



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



**Press Freedom in Sierra Leone
December 2023 – May 2024**

Twelfth Edition

Produced by the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG)

with support from

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms & Abbreviations	Meaning
ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ACR	Annual Compliance Report
AGM	Annual General Meeting
APC	All Peoples Congress
AYV	Africa Young Voices
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporations
BBC-MA SL	BBC Media Action Sierra Leone
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CMG	China Media Group
ETU	Eastern Technical University
IGP	Inspector General Police
IMC	Independent Media Commission
LUC	Local Unit Commander
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MoICE	Ministry of Information and Civic Education
MRCG	Media Reform Coordinating Group
MP	Member of Parliament
MFWA	Media Foundation for West Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NaTCA	National Telecommunications Authority
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
ONS	Office of National Security

RAIC	Rights to Access Information Commission
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLAJ	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
SLBC	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLRU	Sierra Leone Reporters Union
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SWASAL	Sport Writers Association of Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
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, Access to Information, and Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Sierra Leone,’ is the **twelfth** 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 2023 to May 2024, 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 and issues covered in this Report are:

1. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ’s) engagement with the new United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative and team on 21 December 2023 in Freetown.
2. The MRCG’s official presentation of the Draft National Media and Information to the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE), at a stakeholder meeting convened by the ministry on 25 January 2024.
3. The invitation and detention of Alie Bai Kamara, Station Manager of *Citizen Radio 103.7 FM*, by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Freetown on 8 February 2024.
4. The arrest and detention of Emmanuel C Thorli, Managing Editor of *Night Watch Newspaper*, at the CID in Freetown on 21 February 2024.
5. The MRCG’s public engagement with media and journalism students on media freedom, reforms and capacity building in Sierra Leone, at Central University in Mile 91, Njala University and the Every Nation Polytechnic in Bo on 8 and 9 February 2024.
6. The online threats, abuse and harassments against Amadu Lamrana Bah, a journalist working for the *Africa Young Voices (AYV) television* who also doubles as the President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU) for a post on his Facebook and X’s accounts titled in March 2024.
7. The follow-up engagement convened by MRCG and the BBC Media Action Sierra Leone, with heads of various media organizations and associations in Sierra Leone on the implementation of the National

Action Plan developed at the Post Media Viability and Investment Conference in Freetown on 20 March 2024.

8. MRCG and BBC Media Action organized a two-day retreat at Companero Resort, Freetown, on 25 and 26 March 2024 to monitor the progress made in implementing the National Action Plan.
9. The MRCG and the National Fund for Public Interest Media (NaFPIM) roundtable engagement with key institutions in Sierra Leone on the operations of NaFPIM on 24 April 2024.
10. The invitation for questioning of Patrick Kai, a journalist working for *Calabash newspaper*, to the Kenema police division on 16 April 2024.
11. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) issued a warrant of arrest for Justice Boima, CEO of *Justice FM and TV*, on 23 May 2024 for alleged offences relating to cyberstalking and bullying.
12. The alleged online intimidation of Alie Badara, a freelance journalist in Bo, for a Facebook post he made on the excesses of the police in their fight against the synthetic drug called “Kush” and other illegal substances on 28 May 2024.

The MRCG data showed that six (6) cases were monitored and six (6) issues covered for the reporting period. Four of the six cases were inconclusive. They are the matters of Emmanuel C Thorli, Managing Editor of *Nightwatch Newspaper* in Freetown; Patrick Kai, reporter for *Calabash Newspaper*; Justice Boima, CEO of *Justice FM and TV*; and Ali Badara of Bo, Southern Sierra Leone.

The MRCG notes that there were still inconclusive cases 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), seventh edition (June to November 2021), eighth edition (December 2021 to May 2022), ninth edition (June to November 2022), tenth edition (December 2022 to May 2023), eleventh edition (June to November 2023), and the twelfth edition (December 2023 to May 2024). Eighty-two cases were monitored from the First to the Twelfth Edition of the Press Freedom Report. **Fifty-seven** were concluded, settled, resolved or dropped because of lack of progress; **six** were in court, **nineteen** were under police investigation and **nine** abandoned due to lack of progress. **See details in the appendices.**

The MRCG, on 3 May 2024, joined media organizations and other press freedom advocates worldwide to observe the ‘World Press Freedom Day’ on the theme: *A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the face of the environmental crisis*. World Press Freedom Day, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in December 1993, commemorates the Declaration of Windhoek. MRCG joins one of its constituent member organizations, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom and reminds the Government of Sierra Leone of its commitment to upholding the right to freedom of expression and enhancing media freedom at all times. The day was dedicated to the importance of journalism and freedom of expression in the context of the global environmental crisis.

According to the [World Press Freedom Index 2024](#) report released by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Sierra Leone was ranked 64 out of 180 countries in 2024, making a 10-step improvement in world press freedom ranking as compared to the previous year. The RSF report mentioned some of the press freedom cases MRCG has been monitoring and reporting on, including the cases of the attack on *Hope FM* in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone, in which five journalists were injured and its equipment destroyed; the apparent attempt to murder a freelance journalist Gibril Gottor, in Kambia District while he and his family were asleep; the physical abuse of journalist Alie Tokowa, station manager at *Fountain of Hope FM* in

Moyamba District, and the matter of the **BBC** Correspondent in Sierra Leone, Umaru Fofana, who was attacked by supporters of the All Peoples Congress (APC) party in Freetown; among others.

While the MRCG urges media practitioners to abide by the ethical and legal standards of the journalism profession, it also calls on the Government, media organizations, civil society and the public to ensure the safety and security of journalists across the country at all times. The MRCG also notes with concern that issues relating to the safety and security of journalists go beyond politicians and the police, as there had been reports of attacks on journalists from local authorities, youth and members of the public. The MRCG reminds media owners and managers that one of its reports shows that most media houses lacked a safety and security policy, and there were concerns about addressing the welfare of journalists.

The MRCG is a coordinating Secretariat comprising the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), the Faculty of Communication, Media and Information Studies (Fourah Bay College), the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE), the 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 Twelfth 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 United States of America (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 2023 to May 2024. 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.

Twelve cases and issues have been addressed on freedom of expression and of the press. In addition, this report follows up on cases from the first to the tenth edition, from June 2018 to November 2023 that were still inconclusive. Eighty-two cases were monitored from the First to the Twelfth Edition of the Press Freedom Report. **Fifty-seven** were concluded, settled, resolved or dropped because of lack of progress; **six** were in court; **nineteen were** under police investigation/inconclusive; and **nine** abandoned due to lack of progress. 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 Independent Media Commission (Print and Electronic Media) Regulations, 2022. In terms of professional aspects, there is the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics.

The Right to Access Information Act, 2013 provides access to certain information held by public bodies, and the Right to Access Information Regulations, 2022, enhance the work of the Commission. The Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021 also provides for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution, and punishment of cybercrimes and protecting privacy rights.

The report is produced by monitoring issues relating to freedom of expression and the freedom of the press. Two monitors contracted by the MRCG take daily records of significant matters relating to freedom of expression and of the media, 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, Twitter and WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted where necessary, with some individuals who were reportedly attacked, intimidated or arrested. Officials of institutions named in some issues were also interviewed—the MRCG thanked NED for funding the project. Special thanks also go to the authors of the monthly reports, Osman Sesay and Saidu Kamara, and their supervisors, Jonette-Ann Greene and Ishiaka Sannoh. This twelfth biannual report was written by Francis Sowa (Ph.D.) and Augustine S. James.

2. THEMATIC ISSUES

2.1 Freedom of Expression and the Press

The MRCG monthly media monitoring reports from December 2023 to May 2024 documented the following cases.

On 8 February 2024, Alie Bai Kamara, the Station Manager of *Citizen Radio 103.7 FM*, was invited by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Freetown for questioning and later detained at the CID. The Deputy Station Manager, Ibrahim Kalokoh (DJ Kalux), told MRCG that the invitation and detention of Alie Bai Kamara was related to a broadcast the radio did on the incident of the 26 November 2023 ‘attempted coup.’ According to him, on 26 November 2023, a group of soldiers stormed the radio and ordered the radio’s security guard to switch on the transmitter so they could make some announcements, which the security guard failed to do. He explained that the Independent Media Commission (IMC) had invited them, investigated the matter and cautioned them, noting that they were surprised by the invitation of the CID, almost 70 days after IMC had investigated and warned the station not to be involved in such an incident. After spending a night in detention at the CID, Alie Bai Kamara was released the following day. Police confirmed the invitation and detention and said that the matter was still under police investigation. In subsequent follow-ups, the police and the journalist confirmed that the matter had been resolved in the same month at the CID.

On 21 February 2024, Emmanuel C Thorli, Managing Editor of *Night Watch Newspaper*, was arrested and detained at the CID in Freetown, allegedly for his news article titled ‘We Cannot Wait For Bio To Continue In Power Until 2028’, which was published on 21 February 2024. Mr. Thorli told MRCG that police detained him because of the news article he published, noting that the police claimed that it was ‘inciting.’ He continued that after spending three days in detention, he was released with the condition that he reported to the CID every day until otherwise instructed by the police. Police confirmed the arrest and detention of the journalist and told MRCG that the matter was under investigation. In subsequent engagement and follow-up on the matter, Mr Thorli told MRCG that he was still reporting to the CID daily, as the matter was still under investigation.

On diverse dates in March 2024, Amadu Lamrana Bah, a journalist working for the *Africa Young Voices Television (AYV)* who also doubles as the President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), faced series of online threats, abuses and harassment against him for a post on his Facebook and X accounts titled ‘Guess who has added to his fleet of brand-new SUVs...’ where he also asked the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) about the various asset declaration categories the Commission had for government officials. The online threats, abuses and harassment were mainly from people who identified themselves as supporters of the ruling SLPP government. In an interview, Mr Bah told MRCG that he had no intention of reporting the matter to the police for investigation. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) was deeply concerned about the insults, intimidation, attacks, and threats and stood in solidarity with the journalist Bah, who was in March 2024 recognized as ‘Journalist of the Year 2023’ by SLAJ and all journalists in Sierra Leone who face threats, intimidation, harassment, and attacks for their commitment to truth and transparency. The MRCG viewed such an act as a severe setback to press freedom, which should not be allowed to exist in a country that has committed itself to ensuring media freedom in a press briefing hosted by the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE), the Minister, Hon. Chernor Bah, joined the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) to condemn the attack on the journalist by people believed to be supporters of the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP). [Facebook](#). “I strongly condemn attacks on the Fourth Estate, and I sympathise with Amadu Lamrana Bah of *AYV*, who faced attacks for performing his duties, but I must emphasize the need for factual reporting and professionalism among journalists,” said the Minister. [Twitter](#).

On 16 April 2024, Patrick Kai, a journalist working for Calabash newspaper, was invited for questioning at the Kenema Police Division about an alleged cybercrime against Eastern Technical University (ETU) Sierra Leone. The journalist denied the allegation and told MRCG that ETU accused him of being an administrator and informant of a Facebook page known as “Kenema Kotuku,” which had been critical of the institution. He was detained for four hours and released on bail pending investigation. ASP Detective Tamba David Alpha told MRCG that the journalist was invited to the cyber unit of the Police Division for an alleged cybercrime reported by the Registrar of ETU and confirmed that Patrick was released on the same day, but the matter was under police investigation.

On 23 May 2024, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) issued a warrant of arrest for journalist Justice Boima, CEO of *Justice FM and TV*, for alleged offences relating to cyberstalking and bullying. The journalists told MRCG that his warrant of arrest was in connection with his [online publication](#) on alleged land grabbing by the Deputy Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Napoleon Koroma, and the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Richard P.G. Robert, Head of Criminal Investigations Department. According to him, the Deputy Minister and the Head of CID conspired to grab the property of Honourable Hawa Rosaline Saffa, a Member of the Sixth Parliament of Sierra Leone. In an interview with the Deputy Minister, he denied all allegations made by the journalist, including the journalist’s several audios accusing him of land grabbing. He told MRCG that he was taking legal action against the journalist. ASP Amos Lansana, an officer attached to the Cybercrime Unit at the CID Headquarters and in charge of the matter, confirmed the warrant of arrest for the journalist and said that they were still searching for him to start a proper investigation.

On 28 May 2024, Alie Badara, a freelance journalist in Bo, allegedly received verbal assaults and threatening remarks through a phone call from an unknown individual for a Facebook post he made on the excesses of the police in their fight against the drug called “Kush” and other illegal substances in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone. The journalist told MRCG that he had been investigating the allegations that the drugs that are being seized by the police officers in their raids, marked as exhibits, are being sold by some of the same officers. He stated that his Facebook publications ([post one](#) and [post two](#)) regarding the matter irritated some group of individuals for which they planned to attack him physically and set his house ablaze. Inspector Moses Tommy Ganda, a police officer attached to the Cyber Unit at the Bo East Police Division, told MRCG they received the journalist’s complaint and started investigations.

2.2 Right to Access Information

The Chairman and Information Commissioner of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC), Dr Ibrahim Seaga-Shaw, told MRCG that the Commission has been issuing orders for compliance, noting that in 2023, the Commission issued few orders and the public authorities, including the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) responded. He added that there was a case of Augustine Sengbeh Marrah Esq. requesting information on election results, and the ECSL only responded when the Commission intervened. Marrah had asked for both the summary and the detailed result, for which the ECSL said section 92 of their Act does not permit them to give detailed results. The matter went to the High Court but was thrown out of court on 8 November 2023.

On total number of information requests recorded by the Commission, he noted that the Commission recorded 19,399 information requests in 2023, excluding those the Commission is not copied in, noting that there were a lot of successful FOI requests that the Commission was not copied in, as all MDAs are expected to record and report to the Commission. “Section 41 of the Commission’s Act provides that we have to produce an annual report and in addition to the activities, administrative operational and financial activities that we report

on, we have to also report on the status of compliance by MDAs, the extent to which they are complying so it will be reflected in the report. So, at the end of the year, we send a memo to all of the MDAs asking them to complete the template. We have what we call the Annual Compliance Report (ACR) template and Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) publication scheme, so when they complete them, we get a fairer idea of compliance status across the country. There were 40 complaints, of which over 25 were successful. The complaints were made to us, we intervened, and there was progress in submitting requests.”

Regarding the ACR for 2023, the Commission had about 18,050 for the Western Region, 362 for the Northern Region, 238 for the Eastern Region and 611 for the Southern Region. For the PDI for 2023, the Commission had about 47 MDAs that completed the publication scheme at the time. Now, the Commission has about 18 additional public authorities completed for 2023. “So overall, we have about 100 public authorities who have complied from 2021 to date. Most public authorities proactively disclose information. They now have information about what they do on their websites, which are easily accessible on their websites. If they cannot find it there, they can come to ask us, and we will send a memo to the institution to comply,” the Chairman and Information Commissioner explained.

He said the RAIC still has a matter between the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Commission at the High Court of Sierra Leone. In 2020, a journalist, Martha Kargbo, made a request to the Bank of Sierra Leone under the RAIC Act of 2013 but was reportedly denied the information requested. “For us as a Commission, we want to bring the matter to an end because the Bank of Sierra Leone took us to court and claimed that we acted out of the way by levying a fine on them, but we went according to the law as provided in our Act, that if public authorities do not comply, we should levy a fine on them, as long as the requested information does not fall under the exempt category,” said Dr Shaw. The matter still awaits a ruling.

2.3 Internet Freedom and Digital Rights

Since the enactment of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, there have been arrests made pursuant to breach of its provision(s). The Act, among other things, provides for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes and the protection of privacy rights. Sierra Leoneans who use social media and mobile phones to communicate may risk being criminally prosecuted for cyberstalking and cyberbullying, based on Section 44 of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, if they share information or opinions perceived to be abusive, harassing, insulting, or detrimentally affects other people. [Click here to read](#). According to the State of Internet Freedom in Sierra Leone report, by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in 2020, the situation in Sierra Leone is examined in terms of practices and measures adopted by state actors to either restrict or enhance internet access and use. The [State of Internet Freedom in Sierra Leone report](#) provides critical examples of policies, measures, and actions that impact Internet rights.

2.4 Media and Good Governance

MRCG, on 25 January 2024, presented the Draft copy of the National Media and Information Policy to the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE) for onward consultation and validation and presentation to the Cabinet and Parliament. The document, which had been drafted and reviewed by the MRCG in partnership with the MoICE, with support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), is part of MRCG’s reform agenda that seeks to address a couple of national issues on the media and information and falls within the ministry’s mandates. The presentation was done in the presence of other sector players, including the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC), Independent Media Commission (IMC), Postal Services, Government Printing Department, Sierra Leone News Agency (SLeNA)

and others. The draft National Policy on Media and Information is geared towards enhancing commitment to media freedom and freedom of expression in the country, creating a platform for a thorough review and production of a well-researched national document, providing coordinated dissemination of government information through the Directorate of Information at MoICE, and creating platforms for discourse on national issues which citizens can appreciate and utilise.

The MRCG, which is managing the implementation of all the recommendations of the first Media Viability and Investment Conference, with support from the BBC Media Action, on 20 March 2024 held a one-day follow-up engagement on the implementation of the Action Plan, which was developed at the Post-Media-Viability-and-Investment-Conference. The engagement included all heads and technical staff of national media organizations and associations across the country. Working groups were set in the meeting with clear Terms of Reference (TOR) to tackle various recommendations.

With support from BBC Media Action, MRCG held a two-day retreat at the Companero Resort, Bureh Village, Western Rural, on 25 and 26 March 2024 to review the implementation of the National Action Plan, develop activities for each recommendation of the Media Viability and Investment Conference, and suggest other relevant institutions and individuals to work with in implementing the National Action Plan.

In April 2022, SLAJ and the then Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), now referred to as the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE), convened a two-day Media Viability and Investment Conference in Sierra Leone. Seven recommendations were born from the conference, including the sixth recommendation that the Government and development partners commit to a national fund for public interest media.

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

On 28 February 2024, the IMC's Complaint Committee, in its deliberation on a complaint filed with the Commission Mr. Anthony M.B Aruna, against Samuel K. Kallon, Proprietor and Ibrahim Bangura, Snr., Reporter of *Africa 24 Newspaper*, noted the following: that the media institution did not make a reasonable effort to cross-check the story with Anthony M.B Aruna before going to press, that the Journalist failed to submit evidence to substantiate their story, that Anthony M.B Aruna submitted all documents to prove that he went through the necessary processes and procedures to acquire the property HS 19 Hill Station, that the assertion that Anthony M.B Aruna is a land grabber and that he falsified documents is equivalent to smear campaign against him, and that it is noted that the publication is in breach of the accuracy provision of the Print and Electronic Media Regulations 2022. The Board of the IMC at its meeting held on Wednesday, 28th February 2024 fully endorsed the recommendations of the Committee as follows: that a fine of Le 3,000.00 (Three Thousand Leones) be levied for the breach of the accuracy principle; that a fine of NLe 10,000 (Ten Thousand New Leones) be levied in line with Regulation 19(1) (2) of the Print and Electronic Media Regulations 2022; that a total of NLe 13,000.00 (Thirteen thousand Leones) fine should be paid within 30 days upon receipt of this ruling; and that the Media Institution publishes a retraction of the story with equal prominence in its next edition immediately upon receipt of the ruling.

On 4 March 2024, the IMC's Complaint Committee in its deliberations on a complaint filed with the Commission by Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown against *Justice Radio FM 98.5*, in connection with alleged defamatory broadcasts made against her between 10th August and 30th September 2022, noted that *Justice Radio's* evidence cannot substantiate the claims made in the broadcast. The Committee further stated that the broadcast made against Her Worship, the Mayor, was done out of malice with the intention to smear the image of the Mayor. The Committee noted that even though *Justice Radio* Presenter Justice Boima claimed to have attempted to contact the Mayor on her own side before the broadcast was done, no reasonable effort was made to get the Mayor's side. The Committee recommended that a fine of NLe 20,000 (Twenty Thousand New Leones) be levied in line with Regulation 19(1) (2) of the Print and Electronic Media Regulations 2022.

On 11 April 2024, the IMC's Complaint Committee in its deliberations on a complaint filed by MMTU through their Solicitors R.B Kowa & Associates against *Concord Times Newspaper* on the 9th day of February 2024, noted that although the Editor told the Committee that his publications were referenced by the Audit Report, yet, in his presentation of the facts of the Audit report, there was inaccuracy. The Commission noted that there were unresolved issues, as pointed out by the Audit Report; however, while trying to articulate those issues, *Concord Times* was inaccurate in its presentation of the facts. The Committee further noted that all the publications, with the exception of the one dated 1st February 2024 and titled "PAC Cautions MMTU not to deceive the public," were inaccurate. The Committee recommended the following: that a fine of NLe 1,500 (One Thousand Five Hundred New Leones) be levied for four publications except the last publication titled "**PAC cautions MMTU not to deceive the public**"; a total of NLe 6,000 (Six Thousand New Leones) should be paid 30 days upon receipt of this ruling; and that the Editor publishes a retraction of the four publications immediately upon receipt of this ruling.

On 11 April 2024, the IMC's Complaint Committee in its ruling on the Complaint from the National Social Security and Insurance Trust and Mohamed Bangalie, Head of Public Affairs and Event Management Division, NASSIT against *Forum Newspaper* and its Editor Alusine Fullah in connection with publication dated 15th February 2024 titled: "**Money Chop-Chop...NASSIT Is A 'Criminal 'Enterprise'**" and publication dated 16th February, 2024 titled: "**NASSIT CHOPS FUNDS FOR 10 HOSTELS, 5,000 HOUSES**", noted that *Forum Newspaper* failed to attend two consecutive meetings to respond to the

complaint against them. However, they submitted a paper citing and quoting elements of the Audit Report 2022. Upon deliberation, however, it was clear that the evidence he adduced had nothing to do with the submissions of the Audit report, and so it had no effect on such headlines. They had no justification for calling NASSIT a criminal Enterprise and accusing them of Chopping funds for 10 Hostels and 5,000 Houses. Being a public institution through which nearly all Sierra Leoneans have their future hanging on them, these articles have the tendency to insight the public against NASSIT and to expose them to insecurity and to hatred. The Committee recommends the following: that a fine of Le 3,000.00 (Three Thousand Leones) be levied for the breach of the accuracy principle, that a fine of NLe 15,000 (Fifteen Thousand New Leones) be levied in line with Regulation 19(1) (2) of the Print and Electronic Media Regulations 2022, that a fine NLe 2,000.00 (Two Thousand Leones) be levied in line with 34 (3A) of the IMC Act 2020 for failure to attend two consecutive hearing sessions without any permission, that a total of NLe 20,000 be paid within 30 days upon receipt of this ruling, and that *Forum Newspaper* publishes two retractions in its next two editions, with equal prominence immediately upon receipt of this ruling.

During the reporting period, the Chairperson of SLAJ Disciplinary Committee, Claudia Anthony, told MRCG that the Committee did not receive or adjudicate on any complaint from members of the public against any journalist.

4. PERFORMANCE OF MEDIA HOUSE AND SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Improvements in media institutions' outputs are reflected in their contents and programming. However, there were major concerns that a number of media institutions continued to publish and broadcast content that breached ethical standards or contravened the country's media laws, the IMC Act and its Regulations, especially during the elections period.

On 21 December 2023, SLAJ held an [engagement](#) with the new United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative in Sierra Leone, Frederick Hans Ampiah and the team at the UNDP office in Freetown. The essence of the engagement was to discuss and forge potential partnership between the two institutions and strengthen Sierra Leone's media. The UNDP Resident Representative, Frederick Hans Ampiah, expressed his desire to work with SLAJ and the media through supporting capacity building in line with specialized reporting, development journalism, and promoting media sustainability initiatives in the country.

On 8 and 9 February 2024, the MRCG conducted [public lectures](#) with media and journalism students of Central University in Mile 91, Njala University and the Every Nation Polytechnic in Bo on Media Freedom, Reforms and Capacity Building in Sierra Leone. The aim of the engagements was part of MRCG's outreach to students and institutions to share and discuss its reports and publications on media and journalism in Sierra Leone.

In a press release dated 16 April 2024, the Independent Media Commission (IMC), notified all media owners who had yet to renew their licenses to do so on or before 30 April 2024, which was stated as the deadline. The Commission further warned that effective 1 May 2024, media institutions that failed to renew their licenses, registrations or reregistration in compliance with IMC Act 2020 would suffer indefinite suspension or cancellation of their licenses or registrations in compliance with Section 42 of the IMC Act, 2020.

On 24 April 2024, the MRCG and the National Fund for Public Interest Media (NaFPIM), with support from the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), convened an engagement with key institutions, including diplomatic missions in Sierra Leone, on the operations of [NaFPIM](#) since its launch in June 2023.

On 3 May 2024, On 3 May 2024, the President of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, made a clarion call to the Government and the general citizens to stop the online attack on journalists during the commemoration of World Press Freedom [Day](#). He reinforced the call towards the government and the security sector to ensure the safety and security of journalists in the country at all times. The MRCG, in a press release on World Press Freedom Day, called on the Government and other development partners to commit to the public interest media initiative as it was one of the recommendations of the Media Viability and Investment Conference held in April 2022.

On 22 May 2024, in its 10th-anniversary celebration of continuous advocacy for press freedom, the safety of journalists, media reforms, capacity building, and media developments in Sierra Leone, the MRCG, on 22 May 2024, launched two major reports on [Journalists' Welfare](#) and a [Compendium](#) of Media and Communication Laws and Regulations in [Sierra Leone](#). The event was graced by representatives from MRCG's local partners, media stakeholders, and government representatives. It was climaxed with a video [documentary](#) on the journey of MRCG in their quest to transform the country's media landscape.

On 27 and 28 May 2024, the Media Foundation for West Africa, in partnership with the MRCG, engaged 50 female journalists and activists on [digital literacy and skills](#) in Bo. The training addressed issues relating to women's rights online and fact-checking and verification. The digital literacy training for women was aimed at reducing incidents of online harassment against women, increasing women's use of digital tools, and increasing their participation in online engagement.

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

From December 2023 to May 2024, SLAJ has improved in several aspects. The SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla elaborated on the tremendous gains made over the years in promoting and protecting freedom of expression and of the press, and media developments in Sierra Leone, noting that the historic repeal of the criminal libel law in 2020 set the foundation for all these gains the Association has made. He added that the setting up of the NaFPIM, with support from IFPIM, the BBC Media Action, MRCG, and the Government of Sierra Leone, was also a landmark achievement in the media landscape, as the fund seeks to promote public interest journalism and capacitate journalists and their media houses to hold the government and its agencies accountable. He continued that the Government of Sierra Leone, since 2018, has provided annual subvention to support the operations of SLAJ and its affiliate bodies. These gains, he said, were a result of the Association's change of approach from being aggressive or confrontational to engaging in constructive dialogue with the Government of Sierra Leone, without mortgaging its independence and fundamental role of holding them to account, as well as working together as industry players to address the myriad of challenges facing the media in Sierra Leone. "We respect the legitimacy of the government to govern, and they respect our legitimacy as media to hold them to scrutiny," said SLAJ President.

Amidst the gradual progress being made, the President noted a few challenges in advocating for increased press freedom and protection of journalists' rights, promoting ethical standards and professional development among members, noting that contributing to public awareness and civic education on the importance of journalism in society and achieving a conducive environment for journalists to do their work without hindrance are still posing challenges. Since repealing the Criminal Libel law, he noted that there has not been any major arrest or detention of journalists concerning their work. SLAJ's biggest challenge at the moment revolves around journalists' safety, welfare, and online threats and intimidations faced by journalists in the line of duty. The MRCG press freedom data showed a new trend of online attacks from political supporters and traditional leaders in local communities, he noted.

"Whilst we have made some progress in addressing salaries and social security contributions for journalists through the IMC Act of 2020, we continue to push for the consolidation and re-engineering of the industry in light of the global economic crisis and our quest for media viability and investment in the sector. We strongly believe that as much as we expect our journalists to be very professional, their welfare and conditions of service must also be prioritized. We continue to appeal to the Government, politicians, and law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of journalists at all times and to stop the increasing online attacks on journalists. The Association is deeply concerned about recent insults, intimidation, attacks, and threats against some of its members in their lines of duties. We have seen the Minister of Information and Civic Education, Chernor Bah, condemning the online attacks and calling for professionalism. The recent online threats and attacks came after they have consistently tried to hold leaders to account amidst the country's economic challenge. As a result, they now fear for their lives. Freedom of the press is a fundamental tenet of democracy, and any attempt to silence journalists through insults, threats, intimidation, and harassment undermines the very essence of the fundamental human rights and its significance to our fledgling democracy. SLAJ stands in solidarity with all affected journalists, and the Association is committed to always defending press freedom", the SLAJ President noted.

SLAJ continues to make remarkable progress, but there is still much more to be done. Following repealing the criminal libel law, SLAJ signed an MoU with the security sector under the Office of National Security (ONS). The MoU seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, collaboration, and support between the media and the security sector to minimize incidents of physical assault of journalists in the line of duty. Beyond that,

SLAJ and the MRCG have conducted several training and workshops on the safety and security of journalists in the country. These have led to the formulation of a national framework/policy and the establishment of a National Coordination Committee for the Safety and Security of Journalists in Sierra Leone, comprising representatives from media stakeholders, civil society organizations, the security sector, religious and traditional leaders, and the Judiciary of Sierra Leone.

At the 2023 Annual General Meeting, SLAJ adopted a resolution for a comprehensive review of its existing constitution and to ensure it is in line with the dynamic nature of the journalism landscape in the country (and internationally), addresses emerging challenges, provides checks and balances, and promotes the interests of its members effectively.

On World Press Freedom Day in May 2024, in line with the global theme “A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the face of the Environmental Crisis”, SLAJ urged journalists to continue to raise awareness and public education on protecting and preserving the environment, tracking the Government of Sierra Leone’s efforts in achieving the UNSDG 13 and highlighting the gaps and challenges.

SLAJ also capacitated journalists on fact-checking and conflict-sensitive reporting from 4 to 16 December 2023 to empower journalists with essential skills crucial to Sierra Leone’s post-election environment. Spanning all regions of the country, about 120 journalists, bloggers, influencers, and civil society activists benefitted from the training held in Kenema (Eastern region), Bo (Southern region), Port Loko (Northwest region), and Makeni (Northern region). The training program covered crucial aspects, including responsible journalism, ethical reporting, fact-checking methodologies, and the pivotal role of media in preserving national cohesion, unity, inclusivity, and peace. President of SLAJ emphasized the significance of the training and its potential to fortify democratic values and rebuild trust within Sierra Leonean society. Journalism stands as the cornerstone of Sierra Leone’s democracy, through which ethical reporting and stringent fact-checking allow journalists to navigate the complexities of the post-election period and promote unity, transparency, and healthy dialogue.

On its partnership and collaboration drive, SLAJ and its affiliate bodies held an engagement with the New UNPD Resident Representative Frederick Hans Ampiah and his team on the work of SLAJ and the media industry in Sierra Leone. At the meeting, the SLAJ President talked about the strides in media pluralism (its positives and negatives), media ownership, media poverty and reporters’ welfare, media viability and sustainability, media freedom and responsibility, countering disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and hate speech, and the strides SLAJ and its local and international partners (including the Government of Sierra Leone) are making towards media development. He discussed the establishment of the National Fund for Public Interest Media (NaFPIM), which he said was to promote public interest and accountability journalism, and the SLAJ Media Manifesto (The Media We Want), which he described as the Association’s ‘strategic development plan’ and a ‘guidebook’ for media development interventions in the country.

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

In an interview with the Director of Information, Ministry of Information and Civic Education, Emmanuel AB Turay, he highlighted the government’s position on Freedom of Expression and of the Press, Right to Access Information, Internet Freedom, and Digital Rights and President Julius Maada Bio’s 2023 manifesto commitment to enhancing freedom of expression and of the press. As expressed by the President, the government of Sierra Leone fervently believes that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that everyone must exercise. The President wants the voices of reasoning not to ever be subdued, which is healthy for development and democracy in modern-day politics.

The government of Sierra Leone has taken the following steps to ensure and strengthen freedom of expression: Protect press freedom in the country by ensuring that policies and practices affecting press freedom are consistent with our domestic and international laws and principles protecting media freedom and pluralism, as well as the rights to expression, information, and opinion more broadly. Government bodies, including law enforcement and security institutions, have demonstrated this by signing MOUs with SLAJ and other media-related bodies. These institutions are also subject to transparent, robust, and effective oversight to ensure their actions are consistent with human rights and press freedom. The government tries to refrain from enacting laws that can restrict the press by ensuring that all domestic laws and policies affecting the media and their implementation are consistent with international human rights commitments and standards. This was why the government repealed the criminal libel laws that were used to punish journalists and other watchdogs for shedding light on matters of public interest.

The government has shown the political will in taking concrete steps to create an environment that enables the development of pluralistic, independent, and sustainable media ecosystems; Sierra Leone has made the promotion and protection of press freedom core elements of her foreign policy – and hold other governments accountable for crimes against journalists or attacks on the media as a member of the World Media Freedom Coalition; The government continues to support the work of civil society organizations that promote and defend press freedom. The government works closely with civil society groups to ensure that public policies are in line with free expression commitments and to counter global threats to journalism collectively. The government also supports initiatives and coalitions that involve key input from civil society, such as the Council of Europe’s Platform on the Safety of Journalists, the Media Freedom Coalition, the Open Government Partnership, and the Freedom Online Coalition. It ensures that its regulation of social media and online spaces is consistent with international human rights standards.

Following the completion of the Media Viability and Investment Conference in 2022, the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, in collaboration with its media stakeholders and partners, is constantly consulting on implementing the recommendations. Stakeholder mapping to roll out the implementation of Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 has been done. The various stakeholders, including the Ministry responsible for championing the said recommendations, have started taking the necessary steps to enhance the implementation. Already, Recommendation 6 is at its advanced stage, where a Secretariat for the National Fund for Public Interest Media has been established, and a call for support by other donor partners and diplomatic missions, including the government, has been made to enhance investment in the media in Sierra Leone.

On the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone, the government has several times reaffirmed and taken the responsibility to uphold the solemn commitments made in the area of media freedom. We have entreated Government officials to lead by example, set the tone, and make it clear that they respect the role of free media in society, even when they disagree with a journalist’s reporting or views. Government officials

are also encouraged to ensure that their ministries and departments establish professional press offices, make documents available to the press, and hold press conferences where journalists can ask – and even sometimes receive answers to – essential questions about the functioning of government. The Ministry is currently working on a policy that will guarantee the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone.

On the implementation of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, he noted that the Government would ensure that the regulation of social media and online spaces is consistent with international human rights standards and that it would ensure the fight against misinformation and disinformation was not used to restrict freedom of expression. He added that the government will continue to support institutions that defend human rights and press freedom. He assured MRCG that the Government would continue to enhance capacity building for journalists through training and education, support for and advice on improving the legal and business environment for media, and promote efforts to improve the sustainability of existing outlets.

To enhance media development in Sierra Leone, the Director recommended that the media supports democracy, human rights and sustainable development, the following should be taken into consideration: the legal and regulatory environment for media should be capable of supporting democracy; enhance professional capacity (both managerial, technical and journalistic) that will contribute to economic sustainability by ensuring that the media are well run and efficiently managed and that journalists operate in a safe and secure environment; promote a sound and sustainable base for the press to support democracy, human rights and development. The media needs to be sustainable with minimal reliance of forms of funding that compromises its editorial independence.

7. STATUS OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION LAWS IN SIERRA LEONE

For the reporting period, all media and communication laws and codes remain the same. The Data Protection and Privacy Bill developed by the Ministry of Information and Communication (now the Ministry of Information and Civic Education) has yet to be enacted.

Table 7.1: 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.	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 regularly¹)

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

Table 7.2: 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	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 National Electronic Communication Act, 2022 (Act. No. 16 of 2022) repealed and replaced the Telecommunications Act 2006 as amended	2021	In force
11.	The Child Rights Act 2007 (No. 7 2007)	2007	In force
12.	The Anti-Corruption Act, 2008 (Act No No. 12 of 2008) as amended in the Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2019 (Act No. 9 of 2019).	2008, as amended in 2019	In force
13.	The Copyright Act, 2011 (No. 7 of 2007)	2011	In force
14.	The Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (Act No 00 of 2012) as amended	2012 as amended in 2019	In force
15.	The Right to Access Information Act, 2013 (Act No No. 2 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 regularly)²

Table 7.3: 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 2014/2015)	In force.
2.	The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Media Code of Practice	2007	The section on Advertising is still applicable.
3.	Right to Access Information Regulations 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 9 of 2022)	2022	In force.
4.	Independent Media Commission (Print and Electronic Media) Regulations, 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 11 of 2022)	2022	In force.
5.	Independent Media Commission Elections (Coverage and Reporting) Regulations, 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 17 of 2022)	2022	In force.

Source (Sowa and Kapuwa, 2015; updated regularly)³

8. CONCLUSION

The issues covered in this report relate to freedom of expression, the press, information, internet freedom and digital rights, and the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone. The MRCG will continue to re-echo one of the provisions in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report: “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 continues to monitor the implementation and the popularization of the various pieces of legislation: Right to Access Information Regulations 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 9 of 2022); Independent Media Commission (Print and Electronic Media) Regulations, 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 11 of 2022); and the Independent Media Commission Elections (Coverage and Reporting) Regulations, 2022 (Statutory Instrument No. 17 of 2022) by the RAIC and the IMC. The laws have introduced new regulations on the right to access information, media ethics, and coverage and reporting of elections.

It looks forward to implementing the recommendations of its maiden Journalists’ Welfare report, which revealed genuine concerns raised by journalists across the country about their welfare and safety. It also considers the recent rampant online attacks against journalists a way of encumbering press freedom and freedom of expression in the country and calls on the state authorities to ensure journalists’ safety at all times.

The MRCG still 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 to the implementation of the Cybersecurity and Crime Act 2021 without hindering freedom of expression and of the press.

The MRCG finally commends the government and media stakeholders for the steps taken to implement a recommendations made at the first-ever media viability and investment conference and the efforts made to implement the other recommendations. Regarding the MoU SLAJ signed with the Security Sector, the MRCG hopes that with the safety of journalists still being an issue, SLAJ will continue to engage the security sector to address the problems of press freedom and to forge a good working relationship with the security sector especially the police and the military as the country prepares for its general elections. The safety and Security of journalists are at the heart of MRCG; the organization, therefore, hopes that the government, media owners and security sector will guarantee the safety of journalists in their line of duty. The MRCG also calls on the SLP to speedily investigate all matters before it, as a delay in justice delivery is a denial of justice

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government, SLAJ and partners should continue implementing the other Media Viability and Investment Conference recommendations.
- The government should put mechanisms in place to deal with online attackers.
- The government should speedily enact the Data Protection Law to fully promote citizens' digital rights, protect citizens' data and consumer protection and block potential loopholes to data exploitation by private entities and government agencies.
- The government must 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, detained, and prosecuted.
- The media stakeholders should work with the Constitutional Review Committee to add a standalone chapter on media development to the National Constitution.
- The Government should consider the Media Manifesto and implement its recommendations for developing the country's media landscape.
- Media owners and employers should ensure they pay their reporters at least the minimum wage and provide better conditions of service for their staff.
- 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.
- Media owners and managers should develop their in-house safety policy based on the national safety policy for journalists developed by MRCG to ensure their safety.
- The MRCG, SLAJ and other media groups should continue training and building 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.

10. REFERENCES


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11. APPENDICES

11.1 Reported Cases in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth Eleventh and Twelfth Editions of the Press Freedom Reports.

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

The ‘gold columns’ cases 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. 

Those in the ‘brown columns’ are abandoned cases. 

From the First to the Twelfth Edition of the Press Freedom Report, **eighty-two** cases and issues were monitored. **Fifty-seven** were concluded, settled, resolved, or dropped because of lack of progress; **six** were in court, and **nineteen** were under police investigation/inconclusive.

Table 11.1: Status of cases monitored by MRCG from March 2018 to May 2024

No	Completed Cases Monitored by the MRCG since 2018	Date of Attack/Arrest/Invitation	Status of Cases as at the time of reporting
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 Peoples 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 and 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 <i>AYV</i> Director of News and Current Affairs, Samuel Wise Bangura, appeared before Parliament and was asked to retract and apologize. But he refused/declined and nothing happened after that.
6	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 <i>AYV</i> management accepted the apology of the perpetrators.
7	Arrest of Fayia Amara Fayia of <i>Star Radio and Standard Times Newspaper</i> by CID officers outside the <i>AYV</i> 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.
8	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.
9	Arrest and detention of Emmanuel C Thorli, Managing Editor of <i>the Night Watch Newspaper</i> by the Sierra Leone Police on 14 January 2019 on the allegation of publishing false information that several diplomatic passports were illegally given to families of the ruling government officials.	14 January 2019	Police said the matter has been closed because of the repeal of Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965.
10	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.

11	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 2 May 2019.	2 May 2019	Mr. Conteh said his moves to further the case were fruitless; so he decided to drop it.
12	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.
13	Assault on two female sport journalists (Francess Bernard-Bundor and Easter Marie Samura) of <i>SLBC</i> 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.
14	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.
15	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.
16	Arrest and detention of Chernor Jalloh, Reporter, <i>Radio Democracy</i> , Yusuf Bangura, Reporter,	5 March 2020	The two journalists were released, while the matter of Mr. Moore was

	<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		dismissed by the Court.
17	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.
18	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 had been closed. Mr. Jimmy confirmed to MRCG that the matter had been settled out of police.
19	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.	1 May 2020	Police said the matter had been closed.
20	The arrest and detention of Dr. Sylvia 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, to publication of false news, and defamatory libel, among others.	June 2020	The matter rendered, "Nolle Prosequoi," as the Government of Sierra Leone dropped all charges against them on the 16 November 2020.
21	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 had been dismissed.
22	Supreme Court of Sierra Leone ordering the arrest of Lawyer Augustine Sorie-Sengbe Marrah for	28 October 2020	The matter ended when he complied with the Supreme Court ordering

	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.		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 newspapers in Sierra Leone.
23	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. “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.”
24	The arrest and detention of Emmanuel C. Thorli, a reporter for the Night Watch Newspaper 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 had been closed.
25	The invitation and detention of the Editor-in- Chief and Proprietor, Joseph Turay and Ezekiel Dumbuya, News Editor of the Public Review Newspaper , 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 Western Rural Area which police claimed that the newspaper had reported erroneously on.	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.
26	The arrest and detention of Hassan Gbessay Koroma, a Concord Time Newspaper 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.
27	The alleged verbal attack on BBC Sports Journalist Mohamed Fajah Barrie by the Adviser to Sierra	13 June 2021	The Minister of Sports intervened, mediated and settled the matter

	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.		between both parties.
28	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.	12 August 2021	Phebian Swill-Randall accepted her dismissal and did not apologize to be reinstated.
29	The arrest and detention of 10 of <i>Star Radio's</i> 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).	5 October 2021	Station Manager of Star Radio, Abdul Rahman Kamara told the MRCG that the matter had been discharged from court and their meter returned to them.
30	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.
31	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.
32	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.
33	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	The journalist told MRCG that he received the sum of one million Leones (Nle one thousand Leones)

			from the police as compensation and he, through the advice from family members moved on. The Police said the matter had been resolved.
34	The verbal attack and insult against Asmaa James, station manager of <i>Radio Democracy 98.1 FM</i> 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 <i>Radio Democracy</i> 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.
35	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 <i>Radio Democracy 98.1 FM</i> in relation to the 2021 mid-term housing and population census.	13 December 2021	The matter had ended as she was later released.
36	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.
37	The arrest and detention of 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.
38	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.

39	The arrest of Solomon Joe, a journalist working for KISS 104 FM 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. “I am not going to retract the story because I stand by my story,” said Solomon.
40	The invitation and detention of the Acting Spokesperson for the main opposition All Peoples Congress Party (APC), Sidi Yayah Tunis at the 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.	8 February 2022	The matter had ended as he was released from the CID.
41	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.
42	A complaint from Independent Media Commission’s Monitoring, Research and Projects Unit (MRPU) against Justice FM Radio in connection with its program, ‘Justice Show’ which was aired on 27 April 2022.	27 April 2022	The Independent Media Commission temporarily shut down the operations of Justice FM Radio 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.
43	The arrest and detention of Mr. Mohamed Khan, the Interim Chairman of Teachers Solidarity, by police just outside AYV’s premises 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.
44	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 Centers on 28	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

	April 2022 for allegedly insulting President Bio.		human rights organization, helped to secure the discharge verdict for ‘Blacker’.
45	Alleged Cyber Stalking and Bullying on President Julius Maada Bio by former APC Minister of Transport and Aviation, Kemoh Sesay. He was alleged to have ‘willfully and repeatedly’ communicated directly to President Bio in a manner that he knows to be false, for the purpose of causing danger, insult, injury, hatred, criminal intimidation or needless anxiety to the president. He was charged with one count charge of Cyber Stalking and Bullying, contrary to Section 44 (2) (b) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021.	9 May 2022	The matter was acquitted and discharged from court.
46	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	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. 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 matter but had ended the matter and returned the journalist’s phone.
47	The physical assault of journalist Maada Jesse Jengo, a journalist working for <i>Voice of Peace and Development Radio FM 96.5 (VOPAD)</i> in Waterloo, Western Area Rural by ‘four officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)’	2 July 2022	The Station Manager for <i>VOPAD radio</i> , Joseph Lamin, in an interview, told MRCG on 30 October 2023, that the matter had been resolved. Journalist Jengo also confirmed that with the intervention of his Station Manager, Joseph Lamin and other community stakeholders, they had resolved the matter. The officers had apologised to the journalist and his family. In a press release issued on 8 July 2022, the Office of the Directorate of Defence, Public Relations and Information, Ministry of Defence (MOD) stated that “the MOD regrets the unfortunate occurrence which does not represent the RSLAF core values of good discipline and selfless service.”

48	The suspension of the Station Manager of Radio Bintumani 93.1 FM by the Office of National Security (ONS) District Coordinator of Koinadugu, Mr Lawrence Kpangu, after a District Security Committee (DiSeC) meeting.	November 2022	IMC’s Complaints Committee Secretary, Fatmata Kamara, told MRCG that they have concluded their ruling on the matter and their findings showed that all allegations against the Station Manager were false and baseless. The Station Manager was reinstated again but he later resigned.
49	The online harassment of Amadu Lamarana Bah, a journalist working for the Africa Young Voices television (AYV) who also doubles as the President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), by the State House Communications Director, Myk Brewa.	19 December 2022	The matter had ended as the journalist moved on with his work and did not make any formal complaint to the police.
50	The arrest and detention of the Executive Director of Native Consortium and Research Centre, Edmond Abu Jnr., for twenty one (21) days at the Pademba Road Correctional Centre, in relation to social media publications and utterances he made on a radio regarding the court matter between his organization and Mobile Network Operators and the National Telecommunications Authority (NatCA).	10 January 2023	The activist was later released from the Pademba Road Correctional Centre in Freetown. On 26 February 2021, the Court granted an Order, restraining Mr. Abu from publication and comments on the case as it was <i>‘sub judice’</i>
51	The complaint by the Inspector General of Police, William F Sellu against Alex Lawrence Koroma, Producer Radio Democracy 98.1 FM , on a radio broadcast against his person on ‘Good Morning Salone’ Show Monday 22nd May 2023 to the Independent Media Commission (IMC).	May 2023	The radio station’s producer did a retraction and the matter was resolved.
52	Civil libel action by the Inspector General of Police, William F. Sellu, through his Lawyer, Demba Barrie, instituted against Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (First Defendant) and Producer Alex Lawrence Koroma (Second Defendant) on the 2nd June, 2023.	13 June 2023	The High Court in July 2023 ordered damages against the radio and Mr. Koroma, retraction of the broadcast, and apology to the Inspector General. The Court ordered the lawyer for the Inspector General “to file a separate Notice of Motion for assessment of damages. Demba Barrie, lawyer who represented the Inspector General of Police, told MRCG that Radio Democracy FM 98.1 and the other parties involved had in March 2024

			apologized to the plaintiff and confirmed that the matter had been dropped.
53	The attack on the BBC Correspondent in Sierra Leone, Umaru Fofana, by supporters of the All People’s Congress (APC) party during the party’s press conference at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown.	14 June 2023	Mr. Fofana told MRCG that he wished there was a line of action for him to take, “but it’s an exercise in futility. I don’t think the attackers acted alone. So the party won’t take any action against them. Sadly, not even to publicly condemn the action. And I don’t trust the police either so I am dropping the matter.” The Secretary General of the APC, Lansana Dumbuya Esq., told MRCG that the matter was still being investigated.
54	The matter of the Organizing Secretary of the opposition, APC Party in Bonthe District, Robert Kamara, was arraigned before Principal Magistrate Lyoud Jusu of Court Number One in Bo, for allegedly insulting Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.	October 2023	Magistrate Jusu of Court Number One in Bo on 14 December 2023 found the accused guilty and sentenced him to eight (8) months in prison for three counts charge ranging from Cyber Bulling, contrary to Section 44 (1) (a) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, Sending False Message by Means of a Computer System, contrary to section 44(2) (a) of the Cyber Security Act 2021, to Sending Insulting Message by Means of Computer System, contrary to Section 44 (2) (b) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021.
55	The ruling delivered by Justice Momoh Jah Stevens on a matter between Kutubu Koroma, a resident in Maryland, USA and John Akar Foundation and Yada Williams Esq.	21 November 2023	Justice Momoh Jah Stevens ordered Kutubu Koroma, a resident in Maryland, USA to pay NLe 1,500,000 (approximately USSD 63,291.14) as compensation to John Akar Foundation and Yada Williams Esq. and to apologize for his libelous and defamatory publications on social media.
56	The invitation for questioning of Alie Bai Kamara, the Station Manager of Citizen Radio 103.7 FM by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in	8 February 2024	The Deputy Station Manager, Ibrahim Kalokoh (DJ Kalux), told MRCG that the invitation and

	Freetown, who was later detained at the CID.		<p>detention of Alie Bai Kamara was related to a broadcast the radio did on the incident of the 26 November 2023 ‘attempted coup.’</p> <p>Police confirmed the invitation and detention and said that the matter was investigated for some time. In subsequent follow-ups, police and the journalist confirmed that the matter was resolved in the same month at the CID.</p>
57	The online harassment and intimidation of Amadu Lamrana Bah, a journalist working for the <i>Africa Young Voices television (AYV)</i> who also doubles as the President of the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU) for a post on his Facebook and X accounts titled ‘Guess who has added to his fleet of brand-new SUVs...’ where he also asked the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) about the various asset declaration categories the Commission had for government officials.	March 2024	In an interview, Mr. Bah told MRCG that he had no intention to report the matter to the police for investigation. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) was deeply concerned about the insults, intimidation, attacks, and threats and stood in solidarity with journalist Bah, who was in March 2024 recognized as ‘Journalist of the Year 2023’ by SLAJ, and all journalists in Sierra Leone who face threats, intimidation, harassment, and attacks for their commitment to truth and transparency.

	Cases monitored by the MRCG that are still in Court since 2018	Date of Attack/ Arrest/ Invitation	Status of Cases as at the time of reporting
1	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 criticizing the new regime of President Julius Maada Bio.	10 September 2018	Matter is still at the Kenema High Court. Nimalty told MRCG that there was no progress on the matter.
2	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 was still in Court.
3	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 officially discharge the matter and I have not been called in connection with the matter,” he said.
4	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 was still in court, with no progress.
5	Alimamay N’Jai Sesay on 17 October 2022 appeared before Magistrate Mark Ngegba of Pademba Road Magistrate Court No.1 in Freetown for allegedly sharing Abdul Will Kamara alias Adebayor’s audios on social media. He is charged with five counts of various offences in the Cyber Security and Crime Act No. 7 of 2021.	17 October 2022	Police alleged that the accused person between 1 July 2022 and 10 October 2022, through social media, sent insulting messages created by Abdul Will Kamara alias ‘Adebayor’ against the Government of Sierra Leone by means of computer system and network with intent to provoke the

			breach of peace. The matter is ongoing at the High Court.
6	The attack on the office and staff of Hope FM 93.3 in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone, by a group of thugs allegedly sent by the landlord of the premise housing the radio.	23 October 2023.	Mr. Stanley Bangura, proprietor of the radio, told MRCG that the matter was in court, adding that the defendants pleaded with him, Ahmed Sahid Nasrallah, Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) President and Umaru Fofana, for an out of court settlement of the matter. He continued that he agreed on one condition, which is for the defendants to reinstate the radio's tenancy and pay for the damaged pieces of office property.

	Cases monitored by MRCG that are still under Police Investigation since 2018	Date of Attack/ Arrest/ Invitation	Status of Cases as at the time of reporting
1	Attack on the former Editor of Awareness Times Newspaper, 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 have not 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 that the matter had been kept in view.
2	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), 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 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.
3	Death threat against the <i>BBC's</i> 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 the matter had been kept in view.
4	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	The matter was 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 matter had been kept in view for lack of evidence and witness.
5	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	<p>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 <i>TV-News24</i>, 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 <i>TV- News24</i>, 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.”</p> <p>Al Mansaray, in March 2023 posted on his channel that he had filed a legal paper against the United State Government through the U.S. State Department for failing to take appropriate action when he alerted them about the abuse of power and unprofessional conduct of Magistrate Toby. However, there had been no new development on the said matter.</p>

6	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 had also not done anything about the official complaints made to them. Police said the matter had been kept in view.
7	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 and that she decided to move on with her life. Police said the matter had been kept in view.
8	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	Gibril Gottor told MRCG that “I am ok and I have taken over my security myself.” In an interview with MRCG, the Police also maintained that they had not yet got a witness or evidence to substantiate the complaint made by Gibril to support their investigation into the matter, so the matter has been kept in view.
9	The alleged physical assault of journalist Abdulai Gbla of <i>Gbla TV online</i> , by a Member of Parliament (MP), Hon. Abdul Muniru Lansana of Constituency 121, in the well of parliament.	28 June 2022	There is still no new development on the matter between journalist Abdulai Gbla of <i>Gbla TV Online</i> and former Honorable Muniru Lansana. Mr. Gbla told MRCG that till date, he had neither received any update from SLAJ nor from Parliament on the matter. SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla said that SLAJ had contacted the Clerk of Parliament on the matter, but he was also yet to get any update from him on the status of the investigation.
10	The physical assault on the Managing Editor of <i>Night Watch Newspaper</i> , Emmanuel Christian Thorli by staff of Njala University, in Waterloo on 11 September 2022.	11 September 2022	Mr Thorli, in October 2023, told MRCG that the matter was still at the police station for investigation, even though he had not honored the police invitation. The Acting Public Relations Officer for Njala University, Ayuba Koroma, still maintained that they had resolved the matter. Police said they were still investigating the matter, although the journalist was yet to honor their invitation.

11	The arrest and detention of Ady Macauley Esq. former Anti-Corruption Commissioner at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).	6 October 2022	The matter was still at the Directorate of Public Prosecution awaiting legal advice.
12	The alleged ‘verbal threat’ on journalist Gibril Gottor, a freelance journalist in Kambia by a police officer at Malal Police Checkpoint in Magbema Chiefdom, Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone.	18 January 2023	The matter is yet to be concluded as the police still maintained that they have not yet got a witness or evidence to substantiate the complaint made by Gibril to aid their investigation of the matter. Gibril told MRCG that he had left Sierra Leone because he feels his life is no longer safe in the country.
13	The alleged attack and assault on Alie Tokowa, the Station Manager of <i>Fountain of Peace Radio (FOP)</i> in Moyamba District, Alie Tokowa, on 28 March 2023 at the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) office in Moyamba district by its supporters.	28 March 2023	Journalist Alie Tokowa maintained that the State had withdrawn the matter from the police, with no progress. He said he had recently reached out to some human rights organizations to solicit help to take legal actions against his attackers but had not received any positive response from them. Police had investigated the matter. State Counsel had withdrawn the file from the police and the matter was now with State Counsel.
14	The complaint from Ibrahim Alusine Kamara, Managing Editor of <i>Salone Compass Newspaper</i> , stating that security officials assaulted him, endangered his life and vandalized his vehicle during an incident at the APC’s press conference on 25 June 2023 at the party’s headquarters in Freetown.	25 June 2023	<p>Mr. Kamara told MRCG that he had not yet received any update from the Independent Police Complaint Board (IPCB) on the matter.</p> <p>The investigating officer at IPCB, Hawalyn Kamara, again told MRCG that a joint force ‘wearing balaclava’ was deployed to the scene on the day the incident occurred and, therefore, their investigation into the matter had stalled due to lack of identification of the exact security officials that assaulted the journalist.</p> <p>The journalist told MRCG that he is still preparing to, through his lawyers, take the leadership of both the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) to court.</p>

15	The online ‘death threat’ against journalist Musa S. Kamara, working for radio <i>Democracy 98.1 FM</i> from anonymous individuals.	20 August 2023	Musa told MRCG that he was yet to receive any update from the police regarding the investigation. Police said they were investigating the matter.
16	The arrest and detention of Emmanuel C Thorli, Managing Editor of <i>Night Watch Newspaper</i> , at the CID in Freetown, allegedly for his news article titled ‘We Cannot Wait For Bio To Continue In Power Until 2028’, which was published on 21 February 2024.	21 February 2024,	Mr. Thorli told MRCG that police detained him because of the news article he published, noting that the police claimed that it was ‘inciting.’ He continued that after spending three days in detention he was released with the condition that he reports to the CID every day, until otherwise instructed by the police. Police confirmed the arrest and detention of the journalist and told MRCG that the matter was still investigated but the journalist had stopped reporting at the police station.
17	The invitation for questioning of Patrick Kai, a journalist working for <i>Calabash newspaper</i> , at the Kenema Police Division in relation to an alleged cybercrime committed against Eastern Technical University (ETU) Sierra Leone.	16 April 2024	The journalist denied the allegation and told MRCG that ETU accused him of being an administrator and informant of a Facebook page known as “Kenema Kotuku,” a page that had been critical of the institution. He was detained for four hours and released on bail pending investigation. ASP Detective Tamba David Alpha told MRCG that the journalist was invited to the cyber unit of the Police Division for an alleged cybercrime reported by the Registrar of ETU and confirmed that Patrick was released on the same day, but the matter was under police investigation.
18	The warrant of arrest issued by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for Justice Boima, CEO of <i>Justice FM and TV</i> , for alleged offences relating to cyber stalking and bullying.	23 May 2024	The journalist told MRCG that his warrant of arrest was in connection with his online publication on an alleged land grabbing by the Deputy Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Napoleon Koroma and the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Richard P.G. Robert, Head of Criminal Investigations Department. In an interview with the Deputy Minister, he denied all allegations made by the journalist including the journalist’s several audios accusing

			him of land grabbing, and assured MRCG that he was taking a legal actions against the journalist. ASP Amos Lansana, an officer attached to the Cybercrime Unit at the CID Headquarters and in-charge of the matter confirmed the warrant of arrest for the journalist, and said that they were still searching for him to start proper investigation of the matter.
19	The alleged verbal assaults and threatening remarks against Alie Badara, a freelance journalist in Bo, through a phone call from an unknown individual for a Facebook post he made on the excesses of the police in their fight against the synthetic drug called “Kush” and other illegal substances in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone.	28 May 2024,	The journalist told MRCG that he had been investigating the allegations that, the drugs which were being seized by the police officers in their raids, marked as exhibits, were being sold by some of the same officers. He stated that his Facebook publications (post one and post two) regarding the matter, irritated some group of individuals for which they planned to physically attack him and set his house ablaze. Inspector Moses Tommy Ganda, a police officer attached to the Cyber Unit at the Bo East Police Division, told MRCG that they had received the complaint from the journalist and had started investigations.

Table 11.2: Abandoned cases monitored by MRCG from March 2018 to May 2024

The cases in this table are also found in the ‘cases under police investigation’ and ‘cases in court tables.’ While the court say the cases are still on trial and the police also say the cases have been ‘Kept In View,’ the affected journalists have been abandoned the cases, citing lack of progress on their matters.

Cases that have been Abandoned by the journalists at the Police and at the Court because of lack of progress since 2018	Date of Attack/ Arrest/ Invitation	Status of Cases as at the time of reporting
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 criticizing the new regime of President Julius Maada Bio.	10 September 2018	Matter is still at the Kenema High Court. Nimalty told MRCG that there was no progress on the matter. The court is yet to discharge the matter.
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 have not done so since and that he has gradually forgotten the matter. The police said that Koroma had not been able to identify those that attacked him; and as such, they were constrained with arresting any suspect. They however said that the matter had been kept in view.
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), 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 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. Police said, the matter is kept in view.

<p>Arrest and detention of Mahmud Tim Kargbo 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.</p>	<p>20 September 2019</p>	<p>Granted bail after tendering an apology letter to Hon Justice Miatta Samba; matter was still in Court.</p> <p>The journalist had moved on with his life and has abandoned the matter, but the matter was not officially discharged from court.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>4 April 2020</p>	<p>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 officially discharge the matter and I have not been called in connection with the matter,” he said.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>17 February 2022.</p>	<p>The matter was still in court, with no progress. The journalist had moved on long ago. Police said that the matter had been kept in view.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>14 December 2021</p>	<p>The proprietor, Ibrahim Alusine Conteh told the MRCG that the police did nothing towards the issue. He said SLAJ had also not done anything about the official complaints made to them. Police said the matter had been kept in view.</p>
<p>An official complaint by Hawanatu Konneh Fofanah at the CID in December 2021 against an anonymous individual who allegedly attacked her personality on Facebook.</p>	<p>25 December 2021</p>	<p>Hawanatu said there was no headway on the matter and that she decided to move on with her life. Police said the matter had been kept in view.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>29 April 2022</p>	<p>Gibril Gottor told MRCG that “I am ok and I have taken over my security myself.” In an interview with MRCG, the Police also maintained that they had not yet got a witness or evidence to substantiate the complaint made by Gibril to support their investigation into the matter, so the matter had been kept in view.</p>