



Media Reform Coordinating Group-Sierra Leone

2 November 2024.

PRESS RELEASE

MRCG Intensifies Calls for the Safety of Journalists on International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

(Freetown: 2nd November, 2024). The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) joins the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) and other organizations across the world to observe the ‘International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists’ today, Saturday, 2 November 2024, on the theme “*Safety of Journalists in Crises and Emergencies.*”

In a General Assembly Resolution, the UN General Assembly declared 2 November the “International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.” The Resolution called on Member States to take decisive action to combat the current impunity culture. The day was selected to honor the 2 November 2013, assassinations of two French journalists in Mali. This historic resolution denounces all forms of violence and assault against media professionals. Additionally, it urges member nations to take all reasonable steps to stop violence against media professionals and journalists, prosecute those who commit crimes against them, and guarantee that victims have access to suitable redress.

According to the [UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists](#), more than 1,700 journalists have been massacred worldwide between 2006 and 2024, and about 90% of these homicides have not been prosecuted. Impunity increases the number of murders and is frequently a sign of escalating hostilities as well as the collapse of the legal and judicial systems.

Since 2018, the MRCG, with support from its primary donor, **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, has been monitoring and publishing media freedom reports detailing cases of invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions and prosecution of journalists. MRCG’s Twelfth report on ‘Press Freedom in Sierra Leone,’ which was recently published and launched, showed that **Eighty-two** cases have been monitored from the First to the Twelfth Editions. **Fifty-seven** have been concluded, settled, resolved or dropped because of lack of progress; **six** are in court, **nineteen** are still under police investigation, and **nine** abandoned by the victims due to lack of progress

As we observe this day, MRCG reminds the Government of Sierra Leone that from January 2024 to date, it has monitored the following cases including: the invitation and detention of Alie Bai Kamara of **Citizen Radio 103.7 FM**, by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID); the arrest and detention of Emmanuel C Thorli of **Night Watch Newspaper**, at the CID; the online threats, abuse and harassments against Amadu Lamrana Bah, formerly of **Africa Young Voices (AYV)** for a post on his Facebook and X accounts; the invitation for questioning of Patrick Kai, of **Calabash newspaper**, to the Kenema police division; the 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; the warrant of arrest for Justice Boima, of **Justice FM and TV**, for alleged offences relating to cyberstalking and bullying; the online attack, harassment and intimidation of Thomas Dixon of **Salone Times**



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Newspaper, by one Anthony Vandy; the attack and assault on Munya Bawoh, of *All Out Radio* in Kenema, by some police officers in Kenema while investigating a story at the Kenema East Police Station; and the dismissal and alleged attack and harassment of Umu Thoronka, formerly of the *SLBC* for a video she posted about a contribution of a lady at the Presidential Town Hall Meeting in Freetown.

The MRCG notes that issues relating to the safety and security of journalists go beyond politicians and the police, as there are reports of attacks on journalists from local authorities, youth and members of the public, especially in the online space.

The MRCG also reminds media owners that findings in its report on [The Welfare of Journalists in Sierra Leone 2024](#), show that the majority of the journalists in Sierra Leone face challenges with welfare, including **40.3%** who had never received salaries, **48.3%** receiving monthly salaries that were below the country's national minimum wage (NLe 800 about \$ 35), **59%** of the journalists' National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NaSSIT) membership dues were not paid by their respective media employers and **50%** of the journalists do not receive any other form of conditions of service. Many media institutions are either underpaying their employees or not paying salaries and other social security benefits.

Therefore, the MRCG continues to call on the Government, politicians, media organizations, media owners and managers, civil society organizations, and members of the public to ensure the safety and security of journalists across the country at all times.

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