



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- MARCH 2025

The monthly '**Media Freedom Review**' is a publication of the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG). It is produced from the 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 March 2025, MRCG monitored the alleged physical assault of a journalist in Makeni and the arrest and detention of a lecturer concerning a cybercrime offence. MRCG also followed up on various issues including the invitation of the APC 2023 Flagbearer for questioning, a matter involving a reality TV star, the murder of a journalist in Waterloo, the barring of a journalist from entering Sierra Leone's Parliament, the dismissal and subsequent harassment of a journalist in Makeni, the verbal threat against a freelance journalist in Bo, and the attack on the office and staff of a radio in Makeni.

Mr Tejan Sheikh Rogers, a lecturer at the Milton Margai Technical University, appeared in court on 17 March 2025 on one count charge for cyber stalking, under section 44 (2) b of the Cyber Security and Crime Act of 2021, for allegedly using his WhatSapp number to create and post recorded audios and text messages in a WhatSapp group called "Maada must stay Campaign," deemed to have damaged the reputation of the university's Vice Chancellor and Principal Dr. Philip Kanu. The Matter had come up on 17 and 24 March 2025 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No.2 and was adjourned until 2 April 2025.

Journalist Alusine Rehme Wilson, Northern Chairman of the Sierra Leone Sport Writers Association (SWASAL), was on 30 March 2025 allegedly attacked and assaulted by supporters of Wusum Stars Football Club whilst conducting post-match interviews with Bo Rangers football players. The journalist told MRCG that he was currently receiving medical treatment for injuries sustained during the alleged attack. He added that he was in the process of filing a police report against the individuals responsible. The Sport Writers Association of Sierra Leone (SWASAL) issued a press release on 31 March 2025, condemning the alleged attack against the journalist and calling on the relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate the incident.

There has been no progress on the invitation of the 2023 Presidential Flagbearer of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, Dr. Samura Mathew Wilson Kamara by the Cyber Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 4 February 2025 for an interview concerning an alleged social media video in which he was seen referred to as the president elect of the Republic of Sierra Leone, awaiting to assume the seat of power. He was also reportedly seen making statements endorsing the same. The police could not respond to the issue.

In a follow up on the matter involving Hawa Madiana Hunt, a reality TV star who was charged to court on 8 January 2025, on two count charges for allegedly sending insulting messages via computer system against President Julius Maada Bio and First Lady Fatima Bio on social media contrary to the Cyber Security and Crime Act No. 7. of 2021 on 1 March 2025, First Lady Madam Fatima Bio in a live Facebook session called for the release of Hawa Hunt emphasising that she had no involvement in Hunt's arrest or subsequent charges. She urged those responsible for her detention to reconsider and allow her to reunite with her children. The Judiciary of Sierra Leone on 4 March 2025 posted on X that the Court of Appeal Judge, Hon. Justice Tonia

Barnett has discontinued the matter between the STATE VS HAWA HUNT, adding that the Director of Public Prosecutions, through his state counsel Yusuf I Sesay, applied for a discontinuance of the matter citing Section 66 (4) (c) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. Hawa Hunt was on diverse dates in January 2025 denied bail by Magistrate Santigie Bangura of Court No 2 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court in Freetown,

Regarding Melvin Tejan Mansaray, who was barred from the Parliament of Sierra Leone by the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas, on 10 January 2024, due to allegations of “malicious criticism”, the journalist told MRCG that the Privileges and Ethics Committee of Parliament summoned him on 4 March 2025, regarding his matter, noting that during the summon, he apologised and also withdrew the statements he had made against the members of Parliament and the matter was adjourned to a later date. The journalist said that he was waiting for the report and outcome of the hearing of the Privileges and Ethics Committee.

On the matter of journalist Samuel Brima Mattia, Deputy Station Manager of *Voice of Peace and Development (VOPAD) radio FM 96.5*, who was, on 16 January 2025, reportedly murdered by the Station Manager, Joseph M Lamin, and others in Waterloo, Western Rural of Freetown, the primary suspect, Joseph M Lamin, who police said confessed to the crime, along with two others, was charged to court on two counts charge on Conspiracy to murder and Murder. The matter had come up at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court on 4, 11, 18, and 26 March 2025 and was adjourned until 2 April 2025.

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, there has been no further progress on the matter. The journalist told MRCG that the concerned authorities had taken no action on her matter and that she was tired of the delay. SLAJ told MRCG that it had transferred the matter to the Independent Media Commission for further investigation. The IMC maintained that the matter was still under investigation.



There is still no progress on the matter of Alie Badara, a freelance journalist, who reportedly 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” in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone. The journalist told MRCG there is still no positive update to his case. He stated that all his efforts to fight for justice have been futile, and that he believed the police and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) are the main obstacles delaying his case.

On 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 premises initially housing the radio in October 2023, there was no further progress on the matter. The proprietor of the radio, Stanley Bangura, still maintained that the landlord had not yet paid the compensation because he was reportedly sick in the USA and was yet to recover from the illness.

On 11 March 2025, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) submitted a [position paper](#) to Parliament on the Counter Terrorism Bill 2025, highlighting concerns regarding its potential impact on freedom of expression and press freedom in Sierra Leone. SLAJ emphasised that the broad and vague

provisions in the proposed Bill could be misused to criminalise legitimate journalistic work and restrict public discourse.

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 is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States of America. 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).