

February 10, 2022

His Excellency Umaro Sissoco Embaló  
President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau  
Presidência da República da Guiné-Bissau  
Bissau, Praça dos Heróis Nacionais

Your Excellency,

**Petition for Your Personal Intervention to Improve Press Freedom Environment in Guinea Bissau**

We, the under-listed organisations, are the leading press freedom organisations in the various countries of West Africa. First of all, we wish to add our voices to the series of condemnations of the attempted Coup d'état that happened on February 1, 2022. We are firm in a conviction that what is needed for the development of Guinea Bissau and its people is a thriving, sustainable democracy in which the fundamental rights of people are respected and protected. We therefore will, under no circumstances endorse a military takeover of governance.

Your Excellency, it is based on our conviction of the value of democratic governance that we are filing this petition to express our deep concerns about the serious deterioration of press freedom conditions in Guinea Bissau, and to urge you to personally intervene to help improve the press freedom environment in country and combat impunity for crimes against journalists.

The highpoint of the press freedom challenge in the country happened on February 7, 2022, when a group of men in military uniform fired their way into the premises of the Bissau-based radio station, Radio Capital FM and destroyed practically all equipment at the facility. The hooded attackers, most of them in military uniform, fired several shots in the studios and offices, forcing the terrified staff to flee. As we write this petition, one of the victims of the attack, Maimuna Bari, is reported to be in coma with severe rib and spine injuries.

Hours before the attack, the station had broadcast a programme discussing the failed February 1, 2022 coup attempt and offered listeners the opportunity to comment on the fatal incident. It is important to underline also that a group of soldiers attacked the home of one of the panelists of that programme, Rui Landim a day after the raid on the radio station.

This is the second time in less than two years that Radio Capital FM, which is known to discuss national issues in a forthright manner, has been attacked by unidentified men in uniform. On July 26, 2020, a group of armed men in police uniform [raided](#) the station and destroyed its equipment. Following the incident, your Interior Minister, Botchá Candé, visited the station and assured the

management of thorough investigations. However, no updates were given regarding investigations and no arrests were made.

Besides the attacks on Radio Capital FM, there have been other serious violations of media freedom in the country over the years and a generally repressive environment for the exercise of journalistic work. We do recognise that there exist acts of unprofessionalism on the part of the media that is of concern. However, any forms of abuses can neither justify nor correct those excesses on the part of the media. The solution lies in collaboration for capacity development of the media and effective self-regulatory mechanisms.

Security agents are expected to play a frontline role in protecting everyone including journalists and carrying out investigations into attacks on the media. It is, therefore, very disturbing that the perpetrators of the latest attacks on Radio Capital FM and Rui Landim's home; as well as the culprits in the previous raid of the same media organization were in military and police uniforms. We, therefore, wish to believe that your government and the leadership of the police and the military are equally concerned about the involvement of officers of the security services in such violent lawlessness.

Guinea Bissau signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on September 12, 2000 and ratified it on November 1, 2010. Article 19 of this treaty, among others, guarantees the right to receive and impart information and protects the right to participate in public discourse.

Your Excellency, given the fundamental role of the media in building and consolidating democracy and the fact that the media can only play their democratic roles when they are free, we wish to call on Your Excellency to consider taking the following steps to help improve the situation:

- Providing every support necessary for Radio Capital FM to be able to resume broadcasting as soon as possible
- Ensuring thorough investigation into both the recent and the previous attacks on Radio Capital FM in particular and all acts of serious media rights violations and the prosecution of the perpetrators
- Beefing up security presence at the radio station to ensure adequate protection for the media organization and its staff to ward off future attacks
- Ensuring that the radio station receives adequate compensation for the loss of its equipment and air-time

- Ensuring that the staff of the station who suffered injuries during the raid receive adequate reparation
- Adopting a policy of zero tolerance for attacks on the media as part of a comprehensive programme to prioritise press freedom, freedom of expression and access to information in order to consolidate democracy in Guinea Bissau
- Working with media support partners to help improve media capacity and press freedom in the country.

While we look forward to your personal intervention to help improve the press freedom situation the country, accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of our highest regards.

Sincerely,



Sulemana Braimah  
Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa

On behalf of:

1. International Press Centre (IPC), Nigeria
2. Gambia Press Union (GPU) Gambia
3. Centre for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP) Liberia
4. Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG), Sierra Leone
5. L'Union des journalistes indépendants du Togo (UJIT), Togo
6. Association guinéenne des éditeurs de la presse indépendante (AGEPI), Guinée
7. L'Observatoire de la déontologie et de l'éthique dans les médias (ODEM), Benin
8. Syndicat des professionnels de l'information et de la communication (SYNPICS), Sénégal
9. L'Observatoire de la liberté de la presse, l'éthique et de la déontologie (OLPED), *Cote d'Ivoire*
10. L'Observatoire nigérien indépendant des médias pour l'éthique et la déontologie (ONIMED)  
Niger
11. Regroupement de la presse mauritanienne (RPM), Mauritanie
12. Maison de la presse, Mali
13. Centre national de la presse Norbert Zongo (CNP-NZ) Burkina Faso
14. Associação dos Jornalistas de *Cabo Verde* (AJOC), Cabo Verde
15. Sindicato dos jornalistas e técnicos da comunicação social (SINJOTECS), *Guiné-Bissau*

CC:

1. Embassy of the United States of America
2. The German Embassy
3. Embassy of Portugal
4. The European Union delegation in Guinea-Bissau
5. The South African Embassy
6. UNDP
7. UNICEF
8. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
9. Forum of journalists from CPLP (Portuguese-speaking countries)