



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- OCTOBER 2024

The monthly ‘**Media Freedom Review**’ is a publication of the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG). It is produced by monitoring and reporting on freedom of expression and the press, internet freedom, digital and online rights, and the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone.

In October 2024, MRCG followed up on the dismissal and harassment of a journalist in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone, the verbal threat against a freelance journalist in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone, the attack on the office and staff of a radio in Makeni, the assault on a journalist, alleged destruction of property of a journalist in Freetown while on duty, an alleged assault on a journalist in Moyamba District, the matter of former Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) boss, the alleged physical assault on a journalist in Waterloo, the matter between a journalist and a magistrate in Pujehun, information request to the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) and other media engagements.

There has been no new development on the matter of journalist Umu Thoronka, who was dismissed from work and allegedly attacked and harassed on social media regarding a TikTok [video](#) she posted about a contribution of a lady at the Presidential Town Hall Meeting in Freetown on 23 July 2024. The journalist said that since she reported the matter to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), she has been waiting for their response. SLAJ told MRCG that the investigation on the matter was still ongoing. The matter had been extensively discussed at SLAJ’s Annual General Meeting with suggestions for possible solutions.



There has been no new development on the matter of Alie Badara, a freelance journalist in Bo, who allegedly received verbal assaults and threatening remarks in May 2024 through a phone call from an unknown individual for a Facebook [post](#) he had done 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 further told MRCG that he would take another step by the end of November 2024 if no progress was made. Moses Tommy Ganda, the police officer attached to the Cyber Unit at the Bo East Police Division, maintained that they were still investigating the matter.

Concerning the attack on the office and staff of **Hope FM 93.3** in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone, by a group of thugs reportedly sent by the landlord of the premises housing the radio in October 2023, there had been no further progress regarding payment of compensation to the radio. Stanley Bangura, the radio’s Proprietor, said since they left the landlord’s premises and moved to a new building in July this year, they have yet to hear from the landlord regarding compensation for the damages caused during the incident. Mr. Bangura further told MRCG that they were giving the landlord until the end of November 2024 for the compensation. Otherwise, legal actions would be retaken. The landlord is based in the USA, and when writing this report, the MRCG could not get his side.

There is still no new development on the alleged attack and assault on the Station Manager of *Fountain of Peace Radio*, Alie Tokowa, in Moyamba District on 28 March 2023. It was alleged that supporters of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), on the instruction of Mr. Joseph Gbogba, the former District Council Chairman at the SLPP's party office in Moyamba, Southern Sierra Leone, attacked journalist Tokowa while on duty. Mr. Tokowa still maintained that he had yet to receive any positive response from the human rights organisations to help him take legal action against his attackers. As part of his next step, he said he was planning to file a formal complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) soon. The Local Unit Commander of Police in Moyamba, ASP Franklyn Bawoh, told MRCG that the matter was still with the State Counsel.

On the case of journalist Osman Hardy Jalloh at the HRCSL, concerning a complaint against Magistrate Joseph Toby of Pujehun Magistrate Court (formerly of Magistrate Court Number 2 in Kenema), Al Mansaray, the owner of *TV-News24*, in March 2023, had posted on his channel that he had filed a legal paper against the United States Government through the U.S. States Department for failing to take appropriate action when he alerted them about the abuse of power and unprofessional conduct of Magistrate Toby. The Deputy Director of Regional Service of the Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) East, Vandi Saidu, said the chief complainant, Al Mansaray, owner of *TV-News 24*, has not responded to the Commission's email containing the incident summary form sent to him. As such, the Commission cannot take further action on the matter without the complainant's cooperation. The Chief complainant, Al Mansaray, did not respond to the MRCG. The MRCG is still monitoring the matter.

There is still no progress on the case of the former Anti-Corruption Commissioner, Ady Macauley Esq., who was arrested and detained at the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in October 2022 for expressing his legal opinion on AYY Television on the 1965 Public Order Act (POA). He has been released, but the matter is still at the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP). MRCG continues to monitor the matter.



Concerning the alleged destruction of a car belonging to Ibrahim Alusine Kamara, the Editor of *Salone Compass Newspaper*, during a press conference at the APC Headquarters on 25 June 2023, there has been no progress by the Independent Police Complaint Board (IPCB) and the journalist's legal team on the matter. The journalist again maintained that his lawyers were yet to complete the necessary documentation to take the leadership of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)

to court; he further assured that he would be changing his lawyers if they are not fast-tracking his matter. The Investigating Officer at IPCB, Hawalyn Kamara, had previously told MRCG that a joint force 'wearing balaclava' was deployed to the scene 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.

There has been no progress on the matter of Alimamy N'Jai Sesay, who was charged with five counts of various offences in the Cyber Security and Crime Act No. 7 of 2021 for sharing Abdul Will Kamara, alias Adebayor's audios on social media. The matter is still at the High Court for trial, with the accused in remand. The matter had come up on 7 and 14 March 2024, but the accused was not in court on both days. The court was yet to schedule a hearing date on the matter. MRCG continues to monitor the matter.

In a follow-up to the arrest warrant for journalist Justice Boima, CEO of *Justice FM and TV*, for alleged offences relating to cyberstalking and bullying, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Amos Lansana, an officer attached to the Cybercrime Unit at the CID Headquarters in charge of the matter, maintained that the journalist had neither reported to the CID nor been arrested and that they were still searching for him to start their investigation.

The details of the cases and issues will be published in the MRCG Bi-Annual Press Freedom Report for June to November 2024.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America funds the MRCG's initiative on freedom of expression and the press, internet freedom, digital and online rights, and the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone. The MRCG seeks to strengthen democratic dialogue and accountability, consolidate peace, and ensure development through professional, independent, and sustainable media based on the right to freedom of expression and the press.

MRCG is the coordinating Secretariat for media reform, research and capacity building. It comprises Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Independent Radio Network (IRN), Guild of Editors (GoE), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), Sport Writers Association of Sierra Leone (SWASAL), Mass Communication (Fourah Bay College), Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), Independent Media Commission (IMC) and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC).