



COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS IN SIERRA LEONE



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The Framework was developed through a joint process involving media actors and state actors in the country as part of efforts to reduce incidents of media rights violations, increase responsiveness by authorities to addressing media rights violations and to reduce acts of impunity for crimes against journalists in Sierra Leone.

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1. Introduction

This document is the Comprehensive National Framework for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone. It aims at improving press freedom, safety of journalists and countering impunity for crimes against journalists in the country. It was developed through a joint process involving media and state actors, and it spells out the roles and responsibilities of all actors.

The Framework constitutes justification for the need for a National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone, an outline of the media landscape in the country, an overview of the landscape of media freedom in the country, an analysis of the situation of journalists' safety in the country, the processes leading to the establishment of the **Sierra Leone National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists**, its composition and structure, role, activities and operation of the committee. The Framework also comprises the objectives and outcomes of the National Safety Mechanism for Journalists in Sierra Leone as well as the role and intervention areas of essential stakeholders.

2. Justification

The rationale for the Comprehensive National Framework for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone fits within international discourse on safety mechanisms for journalists. Studies from various countries show that in recent years, there has been disquieting evidence of the scale and number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers as well as of incidents affecting their ability to exercise freedom of expression by threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access, and failure to investigate and prosecute crimes against them. This evidence has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community by inter-governmental organizations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders.¹

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists in 2013. Resolution 68/163 deals with 'The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.' The UN condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers, such as torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention, as well

¹ UN PLAN OF ACTION ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY
https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf

as intimidation and harassment in both conflict and non-conflict situations. It also urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy and effective investigations into all allegations of violence against journalists and media workers, and to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies.²

This Framework reaffirms and seeks to maintain the recent successes Sierra Leone has made in its press freedom records. This is evident in the repeal of Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965 which criminalized defamation. Recent international human rights rankings indicate that progress has been made in enhancing press freedom in Sierra Leone. For example, in the 2022 World Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Sierra Leone was ranked 46th out of 180 countries, having moved up from 75th in 2021. Sierra Leone in 2021 ranked 75 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, moving 10 places forward (85/180 in 2020 to 75) because of the bold step Government had taken to repeal the law criminalising press offences in the country. Despite the progress made in media freedom reforms, there are still reports of invitation, arrests and detention of journalists and attacks of journalists by some local residents in the post-repeal era. The reports of the Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) and Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) all show some issues of safety and security. In its April 2022 Media Review, the MRCG reported that it had followed various incidents, which included ‘an alleged assassination attempt on a journalist and civil society activist.’³

This Framework builds on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) and the national security sector on 2 November 2021 in commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, in which both parties committed themselves to working together to create and maintain an environment where media freedom can thrive. The Framework is also a fulfilment of a recommendation made at the safety and security forum organized by the MFWA and MRCG and a related study⁴ which recommended the development of a template for Safety and Security Policy in Sierra Leone. The MFWA, through MRCG, in October 2020 produced a report titled ‘Study on the State of Safety of Journalists’ Policies and Practices in Media Houses in Sierra Leone.’ The findings show that ‘majority of the media houses studied lacked a safety and security policy. There is no specific safety and security policy in those media institutions.’ The

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

³ <http://mrcgonline.org/index.php/impact-resources/213-mrcg-monthly-media-freedom-review-april-2022>

⁴ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-Safety-of-Journalists-Policies-and-Practices-in-Media-houses-in-Sierra-Leone-2020.pdf>

report indicated that many Sierra Leonean journalists do not know safety precautions about covering stories in dangerous zones.⁵

The Framework also addresses issues raised in the UNESCO Safety Policy and Protocols (February 2016) which urges media organisations to, among a number of measures, establish protocols and systems (including enhanced safety), with clear responsibilities of media organizations and reporters, and to provide trainings for media editors and managers to sensitize them on safety issues.⁶

3. Media Landscape in Sierra Leone

3.1 Sub-regional, regional and global frameworks on freedom of expression

Sierra Leone is a party to international instruments that guarantee freedom of expression as indicated in its ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1996 and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1983. Being a member of the United Nations, the country is obligated by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 to protect freedom of expression.

3.2 National legal framework on freedom of expression and press freedom

Sierra Leone is a democratic state that guarantees press freedom under its 1991 Constitution, Act No. 6 of 1991. Section 11 of the constitution states the obligations of the mass media, while section 25(1) guarantees freedom of expression and of the press. Section 25(2) places limitations on the right to freedom of expression and of the press. The greatest setback to media freedom in the country was Part V of the Public Order Act 1965, from Section 26 to Section 37 (which dealt with publication of defamatory, false publication and seditious matters). This provision was, however, repealed in 2020 pursuant to the Public Order (Amendment) Act 2020. There are also the Defamation Ordinance 1961 and the Media Code of Practice and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics.

The media are principally regulated by the Independent Media Commission Act 2020 which repealed the Independent Media Commission Act 2000 as amended. The Act provides for the continuation of the Independent Media Commission (IMC), to provide for the registration and regulation of mass media institutions in Sierra Leone, licensing institutions engaged in radio, television or direct to home digital satellite

⁵ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-Safety-of-Journalists-Policies-and-Practices-in-Media-houses-in-Sierra-Leone-2020.pdf>

⁶ https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ideas_for_news_organisations_en_0.pdf

service broadcasting and registration of persons and institutions engaged in the publication of newspapers, magazines in Sierra Leone and to provide for other related matters. In 2021, Parliament passed the Cyber Security and Crime Act, which human rights advocates have argued may infringe on the rights to freedom of expression and of the press, an assertion the government has always refuted. There is also the Right to Access Information Act 2013.

3.3 Nature of media (types of media and number) issues related to media ownership and media practices

Generally, media institutions are categorised into Radio (174 active and 38 not active, including those without frequency), Television (17 active and seven not active including those without frequency), Television (DTH) (seven active and four not active) and Newspapers (123 active and 107 not active), and Magazines (10 active and 14 not active).⁷ Radio and television stations are further categorized into public service, commercial, community, and religious institutions.⁸ Of the 174 active radio stations, seven are public service, 72 are commercial, 39 are community, 37 are religious, and 13 are teaching radio stations and six international relay stations. The SLBC Act No. 1 of 2010 established the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation as the public service broadcaster (PSB). The registered PSBs are seven for radio and five for television stations. There are 96 commercial radio stations and 12 commercial television stations, 42 community radio stations and no community television station, 48 registered radio stations and five religious television stations, 13 teaching radio stations and one teaching television station, and six international relay stations⁹.

The types of ownership of media institutions are outlined in the IMC Act 2020. They are a body corporate established by an Act of Parliament or registered under the Companies Act 2009 (Act No. 5 of 2009); a partnership registered under the Partnership Act 1890 and a sole proprietorship.¹⁰ Regarding radio ownership, data show that four are partnerships, 189 are companies, 12 are sole proprietorships and seven are body corporate (established by an Act of Parliament – the one SLBC radio and its stations in the regions). For local television ownership, there is no partnership and sole proprietorship, 18 are companies, and five bodies corporate established by the SLBC Act of Parliament. For newspaper ownership, there are 20 partnerships, 167 are companies, and 42 are sole proprietorships and one owned by the government.

Radio remains the most widely accessed broadcast platform in Sierra Leone. In all, eight out of 10 (81%) Sierra Leoneans have access to radio, and 47% listen to it daily. Radio listenership is fractured, however, with no single station able to reach a national

⁷ Independent Media Commission Sierra Leone IMC-SL Media Watch February 2022, Vol.7 No 1 and IMC's submission to the Technical Committee of the Media Investment Conference, Organized by the Ministry Of Information and Communications and National Media Organizations with support from the BBC Media Action

⁸ PART VI (A and B) of the IMC Act 2020

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Sections 24(2) and 29 (2) of the IMC Act 2020

audience. In contrast to radio access, just under half of Sierra Leoneans (45%) can access TV. Newspapers have not gained a mass audience. Readership is also mostly male – 71% of those who access newspapers are men, and 82% of readers live in urban areas. This can partly be attributed to traditionally low levels of literacy among the population. Newspapers are also not broadly distributed throughout the country. Access to traditional media – radio, TV and print – varies greatly in Sierra Leone: the proportion of adults with access to each platform is 81%, 45% and 13%.¹¹

Although the country has several media associations like the umbrella body SLAJ, there is no network of media owners, and there have been unconfirmed reports about abuse of the rights of employees by employers.

4. Reports on safety of journalists' situation in the country

There are various reports dealing with issues relating to safety of journalists in the country. Key among them are the reports of the MFWA's Study on the State of Safety of Journalists' Policies and Practices in Media Houses in Sierra Leone, the MRCG Press Freedom Reports, and the reports of Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House. The reports by the international organisations, which monitor human rights situations both nationally and internationally, refer to the recent progress made by the country, but persistently refer to incidents of harassment of journalists.

As regards women's safety situation in the Sierra Leonean media, in 2020 most female had no safety policy covering them. Out of 44 respondents only six had safety policy measures specifically on female employees. Among the areas these safety policy measures covered were allowing female journalists to return home from work earlier than their male counterparts, women's integrity and sexual harassment at the workplace.¹²

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Sierra Leone

In the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Sierra Leone, the Human Rights Council commended efforts by the country in the 38th Session of the UPR Working Group in May 2021. The adoption of the report of the review of the country's human rights records suggested Sierra Leone had made some strides in protecting human rights. Nonetheless, the Human Rights Commissioner recommended in a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs a number of actions to be taken by the Sierra Leonean government. Chief among those recommendations included: 'Enhancing

¹¹ Wittels, A and Maybanks, N. (2016). Communication in Sierra Leone: An Analysis of Media and Mobile Audiences. BBC Media Action

¹² <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-Safety-of-Journalists-Policies-and-Practices-in-Media-houses-in-Sierra-Leone-2020.pdf>

legislation for the protection of human rights defenders and ensuring that citizens, including those who hold opposing views to government, are allowed to exercise the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, openly without fear of reprisal.¹³

Transformation Index

In its 2022, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) stated that ‘The abolition of Part V of the Public Order Act in July 2020 has been hailed a victory for press freedom by international and national campaigners, SLAJ and other stakeholders’, but it cautions that ‘investigative journalism and protection of journalists remains weak.’¹⁴

5. Efforts made towards improving the media landscape in at least the last five years

The major effort made towards improving the media landscape in the last five years was the repeal of the criminal and seditious libel laws. On 23 July 2020, the Parliament of Sierra Leone unanimously repealed Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965. The Government of Sierra Leone issued a press release titled: ‘Government repeals Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965’, in which it stated that repeal of the criminal and seditious libel law would unshackle free speech, expand democratic space and consolidate the country’s democracy. There are also the new IMC Act 2020, the review of the Media Code of Practice, development of the IMC’s Guidelines on Elections Reporting, Office of National Security’s Strategic Communication group that brings together heads of Public Relations and Communication for security sector institutions. Additionally, there is increased access to the Public Relations and Communication of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Sierra Leone Police, as the latter now has Information Officers in various police stations. The Government has also signed the Global pledge on media freedom.

Further, various capacity-building initiatives have been organized to improve the media landscape. On 5 and 6 August 2021, MRCG and the Mass Communication Department at Fourah Bay College held a two-day session to review media/journalism/communication curriculum to be used by media and journalism schools across Sierra Leone. The review was geared towards improving and advancing journalism and media, and training and producing professional journalists so as to promote democratic good governance.¹⁵ Between 2020 and 2021, the MFWA, together with the MRCG and Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), trained 85 female

¹³ (<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Sierra%20Leone.pdf>)

¹⁴ (<https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/SLE>)

¹⁵ <http://mrcgonline.org/media/attachments/2022/02/24/mrcgs-seventh-edition-press-freedom-report-2021-final.pdf>

journalists, bloggers and activists on digital literacy and women's rights on online issues in Sierra Leone. In the same period, MRCG and MFWA also trained 30 senior journalists on safety.

In April 2022, Sierra Leone held a national media viability and investment conference. The Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) and media partners with the support of BBC Media Action, through PRIMED,¹⁶ organised the national conference which brought together government, media organisations, industry leaders and other stakeholders to explore options and create a national action plan to strengthen public-interest media in the country.

6. Safety of Journalists' Situation in Sierra Leone

6.1 Analysis of the safety of journalists' situation in the country

The First-Seventh Edition of the MRCG Press Freedom Report, from May 2018 to November 2021, recorded 39 cases of freedom of expression violations. Seven of them were concluded, six were settled or resolved out of court or police investigations, 15 dropped or abandoned whereas six are inconclusive or stalled and five are still in court.¹⁷

On the analyses of the trend of violations, key perpetrators and victims, research including engagements with the police, SLAJ and data from the MRCG's Press Freedom Reports showed that in 2018, which was an election year (Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections) in Sierra Leone, there were up to 10 cases of freedom of expression violations against journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty. In 2019, nine major violations were recorded against journalists and civil society activists in their line of duty. In 2020, which saw the emergence of COVID-19, up to 10 cases of freedom of expression violations against journalists and civil society activists were also recorded. On the patterns of violations, most of the violations against journalists and civil society activists were based on: assault and attack; arrest and detention; invitation to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), police stations or the Well of Parliament; and threats or harassments from even local authorities and residents in communities. Journalists and civil society activists suffered mostly from assaults, attacks, arrests and detentions more than the other categories mentioned.¹⁸

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/our-work/media-development/PRIMED-project>

¹⁷ <http://mrcgonline.org/media/attachments/2022/02/24/mrcgs-seventh-edition-press-freedom-report-2021-final.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MFWA-PRESS-FREEDOM-REPORT-SIERRA-LEONE-2018-2020-REVISED-FINAL-june-16.pdf>

On types of safety and security issues that journalists are faced with in Sierra Leone, reports show that media houses and practitioners have been faced with at least one of the following violations: intimidation, harassment, humiliation, arrest, detention and physical attack.¹⁹ The following categories of people are the perpetrators of those violations, with the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and politicians being the most culpable perpetrators of those violations: SLP, politicians, chiefs/community stakeholders/people, military personnel, civil servants and members of the public.²⁰ Other actors named in a different study include political party operatives, presidential guards, violent youths and social media operatives.²¹

6.2 Relations between media and state security agents and challenges

There have been several efforts aimed at improving the media and security agents' challenges. SLAJ has been engaging the SLP on various issues relating to the arrest and detention of journalists. In the build-up to the 2018 elections, the MFWA and the MRCG organised a Police-Media Dialogue forum which addressed a number of issues aimed at improving the relationship between the police and the media.

SLAJ and the national security sector signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 2 November 2021 in commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, during a round-table dialogue at the Office of National Security (ONS) in Freetown on the theme "Maintaining Law and Order and the Safety and Security of Journalists". This effort was to ensure the safety and security of journalists in their line of duty across the country.

7. UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the issue of impunity and its context in Sierra Leone

The trends discussed above have been covered by the UN in its Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (Resolution S/RES/1738), which was adopted in 2006. The Plan of Action came into force essentially because of the overwhelming evidence of attacks on, arrests and imprisonment of journalists and other forms of abuse. Resolution S/RES/1738, therefore, calls for coordinated efforts as in 'prevention mechanisms and actions to address some of the root causes of violence against journalists and of impunity.'

¹⁹ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-Safety-of-Journalists-Policies-and-Practices-in-Media-houses-in-Sierra-Leone-2020.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-Safety-of-Journalists-Policies-and-Practices-in-Media-houses-in-Sierra-Leone-2020.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MFWA-PRESS-FREEDOM-REPORT-SIERRA-LEONE-2018-2020-REVISED-FINAL-june-16.pdf>

The UN Plan of Action seeks to assist Member States to develop legislation and mechanisms guaranteeing freedom of expression and information, including, for example, requirements that States effectively investigate and prosecute crimes against freedom of expression; to fully implement existing international rules and principles, as well as to improve, where needed, national legislation on safeguarding journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in conflict and non-conflict situations; and to encourage Member States to take an active role in the prevention of attacks against journalists, and take prompt action in response to attacks by establishing national emergency mechanisms, which different stakeholders can adopt.

8. Sierra Leone National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists

In line with the requirement by the UN Plan of Action, MFWA and MRCG have made some efforts to establish a National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone. The processes leading to the setting up of this Committee included a review of various reports about the safety situation of journalists in the country. This constituted examining press freedom violation reports by the international community, national and internal non-governmental organisations and national and international media organisations. It also comprised exploration of legal and policy frameworks regarding safety of journalists in the country.

There were interviews with various stakeholders. In total, 18 stakeholders were interviewed including five media associations: Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), Independent Radio Network (IRN) and the Guild of Newspaper Editors (GoE); two media owners; one civil society organisation; the state-owned Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC); the Sierra Leone Police (SLP); the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF); the Executive Secretary of Independent Media Commission (IMC); the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC); the Judiciary; the House of Parliament (HOP); the Office of National Security (ONS) and Faculty of Communication, Media and Information Studies (CMIS), Fourah Bay College.

The other processes included a forum on the safety of journalists and media security forum to present the draft Comprehensive National Framework on the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone; meetings of the Expert Committee to make inputs into the Framework and the adoption and launch and a presentation of the Comprehensive National Framework.

8.1 Composition of the National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone

The Committee comprises:

1. Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)
2. Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC – Representing Gov't/MDAs)
3. Independent Media Commission (IMC)
4. Security Sector Institutions (ONS, SLP and RSLAF)
5. Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL)
6. Civil Society Organization (Campaign for Good Governance – CGG)
7. Council of Paramount Chiefs in Sierra Leone
8. Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG – Secretary to Committee)

8.2 Structure of the National Coordination Committee for Safety of Journalists

The Committee's governance structure is:

- i. Chairperson
- ii. Vice Chairperson
- iii. Secretary
- iv. Sub-Committees

8.3 Activities of the National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists

Role of the National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists.

The following are the proposed roles of the Committee:

- i. Protecting the welfare of journalists (this mainly concerns the responsibility of media owners to journalist employees);
- ii. Regular training of journalists for professional practice;
- iii. Coordination between journalists and security sector;
- iv. Ensuring protection of journalists by developing national safety and security policy guidelines;
- v. Simplification of those guidelines;
- vi. Helping to address press freedom violations;
- vii. Production of reports;
- viii. Visitations to communities;
- ix. Developing guidelines on decision making.

Functions of the Sierra Leone National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists.

Regarding specific functions, the Sierra Leone National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists shall carry out the following:

- i. Holding of meetings;
- ii. Reviewing of reports of press freedom violations;
- iii. Arbitrating those cases;
- iv. Conducting sustained training sessions for journalists on their responsibilities;
- v. Developing awareness messages for journalists;
- vi. Raising funds to administer the Committee through existing media institutions;
- vii. Establishing Regional and District Committees on Safety of Journalists.

Operations of the Committee

- i. Monthly meetings
- ii. Quarterly meetings
- iii. Yearly meetings

9. National Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone

This document is the Comprehensive National Framework on the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone. It is classified as Sierra Leone's version of UNESCO's recommended National Mechanisms for the Safety of Journalists. It sets out the various mechanisms that will help to ensure the safety of journalists in the country. It provides compelling justification for the establishment of a national coordination committee for the safety of journalists in Sierra Leone, describes the committee, identifies its members and spells out the roles of those members.

Objectives

The objectives of this Framework are:

- i. Ensuring the safety of journalists;
- ii. Countering impunity for crimes against journalists;
- iii. Improving the relationship between media practitioners and security sector institutions;
- iv. Establishing coordination between media institutions and other stakeholders in society;

- v. Ensuring the protection of journalists' welfare;
- vi. Supporting regular training of journalists on safety and security issues.

Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Framework are:

- i. Increased redress of violations against journalists;
- ii. Reduced incidents of unresolved cases of violations against journalists;
- iii. Improved relationship between media practitioners and security sector;
- iv. Enhanced relationship between media institutions and other stakeholders.

Roles and Interventions

The role and interventions of various stakeholders such as the executive, legislature, judiciary, state security agents, media owners, media associations, journalists, civil society that will be mandated to ensure the safety of journalists are provided below.

Government	Role in the Comprehensive National Framework on the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone	Role of Representative(s)
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Support the proper implementation of the laws on media freedom in the country; (ii) Ensure the safety and security of media practitioners at all times; (iii) Ensure the implementation of recommendations on media freedom; (iv) Support and take part in regular interaction dialogue forums on safety and security of journalists; (v) Enforce laws that guarantee journalists' freedom to access information, maintain privacy, and use of Internet for communication; (vi) Ratify and deposit regional, continental and global frameworks that provide an enabling environment for media operations in Sierra Leone; (vii) Ensure public and political climate is conducive to the functioning of 	The representative (MIC) will coordinate media freedom activities and programmes among ministries, departments and agencies and will participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone.

	<p>independent and pluralistic media in Sierra Leone;</p> <p>(viii) Allocate adequate funds to public interest journalism.</p>	
Judiciary	<p>(i) Support the proper implementation of the laws on media freedom in the country;</p> <p>(ii) Ensure the speedy and fair trial of all media freedom cases in Sierra Leone;</p> <p>(iii) Organise capacity-building programmes of staff on freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists;</p> <p>(iv) Organise regular dialogue/interaction forums between the judiciary and the media to discuss media concerns in regard to administration of justice on media related cases.</p>	<p>The representative (MIC) shall participate in all National Comprehensive Framework meetings on the safety of journalists in Sierra Leone. The representative will provide information on cases and complaints on safety and security of journalists.</p>
Legislature	<p>(i) Organise dialogue sessions for media practitioners and parliamentarians;</p> <p>(ii) Review any legal, policy and institutional regulatory frameworks that threaten freedoms of expression and the media;</p> <p>(iii) Allocate sufficient funds for the development of the media industry and specifically for strengthening the safety of journalists' national mechanism.</p>	<p>The representative shall participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the safety of journalists in Sierra Leone.</p>
Security sector institutions	<p>(i) The ONS will ensure security sector institutions provide guarantee for the protection of journalists in Sierra Leone;</p> <p>(ii) The Preservation and maintenance of law and order fall within the remit of the security sector;</p> <p>(iii) The Security Sector will ensure a safe and secure environment for the media to carry out their activities unhindered, provided that such activities do not lead to the breakdown of law and order;</p> <p>(iv) The security sector will create and maintain an environment where media freedom can thrive;</p>	<p>The representative(s) shall participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone;</p> <p>Coordinate all dialogue sessions;</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (v) The security sector will work together to sensitise media and security workers about each other's roles and responsibilities; (vi) The security sector will work together to ensure an environment conducive to freedom of expression, access to information, and other fundamental freedoms; (vii) The security sector will work to actively reach out and constructively dialogue with each other in times of crisis. <p>Specifically, the SLP and the RSLAF should act as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The SLP and RSLAF must initiate internal processes of awareness building among personnel for service men and women to be aware of the need to involve media in their work; (ii) In their relations with the media, the police and the military will recognize and respect the rights, responsibilities and independence of the media; (iii) Police and RSLAF must recognize and uphold the principle that relations with the media are to serve the democratic objectives of (a) the citizens' or public's right to know and be informed, and (b) the police's and military's obligation, as a public institutions, to be accountable to the public; (iv) The police and the military must at all times be willing to be transparent and subject themselves to public scrutiny; (v) To win the public's trust and confidence, communication by the police and the military with or to the media – which is for public information – must be credible, honest and transparent; (vi) Any information from the police and the military to the media must be guided by the principle of maximum disclosure; 	<p>Produce reports of meetings and forums.</p>
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	<p>(vii) The police and military must respond to media enquiries on time as much as possible;</p> <p>(viii) The work of the police and the military (all security agencies in general) may often require strict confidentiality and secrecy. In the public interest, it is not every activity of the police and the military or information in their custody that may be made public. There are circumstances and times when it may be necessary to impose limitations or restrictions on the media's and citizens' right to freedom of expression. Whenever the police or the military must act to limit freedom of expression, that is restrain journalists from accessing information, such restrictions must be subjected to the 3-way test recommended as standards of international behaviour, namely restrictions:</p> <p>(ix) must be provided by law;</p> <p>(x) must pursue a legitimate aim of protecting life, property, public safety and peace;</p> <p>(xi) such restrictions must be necessary and proportionate.</p>	
Media Regulator	<p>IMC The media regulator is expected to:</p> <p>(i) Ensure free media industry throughout Sierra Leone;</p> <p>(ii) Work with other media organisations to promote press freedom.</p>	The representative shall participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the safety of journalists in Sierra Leone.
Media	<p>SLAJ SLAJ shall:</p> <p>(i) Advocate for media owners to institute or establish policies and measures to promote the safety of journalists;</p>	The representative(s) shall participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Immediately intervene to assist any journalist whose safety is endangered or threatened; (iii) Monitor all threats to or attacks on members' safety; (iv) Convene training programmes to teach journalists about procedures followed by security forces in instances where journalists will encounter them; (v) Collaborate with security agencies to ensure societal peace; (vi) Train journalists against inciteful statements or publications that trigger public unrest; (vii) Ensure that, in the interest of the nation, classified security information is not published or released to the public; <p>The Journalists Journalists shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Ensure that they are mentally and physically stable enough for a particular task before attempting to carry it out; (ii) All journalists, including freelance journalists, must always carry with them valid identity cards, when they go out to work, from the organisations that have assigned them to carry out that particular work. In an instance in which accreditation is required, the journalist must comply with that requirement; (iii) Journalists are always required to clearly identify themselves and their equipment during coverage of events which involve security agents; (iv) All journalists must ensure they have all necessary equipment for the coverage of a particular events before they attempt to start covering those events; (v) As much as possible, a journalist must not work alone in risky zones; in an instance in which they need to go alone, colleagues and the managements of their organisations must be made aware of the 	<p>safety of journalists in Sierra Leone;</p> <p>Coordinate all discussion sessions;</p> <p>Produce reports of meetings and forums.</p>
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	<p>place, time and reason for their going out alone;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (vi) While on duty, all journalists must conduct themselves in the best manner; this includes steering clear of any irrelevant kind of communication capable of eliciting any form of emotion and its attendant physical occurrence sufficient to be a hindrance to the initial purpose of the journalists; (vii) When working in risky zones involving protests, or any form of violence, journalists must first adhere to warnings from security agents; if, however, such warnings are found to be imbued with the potential to unnecessarily prevent journalists from doing their work, the journalists must report this matter accordingly; (viii) All journalists must conduct themselves in the most professional manner in covering events and in their publications; (ix) All journalists must ensure they are adequately protected before they venture out to work in the field; if they have a reasonable understanding that their safety will not be guaranteed while on a particular function, they must not venture out; (x) Female journalists must ensure they have particularly enhanced safety and security before they carry out tasks, especially in the field. <p>Employers of journalists/Media Houses Employers of journalists or media houses shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Ensure the safety and security of all journalists working for them; (ii) Provide all relevant equipment to journalists working for them; (iii) Regularly train journalists working for them on journalists' safety, especially about working in dangerous zones which 	
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	<p>require the presence of security personnel; employers or media houses should not send inexperienced journalists to dangerous zones;</p> <p>(iv) Insure journalists where it is reasonable to do so;</p> <p>(v) Provide ample education to journalists about the political, social and cultural conditions of a particular place before sending them there to cover events;</p> <p>Media Development and Rights Advocacy Organisations These are required to:</p> <hr/> <p>(i) Provide advice and capacity building to stakeholders on issues such as: the treatment of journalists especially by security forces, investigation of crimes against journalists, and prosecution and protection measures;</p> <p>(ii) Raise money for organizing capacity-building and safety trainings for journalists;</p> <p>(iii) Train journalists on reporting in conflict zones, legal rights, self-protection techniques, first aid, etc. and assist with provision of safety equipment;</p> <p>(iv) Participate in a joint rapid-response mechanisms at the national level and/or international levels.</p>	
Other Stakeholders	<p>Other stakeholders are required to:</p> <p>(i) Support all media freedom and safety and security mechanisms in the country.</p>	<p>The representative(s) shall participate in all Comprehensive National Framework meetings on the safety of journalists in Sierra Leone.</p>

10. Conclusion

The Comprehensive National Framework for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone has outlined the steps that should be followed to ensure continuous improvement in media freedom and safety of journalists. It is Sierra Leone's adherence to UNESCO's recommended National Mechanisms for the Safety of Journalists. The studies and consultations that informed the production of the Framework clearly show that there is a need to develop and implement measures on safety of journalists. As a way of ensuring the implementation of the Framework, a National Coordination Committee for the Safety of Journalists in Sierra Leone has been established with clearly defined structure, objectives, roles and intervention areas for all stakeholders. It is hoped that the Committee will engage other stakeholders to ensure full adherence to the issues raised in the Framework.



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