

Stifling Freedom of Expression in Nigeria: Annual Report of Attacks on Free Expression and Media Freedom in 2022



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The research, tracking, monitoring, and analysis of the attacks on the media and freedom of expression during the year under review, which are documented in this report were carried out by Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, and Mr. Idowu Adewale, Communications Officer.

Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA's Deputy Executive Director, coordinated and supervised the research and wrote the final report while the cover design for the publication as well as the layout were done by Ms Bunmi Bamiselu.

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Preface

Section 22 affirms and asserts the freedom of the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media “at all times” to “uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”.

It is a constitutional injunction flouted with impunity for the most part by the government itself, represented by law enforcement and security agencies, the premier media regulatory body, and other government officials, including judges, as they consistently feature among the list of perpetrators of attacks against journalists, with the law enforcement and security agencies, together with their officials, topping the list by far.

It would appear, therefore, that Government officials, both at Federal and State levels, would rather not be held accountable by the media; that the notion of media freedom and the duty of the media to hold government accountable are not concepts that are widely shared within Government; and that Government officials are prepared and willing to unleash all forms of attacks against journalists and media organizations in response to any attempt to hold them accountable.

The situation is extremely worrying as such responses from Government officials and agencies are in clear disregard for the provisions of Section 13 of the Constitution, which states that “It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this Chapter (Chapter 2) of this Constitution” the same Chapter where Section 22 is located.

So not even the fact that journalists are carrying out their functions in pursuit of a constitutional responsibility imposed on them, nor the reality that the Constitution affirms their freedom to do so has served to mitigate the dangers and violence that they face.

Matters are not helped by the fact that the Constitution has not provided any mechanism for enforcing the right or freedom of the media to perform this constitutional responsibility and that Section 6(6)(c) of the Constitution has specifically prohibited the courts from inquiring into any issue or question on whether any act of omission by any authority or person or whether any law or any judicial decision conforms with the “Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy” contained in Chapter II of the Constitution, which include the freedom of the media to hold Government accountable.

In effect, Section 22 of the Constitution remains unenforceable.

Attacks against journalists and media organizations manifested in a variety of ways in the course of 2022 as journalists have faced physical violence, harassment, and intimidation in the course of their work, including attacks by law enforcement and security agents, political actors, or individuals with different interests and grudges.

Journalists have also faced legal challenges, including unlawful arrests, oppressive criminal charges or threats of legal action, frequently as a result of their reporting on sensitive issues or government activities.

In virtually all the cases of such attacks, the perpetrators have never been held accountable, creating a climate of impunity. It seems the lack of effective investigations and prosecution of perpetrators has emboldened those who seek to silence the media or punish them for their reporting

As digital platforms take hold in Nigeria, journalists are also increasingly facing attacks online, including various forms of harassment, threats, trolling, surveillance, and various types of cyberattacks. Social media can be a platform for both support and attacks.

Most journalists lack adequate safety measures or training to help them to navigate and mitigate risks while on dangerous assignments or covering sensitive issues, including violent conflicts or areas where tensions are high.

In this report, we present this grim picture of the state of freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists in Nigeria in 2022.

Edetaen Ojo

Executive Director

Media Rights Agenda

Introduction

In 2022, MRA recorded at least 64 incidents of attacks on journalists and the media which were all committed with impunity: nobody was arrested, prosecuted, or sanctioned for any of these incidents.

For a country operating a democracy where there should be the rule of law and where nobody should be above the law, the situation signals a serious threat to the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and press freedom. In short, it shows that the Nigerian media is still in fetters.

What makes this situation particularly disheartening is the involvement of Nigeria's security and law enforcement agencies in many of the recorded cases of attacks on the media. Public institutions and public officials were also complicit in the attacks against the media.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the nation's broadcast sector regulator, established to develop the broadcast sector, also constituted a stumbling block to the development of broadcasting in Nigeria through its skewed use of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code to stifle media freedom.

Other perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression and the media in 2022 included mobs, armed assailants, hooligans, state task forces, and political henchmen, among others.

The laws that ought to be used to protect the media were either disregarded or twisted and used to attack journalists, media workers, media outlets, and other citizens for expressing themselves.

The wave of assaults on journalists and media houses not only jeopardises the safety and well-being of media professionals but also poses a direct challenge to the principles upon which democracy is built, including freedom of expression and the rule of law. It erodes the bedrock of freedom of expression, silences the voices that hold power accountable, and casts a chilling shadow over the vitality of a free and vibrant press.

For the year 2022, MRA tracked, collated and documented 64 cases of attacks against freedom of expression. The number is what MRA personnel were able to collate from their monitoring of attacks on freedom of expression across all the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. MRA believes that the number of attacks on freedom of expression is much more than the 64 that it recorded as numerous cases are frequently unreported and undocumented.

The 64 incidents cover different forms of attacks on freedom of expression including attacks on journalists in the course of doing their work or attacks on them because of their work as journalists, attacks on citizen journalists, bloggers, and on citizens for social media posts.

During the year, MRA documented various forms of attacks that include physical assault and battery, arrest and detention, threat to life, abduction, invasion of media premises, media shutdown, equipment destruction etc.

Chapter One

1.0 Analysis of Attacks on Journalists in 2022

1.1 Analysis by Types of Attacks

Journalists, media workers, media outlets, and citizens who expressed themselves faced a barrage of different types of attacks. These attacks include: assault and battery, arrest and detention, threat to life, kidnap/abduction, invasion of offices, prevention from covering incidents/occasions, imposition of fines, among others.

One of the most common forms of attack on freedom of expression, especially against journalists during the year 2022 was physical attack in the form of assault and battery; MRA recorded 20 cases in which journalists were attacked and physically beaten in the course of carrying out their professional duty of sourcing for and reporting news.

This category represents 31.25 percent of all the incidents of attacks on freedom of expression recorded by MRA in 2022. This category of physical attacks did not take into consideration, cases where the journalists were arrested, beaten, and then detained. In this category, the journalists were brutalized but neither arrested nor detained.

Recorded incidents of arrest and detention of journalists and citizens for their freedom of expression also came to 20 in 2022, representing another 31.25 percent of all the attacks on freedom of expression collated and documented by MRA.

Again, in several cases of arrest and detention, the journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers, and social media users who were arrested and detained by security operatives also got battered by the operatives of the agencies that arrested them.

Journalists were victims of kidnappings/abductions in five recorded incidents in 2022. In one of these incidents, the journalist was able to escape his would-be abductors. The journalist, Eniola Daniel of The Guardian newspapers, sustained various degrees of injuries on his hands and legs.

These five cases of kidnapping/abduction represent 7.8 percent or approximately 8 percent of the recorded cases of attacks on freedom of expression. In none of these incidents was any person arrested for the crime. In fact, there was no evidence any of the law enforcement agencies even commenced any

investigation.

There was another set of five recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression that involved the courts: in one of such incidents, the court sentenced a cleric to death for blasphemy; in another incident, a lawyer was jailed for daring to remind a judge that journalists have a right to cover court proceedings.

In two incidents, the court detained some journalists who went to cover court proceedings; while in another matter, two men were jailed for their posts on TikTok. These five incidents also represent 7.8 percent or approximately 8 percent of the reported incidents of attacks on freedom of expression recorded in 2022.

MRA also collated and recorded five incidents of invasion of media outlets. In these cases, the offices of Peoples Gazette in Abuja were invaded by operatives of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

In four incidents, unknown armed men invaded the offices of Prime Time newspaper in Kano, Fresh FM in Ibadan, ThisDay newspaper in Abuja, and the offices of Thunder Blowers, an online newspaper and television station in Gusau, the Zamfara State capital.

The unknown armed men who invaded these four media outlets brutalized the workers they met on duty in addition to destroying some work equipment. In one case, one of the staffers was abducted. These incidents also represent 7.8 percent or approximately 8 percent of the recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression collated by MRA in 2022.

In three cases, journalists reported threats to their lives by agents of the state or by unknown persons. These represent 4.68 percent or approximately 5 percent of the recorded incidents of attacks during the year.

One of the incidents was the reported threat to a woman by Mrs. Bisi Fayemi, the wife of the former governor of Ekiti State; while in the other two incidents, the threats were from security operatives and government officials.

Journalists were, in two recorded incidents, prevented from covering their beats which represent 3.12 percent of recorded incidents of attacks on journalists. In both cases, two different courts prevented journalists from covering their proceedings. While one court prevented journalists from covering its proceedings because the counsel to one of the parties specifically requested for journalists to be sent out in a rape case, in the second instance, the judge requested journalists to obtain express authorization before covering the court.

In two recorded instances, the National Broadcasting Commission, Nigeria's broadcast sector regulator, imposed fines on some media houses for alleged breach of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code. On August 3, 2022, NBC imposed fines of N5 million each on a television station and three pay TV platforms for airing documentaries on banditry in Nigeria which it alleged “glorified the activities of bandits and undermines National Security in Nigeria.”

Again on November 14, 2022, the Commission announced it had imposed a fine of N2 million on Arise TV, an international cable television news channel, for allegedly airing a fake news story which claimed that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had issued a press release saying it was investigating a purported order by a United States court of criminal forfeiture of funds against the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, with a view to prosecuting him.

These two instances of imposition of fines on media houses constitute 3.12 percent or approximately 3 percent of the recorded instances of attacks on freedom of expression in 2022.

There was one incident of media outlets shut down for alleged breach of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code and another of revocation of licences of broadcast houses which were categorized as 'Others' in this report.

In the first instance, the Zamfara State government ordered the shutdown of five media outlets for alleged professional misconduct while in the second case, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Nigeria's broadcast sector regulator on August 19, 2022, announced the revocation of the broadcast licences of 52 media houses, in one fell swoop, for their inability to pay up their licence renewal fees.

These two incidents each represent 3.12 percent or approximately, 3 percent for both combined, of the total recorded incidents of attacks against journalists.

Figure 1: Table Showing Frequency of Different Types of Attacks on Freedom of Expression in 2022

| S/N | Types of Attacks | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Threat to life | 3 | 4.68 percent |
| 2. | Assault/Battery | 20 | 31.25 percent |
| 3. | Arrest/Detention | 20 | 31.25 percent |
| 4. | Kidnap/Abduction | 5 | 7.8 percent |
| 5. | Invasion | 5 | 7.8 percent |
| 6. | Prevention | 2 | 3.12 percent |
| 7. | Fine | 2 | 3.12 percent |
| 8. | Court cases | 5 | 7.8 percent |
| 9. | Others | 2 | 3.12 percent |
| Total | | 64 | 100 percent |

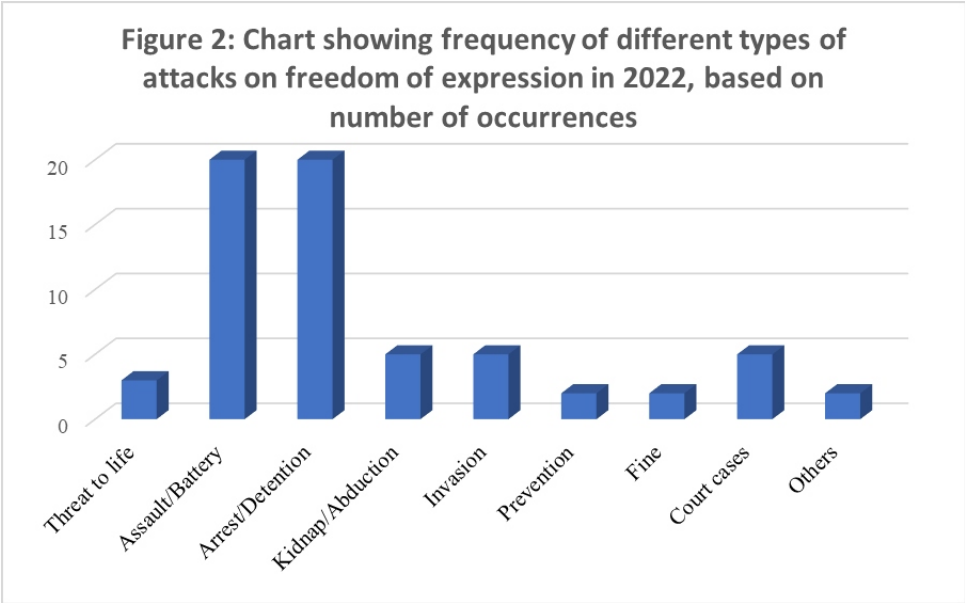
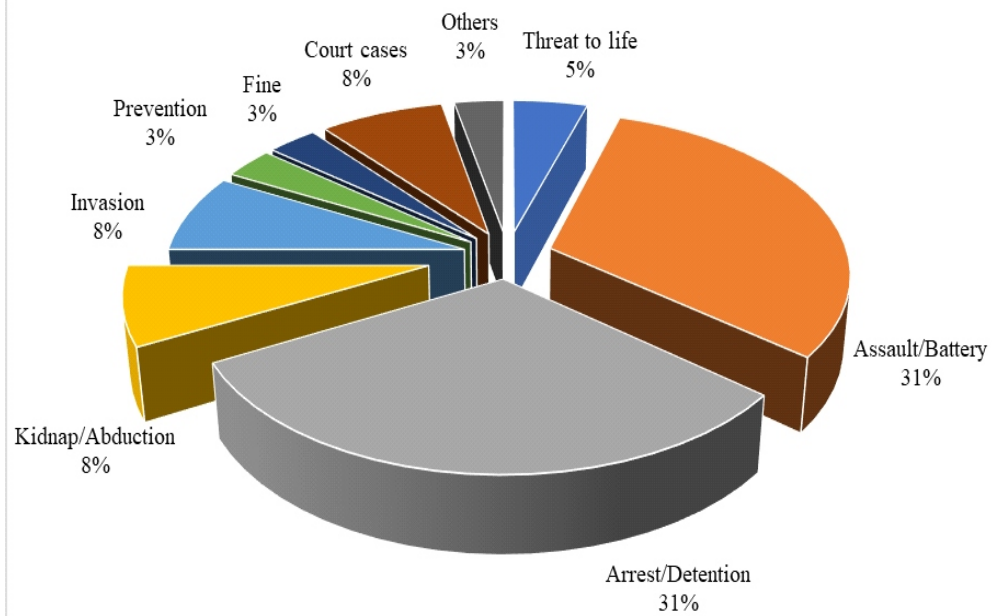


Figure 3: Chart showing frequency of different types of attacks on freedom of expression in 2022 in percentages



1.2 Analysis by Perpetrators of Attacks

From collated incidents of attacks on the media and freedom of expression, MRA identified eight perpetrators of these attacks; they include law enforcement and security agents, thugs and hoodlums, government officials, unknown armed men, judges, mobs, the National Broadcasting Commission and politicians.

Law enforcement and security agents: comprising of operatives of the Nigeria police, the Department of State Services (DSS), the National Intelligence Agency, the Military, or the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), were the greatest perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression.

MRA's records show that these sets of government agents were involved in 29 instances of attacks against freedom of expression. They partook in physical attacks, arrest and detention, invasion of media outlets and even threats to the lives of journalists. Incidentally, these are the crops of people paid to maintain law and order and to protect the nation but ironically are the worst offenders in terms of attacks on freedom of expression.

In percentage terms, law enforcement and security agents were perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression in 45.31 percent of the recorded incidents.

Government officials both elected and appointed, including governors, legislators, ministers, and commissioners, were perpetrators in three recorded incidents. These constitute 4.38 percent of the recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression.

Political thugs and hoodlums were perpetrators in nine of the recorded incidents of attacks on journalists and media houses. This means that in 14.06 percent of the total incidents of attacks on the media and freedom of expression, political thugs and hoodlums were perpetrators.

The courts or judges were perpetrators in eight recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression. Likewise, unknown armed men were also perpetrators in another eight incidents of attacks on journalists and media houses.

In other words, political unknown armed men on the one hand and the courts/judges on the other hand were perpetrators in 12.5 percent each in all the instances of attacks on the media and freedom of expression recorded in 2022.

One government agency, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was a perpetrator in three instances. In two instances, the Commission fined media houses for alleged breach of the broadcasting code and in another instance, it

announced the revocation of the licences of 52 broadcast outlets. These account for the NBC constituting perpetrators of attacks on the media in 4.38 percent the instances of attacks.

Mob attacks on the media happened three times which also accounts for 4.38 percent 5 percent of the instances.

Politicians were perpetrators in two incidents or 3.12 percent of the instance of attacks.

In nine or 14.06 percent of the recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression, women were victims.

Figure 4: Table Showing Frequency of Attacks on Freedom of Expression by different perpetrators in 2022

| S/N | Perpetrators | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Law enforcement/security agencies | 29 | 45.31 percent |
| 2. | Thugs and hoodlums | 9 | 14.06 percent |
| 3. | Government officials | 3 | 4.38 percent |
| 4. | Unknown amendment | 8 | 12.5 percent |
| 5. | Court/Judges | 8 | 12.5 percent |
| 6. | Mob | 2 | 3.12 percent |
| 7. | National Broadcasting Commission | 3 | 4.38 percent |
| 8. | Politicians | 2 | 3.12 percent |
| | Total | 64 | 100 percent |

Figure 5: Table Showing Frequency of Attacks on Freedom of Expression by different perpetrators

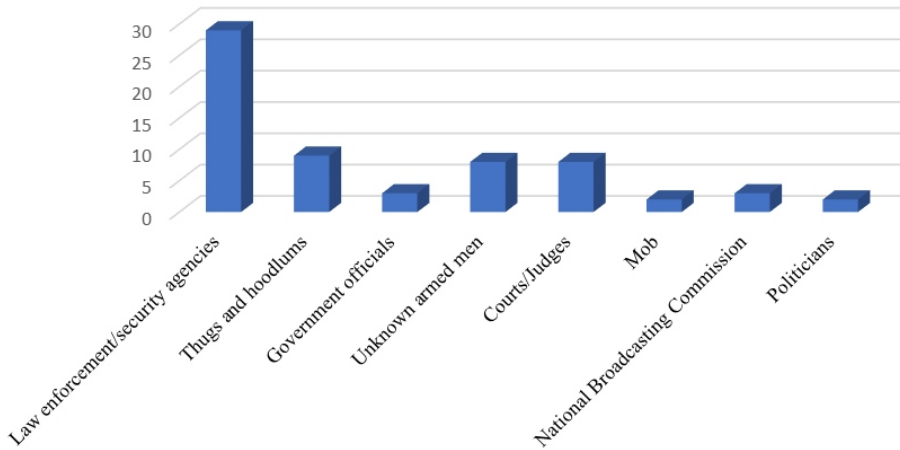
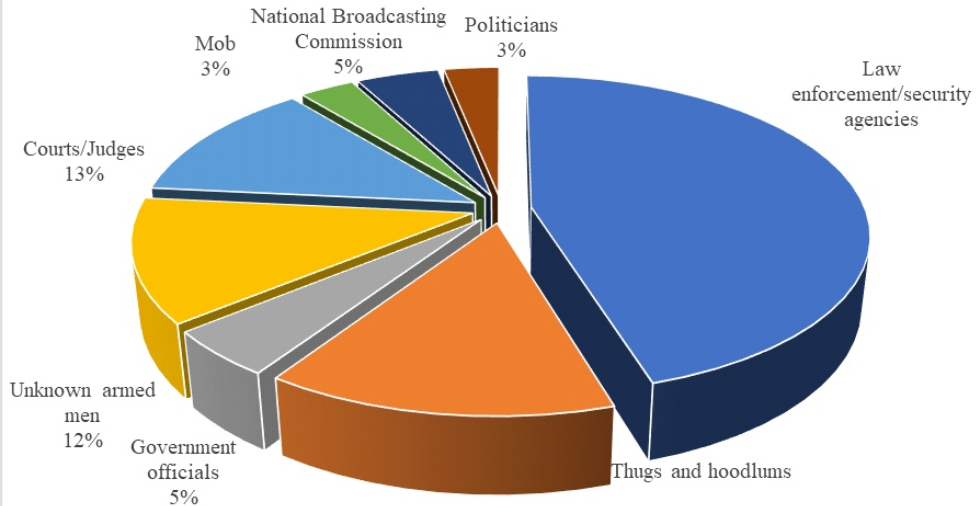


Figure 6: Chart Showing Percentage Frequency of Attacks on Freedom of Expression by different perpetrators



Five of the attacks on freedom of expression were for expressions made on social media: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Tik Tok. Two of the recorded incidents of attacks were for Facebook posts; and one each for WhatsApp, Twitter, and Tik Tok. In all the cases, the court and law enforcement agents were engaged to carry out the attacks.

In the 20 instances of physical assault on journalists, law enforcement agents were perpetrators in eight of them; thugs and hoodlums were perpetrators in another eight incidents; mobs were perpetrators in two; while government officials and a politician were perpetrators in one incident apiece.

In the 20 incidents of arrest and detention for freedom of expression, law enforcement agents were perpetrators in 18 incidents while judges were perpetrators in two.

All the recorded incidents of abduction of journalists were carried out by unknown armed men. However, there was no sign of investigation of any of them by the law enforcement agencies much less an arrest or prosecution of anyone for this crime.

Of the five incidents of invasion of media houses, unknown armed men were perpetrators in three of them while operatives of a law enforcement agency, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), was the perpetrators in one of them, and thugs and hoodlums in another one.

Of the five attacks on freedom of expression in which the courts were used, judges were perpetrators in four of them while the Nigeria Police were perpetrators in another one instance.

In 12 instances of attacks on freedom of expression, powerful individuals in government used state agents: the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigeria Police, and the National Intelligence Agency to attack journalists or citizens for expressing themselves.

Agencies that complain about not having enough manpower and not being adequately armed to fight insecurity suddenly become adequate in all sense of it and are able to deploy their officers and resources to harass, assault, arrest, detain, and prosecute journalists and individuals for their reports and online expressions.

Some of the powerful persons who used state agencies to harass journalists and citizens for their expressions include Mrs. Aisha Buhari, Nigeria's first lady; Darius Ishaku, the governor of Taraba State; Rev. Yakubu Pam, Executive

Secretary of the Nigeria Christian Pilgrims Commission; Mr. Ben Ayade, Governor of Cross River State; Mr. Dapo Abiodun, Ogun State Governor; and Senator Uba Sani, among others.

In several cases, the law enforcement agents arrest and charge journalists and citizens with criminal defamation, injurious falsehood publication of news known to be false, and cyber stalking, contrary, according to most of the charges, to sections of the Penal and Criminal Codes and section 24(1) Cybercrime (Prohibition Prevention etc) Act, 2015.

Invariably, their intention is never to diligently prosecute these cases but to make them suffer by using state agencies and the courts, especially the magistrate court to keep these persons in detention for long period of time.

Chapter Two

2.0 Identified Cases of Attacks on Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in 2022

2.1 Assault and Battery

Community Journalist Brutalised by Security Men

On December 22, 2022, at about 8.56 am, security agents code-named Operation Mesa (Op-Mesa) brutalised Fashina Shakiru, a Lagos-based community journalist who manages Mile 2 Community News.

Narrating his ordeal, Fashina explained that he was covering the traffic situation with his camera on Mile 2 highway inward Orile in Lagos State, when one of the Op-Mesa operatives attacked him.

He said the officer fired a barrage of questions at him asking: “Who are you? What are you doing with the video?” he said he identified himself as a reporter and went ahead to show the security man his identity card. He narrated further that while one of the security men was going through his phone, another came, slapped, and hit him with an iron rod injuring him on the head and continued to harass him. The security man threatened: “If you talk or argue anything, I will shoot you.”

Fashina said he immediately stepped back after the officer threatened to shoot him.

After checking through his phone to ensure the journalist did not capture any of their operation in pictures or videos and finding nothing, the officer who collected his phone returned it to him. However, the officer who had assaulted the reporter collected the phone, again threatening to shoot him dead if he got close to him.

Fashina said a man he suspects to be an officer in mufti walked towards and talked with them, and they released his phone to him.

After the incident, he said he went to a nearby clinic to stitch up the wounds and then to the Satellite Divisional Police Station, Amunwo, to report. At the Police station, he was given a medical report to go to a general hospital in Lagos for proper treatment. He was given a medical report addressed to the medical officer in charge of the Ajeromi General Hospital in the Ajegunle area of Lagos which

urged the medical officer to treat him and report any observation and/or treatment to the Investigating Police Officer for further investigation.

Police Assault Radio Reporter Filming a Lynching Scene

On December 19, 2022, Mr. Muhammad Bello Dabai, a reporter with Premier Radio, Kano was manhandled by policemen for filming an incident of a man being lynched.

The policemen forcefully bundled him into their service vehicle, insisting that they must take him to the police station for interrogation and detention.

Reports have it that Muhammad witnessed a scene of an alleged thief being pursued by a mob who wanted to lynch him when he attempted to exit Nassarawa Hospital in Kano, where the police had taken him for treatment.

As an eyewitness and a journalist, Muhammad began filming the incident when the police officers arrived to re-arrest the offender. But without provocation, one of the police officers confronted him to stop him, during which a fracas ensued in spite of identifying himself, with his official identity card which identifies him as a journalist.

In the ensuing fracas, Muhammad was brutalised, kicked, and slapped several times by the policemen on their way to the police station and forced to lie on the vehicle floor.

Premier Radio reported the incident to the Area Commander of the Metro Police Command to secure the reporter's release.

Journalists Beaten, Dragged Out of Stadium

On November 10, 2022, a group of journalists who were covering and assessing the level of damage at the site of a building under construction at the Stephen Keshi International Stadium in Asaba, Delta State, which had collapsed, were attacked and bundled out of the stadium on the orders of the Chairman of the Delta State Sports Commission, Mr. Tonobok Okowa.

The journalists who were assaulted by the Commissioner's aides were Paul Osuyi of the Sun Newspaper, Monday Osayande of Guardian Newspaper, and Amaechi Okwara of Blueprint Newspaper.

Mr. Okowa, who doubles as the Co-Chairman of the Local Organising Committee for the National Sports Festival scheduled to hold at the stadium on November 28, 2022, also ordered his aides to confiscate the working tools of the reporters.

The Commissioner ordered his men: “Take them out of this place; journalists are not needed.”

When the aides were reluctant in carrying out the order, he shouted, “Are they still here? Collect their gadgets and bundle them out of here.”

On the Commissioner's order, the men swooped on and beat up the journalists using different objects.

Worshippers, Security Guard Brutalise Reporter in Celestial Church Premises

Worshippers at the Celestial Church of Christ, Sharon Parish, in Mobolaji Benson Street in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State and a security guard working for the church on November 6, 2022 brutalized Mr. Deji Lambo, a reporter with the daily Punch newspapers. Deji was at the church premises to gather more information regarding the death of an electrician.

Deji visited the church to gather more information surrounding the death of an electrician, Taiwo Akinlotan, who was electrocuted while fixing some electrical appliances in the church on November 5, 2022.

At the Church premises, the reporter was taken to one Mr. Lambo who introduced the reporter to his colleagues after listening to his mission. One of those to whom the reporter was introduced called the Chairman of the church, Adeleke Oduwole, and handed his phone to the reporter to speak with him and explain the reason for his visit.

Deji then explained to Adeleke that he wanted to speak with a spokesperson of the church on the events that led to Akinlotan's death.

While they were discussing the matter on phone, about 30 worshippers in the church premises swooped on the reporter. They pinned him down, seized his phones and demanded his means of identification. Deji produced his identity card which they seized. They brutalized him, with the security guard slapping him and calling him a thief.

A woman, identified as Iya Ibeji, and other church members filmed with their mobile phones as they assaulted the reporter. They encircled him and interrogated him on his mission there accusing him of planning to destroy the image of the church.

The spokesman of the church later arrived the scene and rescued the reporter. He took him to his office and apologized to him.

The matter was reported at the Owutu Police Station.

Female Reporter Assaulted by Aide to Governorship Candidate

On November 4, 2022, a female reporter with The Guardian newspapers, Ms Kehinde Olatunji, was assaulted by Theophilus Akorede, an aide to the 2023 governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos State, Mr. Olajide Adediran, popularly known as Jandor. Theophilus forcefully bundled the reporter from Jandor's campaign office because she had sat on Mr. Adediran's seat.

Ms Olatunji was at the campaign office in Ikeja to honor an invitation by Hakeem Amode, the Lagos State PDP Publicity Secretary and Chairman of the Media and Publicity Committee of the JandorFunke 2023 Campaign Council, to cover Jandor's meeting with Igbo market leaders from Amuwo Odofin.

The reporter arrived at Jandor's campaign office in Ikeja at 8.00am, being the first person to arrive, she took an available seat within the premises while she awaited the arrival of other newsmen and organisers of the programme.

However, a man in the premises asked her to vacate the seat that she was not supposed to sit there. When she asked why, he replied that it was Jandor's seat. The man then directed her to where she could sit and she obliged.

Later on, the man again asked the reporter to find another seat, saying he wanted to leave the area, and without question, the reporter obliged again and even asked him where she could sit so, she could also charge her phone. She was directed to another part of the premises to where she again relocated.

After the reporter had settled down, Theophilus approached her and said, "I heard you sat on Oga's seat, next time you come here and try such, I will bundle you into the gutter. Look at me very well."

Surprised, she asked him if he woke up from the gutter that morning. Theophilus got angry for being asked the question and talked to in such a manner. The aide forcefully bundled the reporter from her seat and was taking her out of the premises, making good his threat when a journalist entered and forced him to drop her.

As a result of the encounter, Ms Olatunji had to go to the hospital to treat herself.

Lawmaker Assaults Journalist at Press Conference

The Majority Leader in the House of Representatives, Hon. Alhassan Doguwa, on November 1, 2022, assaulted the Leadership newspaper's Kano Bureau Chief, Malam Abdullahi Yakubu, during a press conference in his residence in Kano. This incident occurred after reports that Hon. Doguwa had earlier assaulted the former Kano State Commissioner for Local Government and deputy governorship candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Murtala Sule Garo.

Hon. Doguwa, the member representing Tudun Wada Doguwa Constituency at the House of Representatives, gave Abdullahi a blow in his right ear when he asked the legislator to give his account of what happened during the meeting at the deputy governor's residence when he was accused of assaulting the deputy governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) at his residence in Murtala Garo, Kano.

Hon. Doguwa initially denied attacking the journalist and described the claim as the handiwork of political mischief makers. Not satisfied with the legislator's denial, the journalist took legal action by bringing the matter before a Magistrate Court in the state where it was ordered by the court that the Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Zone 1, investigate the alleged assault case filed by the journalist against the lawmaker.

The AIG summoned the lawmaker who honoured the summons on November 11 and later disclosed that he had apologized to the journalist.

Although he initially denied assaulting the journalist, Hon. Doguwa after apologising said “It was never intentional because even Abdullahi Yakubu knows the kind of person I am.” The journalist also said he had forgiven the lawmaker and promised to instruct his lawyer to withdraw the matter.

Thugs Attack Zamfara State NUJ Council Chairman

On October 20, 2022, political thugs engaged to work on a shop to be used as a campaign office within the secretariat of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Zamfara State Council, in Gusau, Zamfara State, beat up the Council Chairman, Comrade Ibrahim Musa Maizare, when he asked them to stop work on the shop.

The hoodlums attacked Comrade Maizare with sticks and threatened to deal with journalists in the state.

The hoodlums further vowed not to stop work or leave the place, claiming it was given to them by a politician.

The shop being renovated was reportedly burnt down by rival thugs in 2021 and as a result, the NUJ Council Chairman asked the thugs to vacate the premises due to concerns about the safety of the entire complex and other shops, which were at risk of further attacks.

Despite the arrival of policemen at the scene, the thugs continued to hurl insults at members of the union and policemen who unfortunately left the scene, unable to resolve the crisis.

Secretary of the Union, Ibrahim Ahmad Gada, appealed to the security agencies to protect the safety of journalists, adding that lives and properties of journalists working in the state are under serious threat.

Expressing serious concern, Gada further emphasized the need to ensure the safety of all journalists, urging stakeholders to intervene and prevent thugs from dictating how journalists should use their property in the state.

“If an armed thug can threaten to kill a working journalist what do you expect?” he asked.

Political Thugs Attack Journalist in Oshogbo

On October 15, 2022, at about 1:37 pm, suspected political thugs affiliated with the All Progressives Congress (APC), attacked Prince Hameed Oyegbade, Daily Trust TV correspondent, while covering the local government election at the election collation center in Awosuru, Osogbo, Osun State.

The problem started when the thugs vowed they would not allow any journalist to cover the election. They threatened to destroy Hameed's phone and kill him when

he wanted to enter the collation centre. When he attempted to educate them on the laws guiding election coverage and assert his right to perform his duties, they got enraged and attacked the journalist.

A local government chairman and a few other members of the APC cautioned the overzealous ones who attacked him before they drew back and left him alone.

Recounting his experience, Hammed expressed his disappointment with the policemen who witnessed but did nothing to prevent the attack, instead, he was approached by a police officer from Ataoja Division Police Headquarters, who politely asked him to leave the environment after the situation had calmed down.

“The experience was traumatizing. The action of the APC members was not a big deal. Of course, as a journalist, I know it's part of the job hazards. The most unfortunate part that made me sad was the role of the police officers in particular,” he said.

Angry Mob Attacks Journalist Covering Flooding in Jigawa State

On September 22, 2022, an angry mob attacked Mr. Abubakar Tahir, a reporter with the Hausa version of the Blueprint newspaper called “Manhaja” while he was covering the devastation caused by flooding in Ganuwar Kuka village, in Hadejia Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

Abubakar had gone to the flood-ravaged community to cover their plight. He presented his identification card and began interviewing some of the victims. However, the event took a horrible turn when he suddenly got attacked from behind by an enraged group.

When Abubakar attempted to inquire about the reasons behind the brutal assault, they forcibly submerged his head in the water while continuing to physically beat him. One of his assailants brought out a knife but was stopped by some people around.

Thereafter Abubakar was taken to the residence of the local district head, where he was given new clothes and then taken to Hadejia General Hospital for medical treatment.

Minister's Security Aides Attack Journalist

On August 18, 2022, security operatives attached to the Minister of State for the

Federal Capital Territory, Hajia Ramatu Tijani Aliyu, attacked Mohammed Baba, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) for filming an altercation between policemen at the national secretariat of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in Abuja.

Mohammed was manhandled and his clothes torn by the minister's security aides when they discovered he was recording the fight. They also made attempts to seize his phone and camera but were rebuffed by members of the APC press corps and other security men.

The Minister's security aides were engaged in a fight with the security men guarding the APC national secretariat when Mohammed who had been detailed to cover events at the APC secretariat started recording the fight with his video camera.

Hoodlums Attack, Injure Journalists in Lagos

On June 19, 2022, hoodlums attacked journalists attached to the Lagos State Government House who were on the entourage of the state governor to welcome the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential flag-bearer, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was returning to Lagos from Abuja after the party's presidential primary election.

The journalists were attacked on the Ebute-Ero link Bridge by the hoodlums with stones, and cutlasses, while returning from the Palace of the Oba of Lagos, Rilwan Akiolu, in Isale-Eko, where Tinubu and Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu had gone to pay homage to the King.

During the attack that lasted for more than 10 minutes, the hoodlums destroyed the windows of the vehicle conveying the journalists with some of them sustaining injuries.

In a press statement subsequently released by the Lagos Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotosho, the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu condemned the attack and ordered an investigation into the attack.

In the statement, Gov. Sanwo-Olu directed that those involved must be fished out and made to face the law. He also promised that the government will pick the hospital bills of those injured in the incident.

The governor vowed that “Nobody or group will be allowed to destroy our cordial relationship with the media,” adding “Lagos has no room for hooligans.”

Football Fans Attack Journalists at Lekan Salami Stadium in Ibadan

Angry football fans attacked three journalists, namely Atinuke Esan, Tobi Adepoju, and Ayo Animasaun, who went to cover the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) match between the Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC) and Remo United on June 1, 2022 at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Adamasingba in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital.

Trouble began for the journalists after they had conducted their post-match interviews when they were asked by Shooting Stars fans to leave the stadium.

According to them, before they could comply, the fans swooped on them, slapped and beat up the multimedia journalist, Mr. Adepoju, who had to run to where the police van was parked for safety.

A journalist who witnessed the assault said it looked like a planned attack on journalists because “The fans came pointing at him (Mr. Adepoju) and asked him to leave the stadium, before we knew it he slapped him and other fans joined in and started beating him.”

Police Shoot, Injure Journalist Covering Students' Protest in Osogbo

Operatives of the Osun State Command of the Nigerian Police on May 31, 2022 shot and injured the Osun State Correspondent of the Nation newspaper, Mr. Toba Adedeji, while he was covering a students' protest at Orita Olaiya in Osogbo, the State capital.

Mr. Adedeji, who was shot in the thigh, was taken to the Osun State University Teaching Hospital for treatment.

The correspondent had gone to cover a protest over the alleged extra-judicial killing of the late Mr. Abiola Afolabi, who was reportedly killed by policemen on April 4, 2022 and buried on May 31. The late Mr. Afolabi's friends had decided to hold a rally after his burial and converged on Olaiya on that day.

However, policemen stormed the venue of the protest and shot into the crowd of protesters and journalists covering the protest. Mr. Adedeji was one of those hit by police bullets.

Reporter Assaulted by Policemen in Oyo State while Covering Political Party Primaries

Mr. Yinka Adeniran, the Nation newspaper's reporter attached to the Oyo State Governor's Office, was on May 25, 2022 beaten up by policemen attached to the Oyo State Command of the Nigeria Police while one of them sprayed teargas directly into his eyes, nose and mouth.

The police officer wearing a name tag identifying him as “I. O Niyi”, who teargassed Mr. Adeniran, was one of those supposedly providing security at the governorship primary election of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which took place at the Tennis Courts Pavilion of the Lekan Salami Sports Complex in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Reporters who were at the venue of the event to cover the primaries were first asked to identify themselves but were prevented from entering, supposedly on the ground that there were too many journalists at the venue.

Party delegates who were also prevented from entering the venue forced their way in, which gave Mr. Adeniran the opportunity to enter, but a visibly enraged Officer Niyi pounced on him, ordering other officers to “throw” him out.

On the orders of Officer Niyi, about five other policemen who were all armed with rifles attacked the reporter, rough-handling him and tearing his shirt.

Not satisfied with the punishment already meted out to the journalist, Officer Niyi went back to collect a tear gas canister from one of his colleagues and sprayed it directly into the eyes, nose and mouth of the reporter after he had been thrown out of the venue.

The intervention of other journalists, including the Chairman of the Oyo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Mr. Demola Babalola; the Chairman of Oyo State Correspondents Chapel of the NUJ, Mr. Oluseye Ojo, the leadership and members of the Press Crew at the Governor's Office prevented the policemen from inflicting further brutality on the journalist.

Armed Thugs Attack, Injure Journalists Covering Political Campaign

On May 23, 2022, thugs armed with cutlasses, axes, clubs and other dangerous weapons attacked and injured journalists covering the political campaign of Governor Adegboyega Oyetola in Gbongan, Ayedaade Local Government area of

Osun State. The hoodlums destroyed the windscreen of the journalists' bus

The thugs who laid siege for vehicles attacked members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists Correspondents' Chapel and destroyed their bus.

They attacked several campaign vehicles including that of journalists with their weapons thereby injuring four newsmen.

Policemen Attack BBC Journalist Covering IPOB Sit-at-Home Order

On May 18, 2022, police officers attacked a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) journalist who was covering the suspended sit-at-home order by the separatist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), at Cemetery Market in Aba, Abia State

The unidentified journalist was giving a live update during the BBC Igbo Facebook broadcast when the police operatives on routine patrol attacked him, accusing him of filming them.

The journalist was providing updates on the sit-at-home order in the South-east of Nigeria as well as on the court proceedings of Nnamdi Kanu, the detained IPOB leader.

In a video clip posted on Facebook by the BBC Igbo shortly after the incident, heavily armed police officers could be seen questioning the journalist.

One of the police officers shouted at him angrily: “Hey! Hey!! Stop there!!! Why are you videoing us?”

The journalist responded: “I am not videoing you people. This is BBC live.”

The officer ordered him to open the camera while another ordered that he should be held. The journalist was later arrested and released a few minutes later.

According to a programme anchor at the BBC studio, the police officers prevented the reporter from carrying out his work, adding that the reporter's two mobile phones were smashed despite telling them that he is a BBC reporter.

The Abia State police spokesperson, Geoffrey Ogbonna, denied that the officers brutalised the journalist. He, however, confirmed that the BBC journalist was arrested, but later released.

“Somebody like that was arrested, but the issue of brutalisation, I don't think there

was anything like that. He was arrested and then introduced himself and he was allowed to go,” Mr Ogbonna said.

Journalists Monitoring Fuel Scarcity Situation Assaulted

On March 1, 2022, three staff of Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS), Eddy Akpati Ogude, Manager News and Current Affairs; Ms Eunice Emayazia, a reporter; and Mr. Austin Ogbotor, a cameraman, were assaulted in Asaba, the Delta State capital by officers of the Delta State Police Command Comrade for filming their shady activities at a petrol station.

They were injured while the camera they were recording with was destroyed. Ms Emeyazia suffered pains from bruises inflicted on her face, head and a broken wrist.

The DBS crew was monitoring the situation of things as a result of the scarcity of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at the Northwest Filling Station on Mariam Babangida Way, Asaba, when the overzealous security men pounced on them and beat them up.

Narrating her ordeal, Ms Emeyazia said she was recording the queue in the filling station and interviewing motorists when some policemen attached to the fuel station accosted her and started beating her. She said she escaped from the onslaught by running for her dear life as some of the policemen chased her until she escaped into a moving car, adding that she sustained body injuries while her phone and the video camera they were using were damaged by the security operatives.

According to her, while she was being chased, her colleagues were held hostage by the other police officers attached to the petrol station who were angered that they were recording the scene at the filling station.

She said it took the effort of a good-spirited citizen, who witnessed how she was being molested for her to come out alive as the rescuer swiftly made it possible for her to jump into his car during the chase.

Ms Emeyazia had to go to the Federal Medical Centre Asaba for treatment and an X-ray of her broken wrist.

Political Thugs Assault, Manhandle Newspaper Correspondent

On February 21, 2022, political thugs numbering over 50, suspected to be loyalists

of members of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly (EBSHA), attacked and assaulted Mr. Nnamdi Akpa, the Ebonyi State correspondent of The Guardian newspaper at the Assembly complex in Abakaliki, the state capital.

Nnamdi, who is also the Secretary of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Ebonyi State Council was reportedly attacked by the thugs shortly after the EBSHA sitting on that day.

He was said to have contacted the former Secretary to the Government of Federation, Sen. Pius Anyim Pius and the State chairman of PDP, Tochukwu Okorie to get their reactions on the removal of the Deputy Speaker of the House, Mr Obasi Odefa by the House.

Speaking shortly after his ordeal, Nnamdi said he was assaulted and attacked by over 50 thugs. According to him, “the thugs that attacked me are loyal to the Speaker and they are more than 50. When I came out from the chamber, they came and told me to give them my phone. I don't know the reason I should give them my phone.

“They said I was texting some people. Before I knew what was happening, they started beating me up and took away my phone.”

It took the intervention of the chairman of NUJ, Ebonyi State Council, Mr Tony Nwazi and a few other journalists to rescue Nnamdi from the hands of the thugs.

The speaker of Ebonyi State House of Assembly, Mr. Francis Nwifuru, later tendered an apology to the correspondent and members of the NUJ, Ebonyi State Council but allegedly blamed Nnamdi for sending SMS to people who are “enemies of the State Government”.

NSCDC Operatives Beat Up Journalist Covering Students' Protest

On February 16, 2021, operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) beat up a correspondent of The Nation newspaper, Mr. Toba Adedeji, while he was covering a protest by students under the aegis of the National Association of Osun State Students (NAOSS) and Association of Nigeria Students/Joint Campus Committee (Osun axis) at the NSCDC office in Osogbo, the Osun State capital.

Some of his colleagues who tried to rescue him were also threatened by the NSCDC operatives.

The incident occurred when an overzealous NSCDC personnel accosted Toba at the scene and started querying him. In spite of the reporter identifying himself as a correspondent of The Nation newspaper, the NSCDC operative together with his colleagues beat up and harassed the journalist, claiming he was rude to a senior officer.

Narrating his ordeal, Toba said he was standing under the shade at the entrance of the NSCDC command working on his phone while the protest was going on when the officers accused him of spying for the police.

According to him, he told them he was not a spy but a journalist, but one of the officers directed that his phone should be confiscated. He was about to show them his identity card in his chest pocket when one of the NSCDC operatives gave him a headbutt and tried to collect the journalist's phone from him. Other officers joined in beating him.

His wristwatch was damaged as a result of the beating inflicted on him. He was later rescued by his colleagues whom the NSCDC operatives also threatened to shoot.

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Osun State Council, condemned the incident in a statement by Wasiu Ajadosu and Bukola Elufadejin, Chairman and Secretary respectively of the union, describing the attack as barbaric and uncivilised, adding that as men in uniform, they are expected to be above board in their professional conduct.

The union warned that it will no longer condone such attacks on its members, especially during this political season and cautioned security agents not to allow themselves to be used for political games in the state.

While demanding a public apology from the Osun NSCDC Command, it added that the union would be left with no other option other than to stop the coverage of all activities of the command if it fails to apologise.

Speaking on the incident, the Osun NSCDC Command Public Relations Officer, Ms Atanda Olabisi disclosed on a phone conversation that the attack was a misunderstanding between the personnel of the NSCDC and the journalist.

She noted that the attack should not have come up in the first instance, adding that the men responsible for the attack have been called to order and cautioned.

She also disclosed that the command had already apologised to the Osun NUJ council and Mr. Toba Adedeji since he is a known journalist in the command.

She stated that the Osun NSCDC Commandant, Emmanuel Ocheja was on top of the matter and will issue a public statement in respect to the issue.

Hoodlums Attack TV Crew Covering Traffic Gridlock in Lagos

On January 31, 2022, some hoodlums suspected to be members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), and Maritime workers, as well as, those engaged by the Apapa Local Government Council to extort money from motorists, attacked and stabbed a driver of Channels TV vehicle, Mr. Ismail Sanusi, while the TV crew was recording the condition of the traffic gridlock on the Apapa-Oshodi Expressway and environs.

Crew members of Arise Television, who were also within the axis to report on efforts being made to ease movements around the ports, were said to be missing after hoodlums attacked them to halt the recordings.

The hoodlums numbering over 50, armed with daggers and other dangerous weapons descended on the journalists from the television stations recording the traffic situation in the axis.

According to an eyewitness, John Okon, the hoodlums were mobilized by members of road transport unions and other agencies collecting tolls from truck drivers who felt that the TV stations cameramen came to report their illegal activities in the area.

2.1 Arrest and Detention

Journalist Arrested, Extorted by Lagos State Task Force

Mr. Babajide Guerrero, a sports journalist, has accused officials of the Lagos State Environmental and Special Offences (Enforcement) Unit of extorting N100,000 from him on December 19, 2022, and demanded a refund of the money.

The journalist, on December 20, 2022, narrated his encounter with the task force officials on his Twitter page @BabajideGuerrero where he stated that the incident occurred while he was on his way to record the final episode of the World Cup for a television station.

According to him, he was driving on the right lane, approaching Edmund Street in the Yaba area of Lagos State and turning into University of Lagos Road at Jibowu when a Suzuki cab overtook him.

He said a few minutes later, men from the Lagos task force came out of two yellow commercial buses and arrested the Suzuki cab and some other cars claiming it was Double Lane. He said further that he was on his right lane when one of the officers said “oga reverse, let us arrest these guys” and he obeyed. But while he was reversing, the official recorded him reversing, and asked his colleagues to arrest him, saying “he’s among” where upon some of the officials entered his car.

Babajide said all efforts to explain the situation to the men fell on deaf ears and he was driven to their office in Alausa where his car was detained.

He said while he waited at Alausa, one of the officers approached him and demanded N50,000 while another N50,000 was demanded when he was taken to the agency's head office at Bolade Oshodi.

He disclosed that at Alausa, one of the officers who arrested him approached him and demanded N50,000 for which he made a withdrawal and paid the money in cash with the hope that the officer would go into their office and help him get his car, but he disappeared with the money.

From Alausa, he said he was then taken to their office at Bolade Oshodi where he had to make another withdrawal of N50,000 which he paid. He was then given a stapled paper which he took back to Alausa for them to release his car. He also said he had to pay another N1,000 gate pass before he could be allowed to drive his car away.

Following his complaint on Twitter, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, responded to him saying “I’ll contact the Task Force to see how this can be redressed. Thank you for bringing this to our notice. It will surely help us do better.”

Following the report in the media, Mr. Shola Jejeloye, Chairman of the Task Force, invited the journalist and his money was refunded to him while the Task Force officials who were identified were reportedly arrested and investigated.

Police Detain Vanguard Reporter over Petition in which He was not Named

On December 19, 2022, Mr. Luminous Jannamike, the Religious Affairs and Civil Society correspondent of the privately-owned Vanguard Newspapers, was detained on the orders of Mr. Johnson Babatunde Kokumo, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Federal Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID), Abuja at one of the FCIID facilities.

Luminous who appeared before the police with Vanguard Assistant Editor (Defence/Crime Desk), Mr. Kingsley Omonobi, was detained for five hours and later granted bail.

The reporter was arrested over a petition that was written against some journalists who reported the call by a civil society group asking the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Christian Pilgrims Commission, Rev. Yakubu Pam, to resign in order to pave way for unbiased investigation into sundry allegations against him.

Luminous said: “Neither my name nor Vanguard Newspaper was mentioned in the petition, but I was roped into the case for reasons best known only to the police.”

The correspondent later wrote on his Facebook page that: “I have been released by the Federal Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department. I was released on bail at exactly 3.59pm today [December 19, 2022] and I am to return anytime my presence is required.

Media Proprietor Arrested, Arraigned, Released after Two Weeks in Detention

A media proprietor, Mr. Ayodele Samuel, publisher of Taraba Truth and Facts Newspaper and Chief Executive Officer of Rock FM 92.3 Jalingo, was on November 27, 2022, arrested by police operatives allegedly on the orders of Darius Ishaku, the governor of Taraba State.

Ayodele was said to have incurred the wrath of the governor after he published a story that alleged that the governor planned to sell the Taraba Liaison Office in Abuja and the state-owned Mambilla Beverages Company in a report titled, 'Taraba for Sale.'

Prior to his arrest, he had said “While it appears that the government is trying to unjustly repress me through the legal framework through a petition to the police to investigate some reports published by Taraba Truth and Facts Newspaper with regards to the privatisation of the Mambilla Beverages Company and the College of Nursing, Jalingo, its agents are also simultaneously trying to eliminate me, giving me no room to be vindicated.”

He had same day raised alarm that agents of the State Government have been trailing him with the intention to eliminate or arrest him after he published that the state governor, Mr. Darius Ishaku “plans to sell Taraba liaison office”.

In an SOS message he sent out, Ayodele claimed that the state government plans to remand him in prison with stringent bail conditions, adding that the plots against him were planned in government house, supervised by Governor Ishaku's ADC.

The media proprietor was secretly arraigned before a magistrates' court without legal representation and was thereafter remanded in prison despite meeting the bail conditions given by the court.

He had been granted bail in the sum of N10 million naira and two sureties who must be residents of Jalingo with landed properties worth N5million naira each. Although he met the condition, he was not immediately released.

He was released on December 12, 2022, after spending two weeks in prison.

Police Arrest University Student for Tweet Considered Defamatory to Nigeria's First Lady

Aminu Adamu Muhammed, a 23-year-old 500-level student of the Federal University Dutse in Jigawa State, was on November 18, 2022 arrested by operatives of the Nigeria Police for a tweet considered defamatory of Mrs. Aisha Buhari, Nigeria's first lady. He was reportedly severely beaten by the officers when he was picked up from the school campus at about 12:00 noon.

On June 8, 2022, Aminu tweeted in Hausa language, “Su mama anchi kudin talkawa ankoshi,” meaning “Mama has eaten poor people's money and is now full.” The tweet was accompanied by a photograph of Mrs. Buhari.

He was transferred to the FCT State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Abuja where he was allowed to contact his father Adamu Shalele Azare about his location.

Aminu's friends said he posted the tweet out of frustration with the eight-month strike by university lecturers across the country which started in February 2022, and lasted till October 2022.

The management of his school confirmed his arrest. The university's spokesperson, Mr. Abdullahi Bello, said the university was not in session when Aminu posted the tweet, thus, he was not under the care of the university when he made the post on Twitter.

According to Abdullahi, “The unfortunate incident involving Aminu Adamu who made a Twitter post happened during the break. He did the posting in his capacity as Aminu Adamu, not as a student of FUD.”

The parents of the student have called on the first lady to forgive and release their son.

On November 29, he was secretly arraigned at the FCT High Court No. 14 in Abuja by the police and charged with cyber stalking. His family was not notified before his arraignment. He was sent to the Suleja Correctional Centre in Niger State on the orders of Justice Yusuf Halilu who denied him bail despite pleading not guilty to the charges filed against him.

The one-count charge against the student reads: “That you Aminu Adamu, male of Anguwar Sarakuna, Bauchi, Bauchi state sometime between May June 2022 within the jurisdiction of this Honorable court did intentionally open a Twitter Handle with the name @aminullahie Catalyst and screenshot the image of Her Excellency Hajia Aisha Buhari and wrote on it in Hausa language 'Su mama anchi kudi talakawa ankoshi' roughly translated to the English language to mean 'mama has embezzled monies meant for the poor to satisfaction' and posted same on your above Twitter handle for the members of the public to read, knowing same to be false and capable of affecting her reputation. You thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 391 of the penal code.”

On December 2, Mrs. Buhari withdrew her case against him following pressure and condemnation from different sections of society including activists, Amnesty International, the National Association of Nigerian Students, and other Nigerians. Fidelis Ogbobe, the prosecution counsel, while withdrawing the case on her behalf said Mrs. Buhari, being the mother of the nation, decided to withdraw the

case following the intervention of “well-meaning Nigerians”.

Moving a motion for the withdrawal of the case, Fidelis cited Section 108 (2)(a) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act. Justice Yusuf Halilu commended Mrs. Buhari for withdrawing the case.

Two Journalists Detained in Ilorin for Alleged Criminal Defamation, Cyberstalking Following Complaint by Governor's Press Secretary

On October 13, 2022, Mr. Abdulrasheed Akogun, the proprietor of an online news and television network known as Fresh Insight TV; and Mr. Dare Akogun, an investigative journalist with Sobi F.M. radio, both in Ilorin, Kwara State, were arrested and detained by men of the Nigerian Police Force in Ilorin upon honouring an invitation from the State's Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The two journalists were detained on the orders of the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Criminal Investigation Department of the Kwara State Command of the Nigeria Police, Mr. Steve Yabanet, when they refused to comply with his directive that they should write a letter of apology to Mr Ajakaye Rafiu, the Chief Press Secretary to the State Governor, who lodged the complaint leading to the incident.

The journalists were invited by the Police by a letter dated October 7, 2022, which was delivered to him on October 12, 2022, to meet with the Deputy Commissioner of Police on October 13, 2022 at 11am. The letter claimed that the office was investigating cases of inciting disturbance, injurious falsehood, and criminal defamation against them but said the invitation for them to report at the office was “just a fact-finding invitation.”

However, when the journalists honoured the invitation on October 13, they were directed by the Deputy Police Commissioner to sign an already prepared retraction document and a letter of apology to the Chief Press Secretary to the State Governor who had petitioned the State Police Command asking it to investigate and prosecute Mr. Abdulrasheed Akogun and Mr. Dare Akogun for alleged criminal defamation against him. The Deputy Police Commissioner said the journalists would only be released when they signed the letter of apology.

In the petition which he wrote on October 6, 2022, the spokesman of the Governor had claimed in the petition that the two journalists broke the Law through their posts on September 30, 2022 on a popular WhatsApp group, Kwara Commission, where they made false allegations against him and the State Governor that they

used over N15 million in public funds to influence the chairmanship election in a recently concluded election into the Kwara State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and thereby inciting the public against him as well as criminally defaming his character.

Without ascertaining the veracity or otherwise of the report, when the two journalists arrived at the station, accompanied by their lawyer, Mr. Taiwo Olaitan, the Deputy Policy Commissioner asked them to write a letter of apology to the Chief Press Secretary. However, the journalists declined on the ground that it would amount to admitting to the charge of injurious falsehood and criminal defamation, whereupon the Deputy Police Commissioner ordered that they should be detained.

The two journalists were detained overnight until the morning of October 14, 2022, when they were arraigned before a Magistrate Court sitting in Ilorin.

On December 7, the Kwara State government withdrew the charges against them, citing no reason for the withdrawal. During the proceedings, the government prosecutor, Busari Olorundare, applied for the withdrawal of the case.

Magistrate Bio Salihu who presided over the matter acceded to the request, and thereafter terminated all the charges against the journalists and discharged them accordingly.

Journalists Covering Planned Demolition of Party Office Arrested

On August 30, 2022, Mr., Joseph Atabo, a photojournalist with Blueprint newspaper, and Mr. Chika Udenkwo, a reporter with Africa Independent Television (AIT), who were invited by Gombe State Urban Planning Development Authority (GUPSUDA) to cover the demolition of the campaign office of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Mohammed Barde, were arrested by the Gombe State Police Command.

They were arrested while attempting to film the location adjacent the Government's Presidential Lodge and taken to the Pantami Divisional Police Station in the state capital.

Udenkwo was beaten by irate youths suspected to be Yan Kalare political thugs before his colleagues identified him as a journalist.

The police initially said they will not be released until Gombe State Governor,

Inuwa Yahaya gives them orders to release them. They were however later released by the police.

Police Storm Publisher's Home, Arrest Him for Undisclosed Reason

On August 19, 2022, operatives of the Nigerian Police from the Force Headquarters, Abuja stormed and laid siege to the Lagos residence of Mr. Agba Jalingo, publisher of Cross River Watch, and held down his wife and daughter demanding to know his whereabouts.

Agba was later arrested without any warrant and detained at Alapere Police Station in the Ketu area of Lagos. He was arrested for alleged defamation of character of the wife of Frank Ayade, the brother to the Governor of Cross River State, Ben Ayade.

Before his arrest, the publisher had announced on his Facebook page through a series of posts on his page the police siege.

In the posts, he said: “I don't know who sent the police but they have held my wife and my daughter hostage downstairs. I don't feel safe. Those are their faces”, sharing a picture of some men in mufti at the gate.

“Policemen are still surrounding my house in Lagos. I still don't know what brought them here. My wife and daughter are held, hostage.”

While the policemen stormed his Lagos residence to arrest him, some persons had also surrounded the office of the publisher's media office in Calabar, Cross River State. He was flown to Abuja on August 20, 2022.

Jalingo was arrested over an alleged false allegation that claimed Elizabeth paid one Mr. Pascal to write an examination for her at the Nigerian Law School.

Elizabeth, had through her lawyers, Uyi Frank Obayagbona & Co, in a letter dated July 6, 2022, to Jalingo, asked the publisher to delete a report on his media platform alleging defaming of her character.

He was released on bail on the night of August 21 and asked to report back on August 22.

Police Arrest Newspaper Distributor in Lieu of Publisher

On August 12, 2022, operatives of the Nigeria Police Force, Akwa Ibom State Command, arrested a newspaper distributor, Mr. Chidi Ngadiubia, at his distribution point in Uyo and took him to their headquarters at Ikot-Akpan Abia in Uyo where he was detained, allegedly on the orders of the state government.

Chidi was arrested in lieu of the publisher of the Mail newspaper, Mr. Ifreke Nseowo whom the police were looking for over alleged offensive publications.

Reports have it that a female caller had reached out to Ifreke, who had been on the run, telling him she had an advert for publication in his paper. The publisher asked the caller to drop the advertisement materials with the newspaper distributor for pick up at a later date.

Rather than an advertiser, a team of policemen stormed the distribution point, arrested and forcefully took Chidi to the police headquarters. They asked him to produce the publisher or he would be made to face the law for connivance.

The Mail is reported to have consistently published reports considered critical of the Akwa Ibom State government's interest, especially on the alleged certificate forgery against the governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party in the state, Mr. Umo Eno.

Radio Worker Detained Two Months for Airing 'Offensive' Song against Nigerian Governor

Mr. Casmir Chinonye Uzomah, a staff in the technical department of Orient FM/Television, operated by the Imo State-owned Broadcasting Station, was arrested on August 4, 2022, by operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) for playing a song on the radio station, which was considered “offensive” to the State Governor, Mr. Hope Uzodinma.

Following his arrest and detention without trial, individuals and organisations through different media began to call for his release.

Although Declan Emelumba, the Imo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, claimed that Casmir played “a criminal, libelous and extremely subversive song against His Excellency, Sen. Hope Uzodinma, the governor of Imo state, while on duty at the radio station” on August 4, he however denied that Casmir was detained on the orders of the state government.

The Commissioner said Casmir was detained for that long because the DSS wanted to ensure that investigation into the reason why Uzomah was detained is not jeopardised.

Casmir was released on October 15, 2022 after spending more than two months in custody without trial.

Judge Orders Detention of Reporter for Recording Court Proceedings

On July 27, 2022, the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State, Justice Ekaette Obot, ordered Premium Times' reporter, Mr. Saviour Imukudo, who was in court to cover the proceedings of a defamation suit between the State Governor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel, and Leo Ekpenyong to leave her court. But as he was leaving, the judge directed her police orderlies to intercept him, confiscate his telephone and detain him.

Saviour was released at about 5 p.m. after Premium Times Assistant Managing Editor (Southern Operations), Cletus Ukpong, met with the chief judge in her office.

The judge had ordered his arrest because he used his mobile phone to record the proceedings in her court without her permission. Saviour who admitted recording the proceedings explained that he did so to enable him accurately report what transpired in court. Saviour said: “Because the case had become controversial, I wanted to be careful,” the reporter said. “I wanted to capture the highlights on tape so there is no risk of misquoting anyone.”

The reporter was compelled to delete the recording he made, with Justice Obot saying permission must be granted before any recording of proceedings must be made in her court. He was then released and his telephone returned to him.

Police Detain Publisher over Alleged Cyberstalking

On July 25, 2022, the Nigeria Police Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) in Abuja detained the publisher of Taraba Truth and Facts newspaper, Mr. Samuel Ayodele, after he honoured an invitation over a petition written against him by the lawmaker representing Taraba South Senatorial District and the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate in the state, Senator Emmanuel Bwacha.

Oloye Ayodele had to travel from Jalingo in Taraba State to Abuja to honour the invitation.

In an alert sent to journalists, Oloye Ayodele informed media colleagues that he was honouring a police invitation at the FCID.

In the alert he said: “I'm honouring a police invitation at the FCID, Abuja over a petition (I don't know who the petitioners are or the content of the petition) but as a law-abiding citizen, I have honoured the invitation with a lawyer provided by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA).

“I feel it's necessary to inform you and seek your support in case things go south.”

It was at the station that the publisher was informed that the petition was from Senator Emmanuel Bwacha. He was also then shown the petition which accused him of defamation of character, cyberstalking, and malicious publication. He was thereafter interrogated.

Oloye Ayodele Samuel, who is also the CEO of Rock FM in Jalingo, Taraba State, was released the following day, July 26.

Police Arrest, Detain Newspaper Correspondent in Zamfara State

The Zamfara Police Command in the early hours of July 23, 2022, arrested Malam Umaru Maradun, correspondent of the Leadership newspapers, in his home town, Maradun, in Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State. He was taken to the State Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Gusau, the state capital, where he was detained. No reason was given for his arrest.

Mr. Ibrahim Maizare, Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Zamfara State Council, led officials of the NUJ and that of Correspondents' Chapel to the Command Headquarters to secure his release but the police initially declined to grant him bail.

The Police however later released Maradun at about 10 p.m. local time on bail. The State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Ayuba Elkanah, ordered his release to the leadership of the NUJ on bail.

Police Storm Peoples Gazette Newspaper Office, Arrest Editor, Four Others

Armed operatives of the Nigerian Police on July 22, 2022, stormed the head office of Peoples Gazette newspaper in the Utako area of Abuja during which they arrested and briefly detained five of its staff: John Adenekan, an assistant managing editor; Ameetat Adeyemi, Grace Oke, Sammy Ogbu and Justina Tayani

John was taken away to Utako police division at about 12:35 p.m. by five armed police officers who broke into the newspaper's office. The officers later returned to the office to arrest the four other staff members, Ameetat, Grace, Sammy, and Justina.

The officers, who declined to state the reason for their assault, demanded to see the paper's Managing Editor, Samuel Ogunidipe, and reporter Adefemola Akintade.

The newspaper on June 23 reported that the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission raided and recovered items including 50 luxury watches from a purported residence of Buratai.

The Federal Capital Territory Police Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Josephine Adeh, disclosed that, "A petition was written against the duo of Samuel Ogunidipe and Adefemola Akintade for criminal defamation, injurious falsehood publication of news known to be false, and cyber stalking, contrary to section 391, 392, 393, 395 and 418 of the Penal code and section 24(1) cybercrime (prohibition prevention etc) Act, 2015.

She said "In investigating this case, a duly signed warrant of arrest was obtained and presented to effect the arrest of the duo. Their statements have been taken and they have been granted bail, while investigation continues."

Those arrested were released unconditionally around 6 pm local time.

DSS Arrests Journalist Over Video of Brawl at Polling Unit During Ekiti State Governorship Election

On June 18, 2022, operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) arrested Jeremiah Omoniyi, a student journalist covering the governorship election in Ekiti State at Polling Unit 001, Ward 01, Afao Ekiti in Irepodun Ifelodun Local Government Area.

Jeremiah, a student of Ekiti State University deployed by the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) as an election observer, made a video of the brawl which CJID and Premium Times posted on their social media handles.

Thereafter about 15 DSS operatives arrived at the polling unit and asked for the person who posted the video of the brawl at the polling unit. Once they identified Jeremiah as the CJID/Premium Times observer, they arrested and whisked him away. He was manhandled by the DSS operatives as he resisted forceful arrest and got his shorts torn.

He was first taken to a private hotel for interrogation then to a police station where he was detained. He was questioned about why he made the video and what the contents of the video was.

He was released same day after about 30 minutes following CJID intervention in the matter.

Judge Orders Detention of Journalists, Deletion of Press Photographs

On June 7, 2022, officials of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory sitting at Maitama, Abuja, detained six judiciary correspondents who were in the court to cover the day's proceedings. The judge, Justice Chizoba Orji, later ordered the deletion of all the photographs and videos that the Africa Independent Television (AIT) reporter, Ms Wumi Obabori, had taken without her authorization from her gadgets. The journalists were then expelled from the court.

Trouble started when Wunmi attempted to do a video recording after Justice Orji stood down a matter to prepare the ruling in her chambers. The court Registrar, a woman, pounced on Wunmi saying she had no right to cover the court. Journalists who were in the court explained to the Registrar that journalists could make recordings while the court was not in session, but she summoned the police officer attached to the judge to arrest the reporter.

The other reporters involved were Mr. Godwin Tsa of the Sun Newspaper, Ikechukwu Nnochiri of Vanguard Newspaper, Austin Okezie of Raypower FM. Kunle Olanmi of Leadership Newspaper and Mr. Charles Ozoemena.

A policeman, Gusar Dauda, who claimed to have the authority of the judge, locked the door of the courtroom, pulled out his gun, and ordered all the journalists to surrender their phones. They were detained until the judge re-emerged from her chambers about an hour later.

When the judge reemerged from her chambers, she ordered Wunmi to step forward and asked her why she was taking pictures and videos in her court and who gave her permission to do that. She explained that she is an accredited judiciary reporter and that it is a normal practice for reporters to take pictures and videos when the court is not sitting, even up to the Supreme Court.

Publisher Arrested, Detained Incommunicado for Four Days

The publisher of Royal Times Magazine, Mr. Ranti Alaba Thomas, was arrested on June 3, 2022, by men of the Lagos State Command of the Nigeria Police and detained incommunicado in a police underground detention facility for four days before he was released.

The publisher of the Royal Times newspaper was abducted at gunpoint by six armed men of the Nigeria Police.

Narrating his ordeal, Ranti said while in the office, he received a call from a man who claimed to be a DHL dispatcher and who said he had a parcel to deliver to the publisher. He said he gave his address to the caller who turned out to be a policeman and came to his office with five others, all armed.

The publisher said the policemen said they wanted to arrest someone who had called his line. The publisher said he did not know the person in question and that when the number was called with his phone, it was not a number stored in the phone.

He said in spite of not knowing the person they were looking for, he was still arrested, taken to the Lagos State Police Command at Alagbon in Lagos where he was detained, had his phone confiscated and then detained incommunicado and without food.

At this time, his professional colleagues had started looking for him and reported his disappearance at different police stations.

The publisher was kept in custody till June 6 when he was brought out from detention in the afternoon and thereafter released.

Policeman Arrests Newspaper Editor for Filming Protest

On May 31, 2022, an officer of the Nigeria Police, Osun State Command, arrested

Uthman Ismail, deputy editor of the Osun Defender Online at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Correspondents' Chapel premises in Osogbo, the Osun State capital

He was taken to Dugbe Police Station in Oshogbo where he met with the Chief Superintendent of Police, Oyegbade Akinloye. The editor was interrogated in front of the police station as to why he was filming police action dispersing a protesting crowd. He was ordered to delete the video he had taken but he refused.

Uthman was arrested because a policeman had seen him earlier on filming the scene of a students' protest at Orita Olaiya in Osogbo. The students were protesting the alleged extra-judicial killing of the late Mr. Abiola Afolabi, who was reportedly killed by policemen on April 4, 2022 and buried on May 31. The late Mr. Afolabi's friends had decided to hold a rally after his burial and converged on Olaiya on that day.

While being interrogated, members of the NUJ arrived at the station and Uthman was thereafter released.

Journalists Covering Primaries by Splinter Party Group Arrested, Detained

On May 23, 2022, four media workers, Sunny Ohioze of Africa Independent Television (AIT) and his cameraman; Deborah Coker of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), and Ogbomo Osamuyi of Independent Television (ITV) were arrested by a security team at the Event Centre in Benin City, Edo State, while covering parallel senatorial primaries election by members of a faction of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo State.

They were arrested by the police on the order of the head of the Edo Security Network and taken to the Command, Intelligence Rapid Response Squad at Oko Centre in Benin where they were interrogated and detained for over five hours before they were released.

Deborah recounted, after their release: “Even after we told them that we are journalists doing our constitutional duty they insisted that we are providing coverage for an illegal primary that is why they took us to Oko Police station.” She said they were arrested and detained for about five hours and interrogated on trumped-up accusations that they went to cover a parallel primary. She said they were interrogated on why they went to cover a parallel primary and who invited them to cover it.

The Edo Police Command's spokesman, Bello Kontongs, confirmed the arrest of the four journalists, adding that they have been released. He did not give reason for their arrest.

Blogger Arrested. Detained over Publication of Governor's Criminal Records

Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency, the Department of State Services (DSS), on May 13, 2022, arrested Ahmed Olamilekan, a blogger and the publisher of Eagles Foresight, for publishing a story on Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun's alleged criminal records in the United States. Ahmed was detained after he honoured an invitation from the DSS Ogun State command, asking him to report to their office.

Governor Abiodun, who is seeking re-election, has been accused of allegedly being arrested in the US for a credit card fraud and forgery in 1986 and his political opponents have called for his disqualification.

Ahmed's layer, Festus Ogun said Ahmed was arrested on the orders of the governor and that he has been detained incommunicado as he has not been granted access to his family and lawyer.

The lawyer disclosed that “Ahmed was invited for questioning by the Ogun State command of the Department of State Services over a publication relating to the controversial criminal past of the state governor. Thereafter, he was forced against his will to pull down the story from his news blog.”

The lawyer later disclosed that the blogger was later transferred to the police command headquarters.

Man Arrested, Tortured by Police over Facebook Post Criticising a Senator

On May 8, 2022, armed operatives from the Kaduna State Police Command arrested a young man, Mr. Husaini Galadima, over a post on his Facebook page in which he accused Senator Uba Sani, representing Kaduna Central Senatorial Zone, of renegeing on his promise to give him a permanent job after working for him for about five years.

Husaini was taken to Metro Police Station at Tundu Wada where he was allegedly tortured.

He stated in Hausa language on his Facebook page that he had been abandoned and that Sani had refused to fulfil his promise since he was elected as senator in 2019. He alleged that they were five in number who worked with the senator and signed the agreement but that the lawmaker had since given the other four people something, leaving only him.

According to a news report, he has been working for the senator since 2017 when he declared to contest for the senatorial seat with an agreement that he would be given a permanent appointment as an aide once the senator won his election.

He also alleged in the post that his life had been under threat as a result of his social media posts on the matter. He therefore, urged Nigerians to hold the senator responsible should anything untoward happen to him.

2.3. Kidnap and Abduction

Photojournalists Kidnapped, Released After Payment of Ransom

On June 15, 2022, Mr. Uchenna Nwube, along with his friend's mother-in-law, were kidnapped on their way back to Abakaliki from Aba, Abia State.

Uchenna is a photographer attached to Ebonyi State Government House in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State.

He made a distress call to his colleague, to inform them of his kidnap after he was instructed to do so by his captors.

Uchenna was released in the wee hours of June 18, 2022, by his captors after his family and friends paid a N300,000 ransom.

The photojournalist was released alongside his friend's mother-in-law. After his release, he went to the Awgu police station, in the Awgu local government area of Enugu State to make a report.

Gunmen Abduct Journalist from Home, Demand N10 Million Ransom

On June 14, 2022, at about 10 pm, unknown gunmen stormed the country home of Mr. Chucks Onuoha at Ohuhu in Umuahia North Local Government Area in Abia State and abducted him at gunpoint. Mr. Onuoha is the Editor-in-Chief of All Facts newspaper.

Family source said the gunmen scaled the fence to enter the house to abduct him. His Nissan Pathfinder Jeep was also stolen during the operation.

His abductors later contacted the family and demanded a N10 million ransom.

The abducted journalist was a former Abia correspondent of The Sun Newspaper.

He was released by his abductors on June 18. However, the family did not disclose if it paid the ransom demanded by the abductors before he was released.

Newspaper Reporter Escapes Abduction

On June 7, 2022, Eniola Daniel, a reporter with the privately-owned daily, The

Guardian newspaper, escaped being kidnapped after he closed from work and was returning home.

Relating his experience, Eniola said after he closed from work he stepped out of the office and was waiting for a commercial bus to convey him to his bus stop when at about 11:30pm, a white mini-bus popularly known as “Korope” approached and he signaled for it to stop.

He said he boarded the mini bus after the driver confirmed he was going his way, joining three other passengers already in the bus

The reporter said the driver zoomed off but at Toyota Bus Stop, diverted to Oshodi instead of going through airport road.

Eniola said he questioned why the driver was taking him to Oshodi when he told him he was going to airport road but the driver told the journalist that Oshodi was better. He said sensing danger, he opened the door and asked the driver to stop but he refused. Speaking further, he said while he tried to open the door of the bus to jump out, a member of the gang struggled with him to close it.

He said he was lucky to be able to finally open the door and jump down. Fortunately, some vehicles were coming so, after he jumped down, the mini bus drove away.

Eniola sustained different degree of injuries in his hands and legs.

Eniola is in court having filed a N50 million suit against the Chairman of the Lagos State Taskforce on Environmental Sanitation and Special Offences, Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) Shola Jejeloye; the Lagos State Government and Police authorities for the brutal assault unleashed on him by policemen of the taskforce.

Unknown Gunmen Abduct Radio Programme Producer

On May 12, 2022, unknown gunmen, abducted Mr. Idris Haruna-Magami, a popular radio host with the state-owned, Zamfara Radio. Magami produces and presents the, “Su Duniya Manya” a popular programme aired in Hausa language. The general manager of the station, Mr. Murtala Alhasan, said the presenter was abducted while on his way home after the close of work alongside a friend but his friend miraculously escaped from the bandits and returned home while Idris was taken away.

Murtala said the bandits have reached out to the family and asked for ransom to secure his release but he did not state the amount they demanded.

Although the police and state authorities are yet to release any statement concerning his abduction, the management of Zamfara State Radio Service confirmed the attack to journalists in Gusau.

Gunmen Abduct, Release Journalists Covering Enugu Local Government Election

On February 23, 2022, unknown gunmen attacked the news crew of the Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS) covering the 2022 local government elections in Enugu State and abducted Mr. Fred Nnaji and Mr. Monday Ogbodo.

The ESBS crew was attacked by the gunmen at Obeagu in Enugu South local government area while on their way to Agbani, Nkanu West local government area of the state.

Two of the ESBS reporters, Chiamaka Ezeaputa and Mrs. Chigozie Alex-Nwafor, and driver, Ebuka Ogbozor escaped abduction. The driver and Mrs. Alex-Nwafor reportedly narrowly missed being killed during the attack.

The ESBS media team comprised of three reporters, a driver, and a cameraman. With them was a reporter with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

The gunmen made away with the station's utility vehicle and camera as well as the crew's phone, cash, and other valuables.

The two abducted journalists were however released a few hours later by their abductors and were immediately taken to Enugu State University of Science and Technology Teaching Hospital, Parklane for treatment. Their gadgets were however not returned to them.

2.4 Office Invasion

Thugs Invade, Vandalise Newspaper office in Kano

On June 16, 2022 at about 10:31 p.m., unknown hoodlums broke into and vandalized the offices of Prime Times News, an online newspaper based in Kano metropolis and carted away some of the outlet's work equipment.

The newspaper's editor, Ahmad Muhammad, disclosed that the office of the publication was raided and two office laptop computers and a camera were stolen while other equipment including computers and printers were destroyed.

Ahmad said the news organisation suspects sabotage within the company. According to him “I was alarmed around 10:31 p.m. Thursday night that the office was on fire, and one of the staff had to rush to the scene, unfortunately, the damage had been done.”

He disclosed that the matter was being investigated by the security agencies in the state.

Armed Men Invade Fresh FM in Ibadan, Steal Valuables

At about 6.20 am on April 10, 2022, three armed men, suspected to be robbers stormed the premises of a private radio station, Fresh 105.9 FM, located in Ibadan, Oyo State. A live programme airing at the time of the attack was temporarily taken off air while they operated.

The robbers who arrived at the station in motorbikes ransacked all the departments and offices at the station and made away with property belonging to members of staff at the station including recorders, smartphones, laptops, ATM cards, and other valuables. No person was hurt during the attack.

The radio station belongs to gospel musician, Mr. Yinka Ayefele.

Gunmen Invade Newspaper Office, Threaten to Kill Staff

Nine gunmen invaded the Abuja offices of the privately-owned daily, ThisDay newspaper, at about 3.00 am on January 27, 2022, assaulting some of its production staff and the private security guards on duty.

The newspaper's Abuja Bureau Chief, Mr. Iyobosa Uwugiaren, said that the gunmen entered the building through the same route the outlet was attacked about 10 years ago.

He said they held everyone in the premises, comprising mostly of the production staff, to ransom for about 45 minutes, asking them to lie down and threatening to kill them if they alerted the police.

The Bureau Chief said they also left through the same route they came, adding that they didn't take anything but that they warned the private guard that they will return.

Iyobosa said he could not connect the raid to the newspaper's published stories in recent times, or precisely link the raid to any of the newspaper's political foes or who it might have offended in their story updates but he outrightly dismissed the explanation by the police that it was merely a robbery incident.

Iyobosa said the media outlet reported the case to police at Utako for investigation but was not satisfied with the police theory that the incident was just an armed robbery without even attempting to investigate the matter.

He argued that if the incident was indeed an armed robbery the gunmen would not have left without taking a single thing all through the raid and harassment of the paper's staff members.

Nigeria's Foreign Intelligence Agency Raids Offices of Online News Outlet

On January 10, 2022, operatives of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Nigeria's foreign intelligence and counterintelligence agency, stormed the head office of Peoples Gazette in Abuja, demanding to see the online newspaper's managing editor and a reporter. The agents threatened to use “other options” should the journalists fail to cooperate with them over the source of an alleged confidential memo that was published in December 2021.

Four officers of the agency arrived the Peoples Gazette office in a white Toyota Hilux truck at about 1:00 p.m. local time, intimidated security personnel at the gate and forced their way into the offices on the second floor of the building housing the media outlet demanding to see The Gazette's Managing, Editor Samuel Ogundipe and a reporter, Ms Hillary Essien.

Peoples Gazette had obtained and published in a series of three articles, a memo that some directors at NIA had written to President Muhammadu Buhari, advising him against retaining Rufai Abubakar as the director-general on the grounds that he lacked intellectual and physiological rigour for the position.

The operatives left after they realized that Samuel and Ms Essien were not in the office but left a letter dated December 23, 2021 and signed for the DG by Amstrong Machunga, demanding that the outlet should disclose the identities of the officers responsible for the memo and its disclosure.

The three-page letter claimed the content of the memo written to the president by the directors is “full of falsehood,” adding that “it is even worse that Peoples Gazette did not deem it necessary to validate the allegations in such a letter with the other party before running to press.”

The letter said: “It should be on the record that the NIA, as a Secret Service, is sensitive to undue publicity, but not shy of accountability and ready to engage on any issue of concern with responsible media outlets. The malicious publication under reference falls in the category of undue publicity and is most unwelcome.”

“Peoples Gazette, therefore, has to come clean not the falsehood it published and prove that it is not working for people with ulterior negative motives against the NIA, by forwarding to us a copy of the letter from which the publication emanated and identify signatories to the purported letter.

“This could set the stage for engagement and resolution of the damage that has been caused to the image of the Director General of the NIA and the organisation. Failure to take advantage of this opportunity may lead to activation of other options to seek redress.”

Samuel however said The Gazette stands by its story adding “The Gazette made efforts to obtain comments from the NIA prior to running the articles but received no response.” He added that presidential spokesman, Mr. Garba Shehu acknowledged the letter and said the president had addressed the concerns raised by the directors.

Armed Hoodlums Invade Media Outlet, Abduct Editor

On January 4, 2022, about 10 armed hoodlums invaded the offices of Thunder Blowers, an online newspaper and television station in Gusau, the Zamfara State capital. They smashed some computers, cameras, and other equipment and

abducted its Multimedia Editor, Mansur Rabi, who was injured during the attack, while another staff, Mr. Sulaiman Dan Aljanna, had his personal computer also taken away.

The hoodlums demanded to see Abdul Balarabe who at the time of the raid was not in the office. They descended on another staff identified as Mansur Rabe and beat him with sticks for over five minutes, injuring his left arm until he managed to escape into a nearby room and locked the door until they left.

Zaharadeen Zarumi, in a statement he signed for the management of the outlet, said the attackers said they were sent to “teach one of our staff a lesson.” According to him: “They said they were sent to teach one of our staff, Abdul Balarabe, a lesson. But he was not around when they came so they decided to descend on the staff present.”

Addressing a press conference later on the incident, Anas Anka, managing director of the media platform said his outfit was attacked by political thugs whom he alleged were led by one Zairu Abdullahi.

Anas said: “One Zairu Abdullahi led a team of nine other thugs to attack our newsroom and abduct one of our editors, Mansur Rabi, as a result of the attack. They crashed all our eight desktop computers, cameras and our server decoders.

Anas alleged that the state governor, Mr Bello Matawalle had a hand in the attack.

2.5 Prosecution

Police Charge Publisher to Court over Alleged Defamation of Cross River Governor's In-Law

The Nigeria Police have charged Mr. Agba Jalingo, an activist and publisher of “Cross River Watch” to court for allegedly defaming the character of Mrs. Elizabeth Ayade, a sister-in-law to the Cross River State Governor, Mr. Ben Ayade.

The police had arrested Mr. Jalingo in August 2022, after they laid siege to his Ketu Lagos residence. He was taken to Alapere Police Station and subsequently detained at Area F Police Station. The police later flew him to Abuja and subsequently released him on bail in the night.

In the suit dated December 6, 2022, filed before the Federal High Court in Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory, the police claimed the publication by Mr. Jalingo against Elizabeth was false and was released for the purpose of causing her annoyance, ill will, and insult.

The suit partly reads, “That you Agba Jalingo male of No.14 Oremeji Street, Ojudu Alapere Lagos on 30th June, 2022 within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, did intentionally Published online at Cross River Watch and alleged that one Mrs. Elizabeth Ayade Procured the services of one Pascal Aboh to write Nigeria Law School Examination Bar Examination for her an information you know to be false for the purpose of causing her annoyance, ill will and insult. You thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 24(1) b of Cybercrimes (Protection, Prevention Etc) Act, 2015.”

“That you Agba Jalingo male of No.14 Oremeji Street, Ojudu Alapere Lagos on 30th June, 2022 within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court, did intentionally publish at your Facebook page known as Agba Jalingo that one Mrs Elizabeth Ayade procured the services of one Pascal Aboh to write Nigeria Law School Examination Bar Examination for her an information you know to be false for the purpose of causing her annoyance, ill-will and insult. You thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 24(1) b of Cybercrimes (Protection, Prevention Etc) Act, 2015.”

Kano Upper Sharia Court Sentences Islamic Cleric to Death for Blasphemy

On December 15, 2022, an upper Sharia Court in Kano convicted an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Abduljabbar Nasiru Kabara of blasphemy for allegedly defaming the personality of Prophet Muhammad while preaching at his mosques at Filin Mushe, Gwale LGA and Jamiurrasul, Sharada, Kumbotso LGA both in Kano State. Sheikh Kabara was sentenced to death by hanging.

Presiding Sharia judge, Ibrahim Sarki Yola, held that the prosecution has discharged the burden of proof against Abduljabbar and maintained that the cleric failed to defend himself when he was given the opportunity. The judge said: “The court gave him enough time to show the authentic sources of his narrations but failed to prove his assertions,”

According to the prosecution, Sheikh Kabara committed the offence, contrary to section 382 and 375 of Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law, 2000.

The alleged blasphemous statement was made and recorded at his mosques and circulated on social media platforms, especially Ashabul Kahfi social media pages.

Delivering the judgement, the trial judge upheld that section 382 (B) of Kano State Sharia Penal Code, 2000 provides that “any person whosoever found using any expression by means of words, gesture abusing the Holy Prophet Muhammad shall be convicted to death.”

He therefore ruled: “I Ibrahim Sarki Yola, Upper Sharia Court Judge, City Number One, I found you Abduljabbar Nasiru Kabara committing an act contrary to section 283 (B) of Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law, 2000, I therefore sentence you to death by hanging.”

“I similarly order the total closure of your mosques located at Filin Mushe Gwale LGA and Jamiurrasul located at Sharada.”

Justice Yola similarly banned the use of the cleric's sermons in all Radio stations, he said “I order for the confiscation of all his 189 books he tendered during the trial before the court and be transferred to Kano state library.”

The cleric was convicted after 16 months trial in connection with four count charge of defamation of character against the prophet while making commentary on Prophet Muhammad's Marriage in Hadith Number 1,365 and 1,428 while during his preaching.

The court gave him 30 days to appeal the judgment or forfeit his right to appeal.

Kano Magistrate Court Summons WikkiTimes over Alleged Defamation, Cyberstalking

A magistrate court sitting in Kano, through a letter of invitation dated November 30, 2022, summoned WikkiTimes, a Bauchi-based investigative and data journalism platform, over an investigative story which some construction companies indicted in the story alleged was defamatory and amounts to cyberstalking.

WikkiTimes had published an investigation about six construction companies involved in the building of 20 units of one block of two classrooms with furniture, toilets, and offices in selected locations across the three senatorial zones in Kano. The named companies are S.A.T Engineering Service Ltd, M. Sulum Nigeria Ltd, Emacs Engineering Consultant, Pyramid Investment, MGK Global Service Ltd and Haitel Nig Ltd.

Titled “How Nomadic Education Commission, Contractors Siphoned About N290m In Classroom Projects in Kano State”, the story alleged that the “six briefcase companies were used by Nomadic Education Commission to divert N290 million.”

However, S.A.T Engineering Service Ltd; M. Sulum Nigeria Ltd and their owner, Alhaji Surajo Marshal, and Haitel Nigeria Ltd through their counsel, Habiba Abdullahi Umar Esq filed a criminal lawsuit before Magistrate Court 18, Justice AB Wali Complex, Gyadi-Gyadi, Kano State.

They described the publication as “untrue, malicious, unfounded and wicked,” and accused WikkiTimes of cyber stalking and defamation of character “pursuant to the provision of Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention Etc) Act, 2015 and section 393 of the Penal Code Law of Kano State (Cap 89 Laws of the Northern Nigeria.)

The presiding Chief Magistrate, Auwal Yusuf Sulaiman, said he will on January 9, 2023, read the criminal charges to WikkiTimes and its reporter, Elijah Ajoki, who authored the report.

Judge Convicts Two Men of Defaming Governor on Social Media

Magistrate Aminu Muhammad Gabari, the presiding Magistrate of No Man's Land Magistrate Court in Kano, convicted two men, Mubarak Isa Muhammad and Nazifi Muhammad Bala, on charges of defaming the character of the

governor of Kano State, Mr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje using their Tik Tok accounts.

The judge ruled that they should pay a fine of N10,000 each for defaming the character of the governor, and another fine of N10,000 each for inciting public disturbance. He also ordered that the two men be given 20 lashes of cane, sweep the court premises, and wash toilets for 30 days.

The two men reportedly posted on their Tiktok account: 'Unique Pickin', that Governor Ganduje does not see a piece of land without selling it and that he sleeps a lot.

When charged to court, they pleaded guilty to the two counts of defamation and inciting public disturbance brought against them.

The Magistrate also ordered the men to make and post another video on social media in which they will tender an apology to Governor Ganduje.

Judge Jails Lawyer for Intervening in Defence of a Journalist

On July 26, 2022, Justice Ekaette Obot, the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State, sentenced Mr. Inibehe Effiong, a Lagos-based lawyer and human rights activist, to one month in prison for defending Mr. Savior Imukudo, a Premium Times reporter whom the judge also ordered to be detained.

Justice Obot gave the sentence sequel to Inibehe's intervention in the reporter's defence when he said it was fitting for members of the public to witness the proceeding. Sentencing the lawyer, Justice Obot said the lawyer would use the correctional facility to purge himself of actions that could bring the court into disrepute.

The judge is reported to have threatened On July 2, to jail Effiong for alleging prejudice and likelihood of bias in the handling of a libel case involving Mr. Udom Emmanuel, the Akwa Ibom State Governor, and Effiong's client, Mr. Leo Ekpeyong which the judge was handling. She warned the lawyer to behave himself or risk being sent to prison.

Justice Obot had given judgment in the matter and pronounced Leo guilty of libel, a judgment in favour of Governor Emmanuel.

Following the ruling however, the lawyer filed a motion for the judgment to be set

aside, insisting that his client was not given a fair hearing, a prayer the court granted. The lawyer thereafter said his client no longer had confidence in the judge, citing prejudice and the likelihood of bias as his reasons. The lawyer's claim infuriated the judge.

After he was sent to prison, Inibehe tweeted his encounter leading to the jail sentence as follows:

“The chief judge of Akwa Ibom ordered a Premium times reporter to leave the court. I said 'my lord, we were thinking that since the proceeding is public, it is fitting that members of the public should be allowed to observe the proceeding.

“I will be going to the Uyo Correctional Centre now. I have done nothing wrong. I was also not given to say anything before the conviction. Two lawyers in court appealed to the hon. chief judge, but my lord insisted I must be jailed.

“Unknown to me, my lord was writing a committal order to send me to Uyo prison. I wasn't even given the opportunity to say anything. My lord just ordered me to remove my wig and gown, that I was going to prison.

“Meanwhile, we have a pending motion for my lord to disqualify and recuse himself from the case on grounds of bias or likelihood of bias. Justice will vindicate the just.”

Inibehe regained his freedom on August 26, after spending one month in jail.

2.6 Threat to life

Blogger Alleges Threat to Life by Former Governor's Wife

Ms Abimbola Olajumoke Olawumi, a blogger, raised alarm alleging threat to her life by Mrs. Bisi Fayemi, wife of Kayode Fayemi, former governor of Ekiti State over a Facebook post in which she alleged that Mrs. Fayemi was arrested in Dubai in 2018 in connection with money laundering among other things.

Ms Olawunmi had petitioned the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Amnesty International, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Criminal Court (ICC) saying she received a call from a man who identified himself as Williams from the Department of State Services (DSS), asking her to report to the agency's office over a petition filed by one Demola Obanise, a man she identified as Fayemi's brother-in-law.

The blogger added that she has also been receiving calls from strange numbers threatening her, alleging that these threats started after she wrote on Facebook that Bisi was arrested in 2018 in Dubai over alleged money laundering.

On her part, Mrs. Fayemi had also, through her lawyer, petitioned the Ekiti state commissioner of police, accusing Ms Olawumi of posting “malicious, false and offensive messages” about her on Facebook. Mrs. Fayemi said Ms Olawunmi's Facebook posts on November 11, 2022, contravene section 24 of the Cybercrimes (prohibition, prevention, etc) Act, 2015 and were designed to malign her character. She asked the Ekiti police commissioner to ensure that Olawumi faces the law for the post against her.

Mrs. Fayemi, in the petition, asked the commissioner of police, Ekiti State Command to use his good office to bring Ms Olawunmi to justice by investigating her infractions, infringements and invasion of her privacy and save her and the society at large from the blogger's nefarious, criminal, malicious and calculated mischievous posts.

The ECOWAS Community Court of Justice on July 10, 2020, declared that the provisions of section 24 of the Cybercrimes Act, 2015 violate the right to freedom of expression.

In the case of *The Incorporated Trustees of Laws and Rights Awareness Initiatives v. Federal Republic of Nigeria*, the ECOWAS Court held that “the provisions of section 24 of Cybercrimes Act violates Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights to which Nigeria is a state party”.

The Court ordered the Federal Government to either amend or repeal section 24 of the Cybercrimes Act in accordance with Nigerian obligations under Article 1 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Publisher Alleges Threat to His Life by Taraba State Government

Oloye Ayodele Samuel, the publisher of “Taraba Truth and Facts” newspaper and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Rock FM 92.3 radio station in Jalingo, Taraba State, on November 27, 2022 alleged that agents of the State Government have been trailing him with the intention to eliminate or arrest him after he published a news story alleging that the state governor, Mr. Darius Ishaku “plans to sell Taraba liaison office”.

In an SOS message he sent out, Ayodele claimed that the state government plans to remand him in prison with stringent bail condition adding that the plots against him were planned in government house, supervised by Governor Ishaku's ADC.

He narrated different incidents of government agents trailing him.

He said he was being trailed by government officials, disclosing that on November 25, 2022, after honouring a police invitation at the Taraba State Police Command, Jalingo, at about 6:30 pm, he observed that a black Prado SUV with tinted glasses and covered number plate followed the vehicle he was driving. He added that “At about 8 pm of that very day, my team and I also observed that the same Toyota Prado SUV was parked close to Galaxy Hotel, Jalingo, where I usually lodge. This forced me to abandon the hotel.”

He said the same Prado SUV was again sighted around Ishaku Continental Hotel where he was lodged and that the same vehicle with “some unfriendly faces” were parading his business premises and putting his workers under extreme tension. He added that confidential sources at the Danbaba Suntai Airport have informed him that some 'security agent' had inquired if he was booked to travel out of the state on Overland Airline.

Taraba Truth and Fact newspaper reported on September 8, 2022, that Governor Darius Ishaku was making moves to sell the Taraba State Liaison Office in Garki, Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory.

The report claimed that the building is listed among state-owned properties which

ownership would be transferred to private hands in the winding up of Governor Ishaku's two-term tenure.

The publisher said “Since Friday, 25th November 2022 I have been living in fear and my movement is being closely monitored by agents of Taraba State Government for reasons best known to them.”

Sports Publisher Alleges Threat to Life by Suspected 'DSS Operative'

Mr. Olukayode Thomas, the publisher of 234sportsng.com, a sports journalism platform operated by a Lagos-based multimedia company, SEEM Nigeria Limited, made allegation of threat to his life by someone suspected to be an operative of the Department of State Services (DSS).

In a statement made available on September 10, 2022, Olukayode stated that he got a phone call at about 4.49 pm on September 9, 2022, from a man with telephone number 07063249244.

According to him, the caller who claimed to be a DSS operative, ordered him to report to the DSS office in Ilorin, Kwara state, on September 12 without any reason given for the invitation. The publisher resides in Lagos.

Olukayode said he informed the caller that a genuine DSS operative would act with finesse.

He added that he told the purported DSS operative that considering the spate of insecurity in the country, anyone can impersonate and lure unsuspecting Nigerians to be kidnapped or for any other reason.

He disclosed that after the conversation, Truecaller revealed the caller's identity as Janguza Salisu Hamisu.

2.7 Prevention from News Sources

Court Bars Journalists from Covering Proceedings in a Rape Case

On December 21, 2022, journalists who went to court to cover the trial of Dr. Femi Olaleye, who was charged with defiling his wife's niece, were barred by Justice Ramon Oshodi of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court, Ikeja. He insisted that proceedings in the court should be held in camera.

The prosecution had requested that journalists should be stopped from covering the proceedings as the alleged victim was billed to testify.

The judge ruled that the request of the prosecution for a closed hearing was in line with the 1999 Constitution and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJL) as amended.

Justice Oshodi said: “I have carefully considered the request of the prosecution for a closed session, and defence did not oppose. I hereby order that the court be vacated for a closed session.”

“The defendant is at liberty to nominate anybody to attend the hearing,” the judge ruled.

Section 36(4)a of the 1999 Constitution states that “a court or such a tribunal may exclude from its proceedings persons other than the parties thereto or their legal practitioners in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, the welfare of persons who have not attained the age of eighteen years, the protection of the private lives of the parties or to such extent as it may consider necessary by reason of special circumstances in which publicity would be contrary to the interests of justice.”

Shari'ah Court in Sokoto Orders Journalists to Obtain Authorisation Before Covering its Proceedings

A Tudun Wada Lower Shari'ah Court sitting at Kanwuri in Sokoto metropolis on June 23, 2022, ordered that journalists who want to cover its proceedings must henceforth obtain formal authorisation from the Court Registrar.

The Trial Judge, Bashir Rufa'i, made the order when Mr. M. K Abdulkadir, a legal counsel appearing in an inheritance case informed the judge that journalists were in the court covering the proceedings.

The judge initially asked Malam Habibu Harisu of the News Agency of Nigeria and Muhammad Nasir of Radio Nigeria to identify themselves and asked how they came into the court.

He thereafter directed the Correspondents to apply formally to the Court Register before covering cases that would be publicised by their respective media organisations.

The judge said Journalists could sit and listen to cases as any other Nigerian, but not publicise proceedings, adding that same directive applied to all other reporters that came to the Court.

2.8 Imposition of Fine

NBC Fines Arise TV for Allegedly Broadcasting Fake News about APC Presidential Candidate

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on November 14, 2022, announced a fine of N2 million fine it imposed on Arise TV, an international cable television news channel, for allegedly airing a fake news story which claimed that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had issued a press release saying it was investigating a purported order by a United States court of criminal forfeiture of funds against the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, with a view to prosecuting him.

The station reportedly paid the N2 million naira fine imposed on it by NBC, retracted the fake news report, and apologized to Asiwaju Tinubu after INEC publicly dismissed the press release as fake.

Arise TV on November 12, 2022 aired a news story which claimed that INEC issued a press release purportedly signed by Festus Okoye, INEC National Commissioner and Chairman (Information and Voter Education Committee), in which the Commission claimed it was investigating the issue of criminal forfeiture of funds by a U.S. court against Asiwaju Tinubu.

INEC however denied issuing the statement saying “We wish to state categorically that the said press release did not emanate from the commission nor is it pursuing the purported course of action. It is the handiwork of mischief makers and utterly fake.” It added that statements from INEC are usually uploaded to the INEC Press Corps platform and simultaneously disseminated through the commission's website and official social media handles.

Consequent upon this, the Management of Arise TV in a statement on November 13, 2022, retracted the news report and apologized to Asiwaju Tinubu saying, “Of criminal forfeiture of funds, linked to narcotics, smuggling conspiracy and money laundering against the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress Bola Ahmed Tinubu, we Arise News that carried the news, which is now been denied by the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC and we apologise most sincerely to the APC presidential candidate Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the earlier broadcast.”

The broadcast regulator fined the TV station of N2 million for the infraction and demanded the payment of the fine within two weeks.

Director-General of NBC, Balarabe Shehu Ialah, said the report breached the Nigeria Broadcasting Code.

According to NBC DG, airing of the said press release was “a most unfortunate breach of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code and gross display of unprofessionalism and insensitivity by your organisation at this time of electioneering.”

Arise TV is an international television news channel reporting on major global news with a strong focus on Africa. It is owned by Prince Nduka Obaigbena, who also owns ThisDay newspapers.

NBC Fines TV Station, Three Pay TV Platforms N5 Million Each

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on August 3, 2022 imposed fines of N5 million each on a television station and three pay TV platforms for airing documentaries on banditry in Nigeria which it alleged “glorified the activities of bandits and undermines National Security in Nigeria.

The NBC announced in a statement by its Director General, Mallam Balarabe Shehu Ialah, that it had imposed sanctions of N5 million each on Multichoice Nigeria Limited, owners of DSTV; TelCom Satellite Limited (TSTV); and NTA Startimes Limited for carrying a documentary by the BBC Africa Eye titled “Bandits Warlords of Zamfara”, which the Commission claimed glorified the activities of bandits and undermines national security in Nigeria. It said it had also fined Trust-TV Network Limited N5 million for its documentary titled: “Nigeria's Banditry - The Inside Story”. It accused them of contravening the provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, Sixth Edition, especially Paragraphs 3.1.1, 3.12.2, and 3.11.2.

The Commission warned that the imposed penalties on these Broadcast Media platforms and Station were to be remitted not later than August 30, 2022, threatening that failure to comply will lead to the imposition of a higher sanction as provided in the Code.

It enjoined broadcasters to be instruments of national unity and warned them to desist from falling into antics of using their platforms to promote and glamorize subversive elements and their activities.

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, had earlier threatened to sanction BBC and Trust TV owned by Media Trust Ltd for airing the documentaries which the government alleged glorify and fuel terrorism and banditry in Nigeria.

Alhaji Mohammed made the threat in Abuja on July 28, 2022, saying the Federal Government was aware of the unprofessional documentary by the BBC Africa Eye, where interviews were granted to bandit warlords and terror gangs, thereby promoting terror in the country. The Minister condemned the BBC for not upholding the same standards and tenets as they would have done in the United Kingdom (UK).

Alhaji Mohammed also condemned Trust TV for using its platform to grant interviews to a bandit kingpin, Shehu Rekeb, thereby promoting the activities of terrorists.

According to the Minister, both outlets, by their actions, have become accomplices to terrorists and bandits in the name of reporting. The Minister said the appropriate regulatory body was already looking at the infractions and appropriate sanctions would be meted out to both platforms.

Alhaji Mohammed said: "There is a regulatory body regulating broadcasting, which is the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and they are also aware of these two incidents. They are looking at which part of the Broadcasting Code has been violated by the BBC and Trust TV. Media is the oxygen that terrorists and bandits use to breathe.

"When otherwise reputable platforms like BBC can give their platform to terrorists showing their faces as if they are Nollywood stars, it is unfortunate.

"I want to assure them that they will not get away with it, appropriate sanctions will be meted to both the BBC and the Trust TV," the Minister said.

2.9 Others

Zamfara Government Shuts Down Media Houses for Covering Opposition Party Rally

On October 15, 2022, the Zamfara State Government announced the immediate shutdown of three television stations and two radio stations in the state, namely: the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) owned Pride FM radio, Gamji Television, Gamji FM radio, and Al'umma Television, claiming that the affected media houses attended a rally organised by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state despite an Executive Order banning political rallies for security reasons.

The state Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Dosara, disclosed the shutdown of the media houses in a statement, accusing them of allegedly violating professional ethics.

Mr. Dosara added that the police have been directed to arrest and prosecute personnel of the affected stations caught violating the order.

The commissioner said: “The Zamfara State Security Council has approved and ordered the closure of some media outlets in the state for breaking the laws of journalism.”

“An order has been given to the Zamfara state police commissioner to arrest anyone who ignores this order.”

Mr. Bello Matawalle, the Zamfara State governor, had earlier announced a total lockdown in Anka, Bukkuyum and Gummi LGAs of the state following the resurgence of banditry in the LGAs.

The closure elicited widespread condemnation from a cross-section of individuals and groups and on October 18, 2022, the stations were reopened with apologies from the state government. The government also withdrew the order he gave the commissioner of police to arrest and prosecute personnel seen around the affected media outlets.

Federal Government Revokes 52 Broadcast Stations' Licences Over Debt

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) of Nigeria on August 19, 2022, announced the revocation of the licences of 52 radio and television stations

comprising both privately and state government-owned stations across Nigeria for allegedly owing the Commission N2.6 billion licence renewal fees since 2015.

Announcing the revocation of the licences, Malam Balarabe Shehu Ilelah, Director-General of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), while briefing journalists in Abuja directed the stations to shut down their operations within 24 hours adding that there was no political undertone in revoking the licences of the debtor-broadcast stations.

Mallam Ilelah asked the stations to pay their fees before 24 hours to avert total disconnection.

He said earlier in May 2022, the Commission published the list of licensees that are indebted to the Commission and that it granted them two weeks to renew their licenses and pay their debts or consider their licenses revoked, frequencies withdrawn and the withdrawn frequencies reassigned to others who are ready to abide by the necessary requirements.

The NBC DG said three months after the publication, some licensees were yet to pay their outstanding debts, in contravention of the National Broadcasting Commission Act CAP N11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, particularly Section 10(a) of the third schedule of the Act.

The continued operation of the debtor-stations, in view of this development, according to Malam Ilelah, is illegal and constitutes a threat to national security.

Continuing, he said: “Therefore, after due consideration, the NBC hereby announces the revocation of the licenses of the under-listed stations and gives them 24 hours to shut down their operations. Our offices nationwide are hereby directed to collaborate with security agencies to ensure immediate compliance.”

The NBC DG advised all broadcast stations that have not renewed their licenses for the current duration to do so within the next 30 days to avoid sanctions.

He also called on all IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) and all other broadcast stations that are streaming contents online to register with the Commission to avoid disconnection. He pointed out that: “Broadcasters should note that having a DTT or FM license does not warrant a broadcaster to stream online; they are two different licenses.”

He said the Commission has been in talks with the media houses for more than a year, but they refused to revert.

The NBC action elicited widespread condemnation with individuals and groups calling on the commission to reverse the revocation.

On August 20 however, the NBC extended enforcement of revocation order on the debtor broadcast stations from 24 hours to August 23, 2022.

In a statement signed by the Director General, The Commission said the extension was due to the appeal by the affected broadcast stations, relevant stakeholders, public-spirited individuals and organisations.

The statement reads: “This is to inform all the affected broadcast stations whose licenses were revoked and given 24 hours to pay all outstanding license fees that the National Broadcasting Commission has extended the period which all outstanding debts are to be paid from 24 hours to Wednesday August 23, 2022.

“All affected broadcast stations who fail to defray their debts on or before August 23, 2022 are directed to shut down by 12am on August 24, 2022.”

The stations whose licences were revoked are:

1. Silverbird Television (Silverbird Communication Co. Ltd), Network
2. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Abuja
3. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Lagos
4. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Yenagoa
5. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Port Harcourt
6. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Benin
7. Rhythm FM (Silverbird Communications Ltd), FM Jos
8. Africa Independent Television (AIT)/Ray Power FM (Daar Communications Ltd), Network
9. Greetings FM (Greetings Media Ltd), Network
10. Tao FM (Ovidi Communications Ltd), FM Okene
11. Zuma FM (Zuma FM Ltd), FM Suleija
12. Crowther FM (Crowther Communications Ltd), FM Abuja
13. WE FM (Kings Broadcasting Ltd), Benin
14. Linksman International Ltd, FM Keeffi
15. Bomay Broadcasting Services Ltd, Abuja
16. MITV (Murhi International Group Ltd), Ibadan
17. Classic FM (Pinkt Nigeria Ltd), Port Harcourt
18. Classic FM (Pinkt Nigeria Ltd), Lagos
19. Classic TV (Pinkt Nigeria Ltd), Lagos
20. Beat FM (Megalectrics LTD), Lagos
21. Cooper Communications Ltd, Lagos
22. Splash FM (West Midlands Ltd), Ibadan

23. Rock City FM (Boot Communications Ltd), Abeokuta
24. Family FM (Kalaks Investments Nig. Ltd), Ilugun
25. Space FM (Creazioni Nig. Ltd), Ibadan
26. Radio Jeremi (Radio Jeremi ltd), Effurun
27. Wave FM (South Atlantic Media Ltd), Port Harcourt
28. Breeze FM (Bays Water ltd), Akure
29. Vibes FM (Vibes Communication Ltd), Port Harcourt
30. Family Love FM (Multimesh Broadcasting Co. ltd), Port Harcourt
31. Kogi State Broadcasting Corporation
32. Kwara State Broadcasting Corporation
33. Niger State Broadcasting Corporation
34. Gombe State Broadcasting Corporation
35. Lagos State Broadcasting Corporation
36. Lagos DSB
37. Osun State Broadcasting Corporation
38. Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation
39. Ondo State Broadcasting Corporation
40. Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation
41. Bayelsa State Broadcasting Corporation
42. Cross River State Broadcasting Corporation
43. Imo State Broadcasting Corporation
44. Anambra State Broadcasting Corporation
45. Borno State Broadcasting Corporation
46. Yobe State Broadcasting Corporation
47. Sokoto State Broadcasting Corporation
48. Zamfara State Broadcasting Corporation
49. Kebbi State Broadcasting Corporation
50. Jigawa State Broadcasting Corporation
51. Kaduna State Broadcasting Corporation
52. Katsina State Broadcasting Corporation

On August 26, the NBC temporarily suspended the shutdown order it issued indebted broadcast stations in the country. Mallam Shehu Ilera disclosed in a statement that the decision to step back was sequel to a follow-up meeting the Commission held with executives of the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON) and other parties in the industry.

The NBC said it had received positive responses from the debtor licensees, including “big players” in the broadcast industry following a shutdown notice to licensees that are indebted to the commission.

While expressing appreciation to BON, the affected licensees and Broadcast

Stakeholders for their responses and interventions, the Commission specifically thanked DAAR Communications Ltd and Silverbird TV/Rhythm FM for their responses.

In its final words, it said “The Commission is not unaware of the difficulties this shutdown must have caused the operators and other stakeholders but must state that the Commission will always operate within the National Broadcasting Commission Act, Cap. N11, Laws of the Federation, 2004.”

Chapter Three

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Journalists and the media play a vital role in keeping the public informed and holding those in power accountable. However, the compilation and analyses of attacks on freedom of expression show that there are significant risks to the safety of Nigerians freely expressing themselves and especially the media in the line of duty.

Like in many countries, Nigerian journalists and media houses are targeted for their reporting on sensitive political or social issues. They may be harassed, attacked, or even killed for their work. In other cases, journalists face risks simply for being a journalist: they are arrested, detained, and tortured for their reporting. Citizen journalists, bloggers and individuals expressing themselves especially on social media have also become targets of attacks in Nigeria.

In addition to physical safety, journalists and the media also face risks to their digital safety. They may be targeted by hackers, who may steal their personal information or use it to blackmail them. They may also face online harassment, which can include threats of violence, stalking, or bullying.

To ensure the safety of journalists, it is important for governments to protect freedom of the press and expression and hold those who attack journalists and the media accountable; they must never be allowed to commit the attack with impunity as it breeds more impunity. International organizations, such as the United Nations, should also play a role in promoting the safety of journalists and condemning attacks on the press.

Journalists themselves can also take steps to protect their safety. This can include taking security precautions, such as using encrypted communications and being aware of potential risks in the field.

Overall, the safety of journalists is essential for the functioning of a free and open society. It is the responsibility of governments, international organizations, and journalists themselves to take action to protect journalists and ensure that they can continue to do their important work.

It's important to note that, for any measures or recommendations to be effective, they require a culture of respect for human rights and rule of law as well as a strong and independent justice system. Additionally, the collaboration of media

organizations, civil society and other stakeholders are all needed.

Various stakeholders have varied roles to play to ensure the safety of journalists and freedom of expression in Nigeria.

3.1 Government

The Nigerian Governments can ensure the safety of journalists and freedom of expression by implementing a number of measures. Some of these include:

Providing legal protections for journalists: The Nigerian governments should pass laws that criminalize attacks on journalists and provide harsher penalties for those who commit such crimes. They can also establish laws that protect the confidentiality of journalists' sources and ensure that journalists are not targeted for their reporting.

Holding those who attack journalists accountable: The governments should ensure that those who attack or threaten journalists are brought to justice. This includes investigating and prosecuting those who commit crimes against journalists, as well as providing protection for journalists who are at risk. The Nigerian government has not acted in this regard, hence the continued and rising attacks on freedom of expression and the media.

Supporting media literacy: Governments should promote media literacy by providing citizens with the skills to evaluate and understand the information they receive. This can help to create an informed and critical public that is less vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda.

Appropriate training for law enforcement and security agents: The government needs to provide appropriate training to all its security and law enforcement agencies on their constitutional roles of providing safety for Nigerians and maintaining law and order in the land and the special need to protect journalists doing their work.

3.2 Media Unions/Associations and Media Development Organizations

Journalism unions/associations and civil society organizations working on promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression play key roles in protecting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, and in creating a more open and democratic society that values these rights through a number of ways which include:

Providing safety training for journalists: Media unions and media development organisations should provide safety training for journalists to help them understand and manage risks associated with their work.

Monitoring and documenting attacks on journalists/media: They should collate, document, and report on attacks against journalists and breaches of freedom of expression, including physical violence, harassment, and legal persecution, and advocate for accountability for those responsible. They can escalate these attacks at local and international forums where issues of freedom of expression and media freedoms can be acted upon.

Providing support and resources for journalists: They should provide support and resources for journalists, including safety training, legal assistance, and psychological support.

Advocating for legal and policy reform: They should advocate for legal and policy reforms that protect freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. This can include pushing for laws that criminalize attacks on journalists and protect their sources, as well as policies that promote media diversity and freedom of information.

Educating the public: Journalism unions/associations and media development organisations should educate the public on the importance of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. This can include providing information and resources on media literacy and promoting civic engagement around these issues.

Networking and collaborating: They should network and collaborate with other groups, including journalists, human rights organizations, and international bodies, to amplify their efforts to protect freedom of expression and the safety of journalists.

Raising awareness: They should raise awareness of the importance of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists through public campaigns, events, and social media, and encourage people to take action to support these issues.

Providing litigation and legal services for breaches of freedom of expression: Journalism unions/associations and media development organisations should also offer free litigation and legal services to journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers and users of social media etc. whose right to freedom of expression are violated.

3.3 The General Public

The public can contribute to ensuring the safety of journalists and freedom of expression by taking a number of actions that can help to create a more informed, engaged, and supportive society that values freedom of expression and the safety of journalists:

Holding government accountable: The public can hold their government accountable for protecting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. This includes demanding that the government investigates and prosecutes crimes against journalists and that it respects the rights of journalists to report freely.

Being media literate: The public can promote media literacy by being critical consumers of information. This includes being aware of the sources of information, evaluating the credibility of sources, and being aware of disinformation and propaganda. This way, they will not be purveyors of fake news and propaganda.

Raising awareness: The public can raise awareness of the importance of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. This can include participating in events and campaigns that promote these issues and encouraging others to do the same.

Being an active citizen: The public can participate in democratic processes, such as voting and demanding transparency from the government. This can help to create a more open and democratic society that is less likely to attack journalists and restrict freedom of expression.

Supporting independent media: The public can support independent media outlets by subscribing to their publications, sharing their content, and financially supporting them. This helps to ensure that there is a diverse range of voices and perspectives in the media.

4.0. Appendix

4.1 MRA's Interventions on Freedom of Expression Issues in 2022

Introduction

In line with its mandate of promoting and defending freedom of expression, press freedom, the right to information, and digital rights and freedoms, MRA, through various activities intervened on freedom of expression issues in Nigeria and outside of the country.

These MRA did through, among others, legal assistance and litigation, issuance of press statements on germane issues, and participation in national, regional, continental and global events that contribute to shaping the global freedom of expression ecosystem.

4.2 Press Statements

MRA Condemns Shutdown of Broadcast Stations in Zamfara State, Says It Should Never be Repeated

On October 19, 2022, MRA condemned shutting down by Zamfara State Governor, Mr. Bello Matawalle, of five broadcast stations in the State for alleged violation of professional ethics, saying the action signaled a descent into anarchy in the country and should never happen again.

In a statement issued by Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA Programme Director, the organization said: “It is most disheartening that following the bad example set by the Federal Government in its intermittent censorship of broadcasting stations in abuse of its power and authority, the Zamfara State Governor now believes that the broadcast media are fair game in his undemocratic maneuvering to gain a political advantage to the extent that he is shutting down even stations owned by the Federal Government.”

The Zamfara State Government issued a statement on October 15, 2022, through the Commissioner for Information, Mr. Ibrahim Dosara, announcing the immediate shut down of three television stations and two radio stations in the state, namely: the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) owned Pride FM radio, Gamji Television, Gamji FM radio, and Al'umma Television, claiming that the affected media houses attended a rally organised by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state despite an Executive Order banning political rallies for security reasons.

The government directed security agents to arrest any staff member of the affected stations who attempts to go into the stations to perform any duty.

Describing the State Government's action as illegal, unconstitutional and an obscene abuse of power, Mr. Longe said it is only in a lawless society that a government would even contemplate shutting down a media organization for performing its professional and constitutional duty of covering a political event by a rival political party and actually proceed to do so.

According to him, no governor has the authority to shut down any media house even if it has violated its professional ethics as there are procedures to follow to seek redress or sanctions if the governor feels the stations are in breach of any law or regulation.

Besides, Mr. Longe, said: “There is absolutely nothing unprofessional in the action of the broadcasting stations in covering a political rally by an opposition political party, even if the purported ban on political rallies by the Governor was legally done. The fact that the rally took place at all despite the purported ban by the Governor is itself a newsworthy event and the media ought to cover and report it. There is nothing in the Code of Ethics for Journalists or the Nigeria Broadcasting Code or any Law currently in force in Nigeria that makes the action of the broadcasting stations unprofessional or unethical and it is not within the authority of the Governor to establish professional or ethical codes for the media.”

Accusing the Governor of attempting to gain an unfair political advantage by preventing an opposition political party from campaigning during a period of electioneering campaigns in violation of the Electoral Act 2022, he reminded the governor that his action shutting down the stations is a gross violation of the rights of the people of the state and other parts of the country under Section 39 of the Constitution as the action denied access to information to the viewers and listeners of these stations who depend on them for news and other information.

Following widespread condemnation of the action, the state government later reopened the stations and apologised for the closure while also ordering the withdrawal of the security agents deployed to the media houses.

MRA Calls on Government to Investigate all Attacks against Journalists, Prosecute and Punish Perpetrators

On November 2, 2022, MRA called on Governments at all levels to fulfill their obligations to ensure the safety of journalists by investigating all attacks against media practitioners as well as prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of such attacks. The organization said this would send a strong signal to those who attack journalists that they can no longer do so with impunity while also giving the media the confidence to carry out their functions without fear.

MRA made the call at a press conference it organized to commemorate the 2022 edition of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists and the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board, the highest-level coordination mechanism in the UN system.

Addressing journalists in Lagos, MRA's Programme Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, reminded the government that the security of citizens is one of its primary functions and urged the Federal Government to develop and adopt robust

mechanisms to protect journalists and ensure their safety and security.

Noting that 10 years after the UN came out with the Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists, Nigeria has not taken any concrete action to stem the spate of attacks against journalists and the media in the country, he said the increasing level of attacks against media practitioners and organizations in the country was shocking and ought to be a source of concern for everyone.

According to Mr. Longe, MRA has recorded and documented dozens, even hundreds, of attacks against journalists over the years and is yet to hear of any instance where a journalist has been killed in Nigeria and a serious investigation was conducted and the perpetrators arrested and prosecuted.

He challenged the Government to cite any attack on journalists or the media that it has seriously investigated and share with the public the outcome of any such investigation, including details of those arrested and prosecuted for the offence.

Specifically, Mr. Longe said, since the beginning of the current democratic dispensation on May 29, 1999 to date, MRA has collated and documented cases of 19 journalists killed and in none of these killings has the Federal Government investigated, arrested, prosecuted or brought any of the perpetrators to justice.

Besides, he said, in the last one year alone, MRA collated and documented over 47 incidents of attacks against journalists, media workers and media houses, adding that in the course of their work, journalists are arrested and detained, assaulted and beaten, abducted, have their equipment and gadgets confiscated and, in some cases, destroyed, have their operations disrupted among other form of attacks.

Mr. Longe noted that MRA's records showed that men of the Nigerian Police are the major perpetrators of the attacks against journalists as MRA had documented over 15 of such incidents in which they were the perpetrators, with armed hoodlums and political thugs coming a close second.

He said it was ironic that the Nigerian Police and other law enforcement and security agents that Nigerians should be relying on to protect journalists and the media from attacks by political thugs and other bad actors are themselves the worst culprits.

Mr. Longe expressed concern that the Police are also being frequently used to harass and intimidate journalists and other media workers by the rich and powerful who are uncomfortable with the media beaming the searchlight on them and their activities.

He noted that in the last six months, MRA has recorded at least six such incidents where journalists were accused of criminal defamation, cyberstalking or such other offence by the law enforcement agencies acting on the biddings of politicians.

Reminding the government that the world is moving away from criminalizing expression and as such journalists should not be arrested, detained or charged to court over stories and reports that they have published, he noted that the Police continue to use the provisions of Section 24 of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) Act, 2015 to charge journalists and other Nigerians with cyberstalking despite the fact that the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice has declared the provision to be a violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Mr. Longe described the continued use of the provision of the Cybercrimes Act to harass journalists and other citizens as a brazen disregard for the decision of the ECOWAS Court, a violation of Nigeria's treaty obligations and an unjustifiable disrespect for the court.

He called on members of the public to take an interest in the safety of journalists and do everything within their power to help protect them and take action to ensure that those who attack them are brought to justice.

MRA Condemns Arrest and Detention of 2 Journalists by Police in Ilorin

Following the arrest and detention of two Ilorin-based journalists, Mr. Dare Akogun and Mr. Abudlrasheed Akogun by the Kwara State Command of the Nigeria Police Force in an effort to coerce them to retract an allegation of corruption they reportedly made against an official of the State Government, MRA on October 13, 2022, issued a statement condemning the action. Mr. Abdulrasheed Akogun is the proprietor of an online news and television network known as Fresh Insight TV while Mr. Dare Akogun is an investigative journalist with Sobi F.M. radio.

In a statement issued in Lagos by its Director of Programmes, Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA called on the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Usman Alkali Baba, to put an end to the incessant practice whereby politicians, government officials and other powerful individuals use the Police to shield themselves from scrutiny or criticism and to harass or intimidate journalists and media organizations reporting on their activities.

Mr. Akogun was invited by the Police by a letter dated October 7, 2022, which was delivered to him on October 12, 2022, to meet with the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Criminal Investigation Department of the Kwara State Command of the Nigeria Police, Mr. Steve Yabanet, on October 13, 2022 at 11am. The letter claimed that the office was investigating cases of inciting disturbance, injurious falsehood and criminal defamation against Mr. Akogun but said the invitation for him to report at the office was “just a fact-finding invitation.”

However, when Mr. Akogun honoured the invitation on October 13, he was asked by the Deputy Police Commissioner to write a letter of apology to the Chief Press Secretary to the State Governor, Mr. Rafiu Ajakaye, who had petitioned the State Police Command asking it to investigate and prosecute Mr. Abdulrasheed Akogun and Mr. Dare Akogun for alleged criminal defamation against him.

The spokesman of the Governor had claimed in the petition that the two men committed the offence through their WhatsApp posts on September 30, 2022 in which they accused him of facilitating the use of over N15 million in public funds to prosecute the last chairmanship election of the State council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).

Without ascertaining the veracity or otherwise of the report, when Mr. Akogun arrived at the station, accompanied by his lawyer, Mr. Taiwo Olaitan, the Deputy Police Commissioner asked him to write the letter of apology to the Chief Press Secretary. Mr. Akogun, however, declined on the ground that it would amount to admitting to the charge of injurious falsehood and criminal defamation, whereupon the Deputy Police Commissioner ordered that he should be detained.

Mr. Longe described the action of the Deputy Police Commissioner as unlawful, an abuse of power and an abuse of his office, saying: It is embarrassing that the Police now consider that it is their primary function to protect the reputation of political office holders, politicians and other powerful individuals and misusing their coercive powers to play this role. The Inspector-General of Police should immediately call his officers to order and advise them to desist from making themselves tools in the hands of the rich and powerful.

He called for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Akogun, warning that if this was not done within 24 hours, MRA would take legal action to protect and enforce his fundamental rights and seek substantial damages for the oppressive violation of his rights.

MRA Condemns NBC's Revocation of Licenses of 52 Broadcast Stations

MRA, on August 19, 2022, condemned the revocation and withdrawal of the broadcast licenses of 52 broadcast stations across Nigeria by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) describing the action as ill-advised, insensitive and antithetical to the interests of the Nigerian public.

In a statement by Ms Obioma Okonkwo, Head of its Legal Department, MRA said by the revocation of the broadcast licenses of so many stations for alleged non-payment of their licence fees, the NBC was prioritizing its desire to make money off the broadcasters over the interest of citizens as the ultimate effect of its action is to deprive millions of Nigerians access to information as well as their rights and ability to freely express themselves through these stations.

Ms Okonkwo said: “We are shocked by this naked display by the NBC of a lack of appreciation of its principal role which is to contribute to the emergence of a knowledge society. Rather, it has chosen to create an environment in which millions of Nigerians will wallow in ignorance, deprived of access to crucial information that they need to make critical decisions in their lives or to enhance their livelihoods.”

She argued that “the action of the NBC has only worsened the prevailing lopsidedness in the broadcasting landscape in Nigeria which was already dominated by government-owned broadcasting stations but is now under the monopolistic control of Federal Government-owned stations, which will be almost unchallenged, with the result that citizens will now be fed unmitigated propaganda by these remaining stations.”

Ms Obioma accused the NBC of being insensitive to the harsh economic environment under which the broadcast stations have operated over the last two and a half years as the national economy has been ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic itself and the measures taken by the government in response to the pandemic.

She noted that the broadcasting stations are also negatively impacted by the inability of the government to create a conducive environment for them to operate, such as providing appropriate infrastructure like electricity supply, adding that with the stations having to find alternative sources of power supply even as the price of diesel continues to skyrocket daily, they are simply struggling to survive.

Ms Obioma said: “The fact that so many broadcasting stations have been unable to

pay the license fees raises serious questions about the fairness and appropriateness of the fees being imposed on broadcasters by the NBC in such a challenging economic environment. As the NBC, which imposes the fees and collects them for its own use, there needs to be an independent inquiry into this apparent conflict of interest where the motivation of the commission is apparently to make as much money for itself as possible.”

Ms Obioma called on the NBC to reverse its decision in the public interest to avoid creating a society of predominantly ignorant citizens, advising that the need to ensure that Nigerians are adequately informed through the media should supersede any other consideration by the NBC.

She advised the commission to liaise with the broadcasting stations to identify the challenges facing the industry and come up with realistic solutions to the identified challenges.

MRA Calls on NBC to Rescind N5 Million Each Fines on TV Station, Pay TV Platforms

MRA on August 4, 2022, called on the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to rescind its decision to impose fines of N5 million each on a television station and three pay TV platforms for allegedly undermining Nigeria's national security by carrying documentaries on banditry in Nigeria, saying the regulator's action is wrong and unjustifiable in a democratic society.

The NBC announced in a statement on August 3, 2022 that it had imposed sanctions of N5 million each on Multichoice Nigeria Limited, owners of DSTV; TelCom Satellite Limited (TSTV); and NTA Startimes Limited for carrying a documentary by the BBC Africa Eye titled “Bandits Warlords of Zamfara”, which the Commission claimed glorified the activities of bandits and undermines national security in Nigeria. It said it had also fined Trust-TV Network Limited N5 million for its documentary titled: “Nigeria's Banditry The Inside Story”. The NBC accused them of contravening the provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, Sixth Edition, especially Paragraphs 3.1.1, 3.12.2 and 3.11.2.

In a statement by its programme director, Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA described the NBC's action as unconstitutional and repressive, threatening to take legal action against the commission if the measures are not reversed.

Mr. Longe said: “We have no doubt that the decision to sanction the platforms and television station was actually taken by the Federal Government and is being enforced through the NBC in an effort to punish them for portraying the

Government in bad light as it is clear that the Government is embarrassed by its inability to address the challenge posed by the so-called bandits to the safety and security of Nigerians and members of the public at large.”

According to him, “It is our view that the reporting by the television station and the platforms is consistent with role assigned to the media by Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people, in this case, with respect to the security and welfare of the people. It is ironic that while the government regularly dialogues with the so-called bandits and pays them obscene amounts in cash as ransom, thereby enabling their activities further, it has chosen to sanction media platforms for merely reporting on the bandits and the security challenge that they pose to citizens.”

Mr. Longe criticized the NBC for allowing itself to be used by the Federal Government as a tool for the censorship of broadcasters and broadcast platforms when it should be playing the role of an independent regulatory authority in accordance with internationally established norms and standards for media regulators.

He said: “We find it abhorrent that the NBC is once again the law maker, the accuser, the prosecutor, the judge and the enforcer, all at the same time, contrary to the well-established principle of law that no one should be a judge in his own cause. It is even more repugnant that the NBC has accused the broadcast station and platforms of offenses which constitute crimes under our laws and has proceeded to find them guilty of these crimes, thereby usurping the function of the courts under our Constitution.”

Mr. Longe called on the NBC to seek appropriate guidance in the performance of its functions as the regulatory authority for broadcasting in Nigeria in order to stop bringing Nigeria into ridicule before the international community.

MRA Condemns Raid on Peoples Gazette Newspaper, Accuses Police of Being Used by Powerful Interests to Harass Media

On July 25, 2022, MRA condemned the raid on the head office of the Peoples Gazette newspaper by agents of the Nigerian Police and the arrest of the editor and four other staff of the newspaper, and called on the Federal Government to rein in the law enforcement agency, accusing it of becoming a tool in the hands of rich or powerful individuals and entities for harassing journalists and media

organizations.

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA's Programme Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, said “we have observed in recent months a pattern of policemen raiding media organizations, arresting and detaining their staff or intimidating media professionals in various other ways under the guise of investigating complaints made against such media organizations by powerful individuals or entities. We condemn this trend and state emphatically that it is not the duty of the Police to protect the reputations of individuals or organizations or shield them from scrutiny, especially when the Police are failing woefully in the performance of their primary function of ensuring the safety and security of all citizens.”

According to Mr. Longe, “We are concerned that while the Police have virtually abdicated their duty to fight crime, frequently claiming a lack of resources for the dereliction, they appear to have no difficulty in finding the resources to deploy troops to media houses to harass and intimidate journalists and other media workers at the behest of the rich and powerful who are uncomfortable with the media beaming the searchlight on them and their activities. We therefore call on the Federal Government to immediately put an end to this practice.”

Armed operatives of the Nigerian Police were reported to have raided the head office of Peoples Gazette newspaper in the Utako area of Abuja on July 22, 2022. The policemen refused to state the reason for the raid on the newspaper's offices but asked for the Managing Editor, Mr. Samuel Ogundipe, and a reporter, Mr. Adefemola Akintade. Upon being told that both journalists were away from the office, the policemen arrested Mr. John Adenekan, the newspaper's assistant managing editor.

Mr. Adenekan was reportedly taken away to the Utako police division at about 12:35 p.m. by five armed policemen. The policemen returned to the premises and arrested four other staff members, namely Ameetat Adeyemi, Grace Oke, Sammy Ogbu and Justina Tayani. They were, however, all released at about 6.00pm on the same day.

Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Josephine Adeh, is reported to have said that the journalists and staff of the newspaper were only invited for questioning over a petition written against them accusing the newspaper of defaming the character of former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (rtd.).

But Mr. Longe stressed that the protection of the reputation of any individual is fundamentally a personal matter adding that the Police and other public resources should not be employed in vindicating the reputation of any individual, regardless

of the status of the person claiming to have been defamed.

Condemning the recurring use of strong-arm tactics by the Police to intimidate and harass journalists and media organizations, even when they have not established that any wrongdoing has taken place, he advised law enforcement agencies and officials to focus their attention on addressing the more pressing state of insecurity in the country instead of chasing shadows.

MRA Rejects Government's Attempt to Regulate Social Media 'Through the Back Door'

On June 14, 2022, MRA called on the Federal Government to discontinue its attempt to adopt a “Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries”, accusing it of trying to regulate social media and other online platforms through the backdoor by circumventing the legislative process.

MRA described the draft Code of Practice developed by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and published for public comments as a clumsy attempt to usurp the powers, functions and authority of the National Assembly as well as a breach of the constitutional rights of Nigerians.

NITDA's Head of Corporate Affairs and External Relationship, Mrs Hadiza Umar, issued a “Press Release” on June 14 announcing that NITDA had issued the Code of Practice which it is presenting for public input, on the directive of President Muhammadu Buhari in accordance with its mandate under the NITDA Act, to standardize, coordinate and develop regulatory frameworks for all information technology practices in Nigeria.

Condemning the effort, Mr Ayode Longe, MRA's Programme Director said: “The Federal Government is clearly attempting to circumvent the legislative process in favour of a backdoor approach to regulate social media and other internet platforms. It is curious that the Government has chosen to use an administrative document to surreptitiously create criminal offences as the document states unequivocally that any platform or internet intermediary responsible for violating its provisions will be liable to prosecution and conviction.”

He argued that NITDA's misuse of the term “Code of Practice” to describe the document amounts to acting under false pretenses to dupe Nigerians into believing that the Government is seeking to protect them when its real intention is obviously to control social media and other Internet platforms by compelling them

to register with the Government and thereby muzzle the right to freedom of expression online.

Mr. Longe contended that the document is a breach of Articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Nigeria's treaty obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which gives everyone the right to freedom of expression, including the “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers...”

According to him, “the name is problematic. Although it is termed a code of practice, it is in fact not intended to provide guidance for the implementation of any specific law or regulation. Rather, it creates criminal offences which are not contained in any existing Law and attempts to legitimize them by a vague reference to its enabling Act and other laws, which is beyond the remit of any such administrative document.”

Mr. Longe argued that the underlying rationale for many of the provisions of the document are unrealistic and unreasonable as they defy logic and common sense.

He said: “In today's globalized world, is it possible or realistic to expect global Internet platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others to register with the government of every country in the world where they have users and set up offices in all those countries, which is the implication of the Federal Government's demand? Conversely, Nigeria's external broadcaster, the Voice of Nigeria, broadcasts its signal and content to dozens of countries around the world and runs a website that is accessible globally; is it registered and does it have offices in all the countries where its signals are received as Nigeria is now demanding of platforms registered in other countries?”

Mr. Longe described many of the provisions of the document as arbitrary and draconian, saying the requirement that platforms take down “unlawful content” within 24 hours after receiving a notice or complaint from any authorized government agency constitutes an attempt by the Government to control content published on social media and other online platforms while bypassing the judicial process and usurping the functions of the courts which should legitimately determine what content is illegal or unlawful.

MRA therefore rejected the “Code of Practice” in its totality. It called on the government to abandon it and approach the National Assembly with an appropriate bill, if its genuine intention is to address legitimate issues rather than violating the rights of Nigerians and other members of the public on the pretext of protecting them from fake news and misinformation.

MRA Calls on Federal Government to Implement ECOWAS Court Judgment in Twitter Ban Suits

Following the judgment of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, which ruled on July 14, 2022 that the indefinite suspension of access to Twitter in Nigeria by Federal Government in June 2021 was unlawful and violated the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), MRA called on the Federal Government to immediately take measures to ensure the execution of the judgment.

In a statement issued on July 18, 2022, by the Head of MRA's Legal Department, Ms Obioma Okonkwo, the organization reminded the Government that under Article 15(4) of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, judgments of the Court are binding on Nigeria as a member State while Article 22(3) of the Protocol of the Community Court of Justice, as amended by the Supplementary Protocol of the Court, stipulates that “Member States and institutions of the Community shall take immediately, all necessary measures to ensure execution of the decision of the Court.”

She said in the light of the provisions and the judgment of the Court, Nigeria was under a legal obligation to amend its laws and policies to bring them into conformity with the African Charter and the ICCPR as well as to guarantee that the suspension of Twitter would not re-occur, as directed by the Court.

In addition to the consequential order made by the Court in its judgment, directing the Government to lift the suspension of Twitter since the suspension was in contravention of Article 9 of the African Charter and Article 19 of the ICCPR, it also ordered the Government to take necessary steps to align its policies and other measures to give effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined in the African Charter and the ICCPR.

The Court further directed the Government to undertake an act of legislative or other measures on its rules regarding Twitter to enable the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression guaranteed under the African Charter and asked it to guarantee a non-repetition of the unlawful ban of Twitter.

Specifically, it ordered Nigeria to ensure the unlawful suspension of Twitter would not reoccur and to take necessary steps to amend its laws to be in conformity with the rights and freedoms enshrined in the ACHPR and ICCPR.

The Court's orders were contained in its judgment in four consolidated suits filed

by MRA, other non-governmental organisations, journalists and some Nigerian citizens challenging the Government's June 2021 decision to suspend access to Twitter in Nigeria.

The four suits that were consolidated are:

- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/29/21 filed by Mrs. Mojirayo Ogunlana-Nkanga on behalf of Media Rights Agenda and four other non-governmental organizations, namely: Paradigm Initiative (PIN), Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ), the International Press Centre (IPC), and Tap Initiative for Citizens Development (TICD) as well as four journalists, Mr. David Hundeyin, Mr. Samuel Ogundipe, Ms Blessing Oladunjoye, and Mr. Nwakamri Zakari Apollo;
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/23/21, filed by Mr. Femi Falana (SAN), on behalf of Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), a Lagos-based NGO, and 176 Nigerians;
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/26/21. Filed by Mr. Patrick Elohor, President of the NGO, One Love Foundation; and
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/24/21, filed by Chief Malcolm Omirhobo, a Lagos-based human rights lawyer.

MRA Accuses Federal Government of Encouraging Attacks Against Journalists by Failing to Act

On June 6, 2022, MRA accused the Federal Government of encouraging attacks against journalists and media organizations by its failure to take measures to protect journalists and punish perpetrators of such attacks whom it noted are frequently security agents or other government officials.

Observing that at least seven media professionals and a media organization fell victim to various forms of attacks within one week, with one journalist shot and injured by policemen, MRA said in a statement in Lagos that the Federal Government's failure to act to stem such crimes against journalists was a direct cause of the heightened attacks against the media.

MRA's Communications Officer, Mr. Idowu Adewale, said in the statement: “The growing spate of attacks against the media is alarming and having a negative impact on freedom of expression as it is stifling the media environment, thereby,

impeding the freedom and ability of journalists and media organisations to carry out their professional duties.”

Reminding the Federal Government that it has obligations under various regional and international instruments to ensure the safety of journalists and bring perpetrators of attacks against journalists to justice, he insisted that the Government's failure to do so is not only encouraging more attacks against the media but also constitutes a breach of its treaty obligations.

Mr. Adewale said: “It should be a matter of embarrassment to the Federal Government that despite the extremely alarming rate of attacks and crimes against journalists, it cannot point to a single instance over the years, since the inception of this administration, where the perpetrators of such attacks have been arrested, prosecuted and punished.”

He noted that the perpetrators of recent attacks against the media have included law enforcement and security agencies, hoodlums, political thugs, separatist groups, criminal elements, among others, adding that “the Government's inaction and apparent refusal to reprimand its officials who are guilty of such conduct, is clearly being interpreted as an open season for anyone who is so inclined to attack journalists.”

Mr. Adewale highlighted examples of recent attacks against the media to include:

- Mr. Oriyomi Hamzat, a journalist, Managing Director and founder of Agidigbo 88.7FM in Ibadan, Oyo State, who was arrested on May 26, 2022 by officers of the Force Intelligence Bureau of the Nigeria Police in Ibadan and taken to Abuja, after he honoured an invitation by the Oyo State Intelligence Bureau of the Nigeria Police over a complaint to the police by a suspect in a murder trial which the radio station had consistently covered.
- Mr. Yinka Adeniran, the Nation newspaper's reporter attached to the Oyo State Governor's Office in Ibadan, who was on May 25, 2022 beaten up and had teargas sprayed directly into his eyes, nose and mouth by a police officer while he was covering the governorship primaries of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Ibadan.
- An attack by gunmen on May 30, 2022 on the premises of the state-owned Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) in Awada, Onitsha, during which they brutalised and inflicted injuries on some of the staff, burnt down one of the station's buildings as well as a company bus and another vehicle

belonging to a staff of the station.

- The shooting by an operative of the Osun State Command of the Nigeria Police on May 31, 2022 of the Osun State Correspondent of the Nation newspaper, Mr. Toba Adedeji, while he was covering a students' protest in Osogbo over the alleged extrajudicial killing of Mr. Abiola Afolabi who was killed by policemen on April 4, 2022.
- The arrest of a reporter, Mr. Fatai Akanji, and deputy editor, Mr. Uthman Ismail, both with the Osun defender newspaper, by a policeman attached to the Osun State Command of the Nigeria Police on May 31, 2022 for undisclosed reasons.

Mr. Adewale called on the Federal Government to put measures in place to apprehend and bring the perpetrators of these attacks and crimes against journalists to justice as well as forestall future occurrences, especially as the 2023 general elections are drawing nearer.

MRA Calls on Government to Create Safe and Conducive Environment for Journalism Practice in Nigeria

On May 3, 2022, MRA called on governments at all levels in Nigeria to take urgent measures to create a safe and conducive environment for journalism practice in Nigeria, both online and offline, noting that the rising spate of uninvestigated attacks against journalists in recent years undermines the Government's obligation to protect media practitioners.

In a statement to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day (WPDF), MRA urged the Federal Government to make a commitment to protect journalists and other media workers from various forms of attacks, including online, saying such a move would signal its appreciation of the importance of the theme of this year's WPDF, which is "Journalism Under Digital Siege".

MRA said in the statement signed by its Communications Officer, Mr. Idowu Adewale, that "recent advancements in surveillance technologies all over the world and Nigeria's acquisition of such technologies in recent years is having a significant negative impact media freedom and freedom of expression more broadly, the safety of journalists, access to information and the right to privacy, thereby putting all of these rights at risk. It is also putting journalists under siege."

Mr. Adewale argued: "human safety and security as well as respect for human

rights and fundamental freedoms should underpin any national cybersecurity effort. There can be no justification for the indiscriminate interception, monitoring or surveillance of people's private communication, which leaves innocent citizens fearful for their safety and of their government.”

According to him, where the Government or its security agencies plan to engage in targeted communication surveillance, such action may only be carried out within the framework of a law that conforms with international human rights law and standards, upon a specific and reasonable suspicion that a serious crime has been or is being carried out and after the prior authorisation of an independent judicial authority has been obtained.

Mr. Adewale called on the Government to put an end to practice by security agencies and regulatory bodies of interfering in different ways with the rights of individuals to seek, receive and impart information or to communicate with others through any means of communication and digital technologies, such as by blocking or otherwise intentionally disrupting access, saying actions constitute a violation of international human rights law and standards.

He said besides refraining from engaging in any such intentional disruption of access to the Internet and other digital technologies, the Government's international human rights commitments also impose an obligation on it not to condone any such action by other actors, including private companies and criminal groups.

MRA Calls on Government to Investigate Attempted Abduction of Journalist and Ensure His Safety

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) on April 4, 2022, called on the Federal Government as well as the relevant law enforcement and security agencies to investigate the attempted abduction of the Abuja Correspondent of The Guardian newspaper, Mr. Oludare Richards, on his way home, saying the Government should ensure that nothing untoward happens to him.

Mr. Richards is reported to have gone into hiding following an encounter with unknown men whom he suspects to be security agents whom he alleged attempted to abduct him.

According to the journalist, while he was returning to his house in Abuja, a black Hyundai bus drove towards him obviously trying to cut him off and that two men jumped down from the vehicle and chased after him as he ran.

He said he was able to escape with the help of a body spray with which he was able to prevent them from catching him. As a result of his fear that the would-be abductors might be security agents, he did not report the incident at the police station and has also gone into hiding rather than return home.

In a statement issued in Lagos, Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA's Programme Director, called on the Federal Government as well as the relevant law enforcement and security agencies to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and to ensure that no harm befalls Mr. Richards.

He deprecated the frequent practice by law enforcement, security and intelligence agents of abducting journalists, human rights activists and other citizens on the streets or in their homes without following proper and lawful arrest procedures, saying this has made it difficult for citizens to distinguish between criminals, including kidnappers, attacking them and law enforcement officials seeking to arrest them.

Mr. Longe called on the Federal Government to put an end to such practice by providing law enforcement officials with appropriate training about lawful arrest procedures and taking drastic action against those conduct unlawful or improper arrests.

He said: “The lawless and sometimes criminal behavior of many law enforcement agents makes it difficult for law-abiding citizens, including journalists, to know whether falling into their hands is any less dangerous than falling into the hands of plain criminals. This has made the terrain for journalism practice doubly treacherous for journalists in an environment of widespread insecurity where they are frequently under attack from criminals, supposed members of law enforcement agencies and other government officials, with all of them behaving the same way and employing the same tactics.”

Saying that MRA was extremely concerned about Mr. Richards safety and wellbeing, Mr. Longe reminded the Nigerian authorities that they have a constitutional responsibility and an international treaty obligation to ensure his safety. He called on the Government to live up to its responsibility.

Court Grants MRA Permission to Sue AGF over Failure to Make Regulations for Implementation of Anti-Torture Act

In February 2022, a Federal High Court in Lagos granted MRA permission to apply for an order of mandamus to compel the Attorney General of the Federation

and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami (SAN) to exercise the mandatory legal duty stipulated in Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act.

Justice Tijjani Garba Ringim issued the order allowing MRA to apply to the court to compel the Attorney-General of the Federation to make the rules and regulations following a motion brought on behalf of MRA by its lawyer, Mrs. Bankeye Akinwale, in which the organization claimed that although Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act mandated the Attorney-General to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act, he has since 2017 failed to do so.

The organization complained that despite the enactment of the Act in 2017, there have continued to be various allegations made by journalists, and other individuals and citizens of Nigeria of being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment by officials of law enforcement agencies and other government officials and non-state actors.

MRA said in an effort to ensure that the Attorney-General complies with the provision of the law, it wrote a letter of demand dated August 20, 2021 to him requesting him to perform the statutory duty imposed on him by the Act but that the Minister has failed, neglected and refused to comply with the demand and to perform his statutory duty.

The organization said following the failure of the Attorney-General to perform the statutory duty imposed on him by the Section 11 of the Act, it decided to approach the court to ask for an order granting the organization permission to apply for an order of mandamus to compel him to perform the mandatory legal duty imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act.

Ruling on the motion, Justice Ringim said after careful consideration of the application, upon reading through the verifying affidavit deposed to by Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, as well as the exhibits attached and after hearing the submissions of Mrs. Akinwale, MRA's lawyer who moved in terms of the motion paper, he was granting an order to MRA to apply to the court for the order of mandamus that it is seeking.

Specifically, the judge gave clearance to MRA to apply for an order of mandamus to compel the Attorney-General to exercise the mandatory legal duty stipulated in Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 and for the organization to seek the following reliefs:

- A declaration that the failure of the Attorney-General to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 as imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act is a breach of the law;
- An order of mandamus compelling the Attorney-General to carry out the duty imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act;
- An order of mandamus compelling the Attorney-General to carry out the request contained in MRA's letter of demand dated August 20, 2021 delivered to him on August 23, 2021, wherein MRA requested him to make the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act;
- An order directing the Attorney-General to pay to the organization the sum of N5 million as exemplary and aggravated damages for the flagrant violation of the Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017.

Justice Ringim, however, ruled that the grant of the order is conditional on MRA filing a written undertaking for costs within two days of the ruling in the event that it turns out that the order ought not to have been granted in the first place.

Court Orders Finance and Sports Ministries to Pay Journalist N2 Million for Wrongful Denial of Information

In February 2023, a Federal High Court in Abuja ruled that the refusal of the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development to provide an Abuja-based journalist, Ms Godsgift Onyedinefu, with the information she requested in 2019 on the cost of Nigeria's participation in the 2018 World Cup amounted an unlawful violation of her right of access to information and ordered them to pay her N2 million as damages.

Delivering judgment in two separate suits filed by the journalist against the ministries, Justice Donatus Uwaezuoke Okorowo directed them to make available to Ms Onyedinefu all the information she applied for by her letter dated June 3, 2019, not later than seven days from the court's judgment and pay her N1 million each as exemplary and aggravated damages for the unlawful violation of her right of access to information through the wrongful denial of the information to her in breach of Section 7 (4) of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011.

In the first suit filed on her behalf on July 26, 2019, by Lagos-based lawyer and member of Media Rights Agenda's Network of FOI Lawyers, Mr. Charles Musa, the journalist named as defendants the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports

Development, the Minister of Youth and Sports Development and the Attorney-General of the Federation while in the second suit, filed on the same day, she named as defendants the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance and the Attorney-General of the Federation.

Ms Onyedinefu asked the court to direct the ministries and their ministers to make available to her within seven days of the court's judgment, the information she requested from them pursuant to the FOI Act, among other things, on the total cost of Nigeria's participation in the 2018 World Cup and whether budgetary allocation was approved for it in the 2018 Appropriation Act of the Federal Government.

Specifically, she asked the court for:

- A declaration that she is entitled to receive from the defendants the information she requested, having made a written application on June 3, 2019, which the Ministry of Youth and Sports received on June 17, 2019 and the Finance Ministry received on June 27, 2019;
- A declaration that the failure, neglect and/or refusal of the defendants to make available to her the information she requested through her letters to them is wrongful, unlawful and amounts to a gross violation to her right of access to information established and guaranteed by Sections 1(1) and 4 of the FOI Act;
- A declaration that the failure and/or refusal by the defendant to make the information available to her amounts to wrongful denial of access to information under section 7(5) of the Act and that their failure and/or refusal to give her a written notice stating the reason for the denial of the information she requested is wrongful, unlawful and constitutes a gross violation of section 4 (b) of the Act.
- An order directing the defendants to make the information she requested available to her not later than seven days from the court's judgment.
- An order compelling the Attorney-General of the Federation to initiate criminal proceedings against the ministries and their ministers for, among other things, the offence of wrongful denial of access to information under Section 7(5) of the FOI Act;
- The sum of N1 million against each of the ministries as exemplary and aggravated damages for the unlawful violation of her right of access to information established and guaranteed by Sections 1(1) and of the Act

and wrongful denial of access to information under Section 7 (4) of the Act.

In his judgment, Justice Okorowo upheld the objection raised by the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami (SAN), to his inclusion in the suit as a defendant saying his power to initiate criminal proceedings by virtue of Section 174 of the Constitution is not questionable or subject to any control.

Observing that the courts do not question the exercise of the powers of the Attorney-General, he ruled that both constitutionally and under common law, the court cannot grant Ms Onyedinefu's request to compel the Attorney-General to initiate criminal proceedings against any party before it as the court cannot control his constitutional powers. He therefore declined the request and struck out the name of the Attorney-General of the Federation from the suit.

The judge however held that Ms Onyedinefu was entitled to the information she requested from the ministries by virtue of the provisions of the FOI Act, saying “I agree with the plaintiff submission that the fulcrum of democratic government is accountability and the basic postulate of accountability is that people should have information so as to be in a position to fulfill the role which democracy assigns to them and make democracy a really effective participatory democracy and FOIA is a protocol for achieving this basic principle of democracy by providing citizens right to know the facts, the true facts, about the administration of the country.”

He upheld her claim that the ministries were in clear breach of the provision of the FOI Act by their failure to provide her with the information she requested, saying their denial of her request for the information was wrongful.

Justice Okorowo therefore granted all the prayers sought by Ms Onyedinefu, except the request to compel the Attorney-General of the Federation to initiate criminal proceedings against the ministries and their ministers.

Federal Government Processing MRA's Request for Specialized Team to Prosecute Perpetrators of Crimes Against Journalists

On January 18, 2022, MRA received a letter from the Federal Government of Nigeria saying that it was processing a request by MRA for it to establish a specialized team of prosecutors to facilitate effective investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes against journalists and other media workers.

In the letter addressed to MRA's Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Media and Public Relations, Dr. Umar Jibrilu Gwandu, said: “Your letter requesting the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish a specialized team of prosecutors to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of crimes against journalists and other media workers through the office of the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice has been received and is being processed.”

Dr. Gwandu, who wrote on behalf of the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami (SAN), promised that “You will be communicated if there is any development thereof.”

Mr. Ojo had written to the Federal Government on behalf of MRA on October 26, 2021, ahead of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI) on November 2, calling on the Government to establish the team of specialized prosecutors. He said this would, among other things, position Nigeria to “fulfil its international treaty obligations under a number of regional and international instruments, most notably Principle 20 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, adopted in November 2019 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights pursuant to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Nigeria is a State Party.”

Acknowledging that the Government received MRA's letter on the issue “with great appreciation”, Dr. Gwandu said it was gratifying that “professional bodies, pundits, youth and non-partisan organizations are objectively and dispassionately taking into account of the outstanding professional acumen and wealth of experience brought to bear in the transformation of the Federal Ministry of Justice” by Mr. Malami.

In its October 26, 2021 letter to the Government, MRA expressed grave concern that “despite the numerous cases of attacks against journalists in Nigeria in the last few decades, including many of them killed, no one has ever been charged with any crime for such attacks and nobody has ever been punished.”

The organization said the situation was reflecting negatively on the Government and signals a wrong message to perpetrators that they can attack or even kill journalists and that there will be no adverse consequences for the perpetrators.

It noted that as a regional power and leader, it was critical for Nigeria to demonstrate moral leadership by living up to the commitments it had made, particularly in the African context, by respecting and abiding by such regional

standards and instruments.

MRA cited Principle 20 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, titled “Safety of journalists and other media practitioners”, saying it imposes an obligation on State Parties to the African Charter, including Nigeria, to guarantee the safety of journalists and other media practitioners, and provides, among other things, that:

- States shall take measures to prevent attacks on journalists and other media practitioners, including murder, extra-judicial killing, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, kidnapping, intimidation, threats and unlawful surveillance undertaken by State and non-State actors;
- States shall take measures to raise the awareness and build the capacities of journalists and other media practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders on laws and standards for ensuring the safety of journalists and other media practitioners;
- States shall take effective legal and other measures to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of attacks against journalists and other media practitioners, and ensure that victims have access to effective remedies;
- States shall be liable for the conduct of law enforcement, security, intelligence, military and other personnel which threatens, undermines or violates the safety of journalists and other media practitioners; and
- States shall take specific measures to ensure the safety of female journalists and media practitioners by addressing gender-specific safety concerns, including sexual and gender-based violence, intimidation and harassment.

4.3 MRA Court Cases in 2022

Several cases that MRA had been litigating from the previous years continued in 2022, some faced delayed listing, and others, several adjournments. As a result, some of the cases spilled into 2023 while few were decided in 2022 with MRA winning some and losing some.

Court Grants MRA Permission to Sue AGF over Failure to Make Regulations for Implementation of Anti-Torture Act

In February 2022, a Federal High Court in Lagos granted Media Rights Agenda (MRA) permission to apply for an order of mandamus to compel the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami (SAN) to exercise the mandatory legal duty stipulated in Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act.

Justice Tijjani Garba Ringim issued the order allowing MRA to apply to the court to compel the Attorney-General of the Federation to make the rules and regulations following a motion bought on behalf of MRA by its lawyer, Mrs. Bankeye Akinwale, in which the organization claimed that although Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act mandated the Attorney-General to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act, he has since 2017 failed to do so.

MRA complained that despite the enactment of the Act in 2017, there have continued to be various allegations made by journalists, and other individuals and citizens of Nigeria of being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment by officials of law enforcement agencies and other government officials and non-state actors.

It said in an effort to ensure that the Attorney-General complies with the provision of the law, it wrote a letter of demand dated August 20, 2021 to him requesting him to perform the statutory duty imposed on him by the Act but that the Minister has failed, neglected and refused to comply with the demand and to perform his statutory duty.

The organization said following the failure of the Attorney-General to perform the statutory duty imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act, it decided to approach the court to ask for an order granting the organization permission to apply for an order of mandamus to compel him to perform the mandatory legal duty imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act.

Ruling on the motion, Justice Ringim said after careful consideration of the application, upon reading through the verifying affidavit deposed to by Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, as well as the exhibits attached and after hearing the submissions of Mrs. Akinwale, MRA's lawyer who moved in terms of the motion paper, he was granting an order to MRA to apply to the court for the order of mandamus that it is seeking.

Specifically, the judge gave clearance to MRA to apply for an order of mandamus to compel the Attorney-General to exercise the mandatory legal duty stipulated in Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 and for the organization to seek the following reliefs:

- A declaration that the failure of the Attorney-General to make rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017 as imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act is a breach of the law;
- An order of mandamus compelling the Attorney-General to carry out the duty imposed on him by Section 11 of the Act;
- An order of mandamus compelling the Attorney-General to carry out the request contained in MRA's letter of demand dated August 20, 2021, delivered to him on August 23, 2021, wherein MRA requested him to make the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Act;
- An order directing the Attorney-General to pay to the organization the sum of N5 million as exemplary and aggravated damages for the flagrant violation of the Section 11 of the Anti-Torture Act, 2017.

Justice Ringim, however, ruled that the grant of the order is conditional on MRA filing a written undertaking for costs within two days of the ruling in the event that it turns out that the order ought not to have been granted in the first place.

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Delivering judgment in two separate suits filed by the journalist against the ministries, Justice Donatus Uwaezuoke Okorowo directed them to make available to Ms Onyedinefu all the information she applied for by her letter dated June 3, 2019, not later than seven days from the court's judgment and pay her N1 million each as exemplary and aggravated damages for the unlawful violation of her right of access to information through the wrongful denial of the information to her in breach of Section 7 (4) of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011.

The first suit was filed on her behalf on July 26, 2019, by Lagos-based lawyer and member of Media Rights Agenda's (MRA) Network of FOI Lawyers, Mr. Charles Musa. In the first suit, the journalist named as defendants, the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, the Minister of Youth and Sports Development, and the Attorney-General of the Federation, while in the second suit, filed on the same day, she named as defendants the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance, and the Attorney-General of the Federation.

Ms Onyedinefu asked the court to direct the ministries and their ministers to make available to her within seven days of the court's judgment, the information she requested from them pursuant to the FOI Act, among other things, on the total cost of Nigeria's participation in the 2018 World Cup and whether budgetary allocation was approved for it in the 2018 Appropriation Act of the Federal Government.

Specifically, she asked the court for:

- A declaration that she is entitled to receive from the defendants the information she requested, having made a written application on June 3, 2019, which the Ministry of Youth and Sports received on June 17, 2019 and the Finance Ministry received on June 27, 2019;
- A declaration that the failure, neglect and/or refusal of the defendants to make available to her the information she requested through her letters to them is wrongful, unlawful and amounts to a gross violation to her right of access to information established and guaranteed by Sections 1(1) and 4 of the FOI Act;
- A declaration that the failure and/or refusal by the defendant to make the information available to her amounts to wrongful denial of access to information under section 7(5) of the Act and that their failure and/or refusal to give her a written notice stating the reason for the denial of the information she requested is wrongful, unlawful and constitutes a gross violation of section 4 (b) of the Act.

- An order directing the defendants to make the information she requested available to her not later than seven days from the court's judgment.
- An order compelling the Attorney-General of the Federation to initiate criminal proceedings against the ministries and their ministers for, among other things, the offence of wrongful denial of access to information under Section 7(5) of the FOI Act;
- The sum of N1 million against each of the ministries as exemplary and aggravated damages for the unlawful violation of her right of access to information established and guaranteed by Sections 1(1) and of the Act and wrongful denial of access to information under Section 7 (4) of the Act.

Justice Okorowo held that Ms Onyedinefu was entitled to the information she requested from the ministries by virtue of the provisions of the FOI Act, saying “I agree with the plaintiff's submission that the fulcrum of democratic government is accountability and the basic postulate of accountability is that people should have information so as to be in a position to fulfill the role which democracy assigns to them and make democracy a really effective participatory democracy and FOIA is a protocol for achieving this basic principle of democracy by providing citizens right to know the facts, the true facts, about the administration of the country.”

He upheld her claim that the ministries were in clear breach of the provision of the FOI Act by their failure to provide her with the information she requested, saying their denial of her request for the information was wrongful.

Justice Okorowo therefore granted all the prayers sought by Ms Onyedinefu, except the request to compel the Attorney-General of the Federation to initiate criminal proceedings against the ministries and their ministers.

ECOWAS Court Rules in Favour of MRA, Others that Nigerian Government's Twitter Ban was Unlawful

In a judgment delivered on July 14, 2022, in four consolidated suits filed by MRA, other non-governmental organisations, journalists and some Nigerian citizens challenging the Nigerian Government's June 4, 2021, decision to suspend access to Twitter in Nigeria, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice ruled that the indefinite suspension of access to Twitter in Nigeria by the Federal Government in June 2021 was unlawful and violated the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The Court ordered the Government to guarantee that it would not repeat the unlawful ban on Twitter to take necessary steps to align its policies and other measures to give effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined in the ACHPR and the ICCPR.

The four suits that were consolidated are:

- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/29/21 filed by Mrs. Mojirayo Ogunlana-Nkanga on behalf of Media Rights Agenda and four other non-governmental organizations, namely: Paradigm Initiative (PIN), Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ), the International Press Centre (IPC), and Tap Initiative for Citizens Development (TICD) as well as four journalists, Mr. David Hundeyin, Mr. Samuel Ogundipe, Ms Blessing Oladunjoye, and Mr. Nwakamri Zakari Apollo;
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/23/21, filed by Mr. Femi Falana (SAN), on behalf of Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), a Lagos-based NGO, and 176 Nigerians;
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/26/21. Filed by Mr. Patrick Elohor, President of the NGO, One Love Foundation; and
- Suit No. ECW/CCJ/APP/24/21, filed by Chief Malcolm Omirhobo, a Lagos-based human rights lawyer.

The applicants contended in the suits that the suspension of the social media platform, Twitter, in Nigeria amounted to a violation of their fundamental rights, including their rights to freedom of expression and access to information.

The consolidated suits were heard by a panel of three judges consisting of Justice Gberi-Be- Ouattara, presiding; Justice Keikura Bangura, who is the judge rapporteur; and Justice Januaria Costa. The Court ordered the consolidation of the four separate suits at its hearing on July 9, 2021 following a motion by the lawyer representing the Nigerian Government, Mr. Abdullahi Abubakar, who applied for the suits to be heard together since they were all dealing with the same subject matter.

Delivering judgment, the Court declared that contrary to the claim of the Federal Government, it had jurisdiction to hear and determine the suits. It also dismissed the Government's challenge to the admissibility of the suits, declaring that the

applications were admissible.

The Court consequentially ordered the Government to lift the suspension of Twitter since the suspension was in contravention of Article 9 of the African Charter and Article 19 of the ICCPR.

It also ordered the Government to take necessary steps to align its policies and other measures to give effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined in the African Charter and the ICCPR as well as undertake an act of legislative or other measures on the rules of Twitter to enable the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression guaranteed under the African Charter.

The Court directed the Government to guarantee a non-repetition of the unlawful ban of Twitter but dismissed all other claims by the applicants.

Several cases that were commenced prior to 2022 spilled to the year and were not concluded before the year ran out. Others were also instituted during the year and were not concluded before the end of the year.

Some of such cases include:

- Media Rights Agenda lawsuit against the federal government over the indefinite suspension of Twitter at the Federal High Court in Abuja.
- MRA initiated a fundamental human rights suit on behalf of Eniola Daniel, a Guardian newspaper reporter against CSP Shola Jejeloye (chairman of Lagos State Task Force on Environmental and Special Offences Unit) and others for the brutal assault unleashed on the reporter by policemen of the task force on February 28, 2021 at Ladipo Market in Oshodi in Lagos.
- Media Rights Agenda filed a lawsuit filed in its name against the Lagos State Commission of Police and others over the killing of Pelumi Onifade in Lagos while covering the #ENDSARS protests in October 2020
- Media Rights Agenda's lawsuit against the Attorney General of the Federation for the enforcement of Principle 20 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.
- A strategic litigation filed by Media Rights Agenda against the Attorney General of the Federation challenging the defamatory provisions of some Nigerian laws.

- The lawsuits filed by Media Rights Agenda against the Governors of Zamfara, Kaduna and Sokoto States for telecommunication and Internet shutdown in Zamfara, Kaduna, and Sokoto States respectively.
- Media Rights Agenda sued the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for imposing fines on three broadcast stations.
- Media Rights Agenda dragged the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to court over fines imposed on 23 broadcast stations.
- Media Rights Agenda instituted a lawsuit against the Code of Conduct Bureau for the agency's failure to investigate a petition against a state governor who attacked a journalist.
- A fundamental human rights lawsuit was filed in Media Rights Agenda's name on behalf of Otabor Friday Osagie, a journalist with The Nation newspaper who was assaulted by the security personnel of the Governor of Kogi State against the Governor.
- Media Rights Agenda filed a lawsuit against the Attorney General of Rivers State over the provision of Criminal Defamation in its state laws.
- Media Rights Agenda sued the Attorney General of the Federation for the Nigerian Government's failure to take measures to prevent attacks on journalists and media practitioners.
- On behalf of Mr. Kingsley Anaroke, the publishers of Money Management Series (MMS) Plus newspaper, Media Rights Agenda filed a fundamental human rights suit against the Nigeria Police Force and others over the invasion of MMS's office in an attempt to arrest Mr. Kingsley on August 10, 2021 by armed policemen.
- Media Rights Agenda instituted a suit against the Nigeria Police and others in the name of Kings Communication Ltd for invading Kings Communication's office on August 10, 2021.

In 2022, MRA initiated a number of litigation intervention, however. most of these cases are still pending before the court. These cases include:

- MRA provided legal assistance to Mr. Sordum Jolly in a lawsuit he initiated against Obio/Akpor local government council for wrongfully denying him access to the information requested under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act.

- MRA again supported Mr. Sordum Jolly with legal representation in another suit filed against Obio/Akpor Local Government Council and others over their failure to provide him with the information requested under the FOI Act.
- In order to ensure the protection of citizen's right of access to information as guaranteed by the FOI Act, MRA provided Mr. Eeba Dum with legal representation in a suit filed against Niger Delta Basin Authority and others for the violation of his right of access to information.
- MRA provided Mr. Eeba Dum with legal representation in another case filed against the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and others for unlawful denial of access to information he requested under the Freedom of Information Act.
- MRA assisted Mr. Sordum Jolly with legal representation to challenge the unlawful denial of his request for information against Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic and others.
- MRA filed a suit at the Federal High Court in Abuja against National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and others over the Agency's failure to disclose the information requested from it by MRA on its proposed regulatory framework for social media and other online platforms called "Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries".
- MRA challenged the unlawful communications/internet shutdown which took place in Sokoto State with the directive of the Governor and implemented by the Nigerian Communications Commission and the Attorney General of the Federation who were named as parties to the suit. However, in 2022, the case was dismissed by the court.
- MRA provided Wikkitimes Nigeria and its editor, Elijah Ojonicko with legal representation in a criminal suit initiated against them by S.A.T Engineering Services and three other construction companies through a direct criminal complaint filed before Kano State Chief Magistrate Court, accusing Wikkitimes Nigeria Limited, a (Bauchi Online Newspaper) and its Reporter, Elijah Ojonicko of allegedly publishing defamatory statement against them.
- MRA's legal team instituted a fundamental human rights suit on behalf of

Mr. Samuel Ayodele, a Taraba State-based journalist, newspaper publisher and radio station manager, against Emmanuel Bwacha and others before a High Court in Abuja, claiming N20 million as general damages against the violators for harassing, intimidating, unlawful detaining the journalist as well as breaching his fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

- MRA provided legal assistance to Dare Akogun and one other journalist who were charged before a magistrate court in Ilorin over some WhatsApp chats accusing the Chief Press Secretary to the state governor, Rafiu Ajakaye of misconduct. The case against the journalists was later withdrawn.
- MRA sued the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) over the Commission's refusal to act on MRA's request for information about the details of license fees paid by broadcasting stations and platforms operating in Nigeria and the amount of indebtedness of each station owing license fees.
- MRA filed a suit against the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for imposing fines on four media platforms namely Multichoice Nigeria Limited, owners of DSTV; TelCom Satellite Limited (TSTV); Trust-TV Network Limited; and NTA-Startimes Limited, for airing documentaries which the Commission claimed glorified the activities of bandits and undermined Nigeria's national security.

About Media Rights Agenda (MRA)

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) was established in 1993 as an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization for the purpose of promoting and protecting the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information as well as digital rights and freedoms.

It was incorporated in 1997 with the Corporate Affairs Commission under Part C (Incorporated Trustees) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 1990 and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, The Gambia.

MRA's Aims and Objectives are:

- to promote respect and recognition for press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- to promote the highest standards of professionals ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession;
- to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalists' right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information; and
- to promote citizens' right of access to records and information held by governments and public institutions.
- to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression and other human rights online

Activities

MRA's activities are varied and include, but not limited to, the following:

Research and Publication

Under this programme, Media Rights Agenda has produced a number of publications on various issues which affect media freedom, freedom of expression, access to information and digital rights.

Litigation/Legal Services

Under its Litigation Programme, Media Rights Agenda offers legal assistance to journalists who are arrested and detained, subjected to oppressive criminal charges in the course of their professional duties, assaulted, or harassed and intimidated in any other manner.

MRA also litigates in class actions aimed at eliciting broad judicial pronouncements with positive implications for media freedoms.

It has pursued both approaches at Nigerian domestic courts as well as before international judicial forums, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights where it has litigated more cases on freedom of expression and media freedom than any other organization on the continent.

It also offers free legal services and representations for individuals and civil society organisations denied access to information requests from relevant institutions through its nationwide network of FOI lawyers.

Advocacy/Campaigns

MRA runs an Advocacy and Campaigns Programme under which it campaigned for the reform of media laws in Nigeria and championed the campaign for the enactment of a Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria.

The Freedom of Information Bill proposed by Media Rights Agenda to the National Assembly in Nigeria and passed into law on May 28, 2011 guarantees citizens' and non-citizens' right to access information in the custody of government, its agencies and institutions as well as private bodies carrying out public functions.

In addition to carrying out local campaigns on issues of media freedom and freedom of expression generally, MRA also conducts international campaigns using international human rights procedures and mechanisms. Such campaigns are used mainly in cases of the arrest and detention of journalists, other acts of harassment and intimidation of journalists, closure of press facilities, proscription of media establishments and publications in challenging repressive press laws. As part of this effort, MRA has filed complaints and communications to the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa; the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the (now defunct) United Nations Country Special Rapporteur on Nigeria; and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Lawyers and Judges.

MRA is also involved in the Africa-wide campaign for the adoption of Access to Information laws and Internet rights and freedoms that meets internationally accepted standards and principles.

Training/Capacity Building

MRA organises training workshops, seminars and conference on a variety of issues affecting the media, journalism practice, freedom of expression, the right of access to information, and digital rights and freedoms. It also exposes practicing journalists to training opportunities available outside Nigeria and, in some cases, assists journalists with securing admission to such training programmes.

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