QUARTERLY REPORT

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION MONITOR

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019

with funding support from: ifex OSIWA
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The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has monitored and reported on violations of freedom of expression (FOE) rights in West Africa over the past two decades. The reports from the monitoring focus mainly on violations, redress of violations, introduction, repeal or reform of laws affecting freedom of expression with recommendations made to the various stakeholders to tackle the issues raised and take measures to prevent future violations, thereby helping to improve journalists’ safety in the sub-region.

The findings of the MFWA’s monitoring activities have been collected and analysed into quarterly reports titled West Africa Free Expression Monitor. This edition of the Monitor covering the period July-September, 2019, recorded 37 violations in nine countries.

Twelve incidents of arrests and detentions were recorded, making it the leading type of violation, followed by nine incidents of physical attacks on journalists, citizens and activists. Citizens were denied the right to peaceful assembly on four occasions. Nigeria recorded two separate incidents of killing, the first resulting in the deaths of twelve protesters and one journalist while one protester died in the second.

Nigeria recorded 22 violations to top the chart, followed by Ghana with five. Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone each recorded two violations while four other countries namely, The Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo, recorded one violation each.

With regard to the perpetrators, security agents carried out 26 violations, representing 70% of the violations. State officials came second with six, followed by individuals (four) and political party affiliates (one).

In some positive developments, Cabinet in Sierra Leone approved a bill to decriminalise libel in the country. The draft is expected to be laid before Parliament for discussion and adoption.

Since the early 1990’s West Africa has witnessed an impressive progress in terms of democratic governance, bouncing back from the depression of the late 1960’s to late 1980’s when military autocrats held sway across the sub-region. Currently, all governments in the sub-region are democratically elected with term limits generally respected.

The constitutions adopted and other laws enacted in these countries are more liberal and generally protective of democratic freedoms including press freedom and freedom of expression. The progressive legal environment for media practice and the exercise of the right to freedom of expression is also inspired by a number of relevant regional and international treaties and covenants that the various countries have signed or ratified. These instruments include the International Convention on
Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), both of which guarantee fundamental human rights including the right to free expression, and peaceful assembly.

Additionally, nine countries\(^1\) in the region have repealed Criminal Libel in line with these instruments and the general tide towards democracy.

The net result has been a wider space for expression of divergent opinions characterised by a media boom and increased citizens’ participation in public discourse.

This noticeable progress notwithstanding, the media still faces some formidable challenges in a number of countries, while citizens and activists are heavily restricted with regard to their right to freedom of expression. Critical journalists often face arbitrary arrests and detentions, threats and physical assault, while citizens and activists, especially those expressing dissent through demonstration, also risk violent, sometimes fatal, crackdowns.

This report highlights some of these violations and at the same time, serves as a reference document for individuals and organisations engaged in the promotion and protection of freedom of expression rights in West Africa.

In all, 37 violations were recorded during the months of July, August and September, 2019.

**METHODOLOGY**

The report is a compilation of data from monitoring reports received from MFWA’s national partner organisations and correspondents in West Africa. It highlights the freedom of expression (FOE) situation in West Africa, names the perpetrators of violations, assesses redress actions taken and makes recommendations for improvement in the FOE situation in West Africa.

The daily monitoring reports received from our partners and correspondents are published by the MFWA as “Alerts.”

The Alerts are further discussed as Monthly Round-ups and subsequently collated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) tool and analysed into quarterly Monitors.

The data gathered from July to August, 2019 are presented under the following sections: Incidents of Violations; Countries and Types of Violations; Perpetrators of Violations; Targets/Victims of Violations; and Redress for Violations and the Issue of Impunity. Other FOE Developments recorded during the month under review are also highlighted. The report ends with recommendations on how to improve the media and the FOE landscape in the West Africa region.

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\(^1\) Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Togo
INCIDENTS OF VIOLATIONS

The 37 violations recorded during the July-September, 2019 reporting period consist of eight types – Physical attacks, arrests/detentions, seizure/destruction of equipment, killings, censorship, threats, denial of the right to peaceful assembly and the enactment of repressive law.

Arrests and detentions emerged as the predominant type of violation with 15 recorded incidents. Following with ten incidents is physical attacks on journalists, citizens and activists. The rights of citizens to peaceful assembly were violated on four occasions. Thirteen protesters and one journalist were killed in two separate incidents in Nigeria. All the categories of violations reported are presented in Table 1 below with an indication of the countries in which they occurred.

Table 1. Countries and Types of Violations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Killing</th>
<th>Arrest/Arrest/Detention</th>
<th>Physical Attack</th>
<th>Censor</th>
<th>Repressive Law</th>
<th>Seizure/Seizure/Destruction of Property</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Denial of Assembly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Guinea</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. Leone</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Gambia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the Table above, arrests and detentions as well as physical attacks were the most frequently perpetrated type of violation, each of the two types occurring in four of the nine countries featured in this report. The two leading types of violations combined make up about 67.5% of the 37 violations recorded. Below are highlights of the violations recorded;

Nigeria set the tone with a series of physical assaults, arrests and detentions of journalists and citizens expression dissent through demonstrations. A catastrophic intervention by security forces on July 22, for instance, led to the death of 12 demonstrators and a reporter in Abuja. The twelve, who were members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), were demonstrating to demand the release of their detained leader, Ibrahim el Zakzaky.
Precious Owolabi, a reporter for Channels Television, who was covering the protest, was hit by a bullet. He later died at the hospital.

On September 24, 2019, the police brutalised protesters, with one person reportedly shot dead, while two journalists covering the incidents were beaten, also by the police in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria.

On August 3, 2019, police in Nigeria arrested the publisher of the Sahara Reporters, Omoyele Sowore. A vocal critic of the Buhari government, Sowore called Nigerians to demonstrate against perceived misrule and corruption in the country to herald a revolution under the umbrella of a movement he had launched called Revolution Now. He was, however, arrested at his hotel in Lagos by operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS).

On August 5, 2019, police officers assaulted and detained Victor Ogungbenro, a video journalist with the privately-owned Sahara Reporters news website, while he was covering a protest in Lagos state. The journalist had his face sprayed with tear gas. He was kicked repeatedly and dragged on the floor over several metres, despite identifying himself to the police as a journalist. Ogungbenro was subsequently detained without charge until the next day (August 6) when he was released on bail.

Tosin Ajuwon, also a reporter of Sahara Reporters, suffered a similar fate in Ondo State on the same day (August 5) while covering the demonstrations held simultaneously across Nigeria. According to reports, the police saw Ajuwon filming and arrested him. They forced the journalist into their vehicle and drove him to the police station before releasing him without charge after several hours.

In Calabar, the police arrested three journalists in connection with the protests on August 5. The police first arrested Jonathan Ugbal, a reporter of the Cross River Watch and subsequently detained Jeremiah Achibong, also of the same newspaper and Nicholas Kalu of The Nation newspaper. Kalu and Achibong had approached the police station to inquire about Ugbal.

Kalu was released later that day while Achibong and Ugbal were released on bail two days later after being charged with unlawful assembly and breach of peace.

On September 16, 2019, Mary Ekere, who reports for The Post newspaper in Uyo, capital of Akwa Ibom State, was arrested for taking pictures of an operation by the Environmental and Waste Management Agency set up by the State Government. The journalist was put before court on September 17 and returned to prison for a second night before being released without charge the following day.

On August 22, 2019, the police in Lagos arrested journalist Agba Jalingo, after he published an article demanding accountability for funds allocated to a bank project. Jalingo, publisher of Cross River Watch, an online newspaper, was arrested at his residence and taken into detention. On October 4, Jalingo
was arraigned before a Federal High Court in Calabar, Cross River State, on charges of treason and disturbing public peace. The judge, Justice Simon Amobeda, remanded the journalist who appeared in court in handcuffs. Jalingo reappeared in court on October 23 with prosecution witnesses controversially granted anonymity to testify against him.

In Ghana, some staff of the National Identification Authority (NIA), on July 5, 2019, assaulted Edward Twum, a cameraman from Accra-based Citi TV. Twum was filming frustrated applicants while his colleague, Elvis Washington was interviewing them when some NIA officials accosted them. They heckled Twum and tried to seize his camera, leaving him with bruises on his wrist.

There was a violation of Freedom Assembly rights also in Ghana on August 14, 2019, as security forces in Navrongo, capital of the Kassena Nankana District, attacked anti-government protestors and destroyed their placards. The protesters had gathered by the roadside to express their grievances to President Akufo-Addo who had arrived in the District on an official visit.

Still in Ghana, an Assembly member for Mantse Agbona, a suburb of Accra, led some residents of the area to physically attack David Andoh, a photojournalist with Joy News, on September 10. Andoh had joined metropolitan health officials and security officers to cover a public health and sanitation enforcement and sensitisation exercise at Mantse Agbona. The photojournalist was filming a filthy environment that posed a public health hazard when he was pounced on. His camera was damaged in the attack.

Guinea passed a repressive law on July 6, 2019, when the country’s Parliament approved a law authorising gendarmes in the country to shoot on sight without fear of prosecution when confronted with imminent danger or terror attack. Giving the country’s dreadful record of deadly crackdown on demonstrators, this law has grave implications for freedom of assembly rights.

Still in Guinea, a presenter at a private radio station in Conakry and the owner of the station were summoned after the station hosted an outspoken critic of the government in a phone radio interview. Aboubacar Algassimou Diallo, host of the prime-time show Oeil de Lynx on Lynx FM, and Diallo Soulemane, owner of the said station, were placed under judicial control while the programme concerned was suspended indefinitely.

Cote d’Ivoire recorded two violations. On July 1, the police arrested Valentin Kouassi, President of the youth wing of the opposition Parti Démocratique de Cote d’Ivoire (PDCI). Kouassi was charged with disturbing public order and detained for one day in an undisclosed location after he organised an anti-government demonstration in the southern city of Adzopé on June 23.

On August 5, the authorities in Sanguoine, a city located in the West of Cote d’Ivoire, denied supporters of the opposition Parti Democratique de Cote d’Ivoire (PDCI) the right to peaceful assembly. The mayor refused to acknowledge a notification letter from the PDCI regarding the holding of a public gathering to formally inaugurate the new Chairman of the party for that locality.
In the sole incident recorded in Mauritania, Ahmed Ould Wedia, a journalist with the private television station Al-Mourabitoune, was arrested by security forces in his home on July 3 during a crackdown on dissent following protests against the results of Mauritania’s presidential election. He was released without charge on July 15.

Senegal also recorded one incident; gendarmes on July 16, arrested a civil society activist, Guy Marius Sagna while he was in a meeting at the office of FRAPP- France Dégage, a civil society organisation of which he is a leading member. Sagna was interrogated over a post he had made on Facebook about the neglect of the country’s health facilities. The post was in reference to the death in a France hospital of the Secretary of the ruling Party in Senegal and close ally of President Macky Sall.

In Sierra Leone, a group of men reported to be bodyguards of President Julius Maada Bio assaulted three sports journalists during a football match at the Siaka Stevens Stadium in Freetown on September 8, 2019. The guards assaulted Frances Bernard-Bundor and Esther Maray Samoura, both with the state-owned Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), alongside freelancer, Alimmamy Kamara. Esther’s phone was snatched as she tried to record the assault.

The FOE round-ups of July, August and September provides more details of violations.

**COUNTRIES AND TYPES OF VIOLATIONS**

The 37 violations recorded during the period July-September, 2019 were perpetrated in nine countries. Nigeria recorded 22, representing 54% of the total. This included two incidents in which fourteen people including a journalist were killed in a crackdown on demonstrators. The number of violations recorded in Nigeria also represents 340% increase of compared the previous quarter which recorded five violations.

Ghana followed with five violations, down from the eight it recorded during the previous quarter. Mauritania also improved from five violations in the previous quarter to a single violation during this period. For the third consecutive quarter, no incidents were recorded in Mali, just like Cape Verde. Figure 1 below shows the number of violations cited in each of the nine countries.
PERPETRATORS OF VIOLATIONS

Four types of perpetrators accounted for the 37 violations recorded in July-September, 2019. Security agents perpetrated 26 of the violations, 21 of them in Nigeria alone. State officials perpetrated (6) violations; individuals accounted for four (4) and political party affiliates carried out one (1) violation.

Table 2 below gives more details about the categories of perpetrators involved and the number of violations carried out by each category in the 11 countries featured in this report. Table 2: Countries and Types of Perpetrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Security Agents</th>
<th>State/Public Officials</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Political Party Affiliates</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
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<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>Mauritania</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
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<td>Togo</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
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further details about the seven categories of perpetrators involved and the percentage of the violations carried out by each category of perpetrator.

Figure 2: Perpetrators and percentage of violations

TARGETS/VICTIMS

The 37 violations directly affected 70 identifiable victims, 44 Journalists, 12 members of the organised group, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, nine citizens, three activists and two political party affiliates. Twenty of the journalists involved were physically assaulted by thugs in a single incident at the Ebonyi State Assembly in Nigeria.

Three female journalists were identified among the victims; Frances Bernard-Bundor and Esther Maray Samoura of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and Mary Ekere, The Post, Nigeria. No media house was attacked, banned or suspended. The number of several other victims of crackdowns on demonstrations could not be established, while the repressive “shoot and kill” law in Guinea targets all potential demonstrators in that country. Similarly, the arbitrary ban on a public demonstration by the authorities in Togo affected an indefinite number of citizens. Table 3 below provides details about the number of victims who suffered violations in the respective countries.

Table 3: Countries and Victims of Violations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Citizens</th>
<th>Organised Group</th>
<th>Journalists</th>
<th>Activist</th>
<th>Political Party Affiliates</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cote d’Ivoire</td>
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It is a measure of the entrenched culture of impunity that only one of the violations mentioned above has been redressed.

It must be stated that the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Udom Emmanuel, intervened to get Mary Ekere of The Point newspaper released after she spent two days in detention. Also, about two weeks after the incident, the State suspended all the members of the task force involved in the abuse of the journalist, although the October 4, 2019 statement announcing the suspension did not link it to the incident.

Majority of the incidents of assault and arbitrary arrests and detentions were carried out by security agents. This makes it almost impossible for the victims to expect any credible investigations by the police. In fact, there have been past cases where the police refused to receive complaints from victims of security agents’ brutality. In a classic example, the police at Cocody-Vallon in Abidjan refused to receive the complaint of journalist Daouda Coulibaly, when he tried to report his abuse by security agents. Coulibaly had been beaten and dragged on the floor by a group of police officers while he was covering a political demonstration in Abidjan on March 22, 2018.

This situation seriously hampers the ability of the media to play its role of helping to consolidate democracy by enhancing accountable and transparent management of public resources.

Meanwhile, the governments of the countries cited in this report are parties or have signed unto various international and regional protocols to promote press freedom by protecting journalists’ safety. It is therefore important for all stakeholders to increase their efforts at engaging the relevant institutions and authorities on the issue of journalists’ safety and the protection of the right to peaceful assembly in West Africa.

### OTHER KEY FOE DEVELOPMENTS

In a landmark development that can help bring closure to the unresolved murder of Deyda Hydara, a Gambian soldier who worked as a member of the hit-squad of former President Yahya Jammeh, on July 22, 2019, confessed that he was involved in the killing of the former Editor of The Point newspaper. Lieutenant Malick Jatta told Gambia’s Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) that Hydara’s murder on December 16, 2004, was carried out on the orders of the exiled ex-President.
In another encouraging gesture, President Patrice Talon of Benin, on July 22, affirmed his support for freedom of expression and urged the Haute autorité de l’audiovisuel et la communication (HAAC) to protect press freedom. President made this call during the inauguration of the 6th term of the HAAC.

In the most progressive development recorded during the quarter, Mauritanian blogger, Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkheitir, was released on July 29 after five years in detention on blasphemy charges. Mkheitir who was sentenced to death in 2014, remained in detention even after an Appeal Court granted him reprieve by commuting his sentence two years’ imprisonment on November 9, 2017.

On August 15, Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in collaboration with Nigeria Union Journalists (NUJ) organised a Forum for the Adoption of a Framework on Police Media-Relationship and Safety of Journalists in Abuja. The Framework sets out the protocols that regulates the conduct of the two institutions in the course of discharging their respective duties which often bring them into contact, and often, into conflict. The Framework is also expected to further strengthen and guide police-media relations and improve the safety of journalists in Nigeria.

In Guinea, all private radio stations made a two-hour synergy broadcast on August 29, 2019, to denounce recent intimidation and abuse of journalists by the police and the judiciary. It involved a live broadcast, relayed by the private stations, of a protest programme with media managers, journalists and a lawyer as the panelists.

The protest broadcast was the second show of anger against acts of intimidation against the media in the country. On August 26, 2019, media professionals from the private sector stormed the premises of the media regulatory body, Haute Autorité de la Communication (HAC), where they held a sit-in to register their anger at the spate of arrests, detentions and intimidating summoning of journalists. The spate of arrest and detentions has since abated.

In what amounts to a major boost for press freedom and freedom of expression in Sierra Leone, Cabinet of President Julius Maada Bio on September 11, approved a draft bill to repeal the Criminal and Seditious Libel laws of the country’s 1965 Public Order Act. The law has been used to repress the media in Sierra Leone under various regimes and has been the subject of several unsuccessful legal suits by the media and press freedom organisations in the country. Its eventual repeal will, therefore, be a huge breakthrough and opens a new chapter of optimism and progress.

The National Press Centre – Norbert Zongo, MFWA’s national partner organisation in Burkina Faso, successfully held the eighth edition of its biennial freedom of expression celebration, (Festival international de liberté d’expression et de la press, (FILEP). Held on September 25-28, 2019 in Ouagadougou, the festival was under the theme; “pens, microphones and cameras for a free and united Africa.” It brought together about 400 participants from 37 countries across Africa. Participants included editors, journalists, media and human rights defenders, important media personalities and free expression artistes.
Attacks on journalists have been continuing in almost all the countries in West Africa. There is also an unrelenting incidence of arbitrary arrests and detentions often leading to no formal charges. This was the case with the almost all the incidents of arrest and detentions, with the cases of the journalist activist Omoyele Sowore and Mary Ekere of *The Point* who were arraigned before court and subsequently granted bail. The virtual absence of judicial follow-up or closure on cases of arrests and detentions is evidence that such arrests often have no legal basis and are mere attempts to harass and intimidate the victims.

The violations recorded in this report and the fact that they were carried out with impunity constitute a breach of the constitutions of all the countries guarantee freedom of expression including press freedom. Moreover, all the 16 countries in the West Africa region are parties and/or signatories to regional and international instruments including the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) which guarantees citizens’ right to due process concerning arrest and detention (Article 6) and freedom of information and expression (Article 9). Most of these countries have also ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which stipulates at Article 19 (2) that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression.”

Unfortunately, state actors, who are expected to protect these legally guaranteed rights, are the major culprits. This circumstance further promotes and entrenched impunity in the region, with victims of freedom of expression violations having no appeal.

This situation should not be allowed to persist as it hampers the building and sustaining of a credible democracy in which citizens feel safe to participate in public discourse without any fear of retribution from any quarters.

It is, therefore, imperative for all stakeholders to work together to adopt measures aimed at ending attacks on journalists, media organisations and dissenting citizens. To this end, the MFWA makes the following recommendations towards improving the freedom of expression environment in West Africa.
RECOMMENDATIONS

To Media Organisations and Journalists

- Media managers and owners must denounce and report violations against media outlets and workers.
- Media managers must provide adequate capacity building and logistics to their staff to help them detect and avoid danger in the course of their journalistic work.
- Media owners and managers must ensure that journalists are knowledgeable about the political, cultural, physical and social conditions in the areas where they will be deployed before they are sent there.
- Media owners should institute policies to provide their staff legal assistance for work-related legal liabilities.

Media development and rights advocacy organisations

- Monitor and report on press freedom violations.
- Advocate for the respect and protection of freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of assembly rights.
- Provide advice and capacity building to stakeholders on issues such as: the treatment of journalists; investigation of crimes against journalists; and prosecution and protection measures.
- Support and provide safety training to journalists such as reporting in conflict zones, legal rights, self-protection techniques, first aid, etc. and assist with provision of safety equipment.
- Facilitate engagements between media and police and other security agencies to ensure improved relations between the two groups.

To Governments in West Africa

- Ensure that both state and non-state actors respect and protect freedom of expression rights.
- Promote the safety and protection of journalists and media organisations.
- Create national mechanisms to monitor and report on journalists’ safety.
- Hold accountable the perpetrators (both state and non-state actors) of freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of assembly violations through criminal, civil, administrative, or other sanctions to combat impunity.
- Ensure that security agents desist from acts intended to restrict or limit journalists from doing their work.
- Ensure that security agents stop violating the rights of journalists and others exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly. Specifically, police and security forces must cease committing acts of physical attacks, arbitrary arrests and detentions and threats against journalists and people expressing dissenting opinions.
- Ensure security agents are trained in non-violent control of protesters.

To ECOWAS

- Encourage member states to “ensure respect for the rights of journalists” as stated in Article 66 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty.
- Impose and enforce sanctions on Member States that flout statutory human rights obligations.
- Impress upon President Alpha Conde of Guinea to take steps to arrest the deadly crackdown on dissent by his political party supporters and the security forces.

To the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information

- Encourage member states to adhere to the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa.
- Engage governments of the countries where violations are rampant to take steps to end the violations and to fight impunity for attacks on journalists.

To the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion

- Call on the governments in West Africa, particularly, where high violations have been recurring, to respect and protect freedom of expression rights.
- Include more West African countries in fact-finding missions.
- Visit the countries in West Africa that have standing invitations to all thematic special procedures.
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