

THE STATE OF MEDIA FREEDOM IN SIERRA LEONE

(MARCH 2018- DECEMBER 2020)

A look at

**Press
Freedom**

under President
Julius M.Bio



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1. INTRODUCTION

This report tracks press freedom issues in Sierra Leone within the last three years-2018-2020. It is dubbed the State of Media Freedom in Sierra Leone. The report contains an overview of laws, policies and institutions governing the media space in Sierra Leone; key press freedom and safety of journalists' issues; summary of press freedom violations recorded over the period, analysis of trends of violations, key perpetrators and victims; status of redress of violations; and recommendations to both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on how to improve the situation.

It reviews the arrest and detentions of journalists over the years using criminal and seditious libel laws in Part V 'Defamatory and Seditious Libel Defamation' of the Public Order Act (POA) of 1965 (No. 46 1965), before the said laws were repealed. Part V of the POA served as an obstacle to the media in terms of fulfilling its democratic roles due to increased fear of incarceration arising from the provisions of the law which undermined freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution of Sierra Leone, Act No. 6 of 1991 and by extension, international best practices and standards. Those events spawned negative media coverage internationally and somehow smeared Sierra Leone's democratic credentials especially in press freedom rankings.

However, on the 23rd July 2020, the Parliament of Sierra Leone unanimously repealed Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965. On the 28th October, 2020, President Julius Maada Bio signed the Public Order (Amendment) Act 2020 into law as a fulfilment of his campaign promise to repeal criminal and seditious libel provisions in the country. Section 1 of the Public Order (Amendment) Act 2020 provides that "The Public Order Act, 1965 is amended by the repeal of Part V-DEFAMATORY AND SEDITIONOUS LIBEL." The repeal is expected to create an enabling environment for media practitioners and civil society activists to hold government accountable and promote good democratic governance.

There are still some concerns about the safety and security of journalists aside the issues of arrest and detention. Such concerns have been recognised by the United Nations General Assembly which proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists in 2013. Resolution 68/163 deals with "The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity." The UN condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers, such as torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention, as well as intimidation and harassment in both conflict and non-conflict situations. It also urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy and effective investigations into all allegations of violence against journalists and media workers, and to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies."¹ Few cases relating

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013 [on the report of the Third Committee (A/68/456/Add.2)]
<http://undocs.org/A/RES/68/163>

to invitation and or arrest of journalists were still inconclusive even after the repeal of the criminal libel law. Some media houses and practitioners faced at least one of the following violations:

- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Humiliation
- Arrest
- Detention
- Physical Attack²

² A Study on the State of Safety of Journalists' Policies and Practices in Media Houses in Sierra Leone, October, 2020

2. AN OVERVIEW OF LAWS, POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS GOVERNING THE MEDIA SPACE IN SIERRA LEONE

2.1 An overview of laws and policies governing the media space in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone, as a country, has specific statutes (Acts) dealing with Media Laws, Regulations, policies and institutions governing the media space in Sierra Leone. The summary of the key provision is as follows:

1. **Constitution of Sierra Leone, Act. No 6 of 1991.** It contains the overarching provisions on Freedom of Expression and of the Press. It sets out the Obligations of the mass media in Section 11 and the guarantee of freedom of expression and of the press in Section 25

Section 11: The press, radio and television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Constitution and highlight the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.

Section 25: Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, and for the purpose of this section the said freedom includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, freedom from interference with his correspondence, freedom to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions, and academic freedom in institutions of learning.”

2. **The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act 2020-** The Independent Media Commission Act of 2020 is an Act established to regulate the media (radio, newspaper, DTH, television) in Sierra Leone. It repealed the Independent Media Commission Act, 2000 as amended in 2006 and 2007. The IMC Act 2020 seeks to promote professionalism in the media throughout Sierra Leone; ensure that media institutions achieve the highest level of efficiency in the provision of media services; protect the interest of journalists and protect the public against exploitation or abuse by media institutions.

The IMC Act makes provision for the Independent Media Commission (IMC) to develop Media Code of Practice containing Rules and Regulations Governing the Establishment and Operations of the Print, Electronic Media and Advertising in Sierra Leone.

On the 23rd July, 2020, the Parliament of Sierra Leone enacted the bill entitled: the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, 2020 (Act No. 5 of 2020). This came at a time when many citizens were concerned that the repeal of Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965 will lead to journalists becoming “unprofessional and reckless.” Hence there was a

call for the IMC Act to be strengthened so as to act as safeguards for citizens who will want to take action against the excesses of journalists.

3. **Public Order Act of 1965 (Part V- Defamatory and Seditious Libel-now repealed)-** Section 26 to 31 under Part V of the Public Order Act dealt with defamation whereas Sections 32 to 37 dealt with false publication and seditious libel. With much advocacy and lobbying from press freedom advocacy groups including the MRCG, SLAJ, the entire Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965 was repealed.
4. **The Right to Access Information Act, 2013-** it is an Act enacted to provide for the disclosure of information held by public authorities or by persons providing services for them and to provide for other related matters.
5. **The Media Code Of Practice (2007) -** The IMC Code of Practice outlines rules and regulations governing the establishment and operations of the print, electronic media and advertising in Sierra Leone. The IMC Code of Practice serves as guide to journalists on their day to day activities in their journalistic work by making provisions for rules and regulations that they are to abide by. Breaching any of its provisions goes with its own fines and disciplinary actions.
6. **Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics:** The SLAJ Code of Ethics was developed and adopted by the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) to address the ethical issues facing Sierra Leone's journalism. It draws inspiration and conforms to most of the principles drawn from other Codes of Ethics and international best practices. It is to ensure that its members adhere to the highest ethical standards, professional competence and good behaviour in performing their duties. This Code is to provide a guide to professional media practice, and is therefore applicable to all members of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists

The tables below gives a summary explanation of Specific Statutes on Media Laws/Regulation in Sierra Leone, their year of enactment, review or repeal and the status of the law or regulation.

Table 1.1: 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.	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, 2020 (Act No. 5 of 2020)	2000 It repealed the IMC Act of 2020 (Act No.12 of 2000)	In force
5.	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation Act, 2009 (Act No. 1 of 2010).	2010	In force
6.	The Law on Contempt of Court	Common Law	In force

Source (Sowa & Kapuwa, 2015 and Press Freedom Report, 2020)³

Table 1.2: Other Statutes (Acts of Parliament) relating to Media Regulation Still in Force

a. Other Statutes (Acts of Parliament) 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	In force
2.	Criminal Libel - The Public Order Act	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

³ Francis Sowa and Joseph Ebenda Kapuwa, Media Laws and Regulations: Review and Update on Sierra Leone's Statutory and Self-Regulatory Models (2015) and the MRCG's Press Freedom Report, November, 2020

9.	Pharmacy and Drugs Act	2001	In force
10.	The Telecommunications Act	2006	In force
11.	The Child Rights Act	2007	In force
12.	The Anti-Corruption Commission Act	2008, as amended in 2019	In force
13.	The Copyright Act	2011	In force
14.	The Sexual Offences Act	2012 as amended in 2019	In force
15.	The Right to Access Information Act	2013	In force

Source (Sowa & Kapuwa, 2015)⁴

Table 1.3: Codes Dealing with Media Regulation Still in Force

b. 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)	Reviewed and in force.
2.	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Media Code of Practice	2007	In force (to be reviewed; process ongoing).

Source (Sowa and Kapuwa, 2015)⁵

2.2 An overview of institutions governing the media space in Sierra Leone.

The media space in Sierra Leone is mainly governed and regulated by the Independent Media Commission (IMC) which is the country's instituted media regulatory body established through an Act of Parliament in 2000. There is also another regulatory body, the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM) which deals with issues of spectrum; the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, Guild of Editors, and Sierra Leone Reporters Union and among others regulate the conduct of their members.

I. The Independent Media Commission (IMC)

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) is the regulatory body of media institutions in the country. The IMC was established by an Act of Parliament in 2000 (as amended in 2006 and 2007) and now repealed and replaced with the IMC Act of 2020. As a regulatory body, it is responsible for registering, licensing, preparing of code of ethics, discipline and cancellation of registration

4 (Ibid,2015)

5 (Ibid,2015)

and withdrawal of licenses from media institutions if they persistently publish or broadcast inaccurate, obscene/indecent contents. It also seeks to promote professionalism in the media throughout Sierra Leone; ensure that media institutions achieve the highest level of efficiency in the provision of media services; protect the interest of journalists and protect the public against exploitation or abuse by media institutions.

II. National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM),

Another regulatory body is the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM) which was established by an Act of Parliament in 2006. NATCOM issues frequency spectrums to radio and television stations. The main function of the Commission is to licence 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.

III. Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Disciplinary Committee

SLAJ constituted Disciplinary Committee established pursuant to its constitution to adjudicate upon matters of indiscipline and professional misconduct of individual members of SLAJ. SLAJ Disciplinary Committee in their public hearing sessions help guide journalists to professional reporting and provide a platform where complaints brought up by members of the public against journalists are addressed. The Disciplinary Committee is to enhance professionalism in Sierra Leone's media landscape and to promote the adoption of self-regulatory mechanisms. SLAJ has its affiliate bodies- Guild of Editors (GoE), Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), and among others who also govern their members.

3. KEY PRESS FREEDOM AND SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS' ISSUES

A study on the state of Safety Policies and Practices in media houses in Sierra Leone in October 2020 was undertaken by the Media Reform Coordinating Group- Sierra Leone (MRCG-SL) with support from MFWA. It targeted Managers, Managing Editors, Proprietors, Publishers, Editors of radio stations and television stations, newspapers and online media of forty-four media outlets (radio stations, television stations, newspapers and online media) spread across Sierra Leone. It solicited and analysed information on the trends of safety of journalists' issues in Sierra Leone (including types of violations, perpetrators, gender of victims), number of media outlets that have a safety policy or manual, and number a specific policy for female journalists, among others.

The findings of the study showed that majority of the media houses studied lacked a safety and security policy; that there was no specific safety and security policy in those media institutions, although most of them stated that such issues are addressed in their editorial policy. The findings further showed that many journalists are not knowledgeable about tips on how to keep themselves safe in their line of duty and they exposed themselves to dangers when covering riots or demonstrations.

On types of safety and security issues that journalists are faced with in Sierra Leone, the findings showed that almost all the respondents have encountered at least one of the following violations:

- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Humiliation
- Arrest
- Detention
- Physical Attack

Regarding instances of key press freedom and safety of journalists' issues in Sierra Leone especially where they are being influenced by politicians and perpetrated by the police, a writer and reporter for the *Concord Times* newspaper said that "journalists are sometimes arrested by the police in the line of duty as this happens mostly during protests. I have also been attacked during a civil unrest." However, there are also instances of community stakeholders posing threat to the safety of community radio journalists as the station manager of *Radio Zimmi* in Pujehun District explained that "We get intimidated by community stakeholders who think they have the powers to influence our operations."

On the aspect of perpetrators and violators of journalists press freedom and endangering their safety in their line of duty, the safety study findings stated that the respondents named various categories of people as the perpetrators of the violations, with the Sierra Leone Police and politicians being the most culpable perpetrators of those violations:

- Sierra Leone Police
- Politicians
- Chiefs/Community stakeholders/people
- Military personnel
- Civil servants
- Members of the public

On the approach to ensuring the safety of journalists, many media houses do not have a holistic approach as they attend to safety threat and issues as they arise. From the safety and security study carried by the MRCG, the informant for *Awoko* newspaper said they provide “guidelines for staff, do in house coaching, and provide safety tips as and when things go ugly so as to protect themselves”.

From the responses of media houses as to their approaches in ensuring the safety and security of staff in their line of duty, key among the responses from the study showed that media houses:

- Provide resources and safety equipment for their staff on a regular basis;
- Provide advice and mentorship for their staff frequently;
- Organise trainings on safety and security issues for all their staff.

4. SUMMARY OF PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS RECORDED OVER THE PERIOD AND STATUS OF REDRESS OF VIOLATIONS

The Constitution of Sierra Leone and other international laws which Sierra Leone is a signatory to guarantee press freedom and freedom of expression. But one of the key instruments used by politicians and state actors to victimise and violate the rights of journalists in Sierra Leone was the Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965 which was repealed on the 23rd July 2020.

The Reports on Press Freedom in Sierra Leone- the first to the fifth edition produced by the MRCG with support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America, from May 2018 to November 2020 tracked reports on cases of the invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecution of journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty. The reports had recorded 29 cases on invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecution of journalists and civil society activists. The data showed that sixteen were concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned because of lack of progress; four were in court; and nine were under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled.

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

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



The cases in ‘blue columns’ are in court.



The cases in the ‘peach columns’ are under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled.



Table 3.1 Status of cases monitored by the MRCG from May 2018 to November 2020

Summary of press freedom violations recorded from March 2018 to December 2020 and Status of redress of those violations

No	Cases Reported from March 2018 to December 2020	Date of Attack / Arrest/Invitation	Status of Cases
1	Attack on a reporter of Concord Times Newspaper, Patrick Jaijah 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 March 31, 2018 Presidential run-off election	During the 31 st March, 2018 Presidential run-off Election	Matter resolved out of court after few appearances.
2	Attack on the late Editor of New Age Newspaper, Ibrahim Samura by the then ruling APC party members and supporters during the March 31, 2018 run-off election. Samura died on 6 th June, 2018. The two main suspects of the opposition All People's Congress (APC) party, former Freetown City Council Mayor, Herbert George Williams and Abu Bakarr Daramy, the APC Western Area Public Relations Officer are before Justice Augustine Musa of the High Court of Sierra Leone facing a two count indictment of murder and conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm.	31 st March, 2018 Presidential run-off Election	Matter at the High Court in Freetown as trial continues.
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 th 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 AYV, 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 nd 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 African Young Voices TV, 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 The Elephant Newspaper, 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 th September, 2018	Matter is still at the Kenema High Court.
7	Attack on AYV TV 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 Awareness Times Newspaper, John Koroma, during a Bye-Election in Tonko Limba, Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone, on September 29, 2018, allegedly by a team of Sierra Leone Police officers and persons openly identifying themselves as SLPP supporters.	29 th September, 2018	Matter still with the police and no arrest effected
9	Arrest of Fayia Amara Fayia of Star Radio and Standard Times Newspaper 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.	29 th September, 2018	File with the Law Officers' Department for perusal and legal advice.
10	Harassment of Alhassan Jalloh, Editor of the Unique Newspaper, 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 th November, 2018	Mr. Jalloh said the matter was not progressing and he has dropped it and moved on.
11	Arrest and detention of Alpha Thorley, Managing Editor of the NightWatch Newspaper by the Sierra Leone Police on 14th January, 2019 on the allegation of publishing false information that several diplomatic passports were illegally given to families of the ruling government officials.	14 th January, 2019	File at the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice for legal advice.
12	Attack on two AYV journalists, Augusta Ethel Turay and Bockarie Samai, on the 16 th January, 2019, allegedly by supporters of the opposition All People's Congress Party (APC), while covering the visit of officials of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to the home of former President Ernest Koroma in Makeni, Bombali District.	16 th January, 2019	Matter stalled as police claim complainants were yet to return with their endorsed medical report; hence they could not take any further action. But Augustine Ethel Turay, said they submitted their medical report as was requested by the Police; yet there was no progress on the matter.

13	Death threat against the BBC's Mr. 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 th January, 2019	Matter still under investigation according to the Police. However, Umaru Fofana said the Police disclosed his key witness and he eventually lost confidentiality in the Police investigation and hence he has stopped following the matter
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 rd -6 th 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 Presidential State Opening of Parliament on 2 nd May 2019.	2 nd May, 2019	Mr. Conteh said his moves to further the case were fruitless; so he decided to drop it
16	Arrest and detention of four local journalists- Sallieu Tejan Jalloh, Publisher of the Times SL Newspaper; David Johnson, Editor of Times SL Newspaper; Mustapha Sesay, General Editor, Standard Times Newspaper; and Abu Bakarr Kargbo (Father Bakish), a Senior Staff Writer of Standard Times Newspaper- in Freetown on Friday 28th June 2019. They were charged with eight-count for allegedly publishing defamatory articles in the Times SL Newspaper and the Standard Times Newspaper respectively against Pa Momoh Fofanah Esq, a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of Sierra Leone.	28 th June, 2019	Journalists discharged.
17	Assault on two female sport journalists (Francess Bernard-Bundor and Easter Marie Samura) of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation (SLBC) by Officers of the Sierra Leone Presidential guard on Sunday 8th September 2019 at the National Stadium, during the FIFA 2022 World Cup Preliminary return-led match between Sierra Leone and Liberia.	8 th September , 2019	Action taken against the presidential guards. Government refunded the medical expenses by the journalists and their properties destroyed or stolen paid for.
18	Arrest and detention of Mahmud Tim Kargbo on 20th September 2019 for allegedly publishing a defamatory article against Hon Justice Miatta Samba', an Appeal Court Judge,	20 th September , 2019	Granted bail after tendering an apology letter to Hon Justice Miatta Samba; matter is still in Court.

	titled 'Justice Redefined by Miatta Samba', which is said to have accused the judge of corruption and incompetence.		
19	Arrest and detention of the Managing Editor of the Times Newspaper Sallieu Tejan Jalloh (Sal Tee) on 11 th 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 th November , 2019	File still with the Law Officers Department for perusal and legal advice and there has been no new development
20	Attack on three local journalists - Ibrahim Manasaray, aka 'Hebro' of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Makeni, Abdul M. Jalloh of Amzas Radio, Makeni and Foday Moriba Conteh of Calabash Newspaper, Tonkolili Districts - in the Northern Region of Sierra Leone by violent youths of Sambaia Chiefdom, in the Tonkolili District, allegedly based on the utterances of some inciting statements Hon Alhaji Musa Bamba Foray Jalloh, commonly known as Musa Bendugu of Constituency 056, Sambaia Chiefdom made. Hon. Alhaji Musa Bamba Foray Jalloh, said he was not a party to all those allegations and that they were 'blatant lies' designed to dampen his character and reputation. He said he never ordered any attack on anybody	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 is no progress on the matter and hence they have decided to move on with their different jobs.
21	Alleged threat by the former Inspector General of Police to arrest Alex Lawrence Koroma, a producer of Radio Democracy FM 98.1 'Good Moring Salon Programme', for a programme he produced on the state of security.	23 rd February 2020	Arrest not effected.
22	Arrest and detention of Chernor Jalloh, Reporter, Radio Democracy, Yusuf Bangura, Reporter, Concord Times, 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 th 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 Nationalist Newspaper, Mohamed Sankoh (AKA, One Drop) by the police in connection with an opinion piece they claimed he authored titled 'Is the Catholic Church in a Mess?'	20 th 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	<p>Assault on journalist Fayia Amara Fayia of Star Radio and Standard Times Newspaper, allegedly by military officers in Kenema and his subsequent arrest and detention by Police in Kenema. According to a press release issued by the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) on 10th April, 2020, “Fayia was mob-beaten by about nine military officers allegedly led by one Major Fofana and arrested on Wednesday, 1st April, 2020 in Kenema in the line of duty.” The release stated that Fayia was mob-beaten because he attempted to take snapshots of a truckload of rice being offloaded within a barricaded area after he and a colleague were denied entry into the venue. The journalist decided to take photos of the scene with his phone from a distance, to which Major Fofana allegedly stepped forward and grabbed his mobile device from him and later ordered his colleagues to beat him up.</p>	4 th April, 2020	Matter is still in court
25	<p>Assault on journalist Stanley Sahr Jimmy, Station Manager of Wusum Radio 88.5 FM, Makeni, who was allegedly “mob-beaten” by five police officers at the Mena Police Station. According to SLAJ press release, he went to report an alleged breaking into his Radio Station, but an argument ensued in the process between some of the police officers and him, which allegedly resulted to his beating and ‘forcefully dispossessed’ of his phone. “Jimmy reportedly sustained injuries to his lower abdomen, mouth and left eye. A medical report has been tendered to the CDIID while he is responding to treatment,” stated the SLAJ press release.</p>	5 th April 2020.	Matter is stalled as Mr Jimmy claimed the police are yet to call him to identify those that assaulted him nor had they been disciplined. The police said the victim is yet to bring a substantive witness to corroborate his claim.
26	<p>Arrest and detention of Adeyemi Jackson of Universal Radio by police in Freetown. He was arrested and detained 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. The journalist was released on the next day, 22nd May, 2020 after the intervention of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ).</p>	21 st May 2020.	Released on bail; matter under investigation.
27	<p>The arrest and detention of Dr. Slyvia Blyden and Hussain Muckson Sesay by CID in Freetown, because 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, publication of false news, to defamatory libel, among others</p>	1 st May 2020	The matter rendered, “Nolle Prosequi”, as the Government of Sierra Leone dropped all charges against them on the 16th November, 2020

28	Police allegedly harassed and intimidated the Manager of Lunsar Radio, 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 rd April 2020 which led to a strike action calling for the resignation or replacement of their Paramount Chief due to the shutting down of the S.L Mining Company in Lunsar, by the Government which locals claimed the Paramount Chief was responsible for.	12 th June 2020	The matter has been dismissed.
29	Supreme Court of Sierra Leone ordered 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 undertone 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 th October 2020	The matter ended with the Supreme Court ordering him 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 newspaper in Sierra Leone

5. ANALYSIS OF TRENDS OF VIOLATIONS, KEY PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS

Analysis of Trends of Violations

On the analyses of the trend of violations, key perpetrators and victims, research including engagements with the police, SLAJ and data from the MRCG's Press Freedom Reports showed that in 2018, which was an election year (Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections) in Sierra Leone, there were up to 10 cases of violations against journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty. In 2019, nine major violations were recorded against journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty. In 2020, which saw the emergence of COVID-19, up to 10 cases of violations against journalists and civil society activists were also recorded.

On the patterns of violations, most of the violations against journalists and civil society activists were based on: assault and attack; arrest and detention; invitation to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), police stations or the Well of Parliament; and threats or harassments from even local authorities and residents in communities. Journalists and civil society activists suffered mostly from assault, attack, arrest and detention than the other categories mentioned.

On the circumstances upon which the violations were meted against journalists and civil society activists, they were mostly during their line of duties covering elections, protests, and demonstrations, doing follow-up on stories and investigations, publications and broadcast of media contents and during live media programs.

Key Perpetrators of the Violations

The key perpetrators of the alleged violations against journalists and civil society activists under the period of review are:

- Sierra Leone Police (SLP)
- Political party operatives (SLPP and APC thugs)
- Military officers (RSLAF)
- Presidential guards
- Violent youths
- Social media operatives

Victims of the Violations

From the monitoring, the victims of the violations are mostly journalists and civil society activists. See the table 3.1 on the status of cases monitored by the MRCG from May 2018 to November 2020 above for the names and description of victims.

6. STATUS OF REDRESS OF VIOLATIONS

On the status of redress of the violations recorded from March 2018 to December 2020, according to the data from the MRCG's media monitoring, **of the recorded 29 cases** on the invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecution of journalists and civil society activists, the data showed that:

- **Sixteen of the cases have been concluded, settled, resolved, dropped or abandoned because of lack of progress;**
- **Four are in court;**
- **And nine under police investigation/inconclusive/stalled.**

Please see table 3.1 Status of cases monitored by the MRCG from March 2018 to November 2020 for detailed explanation on the redress of the violations.

The Sierra Leone Police has been very cooperative in providing information to the MRCG on the status of cases involving attacks on journalists. The government, through the Ministry of Information and Communications, has continuously reechoed its commitment to ensuring press freedom.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION

The following recommendations, when implemented by both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, will help improve the situation and promote press freedom and freedom of expression.

a. Government of Sierra Leone

- The Government of Sierra Leone to ensure that journalists and civil society activists whose rights were violated in line of their duty receive justice.
- The Government of Sierra Leone to ensure the safety and security of all journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty.
- The Government of Sierra Leone to review and discharge all cases against journalists and individuals that are libel related hence the law has been repealed.
- 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.
- Government should continue to 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.
- The IMC should continue to popularise its statute (IMC Act 2020) and the Media Code of Practice among journalists and the police.
- Politicians and the Police should respect media freedom and the right to freedom of expression
- Government officials should stop stone-walling and be willing and ready to respond to requests from journalists to cross-check their information.

b. Non-Governmental Organizations/Stakeholders

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Non-governmental organisations to support and equip journalists with the requisite knowledge and skills on keeping themselves safe in their line of duty.
- ✓ The MRCG, SLAJ and other media groups to train and build the capacity of journalists to match international best standards of practice.
- ✓ SLAJ, MRCG and other non-governmental organisations to come out with a position paper in urging the police to fast track the investigation and conclusion of cases relating to the violations of the right of journalists.

- ✓ SLAJ to strengthen its Disciplinary Committee and to also popularise its Media Code of Ethics among its membership.

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