



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- MAY 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 May 2025, MRCG monitored the alleged physical assault of journalist Prince Christopher Kamara Editor of *Open Space Newspaper*, the verbal threat against journalist Kandeh Sesay, Managing Editor for the *Watch Newspaper*, and the physical assault of journalist Foday Fofanah of the *AYV Media Empire*. MRCG also followed up on various issues, including the invitation of Dr Samura Kamara, the 2023 Presidential Flagbearer of the All Peoples Congress (APC), physical assault of a journalist in Makeni, the arrest and detention of a lecturer for a cybercrime offense, the invitation of the APC 2023 Flagbearer for questioning, 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 station in Makeni.

Prince Christopher Kamara, Editor of *Open Space Newspaper*, was allegedly assaulted by staff members of the *Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC)* on 6 May 2025, due to an article that had upset them. The journalist reported to the MRCG that he had gone to the SLBC Broadcasting House to interview the Deputy Director General, Asmieu Bah, after receiving information about a possible strike at the *SLBC* compound. During his visit, a group of *SLBC* staff confronted and physically attacked him, ultimately throwing him out of the compound because of the critical story he had published about the current Director General. He told MRCG that he sustained multiple injuries during the assault. Kamara formally reported the incident to the following institutions including the New England Ville Police Station, the *SLBC* Director General, and to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ). In a [report](#) dated 15 May 2025, SLAJ condemned the physical attack on the journalist during the protest, asserting that there is no justification for violence against any journalist, regardless of the circumstances, and called for a peaceful resolution. The Guild of Newspaper Editors (GoE), also issued a press release on 7 May 2025, denouncing the violent assault on Kamara and urged the SLBC leadership to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation. The MRCG also issued a [press release](#) on the issue and called on relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate the matter. In a dialogue facilitated by SLAJ, the journalist, his employer, and the SLBC Director General expressed concern for Kamara's health and agreed to work together to amicably resolve the matter.

Journalist Kandeh Sesay, Managing Editor of *The Watch Newspaper*, received a threat from Anthony Vandy, allegedly a member of the media team of the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Mrs. Fatima Bio. Sesay reported to MRCG that the threat was communicated through a WhatsApp group called 'Miracle Media Network (MMN),' following his publication of an analysis related to a report by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). This report dealt with allegations of corruption concerning a property in Gambia, linked to the First Lady Fatima Bio in Gambia. According to Sesay, Vandy threatened that he would take legal action against him and claimed he would ensure that Sesay faced jail term. Although

Sesay has not yet reported the incident to the police, but told MRCG that he has planned to do so. At the time this report was prepared, Anthony Vandy had not responded to the MRCG's inquiries.

Foday Fofanah, a journalist working for the *Africa Young Voices Media Empire*, was allegedly assaulted by armed Officers of the Sierra Leone Police Force on 21 May 2025, at the Model Old Road Junction in Freetown. An Initial report on social media indicated that the altercation began when the journalist intervened in a public incident involving police officers and a commercial motorbike rider, during which a female street vendor's goods were destroyed. In expressing concern for the woman's loss, the officers physically attacked the journalist. According to a [video](#) that circulated on social media, the journalist was physically assaulted, pepper-sprayed, and threatened with a firearm arm sustaining injuries and a swollen eye during the assault by the officers. In their press releases dated 22 May 2025, the [MRCG](#), [SLAJ](#), [AYV](#), and [SLRU](#) condemned the attack on the journalist and called on authorities to swiftly investigate the matter. The Deputy Head of Media of the SLP, ASP Bobson Senu, told MRCG that the journalist had reported the matter to the CDID and that they were investigating the matter.

In a follow-up on the CID invitation of Dr Samura Kamara, the 2023 Presidential Flagbearer of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, for questioning, following an initial invitation by the Cyber Unit of the CID on 4 February 2025 for questioning 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 and where he was also reportedly seen making statements endorsing same, Amos Lansana, an officer attached to the Cybercrime Unit at the CID Headquarters, told MRCG that Dr Samura Kamara has responded to their invitation and that they were still investigating the matter.

In a follow-up on the matter of 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, Prof.. Philip Kanu. The matter came up on 5, 12, 28, 29, and 30 May 2025 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No.2 and was adjourned until 11 June 2025.

In another follow-up on the matter of journalist Alusine Rehme Wilson, Northern Chairman of the Sierra Leone Sport Writers Association (SWASAL), who 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 had reported the matter at the Rogbaneh Police Station in Makeni, but said that his two witnesses had not shown up at the police station to make statements. The President of the Sierra Leone Sport Writers Association (SWASSAL), Sahr Morris Junior, told MRCG that upon a complaint filed with the Sierra Leone Premier League Board in April 2024, he was called to a meeting in May 2025 and the leadership of the Board promised to investigate the matter but said they had yet to get back to him on their findings.

In a follow-up on the matter of 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", in which the journalist was summoned by the Privileges and Ethics Committee of Parliament on 4 March 2025, regarding his matter, he apologised and also withdrew the statements he had made against the

members of Parliament. The journalist told MRCG that the Privileges and Ethics Committee of Parliament has tabled the report regarding his hearing, and two SLPP Members of Parliament moved a motion for the Privileges and Ethics Committee report to be debated, but noted that a date has not been set for the debate.

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 charges on Conspiracy to murder and Murder. The matter had come up at the Pademba Magistrate Court No 1 on 6, 13, 20, and 26 May 2025 and was adjourned until 3 June 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 the 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 despite the long wait, she has received no response from IMC and SLAJ regarding her case. She added that she wants to return to the country to address the issue, but fears for her safety. 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 maintained 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.

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).