



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- APRIL 2026

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, press freedom, internet freedom, digital and online rights, and the safety and security of journalists in Sierra Leone.

In April 2026, MRCG monitored the assault and detention of a journalist in Freetown. It also followed up on the detention of a musician Alhaji Amadu Bah (alias LAJ), the trial of the Main Opposition, All People's Congress (APC) party's Secretary General, and the trial of a celebrity, Zainab Sheriff, the intimidation of journalist Lamarana Bah, the alleged threat and physical assault to journalists, the murder of a journalist in Waterloo, and the barring of a journalist from entering Sierra Leone's Parliament.

On 4 April 2026, journalist Paul Kamara Esq, a media trainer and legal practitioner, was reportedly assaulted by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) whilst investigating a matter at the Adonkia Police Station, Western Rural District. According to Mr. Kamara, he was assaulted, forcibly restrained, dragged, and pepper-sprayed after an interaction with the police. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), in a press release dated 5 April 2026, called on the leadership of the SLP to institute an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the incident and urged that any officers found responsible be held fully accountable in accordance with the law. The media trainer told MRCG that he had reported the matter to the Independent Police Complaint Board (IPCB). IPCB, in a press release dated 7 April 2026, stated that it had commenced a preliminary investigation to establish the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident and determine the appropriate course of action in accordance with the Board's mandate.

Alhaji Amadu Bah (Alias LAJ) and Ibrahim Koroma, in the matter against Thomas Baio, were granted bail on 28 April 2026 at Bo Magistrate Court No 2. The matter had come up on 8, 14, 21, and 28 April 2026. On 8 April 2026, the accused, Alhaji Amadu Bah (LAJ) and Ibrahim Koroma, were remanded in custody until 14 April 2026. On the adjourned date, the accused were again returned to custody. On 21 April 2026, the hearing did not proceed due to the presiding magistrate's absence, and the matter was further adjourned to 28 April 2026. On 28 April 2026, Magistrate Samuel James Brima of Bo Magistrate Court No 2 granted bail to Alhaji Amadu Bah and Ibrahim Koroma after the lead defence counsel, Madiou Sesay, renewed his bail application for both accused. Magistrate Samuel James Brima adjourned the matter to 5 May 2026. Alhaji Amadu Bah and Ibrahim Koroma were charged on 24 March 2026 by the Magistrate Court Holden at Bo Judicial District with three counts, including **count 1**: cyber bullying contrary to section 44 (1) (b) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, **count 2**: cyber bullying contrary to section 44 (2) (b) of the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, **and count 3**: insulting conduct contrary to section 3 (2) of the Public Order Act of 1965.

The matter of the National Secretary General of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, Lansana Dumbuya Esq, came before the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown on 2, 23, and 30 April 2026. On 2 April 2026, the matter was not heard and was adjourned to 23 April 2026. On 23 April 2026, the lead defence counsel was absent. The second defence counsel, Manley Spain Esq, sought an adjournment, explaining that his team needed more time to conclude their no-case submission and strengthen their legal arguments

properly. The lead prosecutor, Yusif Isaac Sesay Esq, did not oppose an adjournment but expressed concern over the repeated delays and stressed the need for the matter to move forward. After hearing submissions from both sides, the magistrate adjourned the matter until 30 April 2026. On 30 April 2026, the matter was not heard. The matter was further adjourned to 28 May 2026. Lansana Dumbuya Esq was arraigned on 12 February 2026 before Magistrate Brima Jah at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown on three counts of Incitement, Insulting Language, and behaving in an insulting manner, contrary to Section 12(a) of the Public Order Act of 1965 (Act No 46 of 1965), as amended by the Public Order (Amendments) Act No 2 of 1973. The offence alleged that the accused, on 31 January 2026, at the Brima Atouga Mini Stadium in Freetown, committed an unlawful act by encouraging his supporters to refer to the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio, as a thief.

Zainab Sheriff, a model and an artist, was sentenced to four years and two months in prison for incitement and threatening language. On 14 April 2026, the Magistrate ruled on the matter, sentencing the accused to four years on count one and two months, to run consecutively. Zainab Sheriff was arraigned on 23 February 2026 before Magistrate Brima Jah at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 1 in Freetown on two counts of incitement contrary to law and threatening language contrary to section 30(1) of the Public Order Act of 1965. According to the charges, the defendant made statements on 31 January 2026 at the Brima Atouga Mini Stadium in Freetown, allegedly encouraging the killing of an individual accused of rigging elections.

There were still no new developments regarding Tejan Sheikh Rogers in April 2026. Tejan Sheik Rogers, a lecturer at Milton Margai Technology University, had appeared in court on 17 March 2025 on one count charge of cyberstalking 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 audio and text messages in a WhatsApp group called “Maada Must Stay Campaign”, which was deemed to have damaged the reputation of the university’s Vice Chancellor and Principal, Dr. Philip Kanu. The matter had come up on 11, 13, and 20 June 2025 at the Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 2. On 20 June 2025, Magistrate John Manso Fornah issued a bench warrant for the defendant, Sheik Tejan Rogers, for failing to appear before the court on 20 and 24 June 2025. On 1 July 2025, the accused appeared in court, and Magistrate John Manso Fornah committed the matter to the High Court for further hearing.

Regarding the matter of Melvin Tejan Mansaray, the journalist again told MRCG that the Chief Minister of Sierra Leone, Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, had assured him that he would engage the Speaker of Parliament regarding his ban. He also said he had yet to receive an update from the Minister of Information, Chernor Bah, on efforts to persuade the Speaker to rescind the ban. Melvin Tejan Mansaray, a member of the Sierra Leone Parliamentary Press Gallery, was barred by the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas, on 10 January 2025, and denied access to the precincts of parliament, based on allegations of “malicious criticism.” The journalist maintained that the Privileges and Ethics Committee had yet to set a date to debate his matter.

There is no new development on the matter regarding the alleged intimidation of journalist Amadu Lamrana Bah, presenter of the ‘Truth Morning Devotion’ programme on *Truth Radio*, by Admire Bio on 14 October 2025, following public comments on the devastating impact of “Kush” on Sierra Leone’s youth, Kabbah Lavalie, an officer attached to the Cyber Unit at CID and in charge of the investigation, told MRCG that investigation matter was ongoing.

There was no court sitting in April for the murder trial of Journalist Samuel Brima Mattia, former *Deputy Station Manager at Voice of Peace and Development (VOPAD) radio FM 96.5*. The matter was adjourned to 7 May 2026. Journalist Samuel Mattia was allegedly murdered on 16 January 2025 by his Station Manager, Joseph M Lamin, and others in Waterloo.

Regarding the matter of Journalist Umu Thoronka, the Independent Media Commission (IMC), in its ruling dated 25 February 2026, stated that the *Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC)* shall compensate Umu Thoronka with a negotiable sum, taking into account her period of service to the corporation. The President of WIMSAL, Eastina Taylor, in a statement published on Facebook on 11 March 2026 said that the ruling is a clear affirmation that women in the media in Sierra Leone deserve fairness, dignity and respect in their workplaces. She called on the *SLBC* to swiftly honour its obligation and pay the rightful compensation due to its member, but told the MRCG that the SLBC had yet to comply with the IMC's ruling. The Deputy Director General of *SLBC*, Asmieu Bah, again told the MRCG that the Corporation's legal retainer was reviewing the ruling and would advise them accordingly. Umu Thoronka was dismissed from work and was allegedly attacked and harassed on social media over a TikTok [video](#) she posted about a contribution by a lady at the Presidential Town Hall Meeting in Freetown on 23 July 2024. RFK Human Rights and WIMSAL had submitted a [petition](#) to the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on behalf of Umu Thoronka regarding the sexual harassment she received and her illegal dismissal at the SLBC.

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).