



Media Reform Coordinating Group-Sierra Leone

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PRESS RELEASE

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

(Freetown: 2nd November, 2025). The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) joins the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), and other organizations across the world to observe the ‘International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists’ today, Sunday, 2 November 2025, on the theme ***“Chat GBV: Raising Awareness on AI-facilitated Gender-Based Violence against Women Journalists.”***

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly transformed information ecosystems globally, offering new opportunities for journalism, media innovation, and public engagement. However, it has also expanded the tools and scale of online harassment, discrimination, and threats—particularly against women journalists. In Sierra Leone, where the media sector is still strengthening in terms of digital literacy, institutional protection, and gender mainstreaming, this emerging threat presents serious implications for press freedom, women’s participation in media, and democracy.

Female journalists in Sierra Leone already face gender-based violence (GBV), intimidation, and harassment both online and offline. The rise of AI-enabled technologies such as deepfakes, AI-powered misinformation campaigns, automated trolling, image manipulation, and data scraping increases the risk and sophistication of attacks, amplifying harm and threatening their safety, credibility, and careers. The MRCG condemns threats women journalists face in the digital space and the chilling effect this can have on freedom of expression. Since 2018, the MRCG, with support from the **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, has been monitoring and publishing media freedom reports detailing cases of invitations, intimidations, attacks, assaults, arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of journalists. MRCG’s Fourteenth report on ‘Press Freedom in Sierra Leone,’ published and launched in June this year, showed that 98 cases were monitored since the Press Freedom Report’s First Edition. Sixty-six were concluded, settled, resolved, or dropped because of lack of progress; eight were still in court, twenty-four were still under police investigation, and nine were abandoned due to lack of progress.

The MRCG notes that attacks on journalists by government and local authorities, as well as young people and members of the public, particularly online, raise concerns about the safety and security of journalists. In the World Press Freedom Index for 2025, regarding the protection of journalists, Reporters Without Borders noted that journalists are not immune to harassment; they can also be the target of threats, online intimidation campaigns, and even attempted murder when working on sensitive investigations.

As we observe this day, MRCG reminds the Government of Sierra Leone that from January 2025 to date, it continues to monitor various cases, including the barring of journalist Melvin Tejan Mansaray, a member of the Sierra Leone Parliamentary Press Gallery from accessing the precincts of parliament based on allegations of “malicious criticism, the dismissal of Umu Thoronka from her job and allegedly attacked



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and harassed on social media after posting a TikTok [video](#) about a lady's contribution to the Presidential Town Hall Meeting in Freetown on 23 July 2024, the arrest *of RTL Nieuws Africa* Correspondent, journalist Sophie Van Leeuwen, in Freetown on suspicion of possible espionage and for allegedly conducting documentary work without permission from the Government of Sierra Leone, the attack and assault of journalist Alusine Rehme Wilson, Northern Chairman of the Sierra Leone Sport Writers Association (SWASAL), the physical assault of journalist Prince Christopher Kamara - Editor of *Open Space Newspaper*, the physical assault of journalist Foday Fofanah of the *Africa Young Voices (AYV)*, invitation of Thomas Dixon - President of the Guild of Newspaper Editors, , the online intimidation of Amadu Lamrana Bah- Cofounder of *Truth Media*, and the online intimidation of Yusuff Moseray Suma - News Editor and Head of Current Affairs at *Unity Broadcasting Online TV* in Freetown.

The MRCG, with support from its regional partner, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), has, over the years, conducted training for female journalists and raised awareness on Digital Safety and the Use of AI tools on topics including: Deepfake sexual images and videos; AI-generated disinformation campaigns; Automated hate speech and trolling; Identity theft and impersonation; Doxxing and privacy invasion; and Gendered misinformation narratives. The MRCG is currently implementing a project on 'Enhancing Press Freedom, Women's Digital Rights, and Accountability Governance in Sierra Leone funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana.

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 culture of impunity. 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

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