



MEDIA FREEDOM REVIEW- FEBRUARY 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 February 2026, MRCG monitored the arrest and detention of Ms Edwina Jamiru, the arrest and detention of the All People's Congress (APC) party's Secretary General, Lansana Dumbuya, and the arrest and detention of a female musician, Zainab Sheriff. MRCG also followed up on the intimidation of journalist Lamarana Bah; the withdrawal of frequency by the National Telecommunications Authority from **G8 Media Group**; the alleged physical assault of a journalist; the verbal threat against a journalist; the physical assault of a journalist; the murder of a journalist in Waterloo; and the barring of a journalist from entering Sierra Leone's Parliament.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) invited and detained Ms. Edwina Hawa Jamiru on 10 February 2026 in connection with an alleged cybercrime against the State. According to Kabba Lavalie, an officer attached to the CID's Cyber Unit and in charge of the matter, Ms Edwina Jamiru was detained to assist the police with their investigation into insulting conduct and other related crimes against the State. After one week in custody, Ms. Jamiru was released on bail on 17 February 2026. Officer Lavalie confirmed that she had been released on bail and that the State had withdrawn its complaints against her.

The National Secretary General of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, 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 No 46 of 1965. On 31 January 2026, at the Brima Atouga Mini Stadium in Freetown, the defendant reportedly made comments against the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. The matter came up on 16 and 17 February 2026, and the defendant was granted bail on 17 February 2026, after bail had been denied the previous day. On 24 February 2026, Detective Constable Abdulai Dumbuya, attached to the Cyber unit at the CID Headquarters in Freetown, told the court that he recognised the defendant and recalled that on 31 January 2026, during routine monitoring of social media platforms, he discovered a video in which the accused allegedly made statements that attracted their attention and prompted an investigation. The matter was adjourned until 5 March 2026.

Zainab Sheriff, a popular musician, was arraigned before Magistrate Brima Jah at Pademba Road Magistrate Court No. 1 in Freetown on 23 February 2026 on two counts of incitement and threatening language, contrary to Section 30(1) of the Public Order Act 1965. The defendant made statements on 31 January 2026 at the Brima Atouga Mini Stadium in Freetown, allegedly encouraging the killing of any individual accused of rigging elections. The matter came up on 26 February 2026, when she was denied bail. The matter was adjourned until 4 March 2026.

Again in February, there was no new development in the matter of the alleged intimidation of journalist Amadu Lamrana Bah, presenter of the '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 with the CID Cyber Unit and the lead investigator, told MRCG that the investigation was ongoing.

There was still no new development regarding the National Telecommunications Authority’s (NaTCA) withdrawal of frequencies from G8 Media Group in February 2026. The Co-Owner of **G8 Media**, Thomas Dixon, told MRCG that, after engaging with stakeholders, including NaTCA, the Minister of Information and Civic Education, Chernor Bah, and the Chief Minister, Dr David Sengeh, there had been no positive response. The President of SLAJ, Alhaji Manika Kamara, reiterated that discussions with NaTCA were ongoing to resolve the status of **G8 Media Group**. It may be recalled that on 30 July 2025, just days before their planned launch, the National Telecommunications Authority (NaTCA) withdrew frequencies from **Truth Media** and **G8 Media Group**.

There were no new developments regarding Tejan Sheikh Rogers in February 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.

The murder trial of Journalist Samuel Brima Mattia, former Deputy Station Manager of **Voice of Peace and Development (VOPAD) radio FM 96.5**, was heard on 19 and 26 February 2026 at the High Court of Sierra Leone. On 19 February, the Board Chair of **VOPAD**, Emmanuel Justin Margai, testified that while at the station on the day of the incident, assisting the family in locating the deceased, he was shown a substance that looked like blood. After noticing it, he and the deceased’s family, together with the first defendant, went to the police to report the matter. During the cross-examination of the Board Chair by Jonathan Abu Kargbo Esq (representing the first accused), Mr Margai confirmed that the deceased and the first accused had quarrelled and fought on several occasions, and that the Board had once suspended the first accused. In the sitting on 26 February 2026, Elizabeth Mattia, the sister of Samuel Mattia, was led in by the State Prosecutor, Aisha Dusu Kargbo Esq. Elizabeth testified in court that the second accused, Morlai Kamara, told her that the first accused asked him to find someone to help him kill the deceased. During the cross-examination of the witness by Mustapha Karim Dauda Esq, representing the second and third accused, Ms. Elizabeth confirmed that it was when the second defendant met her at her home that he confessed. Jonathan Abu Kargbo Esq said he would cross-examine the witness when the court resumes on the next adjourned date. The matter was adjourned until 5 March 2026. Journalist Samuel Mattia was allegedly murdered on 16 January 2025 by his Station Manager, Joseph M Lamin, and others in Waterloo.

Regarding Umu Thoronka, the President of Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), Estina Taylor, told the MRCG that the Court of Justice of ECOWAS was still awaiting the Attorney General’s response, on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone, to its petition. The Independent Media Commission (IMC) had ruled on the matter but had not yet published the findings. Umu Thoronka was a staff member at the SLBC

who was dismissed and allegedly faced attacks and harassment on social media after posting a TikTok [video](#) about a woman's contribution 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).