free speech and press freedom. No journalist, or individual for that matter, should be targeted for expressing their views. Authorities must learn to accommodate genuine criticism as part of their responsibility to the public," said SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4704290019620373&set=a.116924098357011&type=3>). The journalist later boarded the flight to Cameroon.

On 7 February 2022, two officers from the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Freetown went to Bo and 'ordered the arrest' of Solomon Joe, a journalist of KISS 104 FM in Bo for a broadcast concerning a transaction between two businessmen in Bo. After a statement was obtained from him in Bo, he was taken to Freetown where he spent one night in police custody. On 8 February 2022, the journalist was released on conditions that he retracted his story and apologized to the businessman. "**I am not going to retract the story because I stand by my story. My request now is for the CID to close the file against me in their record since they did not find me wanting, to avoid future arrest,**" said Solomon.

On 8 February 2022, the acting spokesperson of the main opposition All Peoples Congress Party (APC), Sidi Yayah Tunis, was invited and detained at the CID in Freetown for alleged 'inciting utterances' he made during a program on *Radio Democracy 98.1 FM* on Monday 7 February 2022. The Inspector General of Police, Ambrose Sovula, said Mr. Tunis was invited because his utterances were deemed as 'inciting statements' that had the tendency to disrupt or undermine the safety and security of the State. Mr. Tunis was later released on bail and the matter subsequently ended.

On 17 February 2022, journalist Alusine Antha of *Eagle Africa FM 91.3* was physically assaulted by seven youths in the Waterloo Community, Western Area Rural District. The journalist said he had gone to the community to cover a story dealing with a land issue when seven youths physically attacked and assaulted him. He said his mobile phone, tape recorder and money in his possession were forcefully taken away from him during the incident. He reported the matter to the Waterloo Police Division. The police had arrested the seven suspects and charged the matter to court. The matter came up on 19 February 2022 at the

Waterloo Magistrate Court but owing to the absence of the suspects, it was adjourned to 14 March 2022. The matter is still in court.

On 17 March 2022, SLAJ in a press alert called on the Judiciary of Sierra Leone to allow media access to cover the opening session of a tribunal set up to investigate the suspended Auditor-General, Mrs. Lara Taylor-Pearce and her deputy. This was as a result of a complaint from some journalists who were reportedly denied entry to the proceedings. SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, said in the interest of transparency, the tribunal should be opened to all media so that the public would follow the process and not just a selected few. In response to the alert, the Communication Unit of the Judiciary in a press release said the SLAJ allegations were ‘untrue and inaccurate and stated thus: “Lawyers, civil society representatives, family members, some unknown members of the public and other professional bodies were accredited to be in attendance. 50 persons were only allowed due to the limited sitting capacity. With this in mind, priority was given to the Court Reporters Association and they were catered for.”

On 26 April 2022, the SLP arrested Mohamed Khan, the Interim Chairman of Teachers Solidarity, just outside *AYV*'s premises after he had appeared on the '*AYV*'s Wake Up Salone TV program' as a guest to discuss teachers' concerns and their conditions of service. The police said Khan was arrested for inciting teachers to withhold their services from the State using an illegal platform called 'Teachers Solidarity' while the Government of Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone Teachers Union are engaged in negotiations'. *AYV* and SLAJ were concerned that such an act of arrest by the SLP has the potential to scare off potential critical guests that *AYV Media* and other media houses may want to invite to their programs. SLAJ called on the SLP to respect people's right to free expression at all times and to adopt less hostile ways of holding citizens accused of incitement other than arresting them. (<https://www.facebook.com/100063807305798/posts/382693913867516/?app=fbl>). Police said after Mr. Khan's questioning at the CID, he was later released on the same day. On 28 April 2022, the SLP also arrested and detained Lahai Jah and Joseph C Kailie at the Bo West Police Station for convening 'a protest without police clearance' according to Deputy Media and Public Relations of the SLP, Superintendent Samuel Saio Conteh. The Sierra Leone Bar Association's (SLBA) 28 April 2022 press release expressed 'serious concern' on their arrest and detention 'after allegedly requesting a clearance to convene a meeting of "The Teachers Solidarity Movement."' The Association condemned SLP's action stating that it contravened Section 17 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No. 6 of 1991 and also undermined freedom of expression guaranteed in Section 15 (b) of the same 1991 Constitution. The SLBA urged the police to release the teachers with immediate effect. The two teachers were later released.

**Fig 2.1.1 Sierra Leone Bar Association Press Release**





On 28 April 2022, Mohamed Mansaray, popularly known as ‘Blacker’, who reportedly suffered from mental illness and roamed the streets of Freetown, and Kadiatu Yankaday Kamara, a trader, were both sent on remand at the Freetown Correctional Centres for allegedly insulting President Bio. The two accused persons appeared before Magistrate Alpha Rashid Jalloh at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 4 on one count charge of public insult and provocation contrary to Section 2 of the Public Order Act No. 46 of 1965. They were refused bail initially, but were granted bail on 29 April 2022. The matter was adjourned to 9 May 2022 (<https://fritongpost.com/court-remands-blacker-for-insulting-president-bio/>). On 13 May 2022, presiding Magistrate Rashid Jalloh discharged the matter from the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 4. No evidence was proffered against the accused. Legal Link, a human rights organisation, helped to secure the discharge verdict for ‘Blacker’.

On 29 April 2022, journalist Gibril Gottor who resides in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone reported to SLAJ and the SLP of an ‘assassination attempt’ on him and his family through a ‘suffocating smell of petrol’ in their house. According to Gibril, the family discovered a plastic bag in the ventilation pipe on their roof dripping petrol, and their back door painted with the highly inflammable liquid. The journalist and civil society activist said the incident occurred at a time he was investigating major corruption activities involving some business tycoons, military personnel, and a host of other influential people in the district. SLAJ in its 30 April 2020 press release called on the Sierra Leone Police for their swift intervention to ensure the safety and security of the journalist (<https://www.facebook.com/100063807305798/posts/383887097081531/?app=fbl>). Gibril told the MRCG that the police were yet to institute investigation into the matter. “The police told me to return home saying they will do a patrol at my house. But I refused because I did not see any evidence of their patrol. My family and I are still sleeping somewhere else for our safety,” the journalist said. In May 2022, Chief Superintendent of Police at the Kambia Local Police Unit, Abu Bakarr Magona, told the MRCG that they had deployed personnel to patrol Gibril’s house, but cannot provide him with personal security as they do not have enough manpower to do so. Police said the matter was under investigation.

On 26 May 2022, journalist Sorie Saio Sesay, who works for *Okentuhun Radio, FM94.0* in Karene, North-West Region of Sierra Leone, was arrested and detained by police in Makeni for allegedly ‘publishing false information’ on social media about an incident between the SLP and commercial bike riders in Makeni. A press alert from SLAJ Northern Region indicated that the journalist, ‘Sorjie said he mistakenly forwarded the said information from one WhatsApp forum to his own WhatsApp group’ which has ‘high ranking officials of the SLP.’ SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, urged the police ‘to stop arresting journalists for what they publish whether the information is false or true’ and asked for them ‘to refer such cases to the IMC or SLAJ Disciplinary Committee for appropriate actions.’ (<https://www.facebook.com/100001182651239/posts/5112954542087250/?app=fbl>). SLAJ’s press alert of 28 May 2022 said it was ‘worried about the health and well-being’ of the journalist who was refused bail and spent two nights in police custody in Makeni before he was escorted to Freetown and detained at the CID. He was released on bail on 31 May 2022 with the intervention of SLAJ. Sorjie told the MRCG that even though the police had released him, the CID still had his phone. The Director of Crime Service at the CID headquarters in Freetown, AIG William Fayia Sellu, said that the Cyber Unit of the SLP was still investigating the content of the phone of the journalist as a way of following procedures, and once the investigation was completed and nothing found, his phone would be returned and the matter resolved.

**Fig.2.1.2 Arrest and detention of journalist Sorie Saio Sesay of *Okentuhun radio 94.0***



On 28 April 2022, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) in a press statement stated that as part of its mandates temporarily shut down the operations of *Justice Radio* in Freetown for 10 hours. On 27 April 2022, the IMC received a complaint from its Monitoring, Research and Projects Unit (MRPU) against *Justice FM Radio* in connection with its program, ‘Justice Show’ which was aired on 27 April 2022. The decision of the IMC Complaint Committee was connected to an alleged unprofessional conduct, proprietorship and management issues that posed serious confusion to the operations and activities of the radio station. The ban was lifted that same day. The IMC’s Complaint Committee findings showed that the station manager was aware that what was aired on the program was unprofessional and a breach of some of the provisions in the IMC Media Code of Practice and the IMC Act of 2020, and posed a threat to public order and security. The Complaints Committee recommended that a fine of Le1, 000,000 (One Million Leones) be levied on *Justice FM Radio* for breach of the accuracy, truth and impartiality provision in Section 3, Principle 6 of the IMC Media Code of Practice, and that the station should temporarily suspend the ‘Justice Show’ until IMC conducts a monitoring and inspection visit to assess their editorial and technical capacities to manage such a program professionally. The IMC Board at its meeting held on 4 May 2022 endorsed the recommendations.

**There were two cases relating to digital and internet rights.**

On 18 December 2021, the SLP arrested, and detained Ahmed Doyle Kamara popularly known as Tazmo Sliz, an entertainer in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone in Freetown for allegedly insulting and attacking the Fullah Ethnic group in a Facebook live video. (<https://www.facebook.com/kamaraahmedd/videos/970434630212030/?app=fbl>). In January 2022, the matter was charged to court. Tazmo Sliz was charged with two counts of cyber bullying and cyber stalking contrary to **Section 44 (2) (a) and (b)** of the Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021, and misuse of device contrary to **Section 38(1)** of the Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021. On 21 February 2022, Tazmo apologized to the Fullah ethnic group in a Facebook live video for his actions stating thus: “To the Fullah community in Freetown, in Bombali, and in the diaspora, please, forgive me. I promise never to put on such behavior again as I have realized that I stooped so low.” (<https://fb.watch/bjuD6zsjdH/>). On Monday 28 February 2022, Magistrate Sahr Kekura of Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown discharged the matter from court after the complainant, Mohamed Salieu Jalloh on behalf of the Fullah Community accepted Tazmo’s apology.



On 25 December 2021, Hawanatu Konneh Fofanah in a Facebook post said she and her husband had made an official complaint at the CID against an anonymous individual who attacked her personality on Facebook, stating that they would stop the bullying of women on the internet. Mrs. Fofanah said that the attack was as a result of a Facebook post supporting Asmaa James which was not in favor of this anonymous individual. She said the anonymous individual posted a picture of her on Facebook attacking her personality. “For the past 2 hours, I was at CID with my husband to make an official complaint so it can be on records. We will stop bullying women on this internet when you cannot stand them,” she said. On 30 December 2021, she again posted on her Facebook page that she had suffered too much of cyber-attack and bullying on social media. She said she had been insulted alongside her parents and that her life had been threatened. Hawanatu said there was no headway on the matter. Police said it was still investigating the matter.

## **2.2 Right to Access Information**

The Public Information Officer at the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC), David Patrick Kamara, said the Commission was copied in seven (7) information requests within the reporting period of December 2021 to May 2022, noting that information requests can be done without the Commission being copied.

On compliance to the information request, he said the Commission received only one complaint against the Ministry of Youths Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security for not releasing the information requested. He said the Commission in response had written to the two ministries for prompt actions in releasing the information requested for which the Commission was monitoring the process.

Under the period of review, he said the Commission had neither fined nor taken any legal steps/actions against any institution for failure to submit information upon request.

He said the Commission can only release the full data at the end of the year when MDAs report on their compliance to Freedom of Information (FoI) requests as stipulated by the Commission’s Act.

Also, there is matter at the High Court of Sierra Leone between the Bank of Sierra Leone and Martha Kargbo of Ultra Media and the Right to Access Information Commission. In 2020 Martha filed a case against the Bank of Sierra Leone pursuant to the RAIC Act of 2013 after being denied information she requested for. The matter awaits ruling.

## **2.3 Internet Freedom and Digital Rights**

The main law regulating the digital space and online media in Sierra Leone is the *Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021*. On 23 June, 2021, the House of Parliament passed the bill entitled Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021 into law with the President assenting to it on 17 November 2021, making it a legal statutory instrument regulating the cyber space in the country. The Act, among other things, provides for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes; and protection of privacy rights.

December 2021 to May 2022 saw attacks and counterattacks against personalities, especially civil society activists, journalists and officials (both ruling and opposition) for their views especially those that had to do with politics. There were 'social media vigilantes' on the go ready to attack and counterattack views that were not in favor of their interests or political parties. The following internet freedom and digital rights cases were recorded.

On 8 February 2022, SLAJ organized training workshop for media stakeholders, activists and civil society and pressure groups on provisions in the newly enacted Cybersecurity and Crime Act No. 71 of 2021 in Freetown. The training workshop was facilitated by Dr. Francis Sowa who served as the local facilitator and addressed the gaps and lacunas in the Act, whilst Joan Barata served as the international facilitator and addressed the excesses of certain provisions in the law as compared to other international instruments. SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla noted that the objective for conducting the workshop was to capacitate the stakeholders with the requisite knowledge on the Cybersecurity and Crime Act so that they can work together in mapping out strategic action plans that would help them embark on a massive nationwide sensitization and advocacy on the Cybersecurity and Crime Act 2021 ([https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=4858066314242742&id=100001182651239](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=4858066314242742&id=100001182651239)).

On 10 February 2022, *African Young Voices (AYV)* hosted Dr. Francis Sowa, National Coordinator for MRCG in their 'Wake Up Salone' program in which he underscored the need for public education on the Cybersecurity and Crime Act 2021 especially for journalists. He highlighted key gaps in the Act that need to be clearly defined including the definition of cyber bullying in the interpretation section. **"SLAJ has a Cyber Safe Sierra Leone Project which I am leading series of training as a facilitator. We are engaging our constituents. Generally, there are lots of technical issues, lot of jargons in that Act which you may not necessarily understand,"** said Dr. Sowa (<https://www.facebook.com/100009584439780/videos/2181559741992807/>).

## 2.4 Media and Good Governance

The Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) together with SLAJ with support from the BBC Media Action Sierra Leone PRIMED project organized a two-day Media Viability and Investment Conference in Freetown on 21 and 22 April 2022 that sought to address the economic and other systemic challenges that have faced the media industry in Sierra Leone over the years. The first ever media conference to be held in Sierra Leone among media industry leaders, the private sector, government, and international development partners explored innovative solutions for stronger business models that would ensure a diverse, responsible, trusted media in Sierra Leone, to inform, connect and inspire citizens for the future. During the presidential assent to the repealed Public Order Act 2020, President Bio committed his government's support to organize a media investment and viability conference to support and unshackle the media and to attract private sector investment and public sector support for the media in Sierra Leone.

Prior to the Conference, extensive regional consultations were conducted across the country that captured the views of media stakeholders, civil society groups, the private sector, local authorities and government stakeholders.

President Julius Maada Bio in his keynote address at the Conference said over the last four years, his government had promoted, protected, and supported the media because they believed it is essential for the growth and buoyancy of the country's democracy.

At the end of the Conference, key recommendations for a future roadmap for media market development in Sierra Leone were developed to inform a communiqué. Six of the key recommendations that were discussed were: the government to continue providing political will; review of existing legal and regulatory framework of the media; media to commit to re-engineering of the industry to enhance potential for attracting investment; affirmative action by government to promote community media and the public service broadcaster; develop a national policy on advertising; and government and development partners to commit to a national fund for public interest media.

### 3. PERFORMANCE OF INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE PRESS, INFORMATION, INTERNET FREEDOM AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) established by an Act of Parliament in 2013 provides for the disclosure of information held by public authorities or by persons providing services for them and to provide for other related matters. The Commission facilitates and promotes the supply and demand of public information in the country with requests from an individual or a body.

The Chairman and Information Commissioner of RAIC, Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, told the MRCG that upon request, the said public institutions are obliged by the Commission's Act to comply with the request of releasing information, hence the information requested does not jeopardise national security, citizens personal data and patients' medical records.

“Some institutions would not want to release public information even though the information requested for doesn't fall under the exempt categories. So as a Commission, we play the role of a mediator to convince them to comply to ensure the free access of information,” explained Dr Shaw. He said in a case of continuous reluctance from any public institution to release information, the Commission would issue orders for compliance and refusal will lead to a fine which would be determined by the Commission.

Dr Shaw in an interview on *Radio Democracy, 98.1 FM* on 24 March 2022, gave a rundown of requests for information for the past three years stating that in 2019, the Commission registered 112 requests for information and that almost half of the requests were granted. He added that “in 2020 we have an increase in almost 32 more cases as 144 cases came up and 132 of that number received positive responses.” He furthered that, in 2021, the Commission fined two institutions for refusing to provide information requested for by individuals as provided by the law.

There is **the SLAJ Disciplinary Committee** established pursuant to Article 14 (3) of its constitution responsible to adjudicate upon matters of indiscipline and professional misconduct of individual members of SLAJ. Under the reporting period, the Committee said it did not receive or adjudicate on any complaint from members of the public against journalists in their line of duty.

**The Cyber Security and Crime Act, 2021** is a law that provides for the effective, unified and comprehensive legal, regulatory and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes; prevention of the abusive use of computer systems; to provide for the establishment of structures to promote cybersecurity and capacity building; to provide for the timely and effective collection of electronic evidence for the purpose of investigation and prosecution of cybercrime; to provide for the protection of Critical National Information Infrastructure and the protection of computer systems and networks, electronic communications, data and computer programs, intellectual property and privacy rights to provide for facilitation of international cooperation in dealing with cybercrime matters and to provide for other related matters.

On 24 May 2022, the National Cybersecurity Coordination Center, in collaboration with the Judiciary of Sierra Leone conducted a ‘Judicial Training on Cybercrimes and Electronic Evidence’ for the Judiciary and law enforcement agencies in Freetown. The training was geared towards providing the space to interact with

experts in various digital domains. The Deputy Minister of MIC, Solomon Jamiru Esq. said the training was the first of numerous trainings geared towards strengthening digital forensic tools and incidence monitoring and response. “We have no doubt that we will forge ahead with one direction, we will broaden our ambition and be smarter with more innovation and also be more empowered than the rogues in the Cyber space,” he affirmed. (<https://www.facebook.com/114786230160170/posts/550106733294782/?app=fbl>).

**The National Telecommunication Commission** was established by an Act of Parliament in 2006, as amended in 2009. The main function of the Commission is to license and regulate the activities of telecommunications operators so as to promote efficiency, fair competition, expansion of investment in the sector, development of the sector and the protection of users of telecommunications networks and services. The Act was under review at the time of writing this report.

#### 4. PERFORMANCE OF MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

There is improvement in the outputs of media institutions. This is reflected in their contents and programming. However, there were major concerns that a number of media institutions continued to publish and broadcast contents that breached ethical standards or were in contravention of the country's media laws, the IMC Act and Media Code of Practice.

On 13 February 2022, SLAJ and the Independent Radio Network (IRN) observed the World Radio Day. The theme for the commemoration 'Radio and Trust,' was aimed at acknowledging and appreciating the important role played by radio in the everyday life of the people and in the development of the nation. IRN pioneered discussions on radio stations across the country to deliberate on the importance of radio in spreading credible information. "It should be noted that in this age of social media where fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech thrive, radio should be that clearinghouse that gives out the right, correct, well-researched, and verified information with high quality content," said SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla.

On 14 February 2022 SLAJ launched the Golden Jubilee Journalism Welfare Fund at its head office at 56 Campbell Street in Freetown. . President of SLAJ, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, said the Fund was to support journalists in their work and to help minimize the financial, social and psychological challenges which they go through in line of their duties. President Nasralla further noted that "there will be an independent welfare committee and welfare officer to manage issues relating to the fund and to help seek more funds for the Association."

On 6 April 2022, SLAJ in an effort to address the issues and challenges of discrimination, harassment and gender inequality within the media landscape in the country appointed a Gender Advisory Panel which comprises four distinguished personalities who have contributed to the development of the media in the country. The Gender Advisory Panel was established to advise SLAJ on gender sensitive issues and to conduct periodic gender audits that would inform the way the Association would formulate policies. "Members of the SLAJ Gender Advisory Panel are volunteers, helping SLAJ and the Sierra Leone media to promote a level playing field for all practitioners irrespective of their gender. We thank the appointees for consenting to serve on the panel, and we hope and pray that their contributions will change the narrative for women (and men) in the media," said SLAJ President Ahmed Sahid Nasralla ([https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=4973412932708079&id=100001182651239](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=4973412932708079&id=100001182651239)).

In the 2022 World Press Freedom Index published on 3 May 2022 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Sierra Leone made significant progress moving 29 places higher in the Index ranking, from 75th in 2021 to 46th out of 180 countries in 2022. The improvement according to the report was due to the repeal of Part V of the 1965 Public Order Act. (<https://rsf.org/en/country/sierra-leone>). The MRCG in its press release said it believed that its numerous media campaigns, publications and alerts greatly contributed to the feat. (<https://www.blogger.com/u/1/blog/post/edit/7192325381231827706/1383528818325254984>). SLAJ President in commemorating World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2022 gave an update on the status of press freedom in Sierra Leone, threat to free media and free speech and called for responsible practice stating thus: "Freedom of the press is freedom of expression for all citizens, not just journalists. President Bio must ensure that the fundamental rights of everyone, including those opposed to his government, are

respected and protected,” he said.  
(<https://www.facebook.com/100001182651239/posts/5043830745666297/?app=fbl>).

On 18 May 2022, IMC with support from the Chinese Embassy organized a ‘Professional Ethics Seminar’ for station managers and newspaper editors in Freetown on the theme ‘Interrogating Media Operations in Sierra Leone: Engaging the Media on Professional Ethics and Standards.’ SLAJ President at the event underscored that the “training programs targeting media practitioners are very important and must be continuous because they serve as reminders of the do’s and don’ts in journalism.” (<https://www.facebook.com/855818757931788/posts/2098910133622638/>).

On 18 May 2022, the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU) with support from NED, through MRCG organized a symposium for reporters on the theme ‘Media Poverty and the Future of Reporters in Sierra Leone.’ The symposium addressed the future of reporters in the current economic situation of the country, including salaries, National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) and other welfare concerns of reporters. Speaking at the ceremony, SLAJ President Ahmed Sahid Nasralla noted that media institutional poverty had created hindrance towards media competitiveness in the country hence; the symposium organized was very timely, adding that it would definitely help address the welfare of journalists across the country. President of SLRU Amadu Lamrana Bah in emphasising the essence of the symposium said, “There are certain media institutions in the country where there is no assurance of end of service benefit. There are also certain media institutions that have reporters who have worked for over ten years as volunteers and those set of reporters are not permanent staff of those media institutions but only survive on the tokens they collect per coverage.” (<https://a-zsl.com/slru-organizes-symposium-on-media-poverty/>).

## **5. POSITION OF THE SIERRA LEONE ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE PRESS, INFORMATION, INTERNET FREEDOM AND DIGITAL RIGHTS**

December 2021 to May 2022 had been a hectic period for SLAJ with the Association releasing dozens of press releases on the intimidation, harassment, assault, attack, arrest, and detention of journalists. On press freedom violations, SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla said there had been a substantial reduction in the arrest and detention of journalists in relation to their work since the repeal of Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965. He however expressed concern about recent incidents of arrest, detention and assault of journalists by the police and military. SLAJ President, referencing the signing of an MoU with the Security Sector in November 2021 said SLAJ will continue to engage the security sector to address issues of press freedom and to forge a good working relationship with the security sector especially the police and military.

At the Presidential Media Cocktail in December 2021, SLAJ President said that since the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law, the Association has become very attractive, especially for women, with the Association inducting new members into SLAJ across the country. He stated thus: “After a membership drive of over 200 applicants, the 2021 intake was the highest ever in the Association’s 50 years of existence. Out of the total, 30 percent constitutes women, the highest ever we have recruited into SLAJ. With more policies on free media, it is clear now that women can freely practice the profession, and we expect to see more women taking leadership positions in the industry.”

On cyber security and internet freedoms, SLAJ through its ‘Cyber Safe Sierra Leone’ project in February 2022 organized training workshops for journalists across the country on provisions in the Cybersecurity and Crime Act No 71 of 2021. “The trainings were timely and necessary as journalists were educated on the Cyber Security and Crime Act, 2021 and its related offenses to help practitioners avoid pitfalls of the law. Moreover, the trainings helped journalists to understand the simplified version of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021 and the need for responsible use of social media, the internet, and the virtual spaces,” said SLAJ President.

To support independent journalism and journalists in times of emergencies SLAJ on 14 February 2022 launched the Golden Jubilee Journalism Welfare Fund. “The Journalism Welfare Fund is aimed at supporting independent journalism, and the safety and security of journalists during emergencies in Sierra Leone,” said SLAJ President.

SLAJ was also concerned that there were still complaints against journalists at the IMC for unethical journalism practices. The association noted the improvements in contents of media houses but called on the few defaulting ones to continue to improve on their performance. SLAJ further urged media houses to adopt safety and security policies for their workers, and train journalists on the coverage of sensitive stories and national and international crises.

On the National Media Viability and Investment Conference, SLAJ President expressed that “there is no better time this media investment summit could have come other than now, almost two years after the historic repeal of the criminal and seditious libel law.” He continued that one of the strongest arguments SLAJ put forward for the repeal was that, that law was preventing private sector investment into the media in the country because no sensible investor would want to invest in a sector that could easily escort them to



police cells or the Pademba Road Prisons. He furthered that, following the repeal, the expectation of the public was to see a media industry with heightened professional and ethical practice but to SLAJ and other media stakeholders, the major concern was poverty of the media and how to lift the media out of poverty.

“What we are doing now is to continue to critically look at our content, the service of news journalism we offer the society, and what recipe we can use to enhance their quality, and come up with innovative ideas on how we can design and package them well to attract buyers. We also talked about the Legal framework, especially lack of advertising laws and a national information and media policy; and how unfairly government advertising is being distributed among the media, and the non-payment for adverts by government agencies,” said SLAJ President.

SLAJ at the Conference called on the Government to allocate 3% of the national budget as subsidy to the media, especially to support the operations of community radio stations which are playing a very vital role in providing information to people in remote communities. He ended on the note that:

“The Government has a role to play. The private sector has a role to play. The public has a role to play. The international community has a role to play. But above all, we the media stakeholders have the biggest role to play. We must take ownership of this whole project and ensure that it works. This is for the good of our industry and our nation.”

## **6. GOVERNMENT’S POSITION ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE PRESS, INFORMATION, INTERNET FREEDOM AND DIGITAL RIGHTS**

The key highlight of the government’s position on Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Right to Access Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights is the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) together with SLAJ with support from the BBC Media Action Sierra Leone PRIMED project organizing of a two-day Media Viability and Investment Conference in Freetown on 21 and 22 April 2022 that sought to address the economic and other systemic challenges that have faced the media industry in Sierra Leone over the years. The first ever two-day interactive dialogue Conference among industry leaders in the media, the private sector, government, and international development partners highlighted challenges facing the media, proposed possible suggestions, identified potential media investors, looked at national and international perspectives and developed a roadmap for practicable investment that would make the country’s media viable, sustainable and profitable.

President Julius Maada Bio in his keynote address indicated that Sierra Leone has one of the most liberalised, diversified, and decentralised media and communications sectors in the sub-region and in Africa as a whole. He stated thus:

“I made a manifesto pledge to this nation in 2018 to repeal the criminal libel law. The law had criminalised free speech, suppressed journalism, wrecked many lives, stunted democratic governance, and stifled the promotion and protection of the guaranteed rights of citizens to speak freely about governance. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, nearly twenty years ago, we recognised, as a nation, the costs of a repressive autocracy that had shrunken off or closed free speech in this country. The painful and violent civil war years taught us that citizens must be able to speak freely and openly about governance. We all know the costs of those very painful years. So, my commitment to remove that obnoxious law was not just about doing something; it was about doing what our democracy requires to thrive.”

On gains and progress made on press freedom, President Bio pointed that, “For the first time in the history of our great nation, no journalist is in prison for the practice of journalism. No journalist is in fear of death or imprisonment for the practice of journalism. We have increased the right to access information, access to redress and due process and access to justice. For the first time in the history of this nation also, my government has actively worked with the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists to enhance professionalism among media practitioners, promote gender inclusion and participation, and provide safeguards for the safe practice of journalism. For the first time in the history of this nation, we have signed up to the principles of the International Coalition for Media Freedom.”

On safe space for the media to thrive, seek redress and get fair hearings President Bio said through the revised Independent Media Commission Act, media practitioners are guaranteed a safe space for redress and fair hearings on perceived professional lapses adding that for the first time ever, media professionals were listening to media professionals and working with them to make the media industry ecosystem even better.

President Bio furthered that over the last four years; they have promoted, protected, and supported the media because they believed it was essential for the growth and buoyancy of the country’s democracy. He was concerned about partisans’ deliberately and increasingly spreading misinformation and disinformation in order to widen social and political tensions stating thus:

“These acts subvert the integrity of our democracy, civic polity, electoral practices, and our credibility and resilience as a nation. I personally believe that professional journalism is the best and the only antidote to the increasing spread of malicious information on social media. We need a credible and independent media to keep the government honest and accountable, devoid of partisan rhetoric. With a professional and ethical media, our civic spaces are open to more participation. Citizens can understand and are able to freely express themselves in an open society where transparency and democratic norms burgeon.”

## 7. STATUS OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION LAWS IN SIERRA LEONE

On 9 February 2022, Parliament of Sierra Leone concluded debate on the Bill entitled ‘The National Electronic Communication Act 2021’ and committed it to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny. The bill provides for the licensing and regulation of electronic communication and also for the establishment of a National Communication Authority that would be capacitated to handle matters related to electronic communication in Sierra Leone. The Minister of Information and Communications, Mohamed Rahman Swaray in his submission to Parliament stated that, “the Telecoms industry has gained more momentum in Sierra Leone over the years and therefore the bill would seek to address co-location, infrastructure, economic regulations, interconnections, transfer ownership, and among others to guide the operations of the industry in the country.”

On 22 March 2022, MIC in collaboration with the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) organized a two-day Bench Marking and Experience sharing exercise on the Draft Data Protection and Privacy Bill. The consultative workshop was to compare the Bill to both local and international best practices to ensure universal acceptability of the proposed law. The Minister of Information and Communications, Mohamed Rahman Swaray, said that the workshop was part of fulfilling the desire of the government to ensure that Sierra Leone was transformed into a digitally inclusive country. (<https://www.facebook.com/mic.gov.sl/videos/1950356275351992/>). The Government is yet to pass a Data Protection Law though it has been tabled in Cabinet for deliberations.

### a. Specific Acts containing Media Laws and Regulations still in Force

No.	Specific Statutes on Media Laws/Regulation - Acts of Parliament	Year	Status of the law
1.	Undesirable Publications Cap 113 of the Laws of Sierra Leone, 1960	1961	In force
2.	Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance - Cap 114 in the Laws of Sierra Leone, 1960	1960	In force
3.	Defamation Ordinance - Act No. 32	1961	In force
4.	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation Act, 2009 (Act No. 1 of 2010).	2010	In force
5.	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, 2020 (Act No. 5 of 2020)- It repealed and replaced the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, 2000 (Act No. 12 of 2000) as amended in 2006 and 2007	2020	In force
6	Cybersecurity and Crime Act 2021	2021	In force

Source (Sowa & Kapuwa, 2015 and updated regularly<sup>1</sup>)

Table 7.1: Specific Acts containing Media Laws and Regulations still in Force

**b. Other Statutes (Acts of Parliament)/common law relating to Media Regulation Still in Force**

No.	Other Statutes (Acts of Parliament) with laws relating to media regulation	Year	Status of the law
1.	The Treason and State Offences Act, 1963	1963	In force
2.	Criminal Libel - The Public Order Act, 1965 (Act No 46 of 1965)	1965	Repealed
3.	Publication of False News - The Public Order Act	1965	Repealed
4.	Seditious Libel - The Public Order Act	1965	Repealed
5.	Constitution of Sierra Leone - Freedom of Expression and of the Press	1991	In force
6.	Constitution of Sierra Leone - Public Emergency Law	1991	In force, but under review
7.	Constitution of Sierra Leone - Law of Contempt of Parliament	1991	In force
8.	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1995	In force
9.	Pharmacy and Drugs Act	2001	In force
10	The Telecommunications Act	2006	In force, but under review
11	The Child Rights Act	2007	In force
12	The Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2008 (Act No 00 of 0000)	2008, as amended in 2019	In force

<sup>1</sup> Francis Sowa and Joseph Egbenda Kapuwa, Media Laws and Regulations: Review and Update on Sierra Leone's Statutory and Self-Regulatory Models (2015)

13	The Copyright Act, 2011 (Act No 00 of 2011)	2011	In force
14	The Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (Act No 00 of 2012)	2012 as amended in 2019	In force
15	The Right to Access Information Act, 2013 (Act No 00 of 2013)	2013	In force
16	Public Order (Amendment) Act, 2020 (Act. No 4 of 2020)	2020	In force
17	The Law on Contempt of Court	Common Law	In force

Source (Sowa & Kapuwa, 2015; updated)<sup>2</sup>

Table 7.2: Other Statutes (Acts of Parliament) relating to Media Regulation still in Force

### c. Codes Dealing with Media Regulation Still in Force

No.	Codes	Year	Status of the law
1.	Code of Conduct of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists	2000 (reviewed in 2014/2015)	In force.
2.	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Media Code of Practice	2007	In force, under review.

Source (Sowa and Kapuwa, 2015; updated)<sup>3</sup>

Table 7.3: Codes Dealing with Media Regulation Still in Force

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2 (Ibid,2015)

3 (Ibid,2015)

## 8. CONCLUSION

The issues covered in this report relate to freedom of expression and of the press, Information, Internet Freedom and Digital Rights and the safety and security of journalists.

The MRCG will continue to re-echo one of the provisions in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, which says: “Freedom of expression is the lifeblood of a democracy. A culture of public debate and tolerance for dissenting ideas is the sign of a vibrant and healthy democracy. Restrictions on the freedom of expression represent a fearful state; it reflects a State that has no confidence in its ability to promote and disseminate its doctrines in the marketplace of ideas.”

The MRCG looks forward to the speedy enactment of the Data Protection Law which will guarantee the privacy and safety of citizens’ data both online and offline and the National Electronic Communication Act 2021 which will seek to address co-location, infrastructure, economic regulations, interconnections, transfer ownership, and among others to guide the operations of the industry in the country. The MRCG also continues to look forward to the smooth implementation of the Cybersecurity and Crime Act 2021 in a way that it doesn’t hinder freedom of expression and of the press.

The MRCG hopes that recommendations made at the first ever media viability and investment conference will be implemented by the Government of Sierra Leone, media stakeholders and partners to address economic and systematic challenges faced by the media.

With reference to the MoU SLAJ signed with the Security Sector in November 2021, the MRCG hopes that SLAJ will continue to engage the security sector to address issues of press freedom and to forge a good working relationship with the security sector especially the police and the military.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government should ensure that journalists and citizens continue to enjoy their rights to freedom of expression, including press freedom and assembly without the fear of being intimidated, harassed, assaulted, arrested or detained and prosecuted.
- Government to speedily enact the Data Protection Law to fully promote citizen's digital rights, protect citizen's data, consumer protection and block potential loopholes to data exploitation by private entities and government agencies.
- Government, SLAJ and partners to ensure the implementation of recommendations from the Media Viability and Investment Conference.
- Politicians, senior civil servants and other powerful groups of people to desist from intimidating and harassing critical journalists in line of their duties.
- Government officials should stop stone-walling and be willing and ready to respond to requests from journalists to cross-check their information.
- The Government to ensure that journalists and those whose rights were violated in line of their duty receive justice.
- The Sierra Leone Police to speed up and conclude investigations of all cases against journalists and civil society activists, including those who were assaulted or threatened and those who had been invited and/or detained, but released without charge.
- Security sectors must ensure the safety and security of journalists by respecting and abiding by the Memorandum of Understanding they signed with SLAJ.
- The security sectors management to conduct trainings for security personnel on handling protests and dealing with the media during their operations.
- The Justice office through the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice to facilitate the resolution of outstanding libel matters in the spirit of the repealed Criminal Libel Law as requested by the Ministry of Information and Communications to review and discharge all seditious and/or criminal libel-related cases against journalists.
- SLAJ and other media groups to lead the process in developing a national safety policy for journalists that will serve as a guide to journalists in ensuring their safety.
- The MRCG, SLAJ and other media groups to train and build the capacity of journalists to match international best standards of practice through the support of non-governmental organizations by supporting mentorship and fellowship programs for journalists.
- SLAJ should strengthen its Disciplinary Committee so as to promptly and effectively deal with issues of unprofessional practice and excesses of any journalist.



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## 11. APPENDICES

### 11.1 Reported Cases in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Editions Respectively of the Press Freedom Reports

The table below shows the cases, dates of attack/arrest or invitations and their current status.

The cases in the ‘gold columns’ have been concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned. 

Those in ‘blue columns’ are in court. 

Those in the ‘red columns’ are under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled. 

From the First to the Eighth Edition of the Press Freedom Report, fifty seven cases were monitored. Forty two of them were concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned, because of lack of progress; four were in court; and eleven under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled.

Table 11.1: Status of cases monitored by MRCG from March 2018 to May 2022

No	Cases Reported in the First Edition	Date of Attack/Arrest /Invitation	Status of Cases
1	Attack on a reporter of <i>Concord Times Newspaper</i> , Patrick Jaiah Kamara by thugs allegedly on the instruction of former Mayor of the Freetown City Council, Herbert George Williams, Sanusi Bruski and other All People Congress (APC) Party members during the 31 March 2018 Presidential run-off election	During the 31 March 2018 Presidential run-off Election	Matter resolved out of court after few appearances.
2	Attack on the late Editor of <i>New Age Newspaper</i> , Ibrahim Samura by the then ruling APC party members and supporters allegedly on orders of former Freetown Mayor of the APC, Herbert George Williams, and the APC Public Relation Officer, Abubakar at a polling station in Lumley during the 31 March 2018 Presidential run-off election who later died at the 34 Military Hospital at Wilberforce on 6 June 2018.	31 March 2018 Presidential run-off Election	The two accused had been acquitted and discharged for murder and conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm by Justice Augustine Musa of the High Court of Sierra Leone in Freetown as the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.
3	Arrest and detention of a civil society activist, Edmond Abu, Executive Director of Native Consortium and Research Centre, by the Sierra Leone Police for staging a peaceful protest in Freetown against the increments in fuel pump price.	17 July 2018	Released on bail; matter not charged to court.
4	Invitation of the Leader and Chairman of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) , Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray and Abdul Fonti Kabia, formerly of <i>AYV</i> , to CID for interview he granted in response to allegation relating to the alleged publication of false news, contrary to the Public Order Act of 1965.	22 July 2018	All charges dropped and matter terminated.

5	Invitation of journalist to Parliament to answer to some questions in connection with a story broadcast on <i>African Young Voices TV</i> , titled “Caught on Camera”, involving a member of parliament, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay and two others in a land matter.	September 2018	The AYV Director of News and Current Affairs, Mr. Samuel Wise Bangura, appeared before Parliament and was asked to retract and apologise. But he refused/declined and nothing happened after that.
6	Attack on the publisher of <i>The Elephant Newspaper</i> , Nimalty Kamara, allegedly by youth of the ruling Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) for allegedly criticising the new regime of President Julius Maada Bio.	10 September 2018	Matter is still at the Kenema High Court.
7	Attack on <i>AYV TV</i> journalist, Ransford Metzger, while investigating an alleged corruption matter at the St. Joseph Secondary School in Freetown.	September 2018	Alleged perpetrators arrested and held at the CID, but were released after the journalist and AYV management accepted the apology of the perpetrators.
8	Attack on the former Editor of <i>Awareness Times Newspaper</i> , John Koroma, during a Bye-Election in Tonko Limba, Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone, on 29 September 2018, allegedly by a team of Sierra Leone Police officers and persons who openly identified themselves as SLPP supporters.	29 September 2018	Matter still with the police and no arrest effected. John Koroma said he availed his witnesses to the police and that statements were obtained from them individually. He said the police had promised to get on to him but haven’t done so since and that he is gradually forgetting the matter. The police said that Koroma had not been able to identify those that attacked him; and as such, they were constrained to arrest any suspect. They however said they will continue to follow up on the matter.
9	Arrest of Fayia Amara Fayia of <i>Star Radio and Standard Times Newspaper</i> by CID officers outside the AYV media on what the CID said was a post on his Facebook page containing defamatory words against His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio.	29 September 2018	Police said since Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965 has been repealed, the file has been closed.
10	Harassment of Alhassan Jalloh, Editor of the <i>Unique Newspaper</i> , by police officers attached to the Lumley Police Station in the West end of Freetown, while investigating a fracas between Leonco Filling Station at Lumley and a mosque.	5 November 2018	Mr. Jalloh said the matter was not progressing and he has dropped it and moved on.
<b>N</b>	<b>Cases Reported in the Second Edition</b>	<b>Date of</b>	<b>Status of the matter</b>
<b>o</b>		<b>Attack/Arrest</b>	
11	Arrest and detention of Alpha Thorley, Managing Editor of <i>the NightWatch Newspaper</i> by the Sierra Leone Police on 14 January 2019 on the allegation of	14 January 2019	Police said the matter has been closed because of the decriminalization of Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965

	publishing false information that several diplomatic passports were illegally given to families of the ruling government officials.		
12	Attack on two <i>AYV</i> journalists, Augusta Ethel Turay and Bockarie Samai, on the 16 January 2019, allegedly by supporters of the opposition All People’s Congress Party (APC), whilecovering the visit of officials of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to the home of former President Ernest Koroma in Makeni, Bombali District.	16 January 2019	Matter stalled as police claim complainants were yet to return with their endorsed medical reports; hence they could not take any further action. But Augusta Ethel Turay, said they submitted their medical reports as was requested by the Police; yet there was no progress on the matter. “We submitted the medical reports at the Mena Police Station in Makeni as requested, but up to date, the police did not call us, neither discharged the matter nor charged it to court and so we stopped following the matter.” The police said that they were still waiting for the journalists to take their endorsed medical forms to the police headquarters.
13	Death threat against the <i>BBC</i> ’s Umaru Fofana apparently by a member or supporter of the opposition APC in an audio circulated on social media, after an interview he conducted with Sierra Leone’s former Vice President, Victor Bockarie Foh.	17 January 2019	Matter still under investigation according to the Police. However, Umaru Fofana said the Police investigating the matter disclosed the identity of his key witness and he eventually lost confidentiality in them and hence, he has stopped following up on the matter. The police in their response said that Mr Fofana has not been cooperating with the police.
14	Attacks on and intimidation of civil society leaders, including the Executive Director of Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Madam Marcella Samba-Sesay, who had publicly expressed critical views on the media about the governance challenges.	3-6 May 2019	Matter ended after several press releases condemning the attack on her.
15	Attack on a civil society activist, Morlai Conteh, President of the National Youth Coalition of Sierra Leone, allegedly by a group of military officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) after the main opposition All People’s Congress (APC) party did a walkout protest of the ceremony marking the Presidential State Opening of Parliament on 2nd May 2019.	2 May 2019	Mr. Conteh said his moves to further the case were fruitless; so he decided to drop it.

No	Cases Reported in Third Edition	Date of Attack/Arrest	Status of the matter
16	Arrest and detention of four local journalists- Sallieu Tejan Jalloh, Publisher of the <i>Times SL Newspaper</i> ; David Johnson, Editor of <i>Times SL Newspaper</i> ; Mustapha Sesay, General Editor, <i>Standard Times Newspaper</i> ; and Abu Bakarr Kargbo (Father Bakish), a Senior Staff Writer of <i>Standard Times Newspaper</i> - in Freetown on Friday 28 June 2019. They were charged with eight-count for allegedly publishing defamatory articles in the <i>Times SL Newspaper and the Standard Times Newspaper</i> respectively against Pa Momoh Fofanah Esq, a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of Sierra Leone.	28 June 2019	Journalists discharged.
17	Assault on two female sport journalists (Francess Bernard-Bundor and Easter Marie Samura) of SLBC by Officers of the Sierra Leone Presidential guard on Sunday 8 September 2019 at the National Stadium, during the FIFA 2022 World Cup Preliminary return-leg match between Sierra Leone and Liberia.	8 September 2019	Action taken against the presidential guards. Government refunded the medical expenses by the journalists and their property destroyed or stolen paid for.
18	Arrest and detention of Mahmud Tim Kargbo on 20 September 2019 for allegedly publishing a defamatory article against Hon Justice Miatta Samba', an Appeal Court Judge, titled 'Justice Redefined by Miatta Samba', which is said to have accused the judge of corruption and incompetence.	20 September 2019	Granted bail after tendering an apology letter to Hon Justice Miatta Samba; matter is still in Court.
19	Arrest and detention of the Managing Editor of the <i>Times Newspaper</i> Sallieu Tejan Jalloh (Sal Tee) on 11 November 2019 in Freetown, by plainclothes police officers in connection with an SMS text message that he sent to the Chief Minister of Sierra Leone, Prof. David Francis enquiring about an alleged payment of US\$ 1.5 million into his private ECOBANK account by SL Mining, which license had been cancelled by the state.	11 November 2019	Police said the matter has been closed because of the decriminalization of Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965.
No	Cases Reported in Fourth Edition	Date of Attack/Arrest	Status of the matter
20	Attack on three local journalists - Ibrahim Manasaray, aka 'Hebro' of <i>SLBC</i> , Makeni, Abdul M. Jalloh of <i>Amzas Radio</i> , Makeni and Foday Moriba Conteh of <i>Calabash Newspaper</i> , Tonkolili Districts - in the Northern Region of Sierra Leone.	January 2020	Matter under police investigation as police said journalists are yet to corroborate their witnesses. One of the victims, Abdul M. Jalloh of Hamzas Radio, said there was no progress on the matter and hence they had decided to move on with their different jobs. Police said that the three journalists had not been cooperating with the police.

21	Alleged threat by the former Inspector General of Police to arrest Alex Lawrence Koroma, a producer of <i>Radio Democracy FM 98.1</i> 'Good Moring Salon Programme', for a programme he produced on the state of security.	23 February 2020	Arrest not affected.
22	Arrest and detention of Chernor Jalloh, Reporter, <i>Radio Democracy</i> , Yusuf Bangura, Reporter, <i>Concord Times</i> , and a civil society activist, Thomas Moore Conteh, Executive Director of Citizens Advocacy Network (CAN) by police during a Limkokwing University protest over fee subsidies by the Government of Sierra Leone	5 March 2020	The two journalists were released, while the matter of Mr. Moore was dismissed by the Court.
23	Invitation of the Managing Editor/Publisher of the <i>Nationalist Newspaper</i> , Mohamed Sankoh (AKA, One Drop) by the police in connection with an opinion piece he authored titled 'Is the Catholic Church in a Mess?'	20 March 2020	Police dropped case against Mr Sankoh as they said it was a mistaken identity as they mistook Mr Sankoh for another person.
24	Assault on journalist Fayia Amara Fayia of <i>Star Radio and Standard Times Newspaper</i> , allegedly by military officers in Kenema and his subsequent arrest and detention by Police in Kenema.	4 April 2020	The matter is still at the Magistrate Court No. 1 in Kenema. Fayia Amara Fayia told the MRCG that after the intervention of SLAJ, MRCG and MFWA by issuing a petition letter to His Excellency the President, Julius Maada Bio (through the Minister of Information and Communication), the 'matter had died down and I have moved on.' The court is yet to discharge the matter.
25	Assault on Stanley Sahr Jimmy, Station Manager, <i>Wusum Radio FM 88.5</i> in Makeni, allegedly by five police officers at the Mena Police Station.	April 2020.	The police said four of the officers were seriously reprimanded in the presence of the complainant and that there was no case against one of the officers. The police said the matter has been closed. Mr Jimmy claimed the police are yet to call him to identify those that assaulted him nor had they been disciplined.
26	Arrest and detention of Adeyemi Jackson of <i>Universal Radio</i> by police in Freetown after reportedly requesting an interview with Dr Ibrahim Bundu, a medical doctor attached to the Connaught Hospital in Freetown, in relation to an alleged sexual assault matter.	21 May 2020.	Police said the matter has been closed.
<b>N</b>	<b>Cases Reported in Fifth Edition</b>	<b>Date of</b>	<b>Status of the matter</b>
<b>o</b>		<b>Attack/Arrest</b>	
27	The arrest and detention of Dr. Sylvia Blyden and Hussain Muckson Sesay by CID in Freetown, because	1 May 2020	The matter rendered, "Nolle Prosequoi", as the Government of Sierra Leone



	of her alleged critical and controversial publications and postings on social media. She was later charged with 10 counts of various offences, ranging from seditious libel, to publication of false news, and defamatory libel, among others		dropped all charges against them on the 16 November 2020
28	On the Police harassing and intimidating the Manager of <i>Lunsar Radio</i> , Mr Alhaji Foday Labay to produce a recording of a radio program he hosted Prof Sheikh Umaru Kamara, the Community Relations Officer of Sierra Leone Mining Company in Lunsar on 23 April 2020 which led to a strike action calling for the resignation or replacement of their Paramount Chief.	12 June 2020	The matter has been dismissed.
29	Supreme Court of Sierra Leone ordering the arrest of Lawyer Augustine Sorie-Sengbe Marrah for publishing information on social media about the ruling on the qualification of lawyers in holding certain offices, which have political undertones and allegedly had the tendency to put the legal profession into disrepute as his post was rated as demeaning to the apex court of the land.	28 October 2020	The matter ended when he complied with the Supreme Court ordering to do a retraction of the said post in an article and write a letter of apology to the judiciary and the presiding judges; and also publish the said letter of apology in the front pages of two widely read newspapers in Sierra Leone.
<b>N o</b>	<b>Cases Reported in the Sixth Edition</b>	<b>Date of Attack/Arrest /Invitation</b>	<b>Status of Cases</b>
30	The verbal attack, insult and intimidation of BBC reporter, and Former President of SLAJ Umaru Fofana in December 2020, from social media for his alleged “biased reports on political events in Sierra Leone” from people claiming to be members of the main opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) party.	December 2020	Umaru Fofana said he has decided to move on as he receives such threats frequently. <b>“I find it very harassing and sort of bullying that they can dedicate so much time to attacking and seeking to intimidate me. And the fact that APC party doesn’t distance itself from it, let alone condone, it is irksome. Failing to condemn it is akin to condoning it.”</b>
31	The arrest and detention of Emmanuel C. Thorli, a reporter for the <i>Night Watch Newspaper</i> on 7 February 2021, by the Sierra Leone Police for allegedly taking snapshots of the 7 February 2021 Jui demolition exercise carried out by the police at Jui Junction, Western Area Rural.	7 February 2021	Police said the matter has been closed.
32	The invitation and detention of the Editor-in-Chief and Proprietor, Joseph Turay and Ezekiel Dumbuya, News Editor of the <i>Public Review Newspaper</i> , on 22 March 2021, by officers of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Freetown for more than five hours, over a matter involving land dispute in the	22 March 2021	The police said none of them was detained. “They were only at CID for statement making; maybe, according to them, they see it as detention,” said the police. Police said the matter has been closed.



	Western Rural Area which police claimed that the newspaper had reported erroneously on.		
33	The arrest and detention of Hassan Gbessay Koroma, a <i>Concord Time Newspaper</i> journalist on 6 May 2021 by the Sierra Leone police for allegedly taking pictures of the Minister of Internal Affairs, David Panda Noah at the Siaka Stevens Street during an operation of him and police chasing commercial bike riders off the Central Business District (CBD) area, an operation that is said to clean the CBD of commercial motor bikes.	6 May 2021	The matter has been closed.
<b>N o</b>	<b>Cases Reported in the Seventh Edition</b>	<b>Date of Attack/Arrest</b>	<b>Status of Cases</b>
34	The arrest and detention of Osman Hardy Jalloh of <i>TV-News24</i> for the second time by Magistrate Joseph Toby of Court No.2 in Kenema on 10 June 2021 for allegedly publishing a story relating to a matter between an Imam and a female chief in Blama.	10 June 2021	The matter is still at the Human Rights Commission-Kenema for further investigation. The new Deputy Director, HRCSL Regional Service East, Tom Sandi, said the complainant was yet to sign and send the admissibility study to the Commission. The owner of TV-News24, who was the lead complainant on the matter, told MRCG that “Hardy is no longer affiliated with Tv-News24, so I can’t speak on his intentions on this matter.” Journalist Osman Hardy Jalloh told MRCG that “my former boss, owner of TV-News24, was pursuing the matter on my behalf; but I am no longer affiliated with the organization. I don’t have the finance to pursue the matter on my own. So, if my former boss said he was no longer pursuing it, then so be it.”
35	The alleged verbal attack on <i>BBC</i> Sports Journalist Mohamed Fajah Barrie by the Adviser to Sierra Leone’s Sports Minister, Alie Kadar for publishing a story on his Facebook timeline relating to Leone Stars players spending several hours at the Sierra Leone-Guinea border crossing point after they were refused entry into Guinea by the Guinean Immigration Authorities for lack of COVID-19 test results	13 June 2021	The Minister of Sports intervened, mediated and settled the matter between both parties.
36	The dismissal of Phebian Swill-Randall from the Sierra Leone Board of Entertainment and Investment by the Ambassador of Entertainment and Investment, Amara Dennis Turay commonly known as ‘Kao De Nero’ for a Facebook post she made on increment in the pump price of fuel in the country.	On 12 August 2021	Phebean Swill-Randall accepted her dismissal as she did not apologize to be reinstated.
37	The arrest and detention of 10 of <i>Star Radio’s</i>	On 5 October	Station Manager of Star Radio, Abdul

	journalists for allegedly obstructing the Sierra Leone Police as they went to the media house to investigate alleged illegal electricity connection, a complaint made by the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority (EDSA)	2021	Rahman Kamara told the MRCG that the matter had been discharged from court and their meter returned to them.
38	The intimidation of and death threat against Journalist Salieu Tejan Jalloh of <i>Times Newspaper</i> as a result of his publications exposing perpetrators behind the ‘alleged attempted ritual murder of the six virgins.’	8 October 2021	The matter had been settled as the alleged anonymous callers contacted and apologized to the journalist.
39	The raiding of the Editor of <i>Voice of Salone Newspaper</i> , David Johnson on the grounds of ‘insulting statements’ via WhatsApp by the Sierra Leone Police, a complaint filed by Sydney Campbell Esq. On 29 November 2021, the matter came up at the Ross Road Magistrate Court No. 3. The editor was charged with 5 counts.	22 November 2021	The matter had ended as the journalist did a retraction and apologized to Sydney Campbell Esq.
<b>N</b>	<b>Cases Reported in the Eighth Edition</b>	<b>Date of</b>	<b>Status of Cases</b>
<b>o.</b>		<b>attack/arrest/ Invitation</b>	
40	The invitation of the National Chairman and Leader of the National Grand Coalition (NGC) Party, Dr. Dennis Bright to the Police Headquarters in Freetown by the Inspector General (IG) of Police due to an interview he granted Radio Democracy 98.1 FM in connection to the proposed 2021 Mid- term Census which the NGC and the Coalition of Progressive Political Parties (CoPP) objected to.	7 December 2021	He was released on the same day after a closed door interview in the presence of his lawyers for close to two hours.
41	The physical assault and detention of Ransford Wright, a journalist of the <i>AYV Media Empire</i> by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in Freetown.	13 December 2021	Police said they were seeking for an ‘informal resolution’ of the matter. The journalist said the police promised to call him for a dialogue and a peaceful resolution on the matter, which they were yet to do. The matter is still under investigation.
42	The verbal attack and insult against Asmaa James, station manager of <b>Radio Democracy 98.1 FM</b> by Alhaji Amadu Bah, a popular artist known as LAJ in a Facebook live video circulated on social media platforms as a result of a report aired by <b>Radio Democracy</b> on a bench warrant ordered by a magistrate for LAJ.	13 December 2021	The matter had ended after LAJ apologized to Asmaa James and the women of Sierra Leone as he expressed regrets and took full responsibility for his actions. On 22 December 2021, Asmaa James in a Facebook post said she had forgiven LAJ and let go of the matter after some moments of prayers and fasting.
43	The arrest and detention of the 2018 presidential aspirant for the Unity Party, Femi Claudius-Cole at the CID for an alleged negative comment she made on	13 December 2021	The matter had ended as she was later released.

	<i>Radio Democracy 98.1 FM</i> in relation to the 2021 mid-term housing and population census.		
44	The Verbal attack and threat to the entire editorial team of <i>Salone Compass Newspaper</i> from unknown members of the general public through phone calls.	14 December 2021	The proprietor, Ibrahim Alusine Conteh told the MRCG that the police did nothing towards the issue. He said SLAJ has also not done anything about the official complaints made to them.  Police said they were still investigating the matter.
45	The arrest and detention of Pastor Septimus Yambasu for allegedly using obscene and insulting words against President Julius Maada Bio. He was charged for insulting conduct contrary to section 3 (1) of the Public Order Act of 1965 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown.	14 December 2021	The matter had been resolved and discharged from court and Pastor Yambasu's vehicle returned to him.
46	The Sierra Leone Police arrested, and detained Ahmed Doyle Kamara popularly known as Tazmo Sliz, an entertainer in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone for allegedly insulting and attacking the Fullah Ethnic group in a Facebook live video.	18 December 2021	On Monday 28 February 2022, Magistrate Sahr Kekura of Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown discharged the matter from court after the complainant, Mohamed Salieu Jalloh on behalf of the Fullah Community accepted Tazmo's apology.
47	An official complaint by Hawanatu Konneh Fofanah at the CID in December 2021 against an anonymous individual who allegedly attacked her personality on Facebook	25 December 2021	Hawanatu said there was no headway on the matter. Police said it was still investigating the matter.
48	The intimidation and humiliation of Amadu Lamrana Bah, Head of Digital Media of the <i>Africa Young Voices (AYV)</i> and the President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), by Airport officials allegedly acting on the orders of 'someone' at the Lungi International Airport 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.	10 January 2022.	The matter had ended as the journalist later boarded the flight to Cameroon.
49	The arrest of Solomon Joe, a journalist working for <i>KISS 104 FM</i> in Bo by two officers from the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Freetown. They went to Bo and 'ordered the arrest' of the journalist for a broadcast concerning a transaction between two businessmen in Bo. He spent one night in police custody.	7 February 2022.	The journalist was released on 8 February 2022 with conditions that he retracted his story and apologized to the businessman. <b>"I am not going to retract the story because I stand by my story,"</b> said Solomon.
50	The invitation and detention of the Acting Spokesperson for the main opposition All Peoples Congress Party (APC), Sidi Yayah Tunis at the	8 February 2022	The matter had ended as he was released from the CID.

	Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Freetown for alleged inciting utterances he made during an interview he granted on Radio Democracy 98.1 FM on Monday 7 February 2022.		
51	The alleged physical assault of Alusine Antha, a journalist working for <i>Eagle Africa FM 91.3</i> by some youths in the Waterloo community in connection with a land saga he had gone to cover.	17 February 2022.	The matter is still in court.
52	SLAJ 17 March 2022 press alert calling on the Judiciary of Sierra Leone to allow media access to cover the opening session of a tribunal set up to investigate the suspended Auditor-General, Mrs Lara Taylor-Pearce and her deputy after complaint from some journalists that they were denied entry to the proceedings.	17 March 2022	The matter had ended as both parties settled the issue.
53	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) in a press statement on 28 April 2022 stated that as part of its mandates temporarily shut down the operations of <i>Justice Radio</i> in Freetown for 10 hours connected to an alleged unprofessional conduct, proprietorship and management issues that posed serious confusion to the operations and activities of the radio station. On 27 April 2022, the IMC received a complaint from its Monitoring, Research and Projects Unit (MRPU) against <i>Justice FM Radio</i> in connection with its program, 'Justice Show' which was aired on 27 April 2022.	27 April 2022	The ban was lifted that same day. The IMC's Complaints Committee recommended that a fine of Le1,000,000 (One Million Leones) be levied on <i>Justice FM Radio</i> for breach of the accuracy, truth and impartiality provision in Section 3, Principle 6 of the IMC Media Code of Practice, and that the station should temporarily suspend the 'Justice Show' until IMC conducts a monitoring and inspection visit to assess their editorial and technical capacities to manage such a program professionally. The IMC Board at its meeting held on 4 May 2022 endorsed the recommendations.
54	The arrest and detention of Mr. Mohamed Khan, the Interim Chairman of Teachers Solidarity, by police just outside AYV's premise after Mr. Khan had appeared on their Wake Up Salone television program as a guest; and the arrest and detention of Lahai Jah and Joseph C Kailie at the Bo West Police Station by police after allegedly convening a protest without police clearance to convene a meeting of "The Teachers Solidarity Movement".	26 and 28 April 2022 respectively	The matter had ended as they were released on the same day of arrest.
55	The arrest and incarceration of Mohamed Mansaray popularly known as 'Blacker' who reportedly suffers from mental illness and roams the streets of Freetown, and Kadiatu Yankaday a trader, at the Freetown Correctional Centres on 28 April 2022 for allegedly insulting President Bio.	28 April 2022	Presiding Magistrate Rashid Jalloh had discharged the matter from the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 4 as no evidence was proffered against the accused. Legal Link, a human rights organisation, helped to secure the

			discharge verdict for 'Blacker'.
56	An alleged 'assassination attempt' on journalist Gibril Gottor and his family through a 'suffocating smell of petrol' in their house in Kambia, Northern Sierra Leone.	29 April 2022	<p>Gibril told MRCG that the police were yet to provide him and his family security. "The police told me to return home saying they will do a patrol at my house. But I refused because I did not see any evidence of their patrol. My family and I are still sleeping somewhere else for our safety," the journalist said.</p> <p>Chief Superintendent of Police at the Kambia Local Police Unit, Abu Bakarr Magona, told the MRCG that they had deployed personnel to patrol Gibril's house, but cannot provide him with personal security as they do not have enough manpower to do so. Police said the matter was under investigation.</p>
57	The arrest and detention of journalist Sorie Saio Sesay of <i>Okentuhun Radio FM 94.0</i> by police in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone for allegedly "publishing false information" on social media about an incident between the SLP and commercial bike riders in Makeni.	26 May 2022	<p>Sorie was released on bail on 31 May 2022 with the intervention of the SLAJ. He told the MRCG that even though the police had released him, the CID still has his phone.</p> <p>The Director of Crime Service at the CID headquarters in Freetown, AIG William Fayia Sellu, said that the Cyber Unit of the SLP was still investigating the content of the phone of the journalist as a way of following procedures, and once the investigation was completed and nothing found, his phone would be returned and the matter resolved.</p>