

# *The* Reign of Impunity

*Annual Report on Freedom of Expression in Nigeria 2025*



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Mr. Ayode Longe, MRA's Deputy Executive Director, supervised the research, wrote the final report and coordinated the entire project.

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## Preface

The year 2025 was another defining period for media freedom in Nigeria, marked by a troubling mix of continuity in its most negative sense and change in the context of a rapidly evolving technological environment globally.

While the media landscape continued to evolve rapidly, shaped largely by developments in digital technologies, the fundamental challenges confronting journalists and media organizations remained deeply entrenched. These challenges were of a political, legal, economic and social nature, as attacks on journalists, misuse of laws and regulatory powers, shrinking civic space, an extremely difficult economic environment, and growing threats in the digital environment once again tested the resilience of Nigeria's media.

This Annual Report on Media Freedom in Nigeria documents and analyses some of these developments, particularly the attacks, which painted a picture of the media as an enemy of the State that must be crushed by any means. The report presents a factual, evidence-based account of violations of media freedom and attacks against journalists and media houses. It assesses the conduct of state and non-state actors, and examines emerging trends affecting freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and digital rights.

As in previous years, security agencies featured prominently among the perpetrators of attacks, underscoring the persistent failure of the state to uphold its constitutional duty to protect journalists and guarantee media freedom.

The year 2025 witnessed new and intensifying challenges. The increasing regulation of online spaces, the expanding influence of Big Tech platforms, the deployment of digital surveillance tools, and the growing use of the Cybercrimes Act to target journalists and critics raised serious concerns about the future of freedom of expression and media freedom in Nigeria. These developments highlight the urgent need to view media freedom not only through the lens of traditional media rights, but also as a core component of digital rights and democratic governance.

This report is published against the backdrop of continued impunity for attacks on journalists. Investigations are rarely conducted or concluded, the prosecution of perpetrators is non-existent, as a result of which victims are routinely denied justice.

The persistence of this culture of impunity remains one of the gravest threats to media freedom in Nigeria, emboldening perpetrators and sometimes deepening fear and self-censorship within the media community.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) remains committed to documenting these violations, amplifying the voices of affected journalists, and advocating for legal, institutional, and policy reforms to safeguard freedom of expression. We believe that accurate documentation and public accountability are essential tools in the struggle to protect media freedom and strengthen democracy.

We hope that this report will serve as a valuable resource for journalists, policymakers, civil society organisations, researchers, and international partners. More importantly, we hope it will contribute to renewed action, whether by government, the media, and society at large, to end attacks on journalists, ensure accountability for violations, and create an enabling environment in which the media can operate freely and safely.

Ultimately, media freedom is not a privilege for journalists alone; it is a right of all Nigerians. Defending it is essential to transparency, accountability, and the democratic future of our country.

**Edataen Ojo**  
Executive Director  
Media Rights Agenda (MRA)  
January 2026

# C H A P T E R ONE



## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Protecting Journalists in Nigeria as a Democratic Imperative

A free, independent, and safe media environment is one of the most reliable indicators of a functioning democracy. In Nigeria, where democratic governance continues to evolve amid political, security, and economic pressures, the protection of journalists is not merely a professional or sectoral concern. It is a democratic imperative.

Journalists play a central role in informing citizens, scrutinising and holding power accountable, exposing wrongdoing, and facilitating public debate. When they are harassed, intimidated, silenced, killed with impunity, or attacked in various other ways, the consequences extend far beyond the media community, striking at the very heart of democratic accountability.

Nigeria's Constitution recognises the media as a cornerstone of democracy. Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution mandates all agencies of the media to “uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.” This constitutional responsibility positions journalists as intermediaries between the state and the citizenry, and as a mechanism for enabling transparency, participation, and informed decision-making. Through investigative reporting, political coverage, and civic education, among other activities, journalists help citizens to understand how power is exercised, the limits of such power, and how public resources are used.

This mandate, bestowed on the media by the Constitution, appears to be one that is deeply resented by governments across Federal, State and Local

Government levels, as any attempt to hold government officials accountable is not only resisted but in many cases crushed with frightening brutality by security and law enforcement agents who also turn a blind eye to attacks on journalists by non-state actors.

Journalists therefore face an impossible task of fulfilling this constitutional responsibility in an environment of fear as they face threats, harassment and intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detention, or physical violence for doing their work.

The consequence of the situation is that the public is often deprived of essential information for personal, professional business and political decision-making, among others. It should, perhaps, come as no surprise therefore, that Nigerians frequently appear to be making poor democratic choices, while corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations thrive.

Despite constitutional guarantees contained in Section 39(1) asserting that “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference,” journalists in Nigeria continue to face serious risks and dangers in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties.

Attacks by security agencies, political actors, criminal groups, and even private individuals remain widespread. Journalists covering elections, protests, insecurity, corruption, and human rights abuses are particularly vulnerable and at risk. These threats and attacks take multiple forms, including physical assaults, sometimes with horrendous brutality; unlawful arrests and detention, equipment seizure or outright destruction of such equipment, abuse of legal and judicial processes to harass, intimidate or otherwise punish journalists; online harassment and intimidation, abductions or kidnapping, and in extreme cases, death.

Perhaps, the most troubling aspect of these violations is the culture of impunity that surrounds them. Serious investigations hardly ever take place even where such attacks happen in public glare with multiple witnesses, and where investigations take place, they are shoddy, slow or inconclusive. Perpetrators are rarely held accountable, sending a dangerous signal that attacks on journalists carry no consequence.

This reign of impunity that has become a regular feature in cases of attacks against journalists has served to embolden the perpetrators, normalise the abuses, and entrench a culture in which violence against journalists and other

media workers is condoned, if not quietly encouraged.

The consequences of this reign of impunity extend far beyond individual journalists. Fear and insecurity have been known to breed self-censorship as editors become excessively cautious, reporters avoid sensitive beats and stories, and investigative journalism becomes riskier and the domain of only those regarded as foolhardy.

As a result, stories that should be told are softened, delayed, or abandoned entirely. For the wider society, this means reduced public access to information, weaker scrutiny of those in power, and a distorted view of what is really going on. Corruption continues to flourish while human rights violations become rampant as incidents go unreported, and citizens are denied the information they need to make informed choices.

Ending the reign of impunity obviously requires more than expressions of concern after each attack. It demands concrete action, including prompt and impartial investigations, prosecution of perpetrators regardless of their status, institutional accountability for security agencies, and clear public condemnation of attacks at the highest levels of government.

It also requires recognising the safety of journalists as a democratic priority, not a marginal media issue.

Unfortunately, beyond the expression of concern by civil society organisations, media organisations, professional bodies, and their international partners when these incidents occur, those who have the responsibility to take concrete action that can remedy the situation are consistently failing or refusing to act.

The point needs to be made that ending this reign of impunity is not only about protecting journalists; it is also about defending the right of Nigerians to know, to question, and to hold those in power accountable. Until justice becomes the rule rather than the exception, media freedom in Nigeria will remain fragile, and democracy itself will remain under threat.

Protecting journalists is not a goodwill gesture and is not optional. It is a legal obligation of the State. Nigeria is party to international and regional human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which guarantee freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive, and impart information. These obligations require the state not only to refrain from violating press freedom, but also to take positive steps to protect journalists

from harm by both state and non-state actors.

This duty includes ensuring effective law enforcement, prompt investigations, prosecution of offenders, and the adoption of preventive measures such as clear operational rules for security agencies and training on engagement with the media. Failure to meet these obligations represents a democratic deficit.

The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 2019 pursuant to the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, lays out quite clearly the obligations of the State along with clear guidance on the fulfilment of those obligations.

Principle 20 of the Declaration states unequivocally that “States shall guarantee the safety of journalists and other media practitioners” and enjoins State to “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.”

It also requires States to “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” while stipulating that States are “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.”

States are also obliged to “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.”

Protecting journalists in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and sustained strategy that responds to the different threats facing media professionals. The strategy should therefore address both offline and online threats, including digital security, legal protection, and psychological well-being, alongside physical safety.

The strategy needs to be codified through legal reforms to align laws with international standards; ensure institutional accountability for security

agencies, independent oversight mechanisms, and should include public condemnation of attacks at the highest levels of government. It also requires solidarity within the media community and active engagement by civil society, professional bodies, and international partners.

Most importantly, it requires recognising that the safety of journalists is not a special privilege, but a public good, as journalists do not require protection to serve themselves but seek protection to better serve the society.

The protection of journalists is inseparable from the health of our democracy itself. A society that tolerates violence and intimidation against journalists is a society that tolerates secrecy, abuse of power, and unaccountable governance. Conversely, a society that actively protects journalists affirms its commitment to transparency, human rights, and democratic values.

Protecting journalists should not, therefore, be seen as just safeguarding a profession, but as about defending the right of Nigerians to know, to ask questions, and to participate meaningfully in the governance of their country. Without a safe and conducive environment for journalists, democracy cannot thrive; without democracy, the promise of freedom and accountability will remain unfulfilled.

## C H A P T E R **TWO**



### **2.0 Analyses of Attacks on Freedom of Expression in 2025**

#### **2.1 Frequency of Attacks on Freedom of Expression by Types**

In the year 2025, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) tracked, collated, and documented a total of 86 incidents of attacks on press freedom from across Nigeria by various perpetrators including state and non-state actors. All of these incidents were perpetrated with impunity as no single case was investigated or prosecuted by the relevant law enforcement agencies: the Nigeria Police, the Department of State Services (DSS), or the Federal Ministry of Justice.

The most common form of attack on freedom of expression during the year was arrest and detention, for which MRA documented 38 cases. Incidents of arrest and detention of citizens for expressing themselves accounted for more than two-fifths of all the recorded incidents of attacks on freedom of expression. This number constitutes 44.18% of the total number of attacks documented by MRA.

Assault and battery came as the second highest form of attacks on freedom of expression documented by the organisation. A total of 21 cases were recorded, accounting for 24.41% of the total incidents of attacks on freedom of expression in Nigeria during the period.

MRA documented six cases of threats for people expressing themselves and journalists performing their duties during the period, and this represents 6.95%, or approximately 7% of the total incidents of attacks on freedom of expression.

In five documented incidents, journalists were prevented from carrying out their duty of news gathering. This accounts for 5.81% or approximately 6% of the total incidents of attacks on freedom of expression.

Three incidents were also documented of raids/invasions of media houses by both state and non-state actors. One of the incidents of invasion of media premises was carried out by policemen from the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Abuja, while the other two were carried out by unknown persons. All three incidents were done with impunity as neither the policemen nor the unknown men who perpetrated the attacks were apprehended or prosecuted. These incidents account for 3.48% of the total documented incidents.

As in the case of raids and invasions of media outlets, MRA also documented three cases apiece of harassment, and summons for citizens expressing themselves.

MRA documented two incidents of killings: a journalist was also killed in the line of duty for unknown reasons, while a woman was killed for alleged blasphemy. These two incidents represent 2.32% of the total documented incidents,

There was also one incident of shut down of a media outlet, and one of the kidnapping of a journalist. Mr Salis Manaja, a multimedia journalist with Image Merchants Promotion Limited (IMPL), publishers of PRNigeria and Economic Confidential, was kidnapped on October 13, 2025, while travelling from Abakaliki in Ebonyi State to Ilorin, Kwara State, for the company's annual Young Communication Fellowship programme. He was released after a ransom had been paid.

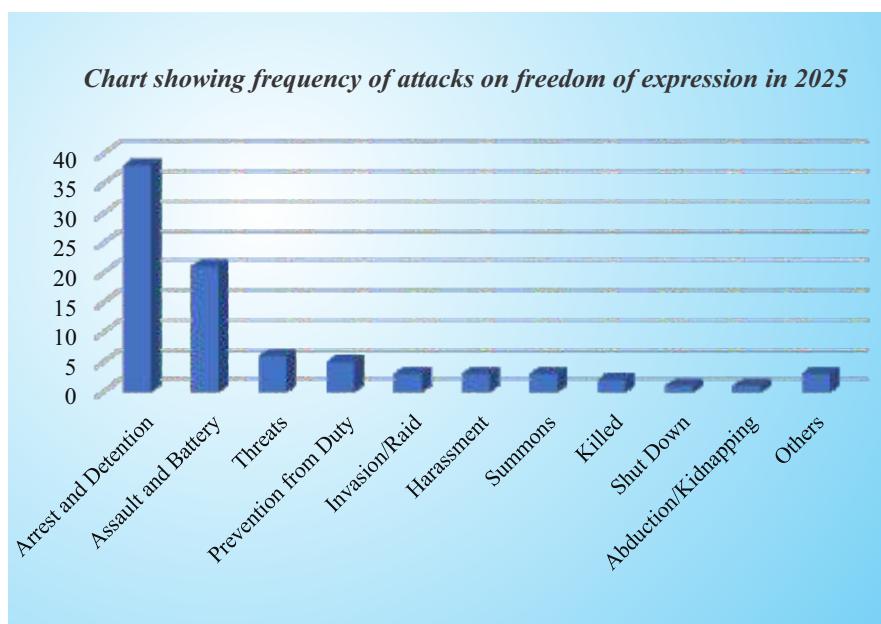
Also, labour unions on January 13, 2025, embarked on a strike action which shut down Lagos State-owned broadcast stations, including Lagos Television, Radio Lagos/Eko FM, and Lagos Traffic Radio, in protest over unresolved payroll issues.

These two incidents represent 1.16% apiece of the total documented incidents of attacks.

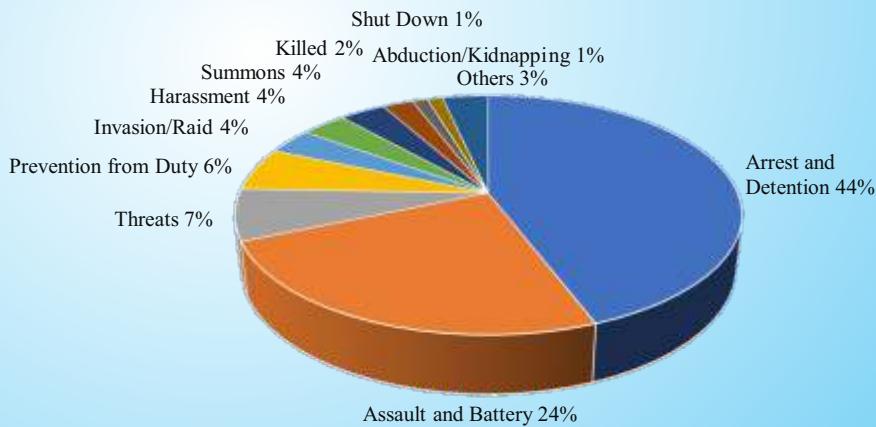
Finally, there is also a category of a potpourri of three incidents of different types of attacks on freedom of expression, which MRA documented and categorised as 'Others' as they do not fall into any of the ten specific categories. These together constitute 3.48% of the total incidents of attacks on freedom of expression.

*The table below shows the frequency of attacks on freedom of expression in 2025*

<b>Ser. No.</b>	<b>Categories of Attacks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Arrest and Detention	38	44.18%
2.	Assault and Battery	21	24.41%
3.	Threats	6	6.95%
4.	Prevention from Duty	5	5.81%
5.	Invasion/Raid	3	3.48%
6.	Harassment	3	3.48%
7.	Summons	3	3.48%
8.	Killed	2	2.32%
9.	Shut Down	1	1.16%
10.	Abduction/Kidnapping	1	1.16%
11.	Others	3	3.48%
<b>Total</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>100%</b>



*Chart showing percentage frequency of attacks on freedom of expression in 2025*



## **2.2 Frequency of Attacks on Freedom of Expression by Perpetrators**

Men and officers of the Nigeria Police Force, the agency of government established to maintain law and order, were the worst perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression. They participated in the assault and battery, arrest and detention, threat, summons, and harassment of citizens and media workers, as well as the prevention of journalists from their duty posts. Of the 15 categories of documented perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression in 2025, operatives of the Nigeria Police were perpetrators in 41 incidents. They account for 47.86% of the attacks on freedom of expression and media workers. In one instance, both the police and thugs combined to attack journalists who went to cover the scheduled Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) inaugural National Working Committee (NWC) meeting, which resulted in a crisis at its national secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory.

Out of the 37 documented cases of arrest and detention of citizens and media workers for their expression, the police were perpetrators in 27 of these incidents of attacks, while they were also perpetrators in six of the 21 documented incidents of assault and battery over expression.

The second worst perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression were

operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency, which has a primary responsibility to safeguard the nation's internal security by preventing and detecting crimes against the state. DSS agents were perpetrators of attacks on freedom of expression and the media in six of the documented incidents in 2025. They were perpetrators in 6.97% or approximately 7% of these attacks.

In the same vein, named individuals were perpetrators of attacks in six incidents and also responsible for 6.97% or approximately 7% of the documented attacks during the period.

Appointees and aides of elected government officials were perpetrators of five of the 86 documented incidents of attacks, accounting for 5.81% of all the attacks.

Three categories of perpetrators: states regulatory and enforcement agencies, governors, and named groups, were responsible for carrying out four incidents of attacks on freedom of expression each during the period. Each actor individually accounted for 4.65% of the documented incidents of attacks on freedom of expression and the media in 2025.

Two other categories of perpetrators, joint security agencies and unknown armed men, were each responsible for three incidents of attacks on freedom of expression during the period. Individually, they each account for 3.48% of the documented incidents of attacks.

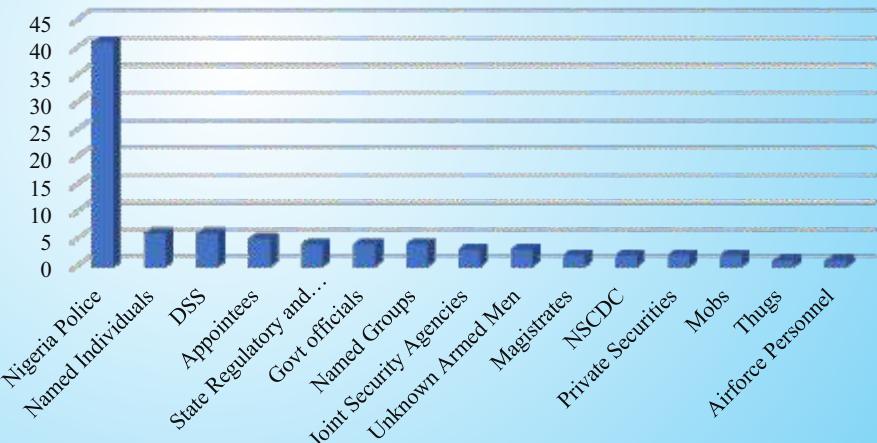
Magistrates, operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), private security personnel, and mobs are other sets of perpetrators who carried out attacks on freedom of expression and the media in two incidents each. Thus, they were each responsible for 2.35% of all the documented incidents of attacks on freedom of expression.

Men and officers of the Nigeria Air Force were perpetrators in one case, and so also were thugs. These two categories of perpetrators were responsible for 1.17% each of the documented incidents of attacks on freedom of expression and the media in 2025.

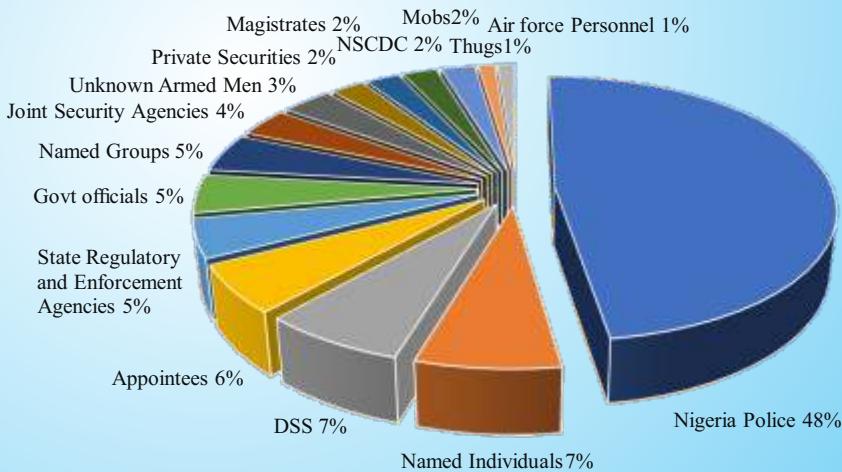
*The table below shows documented perpetrators, and the frequency of their attacks on freedom of expression in 2025*

<b>Ser. No.</b>	<b>Perpetrators</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Nigeria Police	41	47.86%
2.	Named Individuals	6	7%
3.	DSS	6	7%
4.	Appointees	5	5.81%
5.	State Regulatory and Enforcement Agencies	4	4.65%
6.	Govt officials	4	4.65%
7.	Named Groups	4	4.65%
8.	Joint Security Agencies	3	3.48%
9.	Unknown Armed Men	3	3.48%
10.	Magistrates	2	2.32%
11.	NSCDC	2	2.32%
12.	Private Securities	2	2.32%
13.	Mobs	2	2.32%
14.	Thugs	1	1.16%
15.	Airforce Personnel	1	1.16%
<b>Total</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Chart showing perpetrators and their frequency of attacks on freedom of expression*



*Chart showing perpetrators and the percentage frequency of their attacks on freedom of expression*



## 2.3 Other Trends

### 2.3.1 Journalists not Spared in the Brutal Suppression of Protests

A recurring pattern in documented attacks on freedom of expression and the media is the suppression of journalistic coverage during protests. Police responses to protests are often marked by excessive force, and journalists are routinely barred from covering these events. Those who defy this unwritten restriction frequently face intimidation, harassment, or physical violence. Journalists are sometimes shot at, teargassed, assaulted, arrested and detained. It does not matter whether these journalists wear vests that clearly indicate that they are media workers or that they are carrying their work tools. Operatives of law enforcement and intelligence agencies descend on them with brutality and injure them, break their hands and legs, and destroy their equipment.

This scenario played out on October 20, 2025, during the #FreeNnamdiKanuNow protest when officers of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) brutally assaulted the crew members of News Central TV while they were covering the protest in Abuja. The BusinessDay Crew was also not spared, while the police arrested Mr John Okunyomih, a video journalist with Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Also, on September 9, 2025, operatives of the Nigeria Police arrested Mr Nasir Hassan Yelwa, a reporter for Iran Press News Agency and a member of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), while covering a public Maulid procession in Abuja by members of the Islamic Movement.

The same trend also happened in Port Harcourt Rivers State where five journalists who went to cover the protest by the Coalition of Rivers Civil Society Organisations and members of the Take-it-back movement calling for the repeal of the Cybercrime Act and an end to the emergency rule in River State, were on April 7, 2025, brutalised, arrested and detained by armed policemen who were deployed to quell the peaceful protest.

On March 4, 2025, Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency, the Department of State Services (DSS), detained and questioned two reporters with the Daily Trust newspaper, Mr Ado Abubakar Musa and Mr Dickson Adama, over reports of a peaceful protest by truck drivers, which took place on March 2 in Jos, Plateau State.

### **2.3.2 Weaponisation of Laws**

The provisions of some laws were weaponised to raid media outlets, brutalise, arrest, and detain journalists and citizens for exercising their right to freedom of expression. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2024 (as amended), the Criminal Code Act, and the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013, etc, are weaponised to harass, arrest, detain, and arraign journalists, bloggers, content creators, and citizens for their expression on websites, blogs, social media platforms, etc. In 2025, MRA documented about 21 of such cases.

Those arrested are charged with cyberstalking, cyberbullying, injurious falsehood, criminal conspiracy, publishing fake news, and criminal defamation, among others, by the police and DSS, even when they have no evidence and when they have not made any investigation. Arrests are made when these agencies receive petitions from the rich, those in power, or those with influence. None of these cases is usually diligently prosecuted; rather, the victims are detained for a long time among hardened criminals, made to suffer and then freed.

In cases where the police weaponised provisions of the law, they operate like what MRA once described as 'gun for hire', arresting and prosecuting Nigerians for the rich, powerful, and influential.

### 2.3.3 Judicial Collusion in Breaching Journalists and Citizens' Rights

Another observed trend was judicial collusion by Magistrate's courts, a situation where people are arrested and arraigned before magistrates who order their remand for a long period while the victims' counsel seek their bail. In all instances, the magistrate courts do not have jurisdiction to try the cases, yet they go ahead to order the remand of accused individuals pending the perfection of their bail or when the concerned agency is able to properly file the case in a court with jurisdiction.

At other times, the courts grant bail on stringent and almost impossible to fulfil conditions: the bail sum is either high or the judge requests sureties who are government officials with landed property in Abuja or the state, and of at least a director's level, in cases where the accuser is the governor.

On September 25, 2025, a Chief Magistrate in the Imo State Judiciary, Mr Obinna Njemanze, ordered the remand of Mr Chinedu Agu, a lawyer, at the Owerri Correctional Centre for allegedly defaming the State Governor, Mr Hope Uzodinma, in critical comments on the administration posted by the lawyer on his Facebook page. Although the magistrate acknowledged that he lacked jurisdiction to hear and determine the charges brought against the lawyer, he nevertheless asked that he be remanded in a correctional facility.

In another case, Magistrate Stanley Ekeru, a Senior Magistrate in the Bayelsa State Judiciary sitting in Yenagoa, on September 16, 2025, rejected a bail application filed on behalf of Mr Aye O.S. Egberi, the Head of the social media team of the State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC), who was arraigned for alleged defamation and cybercrime. The magistrate ordered that he should be remanded in custody pending the determination of the charges against him.

Mr Ejike Ogbonna, an Imo State-based journalist and publisher of First Citizen newspaper, was granted bail with stringent conditions in September 2025 by a Magistrate's Court sitting in Owerri, the state capital, after he was detained for 30 days at the Tiger Base police unit for alleged cybercrime against a government official. The bail was granted in the sum of N2 million, the provision of a surety who must show proof of ownership of a landed property within the jurisdiction of the court, and a traditional ruler to endorse the bail bond.

In Kwara State, an Upper Area Court in Ganmo, Kwara State, on June 30, 2025, ordered the remand of a female Islamic scholar, Alhaja Kafilat Kaola, at the Oke Kura Correctional Facility in Ilorin, the State capital, over a case of

alleged defamation brought against her by an Islamic preacher, Alfa Taofeek Akeugbagold. She was blatantly denied bail.

### **2.3.4 Gender Disaggregation**

MRA's documented incidents of attacks on the expression of citizens and the media show that men were the major targets of these attacks. The collated data show that over 69 men were victims of these attacks, while more than seven women were attacked.

In 15 incidents, the gender of the victims was not stated, and, in some cases, there are more than one victim involved. Additionally, some of the attacks were on media outlets and groups of people, which may include male and female victims.

### **2.3.5 Geographic Distribution of Attacks**

Collated attacks on freedom of expression in Nigeria in 2025 show that the documented attacks took place in a total of 27 out of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The majority of the attacks took place in Lagos State and the FCT.

MRA documented 16 incidents of attacks on freedom of expression in Lagos; 14 in the FCT; and five apiece in Imo and Kano States.

MRA recorded four incidents of attacks on freedom of expression and the media in Kaduna, Rivers, and Niger States respectively.

Edo and Ebonyi States each recorded three incidents, while Ogun, Anambra, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Bayelsa, Kwara, and Kogi States all recorded two incidents each.

A total of 11 states recorded one incident each; these are Ekiti, Yobe, Abia, Kebbi, Enugu, and Akwa Ibom States. The other states that each recorded one incident of attacks on freedom of expression in 2025 are: Delta, Adamawa, Cross River, and Borno States.

## CHAPTER **THREE**



### **3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

With 86 documented cases of attacks on freedom of expression and nobody held accountable or prosecuted for any of these, it means that impunity for crimes against freedom of expression is being committed with impunity, and there is a need to curb that cycle of impunity.

Breaking the cycle of impunity however requires political will, institutional reform, and sustained pressure from media stakeholders, civil society, and the international community. Without decisive action, attacks on journalists and other citizens who expressed themselves in ways that some people are not comfortable with will continue to escalate, and at great cost to Nigeria's democracy and rule of law.

To address the culture of impunity fueling attacks on journalists and citizens in Nigeria for their expressions, the following measures are recommended:

1. There is a need to strengthen accountability. Law enforcement agencies must promptly, independently, and transparently investigate all attacks against journalists and citizens. Perpetrators, regardless of status, should be prosecuted, and outcomes made public to deter future violations.
2. The Federal Government should end law enforcement and security agencies' abuse of power. To achieve this, the Government should issue and enforce clear directives prohibiting the harassment, arrest, or intimidation of journalists for carrying out their professional duties or citizens for expressing themselves, especially online. Officers

found culpable should be made to face disciplinary and criminal sanctions as a deterrent.

3. In conformity with the UN Plan of Action on the safety of journalists, the Federal Government should establish and adopt a national mechanism or policy dedicated to the safety and protection of journalists, in line with international standards, including early warning systems and rapid response protocols.
4. The judiciary should be encouraged to prioritise cases involving attacks on journalists and other freedom of expression cases to ensure timely justice, as prolonged delays only reinforce impunity and discourage victims from seeking redress.
5. Stakeholders, including civil society organisations, training institutions, media associations and unions, and media houses, should provide regular training for police officers, security personnel, prosecutors, and judges on media freedom, freedom of expression, human rights, and the role of journalists in a democracy. A better understanding of laws protecting human rights by law enforcement and security agencies will help to check impunity.
6. Civil society organisations, media organisations and journalist unions should strengthen solidarity mechanisms, systematically document violations, and pursue strategic litigation where necessary to challenge impunity. They should also use the information and data gathered through their documentation to carry out advocacy on the safety of journalists and respect for human rights.

Civil society organisations and development partners should continue to monitor, report, and advocate against attacks on journalists while supporting legal aid, safety training, and policy reforms.

## CHAPTER **FOUR**



### **4.0 Detailed Incidents of Attacks on Freedom of Expression 2025**

#### **4.1 Assault and Battery**

##### **Journalists Assaulted by Edo State Governor's Aide**

On December 3, 2025, Mrs Juliet Enabulele-Asein, a female journalist with the Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), and a cameraman, Mr. Bright Osifo, were attacked by an aide to the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, Mr Kelly Okungbowa, popularly known as Ebo Stone.

According to media reports, the incident happened at the Festival Hall in the Government House, Benin City, during an empowerment programme for 250 persons with physical disabilities. Trouble reportedly started when a group of non-beneficiaries tried to gain access to the hall and were being ushered in through a side entrance.

Okungbowa allegedly confronted the cameraman, accusing him of recording the scene. When Enabulele-Asein attempted to explain that the cameraman was not recording, he reportedly struck her on the shoulder in an attempt to slap her.

“I told him the cameraman was not recording and even pointed out that he was working for the state government-owned station, but he ignored me,” Enabulele-Asein said.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, through its Chairman and the Secretary, Festus Alenkhe and Andy Egbon,

condemned the alleged assault, calling for the immediate arrest and prosecution of Okungbowa by the Nigeria Police and other security agencies.

The union described the act as an attack on press freedom, journalist safety, and the right of media professionals to carry out their duties without intimidation or violence.

“The NUJ will no longer tolerate attacks on journalists in the line of duty. We urge the public, particularly public officials, to exercise restraint and respect the constitutional role of the media in strengthening democracy and ensuring accountability,” the statement said.

### **Security Chief Attacks Journalist During Yobe State Governor's Budget Presentation**

Mr Babagana Kolo, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), was assaulted on November 6, 2025, by Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) Yakubu Zakari Deba, the Chief Security Officer (CSO) to the Yobe State Governor, at the Yobe State House of Assembly complex in Damaturu.

The incident occurred while journalists were waiting to be ushered into the chamber to cover Governor Mai Mala Buni's presentation of the 2026 budget to the legislature, when CSO suddenly pounced on Kolo, hitting him in the face and inflicting injuries to his mouth, an act that drew outrage among colleagues and other observers present at the scene.

The attack disrupted the media's coverage of the event, prompting journalists to threaten a boycott of the budget presentation. It took the intervention of Alhaji Abdullahi Bego, the Commissioner for Information, for the journalists to continue with the coverage.

CSP Deba, known for his long-standing involvement in state security operations, has had a history of strained relations with journalists. In 2022, these tensions led to a temporary boycott of government activities by the press.

### **Journalist Hospitalised After Beating Ordered by Commissioner**

On November 13, 2025, members of the Neighbourhood Security Watch (NSW), the Ebonyi State security agency, reportedly attacked a journalist, Mr Godwin Aliuna, while covering an event at the open hall of the Ministry of Border Peace and Conflict Resolution at the Old Government House in Abakaliki the state capital. He was hospitalized following the incident.

Mr Aliuna, who serves as a correspondent for the Daily Asset newspaper and Editor of The Nations News Nigeria online, said that Prof. Paul Awo Nwobasi, the Commissioner for Border Peace and Conflict Resolution, identified him and ordered him to leave the venue, sparking a confrontation. According to Aliuna, the incident escalated when the Commissioner allegedly instructed one of his aides to delete all contents from the journalist's phone.

Mr Aliuna said as he began to leave, the Commissioner, losing his temper, charged at him, pushing him and signaling security operatives to arrest him, after which he was subjected to further assault.

The Neighbourhood Security Watch, which allegedly carried out the attack, is affiliated with the Ministry of Internal Security.

### **Police, Thugs Assault Journalists Covering PDP Crisis in Abuja**

A group of journalists covering the clash between different factions of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at its national secretariat in Abuja on November 18, 2025, were beaten by thugs and policemen at the secretariat.

Security operatives assaulted a Channels TV reporter and damaged cameras while journalists attempted to cover the unfolding crisis at the secretariat. The violence erupted as factions led by Samuel Anyanwu and Tanimu Turaki prepared to hold separate meetings at the same venue over control of the party.

During the chaos, the police men deployed to the Secretariat fired teargas canisters directly at journalists, forcing them to retreat, disrupting coverage of the event.

### **NSCDC Officers Brutally Assault News Central TV Crew Covering Protest in Abuja**

Officers of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) brutally assaulted the crew members of News Central TV on October 20, 2025, while they were covering the #FreeNnamdiKanuNow protest in Abuja.

A video went viral online showing NSCDC officers assaulting the journalists. According to News Central TV, the incident occurred at the Ministry of Finance junction in Abuja, despite the crew wearing clear identification and clothing that visibly indicated they were members of the press.

In a post on its X handle, News Central TV wrote: "#FreeNnamdiKanuNow: Our crew was assaulted by officers of the Civil Defence today at the Ministry of Finance junction in Abuja while covering protests to ensure accurate and professional reporting."

The incident has sparked widespread outrage, with many demanding greater protection and respect for journalists covering protests and public events.

The #FreeNnamdiKanuNow protest was a protest called by Mr Omoyele Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), who has been detained since 2017.

The assault on News Central's crew has further deepened concerns about the safety of journalists in the country. In recent years, reporters covering protests and public gatherings have faced increasing harassment, arrests, and violence from security operatives.

### **Police Teargas BusinessDay Crew Covering #FreeNnamdiKanuNow Protest**

Policemen on October 20, 2025, fired teargas canisters at a BusinessDay TV media crew comprising Tony Ailemen, Tunde Adeniyi, Ladi Patrick-Okwoli, and Michael Godwin who were covering the #FreeNnamdiKanuNow protests at the Central Business District in Abuja, shattering the windshield of their vehicle.

According to media reports, the BusinessDay media crew members were conducting a voice pop on the protest when the police fired teargas in their direction. The canister shattered the back windscreen of their vehicle, injuring the camera man, Tunde Adeniyi.

Witnesses said the journalists inside the vehicle would have suffocated if not for the quick intervention of commuters.

Meanwhile, one of BusinessDay's journalists said they identified themselves as journalists, but the police still fired teargas in their direction, targeting their car, and they had to flee the scene.

### **Journalist Assaulted by Imo State Environmental Compliance Corps**

On October 13, 2025, Mr Uchechukwu Olebara, a senior editorial staff member of Radio Maria 106.7 FM, in Owerri, Imo State, was assaulted by operatives of the state Environmental Monitoring and Compliance Unit of the administration for allegedly recording them while they were demolishing alleged illegal structures and shanties in the New Owerri Roundabout.

The windscreens of his Toyota Corolla, side mirrors and the car headlamps

were smashed while the body of the car was badly damaged by members of the group.

The operatives of the Environmental Corps attacked Mr Olebara with machetes, as well as hauled stones and big sticks with which they smashed his car. Mr Olebara, popularly known as Cool DJ Blaze, had to run for his life and was able to barely escape death.

Meanwhile, the Journalist lamented that when he reported the incident at the New Owerri police station, rather than investigate the assault, he was simply asked to “call the SA and settle with him.”

### **NSCDC Operatives Assault Channels TV Cameraman Covering Turbaning Ceremony**

On October 11, 2025, operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Kaduna State Command, assaulted and rough-handled a Channels TV Cameraman, Mr Ogbonna Chukwu, while the journalist was attempting to access the venue of the turbaning ceremony of former Vice-President, Mr Namadi Sambo, by the Emir of Zazzau, Amb. Ahmed Bamalli, in Zaria, Kaduna State.

The incident sparked widespread condemnation after circulating on social media.

Meanwhile, the Corps' Kaduna State Commandant, Mr Panam Musa, on October 13, tendered an unreserved apology to Channels Television over the assault.

Mr Musa described the conduct of the officers as “unfortunate and unacceptable”, noting that it does not reflect the values of the Corps. While appreciating the media for its longstanding support to the NSCDC, he tendered the apology of the Corps to Channels Television for the incident.

He said, “It was an act of overzealousness by some of our personnel, which we do not condone. On behalf of the Corps, I sincerely say we are sorry.” He assured that appropriate disciplinary measures were being taken to address the misconduct and prevent a recurrence.

### **Operatives of Lagos State Building Control Agency Brutalise, Detain Blueprint Photojournalist**

On September 20, 2025, operatives of the Lagos State Environmental and Enforcement Unit and the Building Control Agency (LASBCA) attacked,

brutalised, and detained Mr Sunday Essiet, a photojournalist with Blueprint newspaper, for 10 hours while he was covering a demolition exercise at the Jakande Estate in the Isolo area of Lagos State.

Although Mr Essiet had obtained permission from a senior police officer to cover the event, when other police operatives and some louts saw him with a camera, they pounced on him, beat him, tore his clothes, threw away his official identification card, and seized his camera.

The photojournalist said after being brutalised, he was dragged and locked in a black maria van from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. without food.

Meanwhile, CP Olohundare Jimoh, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, was contacted, and he made a call to the chairman of LASBCA, CSP Adetayo Akerele, who then ordered Mr Essiet's release. However, his camera and other gadgets were not returned to him.

### **Political Thugs Attack Journalists Covering Edo State Local Council By-Election**

On September 20, 2025, journalists covering the conduct of local government by-elections at Asoro Primary School in Oredo Ward 9, Edo State, were attacked by alleged political thugs.

According to media reports, the reporters were conducting interviews and taking photographs when a man who claimed to be an agent of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), accused them of working for the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

He mobilised other thugs to attack and assault the journalists; they seized their phones and jotters, deleted recordings, images, and videos from the journalists' devices, and subjected them to prolonged harassment and intimidation before returning their belongings.

### **Policemen Assault FIJ Journalist for Making Inquiries, Threaten to Behead Him**

On August 30, 2025, Mr Daniel Ojukwu, a journalist with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ), was assaulted by police officers at the Ikeja Police Command in Lagos, when he went to meet with the Complaints Response Unit (CRU) over a report that some policemen had extorted money from detainees.

According to Mr Ojukwu, three policemen assaulted him when he approached

the Squad 1 office to ask to see the accused officers. They seized his phone and began going through it. As they scrolled through his phone, Mr Ojukwu informed them that their action was a breach of his privacy, but they refused to yield; instead, they continued to scroll through his phone. One of the officers, in mufti, shoved him out of the office.

However, the journalist managed to snatch his phone from one of the officers but he was violently beaten. One of them grabbed Mr Ojukwu by the head, forced it down and drove his knee into Ojukwu's face, shattering his glasses and leaving him disoriented.

About six other policemen descended on and clawed at him to wrestle the phone from his hand. In the fracas, he was injured in his left arm, his wristwatch was ripped off, and a SIM card slipped from his phone pouch.

When they finally repossessed the locked phone, they dragged him into another office where a policeman pulled out a machete and threatened to hack him.

The machete-wielding policeman allegedly threatened, "I will cut off your neck now. You think here is child's play?"

The journalist was later moved to the second-in-command's office, and while he waited outside, he complained of shortness of breath. But in response, one of the officers told him: "You will die here, and the autopsy will show asthma killed you, not police brutality".

Another asked him: "Do you think here is child's play?"

When Mr Benjamin Hundeyin, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), arrived at the office, the policemen admitted to dragging Ojukwu's phone off him and assaulting him, but claimed he had broken the law by taking a picture on the premises.

Meanwhile, Ojukwu turned down the offer from Mr Hundeyin to replace his damaged property and pay him compensation, but demanded the opportunity to file an official complaint against the men who attacked him.

### **Defendant Attacks The Guardian Photojournalist in Court**

On May 19, 2025, Mr Adebayo Akeju, a partner in the firm of Adon Partners and a defendant undergoing trial on charges of conspiracy to commit forgery, forgery, and willful destruction of property, attacked Mr Ayodele Adeniran, a photojournalist with The Guardian newspaper, for attempting to take his

photograph at the Lagos State High Court in Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS), Lagos.

Mr Akeju physically dragged Mr Adeniran and only released him after he showed him his camera to prove that he had not taken any photographs.

### **Journalist Brutalised in Ogun State, NUJ Imposes Blackout on NANS Activities**

On May 1, 2025, Mr Olajide Osoba, publisher of Newsangleonline, was assaulted by members of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) at the June 12 Cultural Centre in Kuto, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The attack allegedly occurred on the orders of Mr Azeez Adeyemi, the Senior Special Assistant to the Ogun State Governor on Student Matters.

Mr Osoba, who was at the venue to cover the 2025 Workers' Day celebration, sustained visible injuries during the attack, including bloodied clothing and facial wounds. Speaking after the incident, he maintained that he had done nothing to warrant the assault.

Meanwhile, the Ogun State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has condemned the attack in strong terms. In a statement signed by its Secretary, Bunmi Adigun, the Union described the incident as a gross violation of press freedom and an attack on the safety of journalists.

Consequently, the NUJ temporarily suspended the media coverage of all NANS-related activities in the state, pending the outcome of investigations by both the Union and the police.

“We have taken a firm stance following the alleged assault on a journalist and a member of the Union, Olajide Osoba, by supposed students and members of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Ogun State,” the statement read. “The leadership of Ogun NUJ has ordered a temporary blacklist on all coverage of activities by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) until a thorough investigation is conducted,” the statement added.

### **Journalist Assaulted by Senator Akobundu's Aides in Abia State**

Mr Tony Ichebu, a journalist based in Abia State, was assaulted by bouncers who physically lifted him and threw him out of a canopy at a public event on April 17, 2025, on the orders of Senator Austin Akobundu, who represents Abia Central Senatorial District.

The incident occurred during a funeral ceremony in Ikwuano Local Government Area, where Mr Icheke was taking photographs of the senator. According to eyewitnesses, Senator Akobundu instructed his aides to “deal seriously” with the journalist, prompting them to physically eject and assault him.

According to reports, a former Councillor of Ikwuano LGA, Mr Friday Uko, who was seen speaking with the Senator at the time, allegedly reinforced the instruction to the bouncers, telling them to “deal ruthlessly” with Mr Icheke and declaring that “the heavens would not fall.”

Speaking on the possible reason for the attack, Mr Icheke revealed that he had previously questioned Senator Akobundu on his stance regarding the Senate controversy involving Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan. “Senator Akobundu refused to respond but sent strong signals for me to stop my inquiries,” he said. “I refused, because his silence contradicts my professional commitment to the constitutional mandate for the media to hold public officials accountable.”

Mr Icheke referenced Chapter 2, Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution, which guarantees the press the responsibility to uphold accountability and transparency in governance.

### **Daily Trust Photojournalist Brutally Attacked by Traders in Lagos Market**

Mr Benedict Uwalaka, a photojournalist with Daily Trust newspaper, was violently attacked on April 13, 2025, by a group of traders at the Kontagora Market on Anifowose Street in the Abule-Egba area of Lagos. The assault occurred while he was photographing wheelbarrow pushers as part of his reporting assignment.

According to Mr Uwalaka, three men initially approached him and accused him of being a government informant. They raised an alarm that quickly drew a crowd of about 15 traders, who seized his camera, tied his hands and legs, and began beating him. He sustained a head injury during the ordeal.

“They tied my legs and hands behind me and kept beating me,” Mr Uwalaka said from a private hospital where he was treated. “They said I was an informant and threatened to kill me while calling others to join in the attack.”

He said he reported the incident at the Oke-Odo Police Station in Ile-Epo, and they have arrested one suspect, while others are on the run.

## **Journalists Covering Protest in Port Harcourt Brutalised, Arrested**

Five journalists – Charles Opurum, the Rivers State correspondent of Channels Television; Allwell Ene of Naija FM; Soibelemari Oruwari of Nigeria/Info; Ikezam Godswill of AIT, and Femi Ogunkhilede of Super FM – who went to cover the protest by the Coalition of Rivers Civil Society Organisations and members of the Take-it-back movement calling for the repeal of the Cybercrime Act and an end to the emergency rule in River State, were on April 7, 2025, brutalised, arrested and detained by armed policemen who were deployed to quell the peaceful protest.

The civil society coalition had gathered at Isaac Boro Park in Port Harcourt, where its leadership addressed the media. The protesters then proceeded towards the Federal Secretariat when they were accosted around the CFC flyover by a convoy of policemen who fired tear gas canisters into their midst.

Mr Opurum was tear-gassed, arrested, and brutally beaten up by a policeman before being bundled into a waiting van. According to him, while the police were firing tear gas, he tried to film what was happening, and from nowhere, an overzealous policeman attacked him. He said the policeman grabbed him by the shirt and trousers and asked who he was. He said he identified himself and showed his identity card, but the officer said even if he is a journalist he was not supposed to join the protest, that he should have listened to the police instruction. The correspondent said he informed the policeman that he was not protesting but was there to report what was happening.

Mr Opurum said: “He kept slapping, beating me, and dragging me, and tried to force me into a bus. I looked at the bus and said to him 'no, I can't enter this bus because this is not a police van.' I told him, 'put me in a police van, let me know when I am in the custody of the police', so he dragged me to the second van and pushed me inside. He tried to seize my phone, but I resisted. I held my phone back and said I'm not releasing my phone to you, so when I entered the van, they closed it.” He was eventually released by members of the Commissioner of Police Monitoring Unit who recognised him.

The AIT cameraman had his camera seized and footage of the confrontation deleted by the police before it was returned to him.

## **Security Agents Assault Journalists, Deny Them Access to National Assembly**

On March 26, 2025, law enforcement and security agents deployed to the

National Assembly in Abuja assaulted some journalists and denied them access to the premises to cover the day's proceedings despite pleas by the journalists to be allowed to perform their professional duties.

The Sergeant-at-Arms and police officers on duty claimed they were acting on "orders from above" to prevent persons without official permanent identity cards from entering the White House complex of the National Assembly.

Pleas from the journalists, who explained that the National Assembly's Information Department had not yet issued them their permanent identity cards fell on deaf ears.

The situation escalated and the security personnel resorted to verbal abuse and then physically attacked some journalists. In the process, Mr Mudashiru Atanda, a photojournalist with The Sun, sustained some injuries, while Mr Nicolas Kalu of The Nation newspaper and Ms Gloria Essien of the Voice of Nigeria, who attempted to intervene, were pushed aside during the altercation. A smartphone belonging to Ms Tolu Akinyemi, an accredited journalist with SuperScreen Television, was confiscated by one of the security personnel who also threatened to ensure she never saw it again.

### **Journalist Beaten, Locked up After Raising Alarm Over Church Fire in Port Harcourt**

On March 15, 2025, Mr. Precious Amadi, a broadcast journalist, was brutally beaten up, his two phones damaged, and locked up in a garage for hours by overzealous members of Salvation Ministries for sending an SOS message on Facebook to the Rivers State Fire Service to come contain a fire outbreak in the Church premises at 17 Birabi Street, GRA, Port Harcourt in Rivers State.

Recounting his ordeal, Precious said that he noticed flames within the Church premises while returning from work and he immediately took action; evacuating chairs, fetching water to contain the fire, and making several unanswered calls to the Rivers State Fire Service.

He said despite his efforts, some church members allegedly turned on him, accusing him of being a spy and falsely claiming he was sent to attack Pastor David Ibiyeomie. The situation escalated as they reportedly beat him, destroyed his two phones, and inflicted multiple injuries on him.

In a bid to seek help, Amadi posted an SOS message on Facebook. However, this provoked further aggression as he was subjected to more assault under the supervision of junior pastors in the Church. The members accused Mr Precious of starting the fire, and locked him in a garage for hours.

He was eventually released around 1 AM the next day, but not before church members had deleted his social media posts and erased data from his phone to remove evidence.

Precious said, “I had no ulterior motives. I am a journalist based in Port Harcourt, and I acted purely out of concern. Despite my efforts to help, I was brutally beaten, accused of being an enemy of the Church, and locked up. I was warned not to speak up, but I refuse to remain silent. I demand justice.”

### **UI Security Assault Campus Journalists Who Recorded Them Manhandling Student**

On March 7, 2025, during the inauguration and swearing-in of elected executive members of the University of Ibadan Students Representative Council (UISRC), two campus journalists, Mr. Olanshile Ogunrinu and Mr. Oluwasegun Akanni, were assaulted, and had their phones seized for recording the manhandling of Ms Nice Linus, an elected member of the Council, by the university's security personnel.

Messrs. Ogunrinu and Akanni were assaulted by three members of the University of Ibadan (UI) security outfit codenamed 'Abefe'. They pinned Ogunrinu to the wall, slapped and dragged him out of the hall, and took him to the Abefe office. They also seized his phone.

The institution's security officers had forcefully dragged Ms Nice Linus out of the Trenchard Hall because Mr. T. I Musa, the institution's Deputy Registrar, revoked her election as a member of the UISRC due to her pending SDC case on the role she played in the 2024 protests against fees hike. Witnessing the incidents, the journalists decided to capture it with their phones when the Deputy Registrar shouted: “He is recording”, following which three security men rushed at him and his colleague, pinned them to the wall, and forcefully confiscated Mr. Ogunrinu's phone.

He was later released while writing a statement at the office of the Abefe security outfit.

### **Nigeria AirForce Officers Assault Journalists**

On March 6, 2025, at about 7.40 AM, armed personnel from the Nigeria Air Force Base in Ikeja, Lagos assaulted three journalists, including Mr. Dare Olawin, a correspondent of Punch Newspapers, who had gone to the headquarters of the Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company (IKEDC) Alausa,

Ikeja, Lagos from where he was to proceed with other journalists to cover an event.

The armed AirForce officers were at IKEDC headquarters to vent their anger over the disconnection of their military base from the public electricity grid. However, when they sighted Mr. Olawin ; a TVC cameraman, and one other reporter in a coaster bus, the AirForce officers dragged the media men out, beat them severely and made them to sit on the floor. Mr. Olawin sustained an injury in his left eye as a result.

They confiscated Mr. Olawin's Android phone, a small Itel phone, and a white power bank, and they also threatened to shoot him if he tried to say anything. A tripod belonging to the TVC cameraman and a memory card were also taken away by the men.

### **Political Aide Assualts Journalist, Damages Phone**

On January 6, 2025, Mr. Emmanuel Okoronkwo, a personal aide to Senator Samuel Anyanwu of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), assaulted Mr. Ndubuisi Orji, The Sun newspaper correspondent, who was covering the activities of the party at Wadata Plaza, the party secretariat in Abuja. Mr. Okorokwo damaged Mr. Oji's phone during the attack.

Mr. Orji was at the PDP secretariat to assess the situation following a Court of Appeal judgment on December 20, 2024, which upheld the judgment of an Enugu High Court that affirmed Mr. Udo-Okoye as Anyanwu's replacement. He sought to enter the Wadata Plaza but was turned back by the security personnel at the gate, who said they had directives not to allow journalists into the secretariat.

They requested The Sun Correspondent to call Senator Anyanwu or the Chief Security Officer (CSO), saying that it is only the duo that can authorise his access into the party secretariat. However, as Mr. Orji was walking towards his car Mr. Okoronkwo approached him and started assaulting him; he dealt the journalist several slaps and damaged his mobile phone in the process. It took the intervention of the security personnel at the gate to restrain Anyanwu's aide.

While Mr. Okoronkwo was being led away, he threatened to “deal” with The Sun correspondent and any other journalist whom he finds close to the PDP secretariat. He also boasted that nothing would happen because he was acting on the instructions of his principal who gave specific instructions that journalists should be barred from entering the building by any means possible

including the use of physical force.

The PDP Press Corps in a statement by its chairman, Samuel Ogidan, condemned the assault and charged the police to bring Okoronkwo to justice. The Press Corps also called on the PDP leadership to address the serious incident and take drastic action against Mr. Okoronkwo to serve as a deterrent to others.

On January 7, the PDP through its National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, condemned the assault and apologised for the incident. He also assured that an investigation would be carried out on the matter, and reaffirmed the party's commitment to press freedom and democratic values.

#### **4.2 Arrest and Detention**

##### **Anambra Police Arrest Woman Over Alleged Cyberbullying and Defamation of Senior Officer**

Operatives of the Rapid Response Squad of the Anambra State Police Command have arrested and detained a 42-year-old woman, Ms. Eucharia Ogochukwu, over allegations of cyberbullying and defamation of a senior police officer.

Ms. Ogochukwu was arrested on December 31, 2025, in Awka, the Anambra State capital. Police allege that she engaged in coordinated online activities aimed at damaging the reputation of an Assistant Commissioner of Police. According to the police, the suspect made statements during interrogation which they described as useful to their investigation. The police further disclosed that efforts are ongoing to identify and apprehend other individuals who may be linked to the alleged offence.

Police did not immediately provide details of the specific online posts or platforms involved, nor did they indicate whether formal charges have been filed against the suspect.

##### **Lagos Police Arrest Senior Investigative Reporter with FIJ**

On December 22, 2025, operatives of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in Owutu, Ikorodu area of Lagos, arrested and handcuffed Mr Sodeeq Atanda, a senior investigative reporter with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ), allegedly using his wife and their nine-month-old baby, who were earlier arrested and detained for hours, as bait.

Earlier the same day, Mrs Adenike Atanda and her infant child were arrested at their residence by the police and detained for several hours at the Owutu Police Station.

Mrs Atanda disclosed that the police coerced her into calling her husband and lying to him that their child was ill and hospitalised. She recounted: “When they realised my husband was no longer far from the house, the policemen drove me and my baby to a street not far from our home. When they saw him, they handcuffed him and took him away. That was when they released my baby and me.”

Mr Atanda was taken from the Owutu Police Station to the Force Headquarters Annex, Obalende, Lagos, where he was detained for several hours before his eventual release shortly before midnight.

According to FIJ, on November 26, 2025, a person who identified himself as “Omo Eleniyan” and claimed to be working with the Inspector-General of Police Monitoring Unit at the Force Headquarters Annex, Obalende, Lagos, contacted Mr. Atanda via WhatsApp, summoning him to the station.

In the WhatsApp message, Omo Eleniyan said “I'm a police officer attached to IGP Monitoring Unit Lagos Annex.”

“An approved petition was referred to my department from the office of the inspector general of police for further investigation, and you [sic] named [sic] as [sic] been mentioned and alleged [sic] that was why [sic] you been [sic] invited sir [sic] thanks for cooperation and understanding [sic].”

In response, Mr. Atanda provided FIJ's official email address, requesting that a formal letter of invitation be sent through that channel.

But Eleniyan responded: “The invitation Is [sic] for you not [sic] for the organisers [sic].”

However, Eleniyan replied: “The invitation is for you, not for the organisers.”

Mr. Atanda subsequently clarified that he works for FIJ and that any such invitation should be sent through the organisation's official channel. Eleniyan replied: “Alright sir. No problem.” Thereafter, FIJ did not receive any further communication from him until the police allegedly used Mr. Atanda's family as bait to arrest him.

Mr. Atanda was released a few minutes before midnight on the same day.

## **Anambra Police Harass, Detain Journalist at Anambra Assembly Gate**

An Anambra-based journalist, Mr Izunna Okafor, was harassed and briefly detained on December 10, 2025, by security personnel at the entrance of the Anambra State House of Assembly Complex in Awka while he was on an official assignment to the legislative body to cover the budget defence of the State's Commissioner for Power and Water Resources, Mr. Julius Chukwuemeka.

Okafor, who arrived to cover the budget defence of the Commissioner for Power and Water Resources, said security officers first ordered him to park his vehicle outside the premises. He said despite identifying himself as a journalist and explaining his assignment, the officers blocked him from entering, demanded he personally call the Commissioner for clearance, and then physically pushed him back when he attempted to proceed.

When Okafor began recording the encounter, the officers seized his two phones, stopped the recording, searched through his devices, and continued denying him access. The confrontation escalated as he was dragged, threatened with detention at B-Division, and taken to the Assembly's detention post, where officers demanded he sit on the floor and allegedly threatened further punishment.

He added that attempts by the Commissioner to intervene initially failed, as the officers insisted that he must first be detained. Okafor was later taken towards B-Division before being called back to the Assembly premises, where discussions involving officials and observers took place. Security officers reportedly demanded an apology letter and an undertaking before his release, but others present resisted the demand.

He was eventually freed, but only after playing the audio recording of the incident, upon which the House Member on the scene ordered the recording deleted before his phone was returned.

The Anambra State Police Command, however, denied that Okafor was ever detained, insisting that its officers only followed standard security protocols to verify his identity and confirm the authenticity of his invitation to the Assembly complex.

According to the Command, the process was routine and non-punitive, adding that the “enemy” remark heard during the encounter was merely a situational

outburst that arose from what they described as the journalist's unsatisfactory explanation. Police further noted that the individual who invited Okafor was neither a staff member nor a lawmaker but was also present on invitation, stressing that the matter was resolved on the spot. The Command reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a professional relationship with journalists, whom it described as vital partners in advancing public safety and accountability.

### **Governor's Critic Arrested, Arraigned, Released on Bail**

Mr Abubakar Idris, a trader resident of Kaduna, North-west Nigeria, also known as Comrade Danhabu on Facebook, was arrested by operatives of the Nigeria Police on December 8, 2025, for criticising Mr. Uba Sani, the Kaduna State Governor. He was arraigned at a Magistrate's Court on December 9 and remanded in custody.

He was arrested at his market stall and taken to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Kaduna, where he was detained and personally interrogated by the Commissioner of Police (CP).

Mr Idris was arraigned before a Magistrate's Court in Kaduna on allegations of cyberstalking and injurious falsehood. The Magistrate ordered that he be remanded in a correctional facility until January 13, 2026, for the hearing of the case.

He was arrested over a Facebook post in which he accused the state government of disregarding a directive by President Bola Tinubu to withdraw police officers attached to Very Important Persons (VIPs) across the country.

Reports indicate that Mr. Idris shared the Facebook post that led to his arrest at about 10:19 p.m. on December 7, and the police arrested him the following day, despite their claim that he was arrested due to his repeated failure to honour several police invitations.

He was eventually released on December 24, 2025.

### **DSS Arrests, Charges Man Over Social Media Posts Calling on the Military to Overthrow Government**

Security operatives from the Department of State Services (DSS) have arrested Mr Innocent Chukwuemeka Onukwume in Oyigbo, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, for allegedly using his social media account to incite the military to overthrow the Nigerian government. On November 11, 2025, the DSS filed

a six-count charge against him at the Federal High Court in Abuja.

According to reports, Mr Onukwume, who operates the X handle "@TheAgroman," posted messages calling for a coup and urging the armed forces to "suspend the Nigerian government." In one post, he wrote: "Dispose of APC, suspend the Nigerian Government, and join the AES. That is all we need now. It will happen eventually. Nigerians, the military needs your support now! Only them can save this country."

He also accused the Presidency of compromising national interests, posting: "The bastard in Aso Rock has basically sold this country to the West, and they run our intelligence apparatus. Only the military can reset this country. Support them."

The charge marked FHC/ABJ/CR/610/2025 was filed by A. M. Danalami on behalf of the DSS, alleging that Mr Onukwume, of Umusayo Layout, Oyigbo Local Government Area in Rivers State, committed the offences in October 2025.

The DSS charge sheet states that, by his conduct, Onukwume committed offences contrary to and punishable under Sections 46 A (1) and 59 (1) of the Criminal Code Act.

Some counts in the charge read:

"That you, Innocent Chukwuemeka Onukwume, male, 27 years old, of Umusayo Layout, Oyigbo LGA of Rivers State, sometimes in October, 2025, having the intent to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturbing the public peace, posted a message calling for a coup in Nigeria on your social media account, to wit: your verified X account (@theagroman), by which you published the following words: 'A coup in Nigeria is needed. Dispose of APC, suspend the Nigeria government and join the AES. That is all we need now.' You thereby committed an offence punishable under section 59 (1) of the Criminal Code Act, Cap 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004."

"That you, Innocent Chukwuemeka Onukwume, male, 27 years old, of Umusayo Layout, Oyigbo LGA of Rivers State, on or about the 15th day of October, 2025 and within the jurisdiction of this honourable court, with intent to cause annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, enmity, criminal intimidation, hatred, ill will or needless anxiety against the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, knowingly and intentionally posted a message on the social media via your verified account, to wit: your verified X account (@theagroman), by which you published the following words: 'It will happen eventually, Nigerian. The military needs your support

now! Only them can save this country. The bastardd in Aso Rock has basically sold this country to the West and they run our intelligence apparatus only the military can reset this country.' You thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 24 (1) (b) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2024 (As Amended).

"That you, Innocent Chukwuemeka Onukwume, male, 27 years old, of Umusayo Layout, Oyigbo LGA of Rivers State, on or about the 15th day of October, 2025 and within the jurisdiction of this honourable court, with intent to cause annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, enmity, criminal intimidation, hatred, ill will, or needless anxiety against the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, knowingly and intentionally posted a message on the social media via your verified account, to wit: your verified X account (@theagroman), by which you published the following words: "Tinubu has to go and APC has to die for Nigeria to have any semblance of normal life. And if you think your stupid, votes can remove Tinubu. I'm here to tell you that you're a fool.' You thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 24 (1) (b) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2024 (As Amended).

"That you, Innocent Chukwuemeka Onukwume, male, 27 years old, of Umusayo Layout, Oyigbo LGA of Rivers State, on or about the 15th day of October, 2025 and within the jurisdiction of this honourable court, with intent to cause annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, enmity, criminal intimidation, hatred, ill will, or needless anxiety against the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, knowingly and intentionally posted a message on the social media via your verified account, to wit: your verified X account (@theagroman), by which you published the following words: "A coup in Nigeria is needed. Dispose of APC, suspend the Nigeria Government and join the AES. That is all we need now.' You thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 24 (1) (b) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2024 (As Amended)."

### **Police Arrest, Arraigns University Student Over Social Media Criticism of Niger State Governor**

Police in Niger State have arrested Mr Abubakar Isah Mokwa, a post-graduate student of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Lapai, for criticising Governor Umar Bago on social media.

Mr Mokwa was picked up by the police on October 23, 2025, about a week after posting on his Facebook account, where he accused the governor of lying

about his administration's achievements in tackling insecurity and improving infrastructure. In the post, Mr Mokwa called Mr Bago "Governor Amunike," a name adopted by popular comedian Kevin Chinedu to depict corrupt Nigerian governors.

Confirming his arrest, Mr Wasiu Abiodun, the Niger State police spokesperson told journalists that the Niger State Police Command received a formal criminal complaint against Mr Mokwa and, as a result, arrested him.

He was transferred to the State Police Command Headquarters in Minna for further investigation in connection with the allegations according to Mr Abiodun.

On November 5 when he was arraigned at the Chief Magistrates' Court 1 in Minna, the Niger State capital, the Magistrate refused to grant him bail, even though it admitted that it lacks jurisdiction to hear the cybercrime case brought against the student by the Niger State Governor.

The court delivered the ruling after considering a formal bail application filed by Mr Mokwa's lawyer, Barrister Ibrahim Usman Wali. And, despite acknowledging that it lacked jurisdiction, the Magistrate went ahead to fix another hearing for November 17, 2025, a move the defence team described as a clear violation of due process.

On November 17, when he was again arraigned at a Magistrates' Court, it ordered Mr Mokwa to be remand in the Minna Correctional Centre till 29 November 2025, while the police continued their investigation.

Prior to the adjournment, his counsel, Mr Ibrahim Usman Wali, had explained delays in earlier proceedings, saying: "They claim they'll bring him but they're experiencing some administrative delays. We're suspecting that they're waiting for the final OK of the CP, who isn't in yet."

Expressing concerns over the handling of the case and stated: "We take this opportunity to reaffirm a simple but fundamental truth: the Nigerian Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to free expression, including the right to criticise government conduct. Governance is a public trust, and those who hold office must accept public scrutiny as part of democratic accountability."

He added, "Attempts to criminalise dissent or silence constructive voices only weaken the social contract between the people and their government. We therefore urge the authorities, including the Governor, to respect

constitutional freedoms and the civic space that sustains democracy.”

## **Police Arrest TikToker for Criticising House of Representatives Member in Enugu**

Mr Chisom Achor, a TikToker from Ebonyi State, was abducted by officers of the Enugu State Police Command in the evening of November 5, 2025, allegedly on the orders of Hon. Chinedu Ogah, the House of Representatives member representing Ezza South/Ikwo Federal Constituency, while he was live on TikTok, criticising the lawmaker.

Before his arrest, Achor had posted videos on TikTok in which he accused the lawmaker of subjecting his community to brutal oppression, killings, and land grabbing. In one of the videos, delivered in Igbo, he alleged that Ogah had leveraged his influence to intimidate and exploit the people of the community. In his narration, Achor claimed that several residents had died under questionable circumstances and accused the lawmaker of using violence and coercion to silence dissent in the community.

Mr Achor has been held incommunicado as no one has been granted access to see him.

## **Journalist in Abuja Arrested for Inquiring about Projects in Gwagwalada Council, Arraigned, Granted Bail**

Abuja-based journalist, Mr Manasseh Bem Paul, who works with Chronicles Reporters, a public service journalism platform, was on October 30, 2025, arrested at his residence in the Gwagwalada area of Abuja by armed policemen accompanied by Hon Ezekiel Zezelaga, the Giri LGA (FCT) All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) chairmanship candidate, who stormed his house and brutalised him before arresting him.

Reports say the police officers whisked Manasseh away in Hon. Zezelaga's vehicle and took him to the residence of the Gwagwalada Area Council Chairman, Mr Abubakar Jibrin Giri, where he was threatened, intimidated, and assaulted. Messrs Zezelaga and Giri claimed that the activist had defamed them.

Manasseh had earlier published a report exposing alleged irregularities in contract awards by the Gwagwalada Area Council and also accused the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate, Hon. Zezelaga, of acquiring suspicious properties on behalf of Mr Giri.

He was, thereafter, taken to the Gwagwalada Police Division, where he was

again beaten and manhandled by police officers.

The police arraigned him at the Magistrates' Court sitting in Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT, accusing him of criminal defamation of character.

During proceedings, his lawyer, Barrister Grace, urged the court to grant him bail, arguing that the offence was bailable. The court admitted him to bail in the sum of ₦3 million with two sureties (one a Level 14 civil servant and one a businessperson, each to provide ₦3 million)

The case was adjourned to December 1, 2025, for hearing.

### **Police Arrest, Detain AFP Journalist Covering Protest in Abuja**

On October 20, 2025, officers of the Nigeria Police Force arrested Mr John Okunyomih, a video journalist with Agence France-Presse (AFP), while he was covering the #FreeNnamdiKanu protests outside the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja. The policemen took the journalist to the Force Headquarters in Garki, where he was detained.

Media reports state that Mr Okunyomih was with other journalists monitoring the protests when police fired teargas toward them. Thereafter, the police swooped in and arrested Mr Okunyomih. They manhandled him and pulled his camera as they forced him into their vehicle and, in the process, his camera was slightly damaged.

He was released about an hour later without charge.

### **Police Arrest Journalist Following Petition by Kano State Official Accused of Corruption**

On October 18, 2025, Mr Ibrahim Abubakar Ishaq, a journalist with an online platform, Dan'uwa Rano TV, was arrested by the Zone 1 Headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in Kano State following a petition alleging defamation of character made by Mr Abdullahi Rogo, the Director-General of Protocol to Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano State, against him.

Reports have it that the police officers stormed Mr Ishaq's office in Kano and, without presenting any arrest warrant, whisked him away.

It was gathered that the journalist was questioned over his alleged defamation of Mr Rogo and for operating an online television station without obtaining a licence from the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). He reportedly clarified that online media platforms are not required by law to obtain an NBC licence. Despite this clarification, however, he was detained in a cell, allegedly on the orders of the embattled Mr Rogo.

In a programme titled “Imalu” aired on his YouTube channel, Dan'uwa TV on September 1, 2025, Mr Ishaq had commented on the corruption case against Mr Rogo, who is standing trial for an alleged N6.5 billion fraud. Mr Rogo is being tried by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for alleged diversion and laundering of N6.5 billion belonging to the Kano State government.

Mr Ishaq is alleged to have said during the programme that allegations of corruption by protocol officers are not new, adding that the officers always demanded bribes from contractors and people who wanted to see the governor. He added that some governors may be unaware of the development, but others may be due to their involvement in fraudulent activities.

The satirical programme reportedly made innuendo-laden references to a “certain DG protocol” accused of collecting bribes in exchange for granting visitors access to the governor. Although the programme did not mention names, Mr Rogo, however, petitioned the police, claiming the content targeted him.

The journalist was released on October 19, following mounting pressure and public outcry.

### **DSS Arrest Two Radio Reporters Covering President Tinubu's Visit to Plateau State**

On October 4, 2025, two reporters with Jay 101.9 FM, Jos, the Plateau State capital, Ms Ruth Marcus and Ms Keshia Jang, were arrested by operatives of the Department of State services (DSS) during a visit by President Bola Tinubu, for the burial of the mother of Prof. Nentawe Yilwadta Goshwe, the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Chairman.

According to media reports, they were arrested after posting a video on social media showing a confrontation between a cleric and security operatives during the funeral event. Security agents deployed to the venue had initially denied journalists and others access to the church for the service.

However, Mr Oluwatosin Ajayi, the DSS Director-General, ordered their immediate release after he learned of their arrest. He also directed that an apology be tendered to the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ).

Meanwhile, the management of Jay FM said in a statement signed by its Managing Director, Comrade Clinton Garuba, that the journalists had gone

missing during coverage of the funeral service before it was later confirmed that they were in DSS custody. The statement added that “Upon confirming that the DSS was holding them, frantic efforts were made to secure their release. Although our efforts were initially rebuffed, they were eventually released.”

## **Naija News Today Publisher Arrested in Lagos for Publications, Taken to Abuja**

Mr Friday Alefia, publisher of Naija News Today, was, sometime in October 2025, reportedly arrested in Lagos by operatives of the Intelligence Response Team (IRT) of the Nigerian Police and transferred to Abuja, where he is being held at the detention facility of the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) over alleged cybercrime relating to a report he published about Hon. Chinedu Ogah, who represents Ezza South/Ikwo Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives.

Mr Alefia was allegedly arrested following a petition by Hon. Ogah, who accused him of defamation, cyberbullying, and character assassination over a report published on December 20, 2024, titled “Ogah’s Political Future Uncertain Amid Senate Rumours.” The platform also published a second article on May 15, 2025, titled “2027 — The Year Chinedu Ogah Might Finally Fade Into Political Irrelevance.” The House member found these articles critical of his political performance and, as a result, filed a petition against the journalist.

Speaking with the media on October 12, 2025, the publisher’s elder brother, Uchenna Nwanchor, stated that the family did not know the exact date of his arrest but said that he had been in custody for more than two weeks. He added that a relative, who had been taking food to Mr Alefia in detention, informed the family that his health was deteriorating daily.

Several people have pleaded with Hon. Ogah to release the journalist, but he said the matter was already before a court.

The House member described Mr Alefia’s publications as attempts to tarnish his reputation, claiming the detained publisher had written “about 36 stories” against him.

## **Magistrate Remands Lawyer in Custody for Alleged Defamation, Cybercrime**

On September 25, 2025, a Chief Magistrate in the Imo State Judiciary, Mr. Obinna Njemanze, ordered the remand of Mr Chinedu Agu, a lawyer, at the Owerri Correctional Centre for allegedly defaming the State Governor, Mr. Hope Uzodinma, in critical comments of the Administration posted by the lawyer on his Facebook page, although the magistrate acknowledged that he lacked jurisdiction to hear and determine the charges brought against the lawyer.

Magistrate Njemanze ordered the remand of Mr Agu even after he acknowledged that his court lacked jurisdiction to try the lawyer in the matter.

Mr Agu was arrested on September 23 based on a petition by a group called Imo Democratic Alliance, and signed by Umukoro Marvis Udochukwu.

At the September 25 hearing, the magistrate adjourned the case to October 29, 2025 and ordered that the case file be forwarded to the Imo State Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) to assign the case to a court with jurisdiction.

The police accused Mr Agu of allegedly committing the offences contrary to and punishable under section 24(1)(b) of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Amendment Act, 2024 because of his opinion articles that criticised the administration of Governor Hope Uzodimma, which he shared on his Facebook page.

According to the Imo State Commissioner for Police, the lawyer had, on August 30, 2025, shared an article where he wrote “the courts are closed and justice has been kidnapped not by bandits in the bush, but by bandit in government” and “this, is not government, this is tyranny trapped in sinking bureaucracy”.

The Police Commissioner said Mr Agu knew that his posts were false and could incite the people against Governor Uzodimma and his cabinet, and cause a breakdown of law and order in the state, and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 24(1)(b) of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention etc.) Amendment Act, 2024.

Mr Agu, a critic of Uzodimma's administration, had engaged with the Imo State Commissioner for Information, Mr Declan Emelumba, in a series of public exchanges. His articles, including “Tears from Enugu: A Lawyer's

Heartbreaking Diary from a State that Works to a State in Ruins” and “Imo State – Where Justice Is on Vacation During Court Vacation,” drew sharp rebuttals from Emelumba, who described them as “satanic verses.”

On September 25, Agu's legal team filed a fundamental rights application before Justice Chituru Wigwe-Oreh of the Federal High Court which granted him bail, but he was not released as the order was said to apply only to the police and did not cover the custodial authority of the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCoS), for which reason he remained in detention. The Federal High Court subsequently instructed Agu's lawyers to file a fresh application addressing the NCoS.

On October 9, the court asked Mr Agu's legal team to file a written address on the competence of the bail application, given that no formal charge had been filed against him. The judge noted that the opposing side would be allowed to respond before a final ruling date is fixed. The Court, therefore, adjourned his bail application to October 14, 2025.

However, on October 16, when the court sat, Justice Wigwe-Oreh refused to grant the lawyer bail, citing the absence of any formal charge against Mr Agu as the basis for denying the bail application.

He was eventually released from the Owerri Correctional Centre on October 21 after spending 28 days in detention.

### **Publisher of Secret Reporters Online Arrested in Abuja, Flown to Delta State**

Mr Tega Oghenedoro, popularly known as Fejiro Oliver, a journalist and publisher of Secret Reporters, an online platform for investigative journalism, was on September 19, 2025, arrested at his office in Garki, Abuja, by operatives of the Nigeria Police Force Intelligence Department (FID), who took him to their office. They, thereafter, drove him to the airport in Abuja and flew him to Asaba, the Delta State capital, where he is being detained.

Reports stated that he is being detained at the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Asaba, and has been denied access to his lawyers. He has neither been released nor charged to court.

However, neither the Delta State government nor the Delta State police command has made any statement on the arrest of Mr Oghenedoro.

Meanwhile, human rights advocates, Mr Omes Ogedegbe and Comrade Efemina Umukoro Akima, have raised alarm concerning the safety of the

journalist and petitioned the Delta State Police Command, demanding the immediate disclosure of the whereabouts and release of the journalist, noting that they visited the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Asaba, and that officers at the Human Rights Section told them that Mr Oghenedoro has been moved to the Anti-Kidnapping Section.

However, they said when they visited the Anti-Kidnapping Section, they denied that he was being detained in their facility.

### **Leadership Online Editor Arrested, Remanded Over Report of Fraud by Councillor**

Mr Zuhair Ali Ibrahim, editor of Leadership Online newspaper, was on September 15, 2025, arrested by the police in Zaria, Kaduna State, following a petition by Mr Abubakar Nuhu, the Councillor of Doro Ward in the Bindawa Local Government Area of Katsina State over a report published by Leadership Hausa Online on September 7, 2025, in which a certain Alhaji Ibrahim Sa'adu accused the Councillor of defrauding him of ₦30 million.

Mr Ibrahim was taken to Katsina State from Kaduna State and on September 18, remanded in prison custody on the order of Magistrate's Court II sitting in Katsina on the request of the police to keep him in custody pending investigations into a petition.

According to media reports, the editor reportedly contacted the Councillor for his side of the story without success before going to press.

He was interrogated and he explained how he got the story, as well as detailed the efforts he made to obtain the Councillor's side of the matter.

### **APC Social Media Chief Denied Bail, Remanded for Alleged Cyberstalking**

On September 16, 2025, Magistrate Stanley Ekeru, a Senior Magistrate in the Bayelsa State Judiciary sitting in Yenagoa, rejected a bail application filed on behalf of Mr Aye O.S. Egberi, the Head of the social media team of the State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC), who was arraigned for alleged defamation and cybercrime. The magistrate ordered that he should be remanded in custody pending the determination of the charges against him.

Recall that the Magistrate had on September 10 ordered Mr Egberi to be remanded for 30 days at the Okaka Medium Correctional Facility for his alleged involvement in cyberstalking the Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri and the State Commissioner of Police, Mr Francis Idu.

Mr Egberi was arrested by the Operation Puff Adder, led by CSP Chris Uwaogbo, over a write-up that accused the State Governor and Police Commissioner of reportedly masterminding the July 2025 abduction of a State High Court Judge, Justice Ebeyerim Umokoro, and charged to court. The police argued that Mr Egberi's publications were a deliberate attempt to undermine security efforts and sabotage the coordinated rescue operation for the abducted judge.

Meanwhile, during the September 16 proceedings, Chief Benjamin S. Ogbara, counsel to Mr Egberi, filed a bail application asking the court to vacate the September 10 remand and admit him to bail pending legal advice from the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP). He supported his application with a medical report from Dr Nathan Abule, a Medical Consultant at the Federal Medical Centre, which showed that Mr Egberi has chronic health conditions, including bronchial asthma and peptic ulcer disease, that are managed through outpatient care.

The police prosecution, represented by Japhet O. Japhet, however, opposed the bail application, arguing that the “prosecution would be ready to proceed once the 30-day period elapses” and therefore the remand should stand.

Following the arguments from both sides, Magistrate Ekeru rejected the bail application and advised Chief Ogbara to approach the Federal High Court for relief regarding bail.

### **Journalist Arrested While Covering Shiite Maulid Procession in Abuja**

On September 9, 2025, operatives of the Nigeria Police arrested Mr Nasir Hassan Yelwa, a reporter for Iran Press News Agency and a member of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), while covering a public Maulid procession in Abuja by members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), popularly called Shiites.

Mr Yelwa was reportedly picked up by policemen in the Apo area of Abuja at about 2 PM and taken to the Abattoir facility, the former SARS office, where he was detained. Eyewitnesses say he showed his press identity card; nonetheless, the police seized his camera and arrested him.

Recounting the incident that led to his arrest, he said that after the Shiites had ended their procession and prayers and people were dispersing, a convoy of heavily armed police officers stormed the area and started firing teargas and beating people, and in the melee that ensued, many people, including

bystanders, got caught in the chaos and were injured.

The reporter said he took refuge somewhere and was recording how people were being beaten with brutal force. Shortly after, he said he wanted to board a taxi to return to his residence, when the police quickly approached him menacingly even as he was holding on to his equipment as well as his press identity card.

He said an officer shouted at him, asking, “Who are you? He said he told them he was a journalist, and they requested to see his identity card, which he said he promptly showed them. He said they asked him to enter their vehicle.

Mr Yelwa said that when he tried reaching out to his colleague, Ochiaka, the former Secretary of Abuja NUJ, police officers overpowered and wrestled the phone from his hand while speaking with Ochiaka.

He said the police took him and 12 other people to Area Command, where they were inhumanely paraded as suspected criminals. He said the police took them to the abattoir, a former Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), where they were locked up for two days. On September 12, police took them to the Magistrate Court at Wuse Zone 6, and unfortunately, the judge was absent, which meant that they had to be taken back and locked up until September 15.

On September 15, they were again taken to court and charged with unlawful assembly and violence. They pleaded not guilty. He said the police prosecutor singled out seven of the detainees for discharge, saying that their investigation revealed that they were not involved in the unlawful assembly, leaving six of them behind. The judge adjourned the case to 30th September, 2025. It was then that his lawyer asked for his bail, which the judge granted.

### **Kano Journalist Lured by Police, Detained for Facebook Post**

Mr Abdulaziz Aliyu, a journalist based in Kano, who works with the online broadcast media outlet, Waraka TV, was on September 9, 2025, lured to the Area Command of the Kano State Police on Court Road on the pretext of a stolen phone investigation and, thereafter, detained for about two hours.

Mr Aliyu said, “A police officer who identified himself as CSP Sabo called me, claiming I was linked to a stolen phone investigation and needed to report for clarification. But when I got there, it turned out to be about a Facebook publication I made.” He was released on bail around 10 pm with instructions to return the following day.

The journalist was interrogated about a Hausa historical programme aired on

Karama Radio about Sarkin Zazzau Malam Jafaru Dan Isiyaku, who ruled Zazzau from 1937 to 1959. The broadcast was shared on Waraka Online TV.

Following the incident, the Association of Kano Online Journalists (ASKOJ), in a statement signed by its chairman, Yakubu Salisu, condemned the detention.

The Group said: “The increasing cases of police invitations and detentions of journalists across the country are deeply worrying and must be condemned. Journalism is a constitutionally recognised profession, yet some individuals intoxicated by power view it as a threat and use state resources to harass, intimidate, arrest, and, in some cases, endanger the lives of journalists.

“The police deceived our colleague, Abdulaziz Aliyu. It was not about a stolen phone as claimed, but an article that allegedly offended some individuals. While ASKOJ does not condone unprofessional conduct, we insist that journalists' safety and press freedom must be protected.”

In response, the Kano State police spokesperson, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, accused Salisu of misinformation and threatened legal action. He claimed that Mr Aliyu was not detained but rather invited as part of a routine investigative process following a written complaint lodged against him and that he was released on bail to return on September 10 to assist in the ongoing investigations.

However, SP Kiyawa attempted to discredit and threaten both Aliyu and Salisu, claiming they were not registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).

According to him, “Inquiries conducted with the leadership of the NUJ, Kano State Chapter, revealed that neither Abdulaziz Aliyu nor Yakubu Salisu are registered members of the union. The statement by Salisu is a deliberate attempt to misinform the public and tarnish the reputation of the Police in Kano State. Appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the law.”

### **Ekiti Police Detain FIJ's Senior Reporter Who Honoured Invitation**

On September 4, 2025, the Ekiti State Police Command arrested Mr Sodiq Atanda, a Senior Reporter with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ), at their headquarters in Ado-Ekiti after he honoured their invitation to report at the station for an investigation.

According to reports, the police invitation asked Mr Atanda to report to the Commissioner of Police through the Assistant Commissioner of Police in

charge of the State Intelligence Department (SID), Police Headquarters, Ado-Ekiti. It stated that the office was investigating a complaint via a petition from T. S Adegboyega & CO. (Solicitors, Advocates and Notary Public) on behalf of their client, Prof. Abayomi Sunday Fasina, the Vice-Chancellor of Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE).

FIJ has published a series of stories on how Prof. Fasina sexually harassed Mrs Folasade Adebayo, a director at the school, and how he resorted to humiliating her after she repeatedly turned down his sexual advances, among other stories.

During the visit, Mr Atanda was allegedly interrogated by Dayo Adekale, the Investigation Police Officer (IPO) and detained for 11 hours, on the orders of the Ekiti State Commissioner of Police, Joseph Eribo.

Meanwhile, the FIJ senior reporter said that most of Adekale's questions were about knowing the identity of his sources for the reports; the IPO also said he was ready to go to any length to get him to name the sources. When Atanda refused to disclose his source, saying it was against his professional ethics to reveal his sources, Adekale also told him he would also not bend his rules.

According to the journalist, "In the middle of the conversation, he asked who my sources were. He was particular that there must be an origin of whatever information I had published. I told him I was not obligated to disclose my source."

"He asked if that was the rule of my profession, and I affirmed it. But he then told me, "You have your own rules, I also have my own rules. If you don't bend your own rules, I'm not going to bend mine. When we get to that point, you have to disclose your sources. Otherwise, we are not going to get anywhere."

Mr Atanda said the IPO also attempted to control what he wrote in his statement to show that he did not reach out to the Pro-Chancellor even though he did.

When he was taken to the office of Musa Hadi, the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) of the SID, the IPO listed his bail conditions, which included two sureties, with one owning a landed property worth N2 million within their jurisdiction or the N2 million cash deposit. The second surety must be a level 10 civil servant at the state or federal commission, also within the state, alongside an affidavit sworn to both of them.

During the interrogation, the FUOYE representative present at the police station said they would not allow Mr Atanda to leave detention until Mr Fisayo

Soyombo, FIJ's founder and Editor-in-Chief, shows up.

They expressly told the police that they wanted the reporter to be locked up for at least one week until Soyombo shows up for his release. Mr Adekale, the IPO told the journalist that constantly reporting Fasina's sexual misconduct was a crime deserving prolonged detention, just like attempted murder.

When Atanda was taken to Eribo, the State Police Commissioner, he said "his people were already making noise" and claimed he didn't know that Mr Atanda was a journalist. He then asked the journalist to be released and asked him to tell his people to "stop making noise".

He was released in the evening of the same day and left the station at 7:40 PM.

### **Police Invite, Detain Osun Defender Editor Over Source of News Report**

Mr Yusuf Oketola, the Assistant News Editor of Osun Defender newspaper, was detained on September 3, 2025, after honouring an invitation by the Zone XI Command of the Nigeria Police Force in Osogbo, the Osun State capital, to report at the station over alleged defamation of character for a report he wrote in the newspaper over which the command was petitioned.

Although the police did not disclose the details of the petitioner or the story, the invitation letter, signed by Assistant Commissioner of Police Akinloye Joseph, claimed that the editor was being invited for fact-finding purposes.

The letter, dated August 25, 2025, reads in part, "This office is investigating the above captioned subject matter reported through a petition written to the office of the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone XI Command Headquarters, Osogbo, against Yusuf Oketola, who is one of your reporters."

At the police station, Mr Oketola was interrogated and asked to reveal his source, which he declined to give. The editor was invited based on a March 28, 2025, report with the title, "Three Bankers Drag Osun Magistrate To Chief Judge Over Kano Transaction." He was, thereafter, detained for several hours while his lawyers applied for bail.

Reports have it that a plain-clothed police man, who introduced himself as 'Inspector Sola', demanded the sum of N500,000 for the editor's bail, which the Osun Defender newspaper management declined to pay.

However, Mr Oketola's family members raised the sum of N50,000, which they paid to the police to secure his release, even though officially, the Nigeria

Police maintain a 'bail is free' policy.

### **Content Creator Arrested on Governor's Order for Sharing Video Exposing Hospital Decay**

Mr Hassan Mai-Waya Kangiwa, a content creator based in Kebbi State, Northwestern Nigeria, was arrested and detained in September 2025 on the orders of the State Governor, Mr Nasir Idris, for releasing a video showing the deplorable conditions at the Kangiwa General Hospital.

Reports stated that security operatives raided his home at night, seized his equipment, arrested him, and cut him off from legal access.

The 'offending' clip, which showed an elderly patient lying on a bare metal bed frame without a mattress, spread quickly across social media, drawing strong reactions and condemnations from netizens.

Following the arrest, the hashtag #FreeHassanKangiwaNow trended on social media as users reshared the video and criticised the Governor.

However, the Kebbi State government later released and paid ₦200,000 to him in compensation for his unlawful detention.

### **Newspaper Publisher Detained for a Month, Granted Bail on Strict Conditions**

Mr Ejike Ogbonna, an Imo State-based journalist and publisher of First Citizen newspaper, was granted bail in September 2025, by a Magistrate's Court sitting in Owerri, the state capital, in the sum of N2 million, after he was detained for 30 days at the Tiger Base police unit for alleged cybercrime against a government official.

Other bail conditions given to the publisher include the provision of a surety who must show proof of ownership of a landed property within the jurisdiction of the court, and a traditional ruler to endorse the bail bond.

Mr Ogbonna, who was brought to court in handcuffs, is standing trial on a four-count charge. He was accused of cyberbullying and defaming the character of the Special Adviser to the State Governor on Compliance, Mr Chinasa Nwaneri, through a voice note allegedly circulated via social media.

The case was thereafter adjourned to October 3, 2025, for hearing.

### **Police Harass, Detain Media Room Hub Publisher over Coverage of Land Dispute**

Ms Azuka Ogujiuba, Chief Executive of an online entertainment news

website, Media Room Hub, and a former writer for This Day Style magazine, was in September 2025, harassed, arrested and detained for days by officers at the Special Investigation Unit of the Nigeria Police Force at the Asokoro Division in Abuja over her coverage of a land dispute.

According to reports, Ms Ogujiuba was arrested and detained twice, while the police continue to summon her to Abuja despite living and working in Lagos.

Speaking at a press conference in Lagos on September 16, 2025, she accused the Nigeria Police Force of harassment, assault, and unlawful detention over allegations of cyberbullying and defamation of character. She added that her health had deteriorated since she was detained in a cell in Abuja for three days without food.

Narrating her ordeal, she said, “The Nigeria Police Force forced me to write an apology letter. They forced me to write that what I published was not true.

“They were telling me what to write. One of the officers made me do an undertaking that the letter was not done under duress. I had no options when I saw a gun facing me while under their custody.”

She explained that she honoured a police invitation in Abuja on August 6, 2025, despite living and working in Lagos, only to be confronted with a petition accusing her of cyberbullying and defamation.

She said she was surprised by the accusation because the court injunction she posted, for which she was being accused, had been published by several other media outlets. She said she told the police that the court injunction was a public document and not intended to bully or defame anyone.

She disclosed that she was initially granted bail and asked to return after two weeks, but was later ambushed in Abuja by some policemen in mufti, in a gangster manner, while attending a paid event.

“I was at a scheduled interview when I started receiving calls from the officer, insisting that the petitioner wanted to see me. I reminded him that I had bail and promised to come after work.

“But while leaving the office, we suddenly heard commotion outside, and since they were not in uniform, we thought they were kidnappers. They targeted my phone, pounced on me, and manhandled me,” she narrated.

She said she was taken back to the police office, where she was humiliated and intimidated by some police officers and at the police station, followed around

the office with a gun, like she was a terrorist.

Continuing, she said, "They were unnecessarily hostile. I asked to see their boss, but they refused. When I tried to call my lawyer and family, they came aggressively at me and snatched my phone."

She said she was eventually locked up in a cell which, according to her, was "smelling" and left there for three days without food. She described her detention as harrowing.

### **Blogger Arrested, Arraigned for Allegedly Publishing Fake News on Facebook**

On August 5, 2025, Ms Akanji Kofoworola, a 37-year-old blogger, was arraigned before Magistrate Wahab Balogun of the Lagos Island Magistrate Court by the Lagos State Police Command on a three-count charge of conspiracy, publishing fake news, and defamatory content against Nollywood actress and businesswoman, Ms Lizzy Anjorin.

Ms Kofoworola, who was arrested by the operatives of the Zonal Police Command in Onikan, was arraigned for allegedly using her Facebook account to publish, distribute, or project articles and obscene content against the Nollywood actress.

The Police prosecutor, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Salihu Kadiri, told the court that the blogger and others, currently at large, committed the offences in Lagos from 2023 to date. ASP Salihu accused the blogger of unlawfully publishing statements and rumours about the actress on Facebook, which she knew or had reason to believe were false.

The charges against Ms Anjorin read: "That you Akanji Kofoworola 'F' and other Bloggers at large, from 2023 till date, somewhere in Lagos State in the Lagos State magisterial district did unlawfully publish, Statements, rumour about one Chief Mrs. Lizzy Anjorin on Face Book, a platform on social media, knowing, or having reason to believe that such Statements, rumour and report are false thereby committed an offence punishable under section 39 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State 2015.

"That you Akanji Kofoworola 'F', and other Bloggers at large, same time and place, in the Lagos State magisterial district did unlawfully display to the public pictorial representation of one Chief Mrs. Lizzy Anjorin on Face Book, a platform on social media, using the said public space to present her in a manner likely provoke or bring into disaffection any section of the

community, thereby committing an offence punishable under Section 57 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State 2015.

“That you Akanji Kofoworola 'F', and other Bloggers at large, same time and place, in the Lagos State magisterial district, did for gain of social media likes and remuneration distribute or project articles and content deemed to be obscene and likely to corrupt the minds of viewers towards the personality of Chief Mrs. Lizzy Anjorin, thereby committing an offence punishable under section 150 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State 2015.”

The blogger pleaded not guilty to the charges and her counsel moved an oral bail application on her behalf, arguing that the offences are bailable.,

However, the prosecutor urged the court to remand her in the custody of the Nigerian Correctional Services pending the conclusion of the trial.

Magistrate Balogun granted her bail in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties in like sum, after listening to both parties and adjourned the case to August 21 for trial.

### **Journalist, Activist Arrested, Charged with Cybercrime**

An investigative journalist, Mr Buhari Olanrewaju Ahmed, and a rights activist, Mr Musa Saidu Tsaragi, were on July 22, 2025, arrested and detained at the State Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Kwara State Police Command Headquarters in Ilorin for alleged defamation and cybercrime.

They were detained after honouring a police invitation following charges filed against them by the Special Adviser to the Kwara State Governor on Social Investment, Sadiq Buhari, who accused them of defamation and cybercrime.

It was gathered that, although the Kwara Magistrate Court did not sit on the matter, the police, however, bypassed judicial processes to secure a remand order directly from the court registrar to keep them in detention.

They were charged with criminal conspiracy, defamation of character, and cyberstalking in court on July 25, but were released on bail to their respective sureties. The case was adjourned to August 15, 2025, for further mention.

### **Social Critic Lured, Arrested over TikTok Post**

On July 17, 2025, a musician and social critic, Saheed Osama, popularly called Shamsodium, was arrested and detained by operatives of the Lagos

State Police Command, for allegedly making defamatory statements about Mrs. Omowunmi Aloba, the widow of Ilerioluwa Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad, in a TikTok video post suggesting that she was responsible for his death.

According to reports, Osama was lured to a fake photoshoot location in Lagos on Thursday before being apprehended and may have been transferred to police custody in Abuja.

Reports also suggest that Osama's arrest may be linked to his online activism and criticism of authorities through his TikTok posts. His disappearance since last Thursday had initially raised concerns among associates before it was confirmed that he was in police custody.

In a statement signed by its organising committee members, Hassan Taiwo and Adegboyega Adeniji, the Rights Advocacy Group, #EndBadGovernance, condemned the incident, stressing that public criticism is not a crime but an essential part of democracy. The Group also accused the Nigeria Police Force of being used as a tool to harass individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression.

The Group further cautioned against the misuse of police officers for arbitrary arrests, warning that such practices could erode public trust in security agencies. It urged the authorities to uphold the rule of law and ensure that citizens' constitutional rights to free speech and expression are fully protected.

The incident has sparked growing debate over the shrinking space for free speech in Nigeria, with many observers urging the government to prioritise democratic values and protect citizens' rights to express dissenting opinions without fear of harassment or unlawful arrest.

### **Lagos Activist Arrested, Arraigned under Cybercrime Act over Instagram Posts**

On July 16, 2025, Mr Scott Iguma, an activist, was arrested by officers of the Lagos State Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Panti, and arraigned at a Federal High Court in Lagos the next day, on four counts of defamation, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking under the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, No. 17 of 2015.

According to reports, the police are prosecuting Mr Iguna for allegedly posting videos on his Instagram handle accusing PWAN, a real estate company, as fraudulent, adding that several investors have accused it of

failing to allocate lands despite collecting payments for them.

When Mr Iguma was arraigned, Mr Augustine Nwabuisi, the police prosecution counsel, told the court that he allegedly committed the offences between May 27 and 28, 2025, at the Lekki Gardens in Sangotedo, Lagos. The police prosecution counsel informed the court that the activist used his social media platform to post unverified and defamatory statements against Dr Augustine Onwumere, the founder of a real estate company, PWAN Group, and that he allegedly described Dr Onwumere as a “criminal” operating a “fraudulent business,” and warned the public against dealing with PWAN.

Mr Nwabuisi said that the activist allegedly used his Instagram account to disseminate false information with the intent to threaten, defame, and incite the public against Onwumere and his company.

The police prosecutor also said that Mr Iguma circulated Dr Onwumere's photographs across multiple social media platforms in a manner intended to damage his reputation and incite hatred or lawlessness.

One of the charges filed against Mr Iguma reads, “That you, Scott Iguma 'M', on or before the 27th day of May, 2025, at Lekki Gardens, Sangotedo, Lagos, within the jurisdiction of the Federal High Court of Nigeria, did knowingly and intentionally send a message via a computer system through your Instagram account, which has over one million followers/viewers, stating: 'If anything happens to me, PWAN should be the number one suspect. If anything happens to my family, nuclear and extended, PWAN should be held responsible. Even if I fall sick, hold PWAN responsible,' knowing the same to be false, for the purpose of causing breakdown of law and order, hatred, posing a threat to life or causing such messages to be sent.”

The police prosecutor said the offences for which Mr Iguma was being tried contravened Section 24(1)(b) and are punishable under Section 24(2)(ii) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act (As Amended) 2024.

The activist pleaded not guilty, but Friday Oghazi ordered that he should be remanded in the custody of the correctional centre pending the hearing and determination of his bail application scheduled for July 21, 2025.

PWAN has, however, distanced itself from the activist's ordeal. In a statement signed by the head of its media team, Mr Leslie Ejiro, the company denied orchestrating Mr Iguma's arrest, detention, and prosecution.

On July 21, Justice Oghazi granted bail to Mr Iguma in the sum of N10

million, with one surety in like sum. The Court said the surety must present documents proving ownership of property within the court's jurisdiction. Alternatively, the Court said the surety may be a civil servant with either the Federal or Lagos State Government, not below Grade Level 12 and must provide evidence of tax payment.

Justice Oghazi further ordered both the nominal complainant and the defendant to refrain from making public comments about the ongoing case either online or through media platforms, noting that the matter is now before the court.

### **Female Islamic Scholar Remanded for Alleged Defamation of Cleric**

On June 30, 2025, an Upper Area Court in Ganmo, Kwara State, ordered the remand of a female Islamic scholar, Alhaja Kafilat Kaola, at the Oke Kura Correctional Facility in Ilorin, the State capital, over a case of alleged defamation brought against her by an Islamic preacher, Alfa Taofeek Akeugbagold.

According to reports, Alfa Akeugbagold dragged Alhaja Kaola, who is also the proprietor of a school, before the court, accusing her of defamation.

During proceedings, the legal counsel to Alhaja Kaola pleaded with the court to grant her bail on self-recognition and on account of her public status, assuring the court that she would not abscond.

However, counsel to Alfa Akeugbagold, Mr Ajasa Ademola, opposed the bail application, arguing that Alhaja Kaola was not entitled to such privilege under the law, citing her involvement in a similar matter.

When Mr Ademola was asked to provide evidence in support of his objection, he presented a video in which Alhaja Kaola was seen disparaging a judge and a lawyer over a previous legal case.

The lawyer cited relevant legal provisions, maintaining that an individual who publicly ridicules judicial officers should not be granted bail under such circumstances, insisting that she be remanded.

The Judge thereafter ordered that Alhaja Kaola be remanded at the Oke Kura Correctional Facility in Ilorin until the next adjourned date, July 17, 2025.

### **Content Creator Arrested, Detained, Secretly Tried for Alleged Defamation**

An Anambra State-based content creator, Evangelist Ebube Joseph, was

arrested by the Department of State Services (DSS) allegedly on the orders of the Enugu State Governor, Mr. Peter Mbah, over comments he made on social media on the activities of killer herdsmen in the state. Reports said the DSS operatives who arrested him stormed his residence, arrested, handcuffed, and blindfolded him before driving away with him. He was initially detained in an underground facility for 10 days, despite his health condition, before he was released on bail. He was subsequently re-arrested and secretly arraigned in court.

Evangelist Joseph was arrested and detained by the Department of State Services (DSS) in connection with his commentary on incessant killings across Enugu State by persons suspected to be Fulani herdsmen. His arrest and detention were allegedly on the instructions of Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State.

He was later invited to come to Enugu State, where he was again detained, this time incommunicado, and secretly charged to court without legal representation.

Another content creator called David (MC Dave), on June 20, 2025, broke the news of Joseph's incarceration and disclosed that Evangelist Joseph was charged to court on the grounds that he defamed the governor.

In a video he posted on Facebook narrating his ordeal in the hands of the DSS operatives, Evangelist Joseph said that for the 10 days that he was incarcerated, he felt he would not come out alive. He said, "The day I was arrested, about 2 am, many people, even in the village where I live, everybody knows that I was arrested. DSS came with four vehicles to the house I am living in as a tenant, they carried me, covered my eyes, and handcuffed my hands behind my back for committing no crime, only that I spoke about the killings by Fulani herdsmen across Nigeria and in particular Enugu State."

### **Journalist Arrested Over Allegation of Defamation, Cyberbullying**

Mr Nurudeen Adegbienro, a journalist with Mainland 98.3 FM in Lagos, was on June 3, 2025, arrested from his home in Agege by operatives of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) of the Nigeria Police Force in Alagbon, Lagos State, over a petition by Chief Ganiu Kola Egunjobi, the Chairman of Agege Local Government, accusing him of defamation and cyberbullying.

According to Adenekan's wife, the police operatives, who claimed to be from the FCID, Alagbon, stormed his Agege residence at night, broke into the home, and whisked him off without giving any reason for the journalist's midnight arrest. She said her husband was being detained at the FCID, Alagbon.

Meanwhile, the FCID said, "A detailed written petition was submitted to the AIG, FCID Annex, on the 2nd of June 2025 by T.C. Eze Chambers, acting on behalf of Chief Ganiu Kola Egunjobi. It said the petition alleged cyberstalking, bullying, scandalous publications, threats to life, incitement of the public, and conduct likely to cause a breakdown of law and order.

According to the police, "The allegations are made against Mr Adegbenro Nurudeen and other unidentified individuals, who are said to be using various Facebook and Instagram accounts, as well as those operated by their proxies, to malign, scandalise, threaten, and bully Chief Egunjobi."

The police further claimed that the cyberstalking began after Mr Adegbenro allegedly approached Chief Egunjobi, seeking an appointment as his media assistant, which the Chief declined.

## **Police Arrest Journalist after Exposing Alleged Akpabio-Linked Smear Campaign**

On May 22, 2025, at about 3 AM, Maazi Obinna Oparaku Akuwudike, a Nigerian journalist and media activist, was arrested in Owerri, the Imo State capital, by policemen, reportedly on the orders of Mr Kayode Egbetokun, the Inspector General of Police.

According to reports, Maazi Akuwudike's detention is linked to an interview on Adeola Fayehun's YouTube talk show, *Keeping It Real*, where he claimed that Sandra Duru (alias "Prof Mgbeké") paid him ₦2.5 million to produce defamatory content targeting suspended Kogi Central Senator, Mrs Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

In the interview, he said: "I received money for producing videos, but I grew concerned after noticing inconsistencies in Duru's public statements." He added that after hearing certain controversial remarks made by Duru during a livestream, he decided to withdraw from the assignment and publicly expose what he described as "fabricated lies" targeting Senator Natasha.

The journalist also alleged that Senate President Godswill Akpabio was the political and financial sponsor behind Duru's smear campaign. This revelation

has led to growing suspicions that his arrest was politically motivated and potentially orchestrated to silence a key witness in the Akpabio-Natasha imbroglio. Recall that Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan has previously accused Senate President Akpabio of sexual harassment.

The incident has triggered outrage among media rights groups and civil society actors, who warn that the arrest sets a dangerous precedent for freedom of expression and whistleblower protection in Nigeria. Many view it as a stark example of the use of law enforcement to intimidate and suppress voices that challenge political elites.

“This is more than just an arrest—it’s an attack on the right of journalists to expose the truth and hold power to account,” said one media advocate, calling for Obinna’s immediate release and an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding his detention.

## **Borno-Based Social Media Activist Arrested Over Criticism of Government Official**

Mr Sultan Usman, a well-known social media activist in Borno State, was arrested on April 14, 2025, by operatives of the Police Crack Squad following a post he made on X (formerly Twitter) criticising a senior government official over the handling of flood prevention efforts.

Mr Usman's arrest came after he publicly challenged remarks made by Mr Adam Bababe, the Executive Secretary of the Borno State Geographical Information Service. In the wake of severe flooding that affected several parts of Maiduguri and its environs, Mr Bababe suggested that resistance from certain communities hindered the agency's preventive measures.

In the post, Mr Bababe wrote: “Emergency Lovers of Borno, kindly note that the government faced strong resistance from the public to enforce prevention... Go through our activities and go around all flood-prone areas to ask them if we hadn't warned them or marked their houses since 2020. They know what they bought.”

In response, Mr Usman criticised the statement as dismissive and deflective. “This statement is like adding insult to injury. It is but an open admission that the government has failed in its responsibility,” he wrote. “If the government failed to implement laws simply because of resistance from the people, then that government must be held responsible.”

He further questioned whether preventive warnings were ever issued to other

affected areas, such as Gwange, Gidan Dambe, Dikwa Low-Cost, and other communities in Maiduguri, saying, “You can do better; it is not a blame game.” Despite deleting the post shortly after it was published, Mr Bababe reportedly filed a complaint with the police, resulting in Mr Usman's arrest.

## **University Graduate Arrested for Supporting Protest Against Fees Policy**

Mr Martins Eyam, a Mechanical Engineering graduate from the University of Cross River State (UNICROSS), Calabar, was arrested on April 7, 2025, for expressing support for a student protest against the University's “No Fees, No Exams” policy.

His arrest followed the circulation of a WhatsApp voice note in which he voiced solidarity for a protest by the students. Mr Eyam was invited to the University's administrative complex, where the Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Francisca Bassey, reportedly identified him in the presence of the Principal Account Officer, Chief Security Officer, and other staff members as the person inciting students to protest. He was immediately arrested by operatives of Operation Okwok, the Cross River State's joint security task force.

While in custody, security operatives allegedly mocked and intimidated him, accusing him of aspiring to become like renowned human rights lawyer, Femi Falana, and outspoken social critic Vincent Martins Otse, popularly known as Very Dark Man.

Mr Eyam was subsequently transferred to the Medium Security Custodial Centre in Afokang after the task force obtained a remand order from a Magistrate Court. He was scheduled to be arraigned on April 25, 2025.

However, he was released a day earlier, on April 24, and all charges against him were dropped.

## **Police Arrest, Detain Journalists on Orders of Niger State Governor's Print Media Aide**

Two journalists, Mr Yakubu Mustapha Bina, the “People's Daily” Correspondent and Chairman of the Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Niger State, and Mr Fodio Ahmed, a freelance journalist, were on April 2, 2025, summoned to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Minna for allegedly defaming Ms Aisha Wakaso, Special Adviser on Print Media to Governor Umaru Mohammed

Bago of Niger State.

They were interrogated by the Investigative Police Officer (IPO) until 6 PM before Mr Bina was released; his mobile phone was confiscated, and he was asked to return for further questioning on April 3, 2025, at 11 am. He also reportedly refused to write a statement admitting he shared defamatory comments about the governor's aide. Mr Ahmed, who authored the offending article titled: "Bidding Farewell to Freelancing: Hello Nexter! An Open Letter to Aisha Wakaso," on the other hand, was remanded in detention.

A source privy to the case said the IPO admitted that he received orders from above to detain Mr Bina, but added that it was only through the intervention of a high-ranking police officer and other prominent individuals that he was released.

Their detention was sequel to a complaint by Ms Aisha Wakaso, Special Adviser on Print Media to Governor Umaru Mohammed Bago of Niger State, that she had been defamed. She had filed a defamation lawsuit against Messers Bina and Ahmed following Ahmed's article, published on 7 March 2025, which accused Wakaso of creating divisions within the media and undermining Governor Bago's interests.

Ms Wakaso, in her lawsuit, argued that the article contained malicious statements intended to damage her reputation. She also accused Mr Bina of circulating the defamatory article in over 10 WhatsApp groups, including those involving professionals and in government circles. She demanded for a public apology and retraction of the article.

### **Police Summon, Detain Two Journalists in Kano on Orders of the Information Commissioner**

Two journalists in Kano State, Mr Buhari Abba Rano, the online editor of Kano Times, and Mr Ismail Auwal, a freelancer, were summoned and detained by the State's Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (CIID) in March 2025 on the orders of the Commissioner for Information, Comrade Ibrahim Abdullahi Waiya, over a critical opinion article published on multiple media platforms, including the Kano Times website on February 24, 2025.

Following a petition to the Kano State CIID of the Kano Police Command, the two journalists were invited for questioning through a letter dated March 22.

When Mr Rano honoured the invitation on March 24, his phone was seized and he was questioned for three hours before being released on bail.

Mr Auwal, on the other hand, was asked to report for questioning on March 25, and when he honoured the invitation, he was detained and questioned from 1 PM till 5 PM when he was released on bail. He authored the said defamatory opinion article titled Dear Gov. Yusuf, Beware of Kano Information Commissioner Ibrahim Waiya by Ismail Auwal.

They were asked to return on March 28 but because of the wide media attention that the matter generated, the governor intervened and the Commissioner withdrew his complaint.

### **DSS Detains, Questions Daily Trust Reporters for Writing Story on Peaceful Protest**

On March 4, 2025, Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency, the Department of State Services (DSS), detained and questioned two reporters with Daily Trust newspaper, Mr. Ado Abubakar Musa and Mr. Dickson Adama, over reports of a peaceful protest by truck drivers in Jos, Plateau State, on March 2.

Daily Trust had reported that trucks' drivers and owners protested in Jos, the Plateau State capital, lamenting that many of their members had been killed and their vehicles burnt in attacks on them in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

The duo, who honoured the DSS invitation, were reportedly kept for hours before being allowed to return home.

Mr. Musa was allegedly questioned on why he wrote the news report on the protest.

### **Monarch Orders Arrest, Detention of Newspaper Correspondent, Demands Compensation**

On February 25, 2025, Oba Fatai Akamo, the Olu of Itori, in Ewekoro Local Government Area of Ogun State ordered the police to arrest and detain Mr. Bankole Taiwo, the Ogun State correspondent for The Punch newspaper, for asking questions about a trending video where one Mr. Sanni Babatunde Akeem, a person living with disability, levelled allegation of land-grabbing against the monarch and Oba Kayode Sodimu, another monarch.

Mr. Taiwo had honoured an invitation from the monarch to cover a press conference to herald his 21st coronation anniversary in his palace during which the journalist seized the opportunity to ask Oba Akamo for his side of the story concerning the viral video. He had started to narrate his side of the

matter but became angry when the journalist asked him about the other royal father mentioned in the video.

The journalist said Oba Akamo began shouting: “What do you mean? This boy was sent here. Police arrest him and take him to your station.”

In spite of pleas from other journalists, Mr. Taiwo was arrested and taken away by the police on the insistence of the monarch.

About four minutes after getting to the police station, the police got another call from the palace and they took him back to the palace, returned his seized phone to him, and ordered him to delete all that he had recorded at the palace.

Following the publication of the attack by The Punch Newspapers, Oba Akamo, through his legal counsel, Mr. A.M Kotoye, (Senior Advocate of Nigeria, SAN), wrote a letter addressed to Mr. Adeleye Joseph, the Managing Director/Acting Editor of The Punch, demanding a retraction of the said publication and a written apology from the media organisation addressed to the monarch, saying the monarch has been “greatly injured and affected, by the ... wrong and false reportage”.

In addition, the monarch demanded that both the retraction and the written apology be published in The Punch Newspaper and one other national newspaper within seven days of the receipt of the letter. The lawyer also demanded the sum of N500,000,000 (Five hundred Million Naira) as compensation for the injury to the monarch, which the lawyer said is a direct consequence of newspaper's “wrongful conduct”.

### **Police Detain Reporter for Alleged Criminal Conspiracy, Cyberbullying**

On January 15, 2025, the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) annex of the Nigeria Police in Alagbon, Lagos State, detained a Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ) reporter, Mr. Emmanuel Utí, accusing him of criminal conspiracy and cyberbullying over a story he wrote, which was published by FIJ on November 28, 2024, titled "Lagos Man Paid Expedia Consults Beverly Basil N4m for Canada Admission in 2023. She Disappeared With the Money".

The police had invited the reporter through a letter dated December 16, 2024, signed by DCP Ibrahim Jibrin, Deputy Commissioner of Police (administration) for the Assistant Inspector General of FCID Annex, Alagbon.

Mr. Utí honoured the police invitation to meet with SP Magaji Ibrahim for

what they described as a “fact-finding” activity, in the company of one of FIJ’s lawyers. He had written the story which detailed a failed admission transaction between Beverly Basil of Expedia Consult and Muyiwa Taiwo, a Lagos resident.

He was questioned, but however, held incommunicado, and denied access to receive or make calls for over six hours.

Mr. Uti was later released the same day in the evening and instructed to return to the FCID on January 21.

#### **4.3 Threats**

##### **Journalist Faces Death Threats Over Investigation into Alleged Defilement of Nine-Year-Old Girl**

The life of Mr Everest Ezihe, a senior journalist with The Authority Newspaper, has reportedly been threatened following his investigation into an alleged case of child defilement in Imo State. The threats are said to have come from Mr Nze Henry Onyegbule of Amainyi Autonomous Community in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area. The case involves the alleged defilement of a nine-year-old primary school pupil, Miss Nmesoma Chiwike, daughter of Mr Jude Chiwike of Omulo Village, by a kinsman, Mr Okechukwu Azuagu, who is reportedly over 60 years old.

On December 16, 2025, barely 30 minutes after Mr. Ezihe left the office of the Imo State Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of investigations at the State Police Command, Mr. Onyegbule reportedly called him on MTN line 07035499008. During the call, Mr. Onyegbule allegedly subjected the journalist to a barrage of verbal abuse, insults, and threats over his continued investigation of the case. He reportedly questioned Mr. Ezihe's decision to persist with the report, asking, “You don't want to drop this report? You are still writing?” He then allegedly issued a threat, warning the journalist to “watch out,” and stating that he would “definitely deal” with him for carrying out his professional duties.

When Mr Ezihe asked him: “my brother, who are you? What's my offense? he shouted “stupid man! Let see, how it will end”, and then cut the call.

##### **Journalist Receives Threats Over Report on Niger Schools Attack**

Mr Dan Atori, a journalist and media aide to Bishop Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, the Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Niger State,

has reported that he is currently facing threats from unknown individuals. According to media reports, the intimidation began after he reported the November 21, 2025, attack on Papiri schools, where suspected terrorists abducted more than 300 pupils and staff members.

The threats appear to be linked to conflicting claims that circulated about the actual number of pupils and staff abducted from St. Mary's Private Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Papiri, Agwara Local Government Area of Niger State.

While the CAN Chairman, Bishop Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, who also oversees the schools, maintained, through his Media Aide, that more than 300 persons were abducted, some individuals insisted that the figure was lower.

Bishop Yohanna, who leads the Kontagora Catholic Diocese, has stood firmly by his account, stressing that those disputing the numbers never visited the school and are relying on speculation rather than accurate information.

As a result of his firm position, Dan, the Media Aide to the CAN Chairman, says he has been receiving multiple calls from hidden numbers, warning him to stop sharing details about the abduction.

“I have been contacted by some groups, both the good, bad, and the ugly, security, politicians, propagandists. By God's grace, no matter how long the truth is suppressed, it must surely come out strong to silence lies, propaganda,” Dan stated.

Dan, whose only offence is carrying out instructions by his Principal, Bishop Yohanna said, “As at the last 48 hours, I have received calls (from hidden numbers) threatening and warning me not to do/send statements, for safety purposes. I have notified the necessary channels of the threats”.

“I need your prayers and support as always. And my earnest prayers is to see that the remaining captives are rescued by the power of God”, he added.

### **Policeman Threatens Citizen Journalist's Life for Exposing Extortion**

On September 2, 2025, Mr Oluwatosin Ojulewa, a policeman nicknamed 'World Best', attached to the Akinpelu police station in the Oshodi area of Lagos, threatened to take the life of Mr Samuel Olumoran, a citizen journalist in Lagos State, if he lost his job after the journalist confronted the policemen with allegations of extorting money from residents in the area.

According to media reports, Mr Olumoran had confronted the policeman

about his illegal duties, including arbitrarily arresting and extorting various sums from traders. He demanded a refund of N10,000 that the policeman had forcefully extorted from a trader he had illegally arrested the previous day.

However, Mr Ojulewa threatened: “You are ruining our work by stopping us from raiding and asking us who we collected money from. If you or anyone makes me lose my job, I will make sure that person loses their life.”

The policeman was initially reluctant to refund the money he had extorted, but after some verbal exchanges, he returned the cash to the victim and reportedly threatened to maim Mr Olumoran for interfering.

Thereafter, he began receiving unsolicited calls from unknown persons who described themselves as friends of the Akinpelu Police Station.

Mr Olumoran said, “I don't know how they got my number, but when I picked up one of the calls, the person said he was friends with the DPO, and he knew the Akinpelu policemen.”

He said the caller asked why he went public with his story of Akinpelu police station's officer's extortion activities and asked him to delete the stories documenting the extortions. The journalist said he informed the caller that he was not going to delete the story.

Again, a man identified as Yusuf Muhammed by Truecaller, who claimed to be a crime editor of PM News and The News Magazine, sent Mr Olumoran a WhatsApp message asking him to call, saying when he tried to reach Mr Olumoran, his phone was switched off. When Mr Olumoran returned his call, Muhammed claimed he was going to write a report against him.

On September 9, he called back to say he was no longer going to come for the journalist, and later, at about 12:42 pm, he sent a WhatsApp message warning Olumoran to “tread softly”. His message reads, “Samuel, I am not a baby journalist. I have been in this noble profession for close to 30 years, and please, for crying out loud, tread softly. Your family needs you, please, my brother. Life na jeje.”

When Mr Olumoran challenged him about the threats, Muhammed denied saying his 'brother' told him to discontinue the story against him.

### **Hotelier Threatens Journalist for Reporting Security Raid on Hotels**

On June 26, 2025, a hotelier named Mr Victor Balogun made a phone call to Mr Idibia Achadi Gabriel, a journalist based in Kaduna, North-west Nigeria,

and threatened him for publishing a story of a raid carried out in his hotel by security operatives attached to the Kaduna State Special Task Force.

Mr Gabriel reported the invasion of the hotel known as De Jays Guest Inn, located in Ungwan Boro community, in a news story titled: “Kaduna: Security Operatives Raid Hotels, Arrest Dozens of Suspect,” which was widely republished in other news outlets. The story reported the coordinated raids on hotels in Kaduna State by security operatives who arrested dozens of crime suspects.

The journalist said Mr Balogun called him, threatening him with severe consequences if he did not retract the story. He said the hotelier also informed him that he had gone to the office of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Kaduna State Council to vent his anger and threatened that he “can be very dangerous and can do anything if the said story is not taken down,” even after he was told the journalist witnessed the raid and could not reach him immediately for his comments.

The hotelier reportedly told the journalist, “Mr Idibia, thank you, I saw the news report you did in Opera news online, you mention my hotel only. I was there, I heard you talk to one of the police security. You've to do the other positive side if you can't retract it, or I'll deal with you. You know I can be dangerous.”

### **Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State Threatens to Sanction Radio Stations**

The Osun State Governor, Mr Ademola Adeleke, on June 15, 2025, threatened to sanction radio stations in the state that constantly breach the Nigerian Broadcasting Codes by airing content that, according to him, incite violence.

The warning was contained in a statement issued by his spokesperson, Mr Olawale Rasheed, where Gov. Adeleke expressed displeasure at the activities of some radio stations, which he claimed allowed guests to incite the public to violence and also manifest disdain for fair hearing to stakeholders.

Condemning the stations involved for their alleged refusal to caution guests who reportedly made libellous allegations bordering on sedition against public officials, the governor also alleged that these stations blocked the right to a fair hearing for the affected people.

The governor subsequently directed the Commissioner for Information to summon the General Managers of all affected stations for a briefing before

further action would be taken. He said observance of broadcasting codes is key to responsible broadcast journalism, and vowed to impose sanctions on any station that refuses to obey broadcast rules and codes.

### **Political Thug Threatens to 'Deal' with Adamawa Journalist**

On May 30, 2025, Comrade Ishaka Donald Dedan, Chairman of Adamawa State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), was harassed by one Hamidu Muktari (alias Dogo), who also threatened to “deal” with him. The incident happened during the Bwatiye International Cultural Festival, which took place in Yola, the state capital.

Comrade Dedan had, in a petition to the Nigerian Police, revealed that this was not the first time Muktari, the Adamawa State PDP Director of Youth Mobilisation, had harassed or threatened members of the journalism profession.

The NUJ Chairman recounted that on that day, he served as one of the official Masters of Ceremony at the event, where he had the privilege of ushering in Governor Fintiri. He said further that as the Governor delivered his address however, he noticed aggressive ranting nearby and upon turning to request the individual to lower his voice out of respect to the governor who was making a speech, he was surprised to identify Muktari as the source of the disturbance.

Comrade Dedan said: “To my shock and that of many distinguished guests, Hamidu Muktari was pointing at me, making unprintable and defamatory statements. He vowed to 'deal with me' once the Governor left the stage and claimed he would show me who he truly is.”

Meanwhile, the NUJ Zone E, in a statement issued by its secretary, Mr Abubakar Musa Waziri, in Bauchi, condemned the intimidation and threat to the life of Comrade Dedan, describing it as a brazen attack on press freedom and democratic accountability.

The NUJ also demanded that the Adamawa State Police Command and the DSS provide urgent security protection for Comrade Dedan and his family.

#### **4.4 Abduction/Kidnapping**

##### **Journalist Abducted by Unknown Persons During Fellowship Programme Trip**

Mr Salis Manaja, a multimedia journalist with Image Merchants Promotion

Limited (IMPL), publishers of PRNigeria and Economic Confidential, was kidnapped on October 13, 2025, while travelling from Abakaliki in Ebonyi State to Ilorin, Kwara State, for the company's annual Young Communication Fellowship programme.

According to reports, Mr Manaja's colleagues raised the alarm on social media about his whereabouts when they did not see him and could not reach him as repeated calls to his phone went unanswered.

A source close to the family later disclosed that his abductors made contact with the family, demanding a ransom for his release. Details regarding the exact location where the kidnapping took place remain unconfirmed, according to the source, who also did not disclose how much the abductors were asking for as ransom.

Mr Manaja was released on October 23 after a ransom of N1.2 million had been paid to his abductors.

#### **4.5 Prevention from Duty**

##### **Legacy 95.1 FM General Manager Suspended for Criticising Governor**

On August 9, 2025, the management of Legacy 95.1 FM, a private radio station based in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, suspended Mr Godfrey Chikwere as acting General Manager, following his criticism of Mr Francis Nwifuru, the Governor of the State, during radio broadcasts and on social media.

Mr Chikwere's suspension was announced on the radio station by Legacy FM's management, which accused him of flouting the station's code of conduct.

According to the announcement, "The management of Legacy FM 95.1, The Sound of Now, hereby suspends the acting general manager, Godfrey Chikwere, with immediate effect, till further notice.

"This is due to unruly behaviour and disobedience to the code of conduct guiding the Legacy FM," the station's management said in the announcement.

He was directed to hand over all company property in his possession to the next senior officer.

In one of his Facebook posts on August 8, the journalist urged the governor to take decisive action to protect his image and that of Ebonyi State, saying that the public perception of the governor's administration was deteriorating. He

criticised the administration for what he described as poor communication, underperformance by appointees, and unfulfilled pronouncements. Mr Chikwere warned that the governor's goodwill was dwindling and advised him to “step on toes” to achieve results.

Governor Nwifuru's spokesperson, Monday Uzor, and the Ebonyi State Commissioner for Information, Mr Ikeuwa Omebeh, condemned Mr Chikwere's criticisms of the administration.

Mr Uzor described the journalist's criticisms as unfounded and accused him of ungratefulness for using his platforms to attack the governor, despite that the radio station was benefitting from government support.

On his part, Mr Omebeh described Mr Chikwere's criticisms of Governor Nwifuru as “derogatory and inciting,” saying such remarks were unacceptable as they were an affront to the collective identity of the Ebonyi people.

While noting that the government welcomes constructive criticism, the Commissioner warned against attempts to incite citizens against their leaders.

Mr Chikwere was however, later directed to resume work on August 12, 2025.

### **Journalists Locked Out of Covering President Tinubu's Joint National Assembly Address**

On June 12, 2025, journalists accredited to cover the National Assembly were barred from entering the legislative chamber where President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was scheduled to address a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives as part of the June 12 Democracy Day celebrations.

The President was expected to deliver his Democracy Day speech at 12 noon, as part of activities marking the June 12 commemoration, before the joint sitting of the two chambers of the National Assembly.

However, stern-looking personnel of the Department of State Services (DSS), the Sergeant-at-Arms, and other security operatives stood sentry at the gate and insisted that only those with “special accreditation” would be allowed to cover the session. Despite possessing valid accreditation tags, reporters from several major news organisations were denied entry by security personnel stationed at the entrance to the Galaxy, the designated press gallery of the National Assembly.

Journalists from *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *TVC News*, *Punch*, *The Nigerian*

*Tribune, News Central, The Nation, and ITV*, among others, were prevented from entering the gallery to cover the President's address.

Instead, the National Assembly security personnel asked the journalists to follow the proceedings from the television screens at the National Assembly's media centre.

### **Security Personnel Prevent Journalists from Covering Governor Oborevwori's State Address at Delta State House of Assembly**

On May 27, 2025, police personnel prevented over 20 journalists from different media organizations from entering the Delta State House of Assembly complex to cover Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's state address, even after they showed the identity cards of their media houses. The journalists were told that the directive that they should not be allowed in was from higher authorities.

Media outlets prevented from assessing the Assembly complex include The Punch, The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, This Day, The Nation, Champion, Daily Telegraph, Leadership, Blueprint, Business Day, Nigerian Pilot, Business News, The Story, and Emerald online, among others.

The head of the security personnel, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Saviour David, told the journalists: "The order is from the speaker and the authority. If you like call anybody, nobody will answer you," adding, "you can quote me."

ASP David however, allowed three female journalists who are core government house crew access to the complex, and disclosed that the governor had placed some media outfits on a watch list for "bad reportage" of his two-year administration.

### **Akwa Ibom Government Expels Channels TV Crew Over Governor's Defection Report**

On May 24, 2025, the Akwa Ibom State Government expelled Channels Television's correspondent, Chris Moffat, and cameraman, Kufre Ikpe, from the Government House press centre in Uyo, following the station's broadcast of a video in which Governor Umo Eno confirmed rumours of his planned defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

On May 22, Governor Eno held a cabinet meeting to review the status of the administration's projects, and used the opportunity to confirm his rumoured

plan to defect from the PDP to APC. He told his cabinet members to either defect with him or prepare their resignation letters if they were unwilling to defect with him to the APC.

Reports have it that immediately after the event, Governor Eno's spokesperson, Ekerete Udo, gathered the Government House Press Corps, including Channels TV crew, and warned them not to air or publish the governor's remarks. However, on May 23, Channels Television broadcast clips of the governor's announcement as part of its news reports, which reportedly embarrassed and angered the governor.

As a result, Mr. Udo contacted the Channels TV team and informed them that it has been barred from accessing the press centre on the governor's orders.

The International Press Institute (IPI) condemned the expulsion, describing it as a “blatant attack on press freedom” and a violation of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. In a statement signed by IPI Legal Adviser and Advocacy Committee Chair, Tobi Soniyi, and Committee Secretary, Ochiaka Ugwu, the Institute demanded the immediate recall of the expelled journalists.

### **Kano State Bans Airing of Live Political Programmes, Issues Interview Guidelines for Media**

The Kano State Government has banned live broadcasts of political programmes by media outlets and issued guidelines for conducting interviews by broadcast houses in the state following a meeting with media executives, chaired by the State Commissioner for Information and Internal Affairs, Comrade Ibrahim Waiya. The state also banned journalists from asking “provocative questions” during interviews.

Mr Sani Yola, the Director of Special Duties in the Kano State Ministry of Information and Internal Affairs, disclosed this in a statement on May 7, 2025.

The statement said, “Anyone appearing on media platforms for interviews must sign an undertaking to refrain from making abusive, defamatory, or culturally offensive remarks.

“A ban has been placed on live political programmes across media outlets to prevent the spread of inflammatory content.”

“Presenters are also “banned from asking provocative questions or making suggestive gestures that could lead to statements capable of defaming individuals or damaging the image of Kano State.”

According to the government, the directives are meant “to promote responsible journalism, mutual respect, and the protection of Kano State's cultural and religious heritage.”

Mr Yola said the quarterly meeting convened by the Ministry of Information was aimed at strengthening understanding and cooperation between media organisations and the government, adding that the effort was also “to ensure effective information dissemination that upholds the dignity and image of Kano State”.

He said the media executives at the meeting pledged their continued cooperation with the government and also offered valuable suggestions on improving broadcast standards and sanitising language during interviews.

The statement said the move was part of the government's commitment to preserving the state's moral standards, and disclosed that sensitisation programmes have been organised for political programme presenters, media commentators, and the Council of Friday Imams. These efforts, he said, are designed to encourage responsible communication that conveys messages to the public without defamation or any act that could undermine the state's reputation.

Advertisement

Comrade Waiya said that the government's stance is not to suppress political opposition but rather to safeguard the sanctity of Kano's cultural and religious values.

Key resolutions reached during the meeting with media managers include the following:

- Anyone appearing on media platforms for interviews must sign an undertaking to refrain from making abusive, defamatory, or culturally offensive remarks.
- A ban has been placed on live political programmes across media outlets to prevent the spread of inflammatory content.
- Presenters are also banned from asking provocative questions or making suggestive gestures that could lead to statements capable of defaming individuals or damaging the image of Kano State.

However, the move has drawn widespread condemnation from journalists, opposition politicians, and civil society organisations who argue that the Kano State government's action infringes on press freedom.

#### **4.6 Invasion/Raid**

##### **Police Raid Journalist Fejiro Oliver's Office Over Pending Defamation Cases**

Policemen from the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), led by Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jonathan Towuru, on December 4, 2025, stormed the Abuja office of investigative journalist, Mr Tega Oghenedoro, popularly known as Fejiro Oliver, in a renewed attempt to arrest him.

Reports have it that the policemen, who were in mufti, identified themselves as officers from the Force Criminal Investigation Department, FCID, a department of the Nigeria Police Force. They were led by Deputy Inspector General of Police Jonathan Towuru.

The officers said they were acting on a court-issued warrant for Mr Oghenedoro's arrest. However, they were unable to arrest him as he was not in the office at the time of the raid.

Speaking with Daily Post, Mr Oghenedoro said he has been living in fear since returning to Abuja and intends to present himself at the Police Headquarters the following day.

Meanwhile, on December 4, 2025, Mr Oghenedoro appeared at the Federal High Court, Asaba Division, Delta State, over two defamation cases filed by the police on behalf of Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and Senator Ede Dafinone, before the same judge. On December 3, 2025, he had also appeared before a Delta State court, where he faced Magistrate Patricia Onyeisi Okoh over a separate defamation suit brought by Stella Okotete, a politician whose ministerial nomination had been rejected by the Senate following petitions from a group of lawyers alleging certificate forgery.

##### **Kogi Radio Station Invaded, Equipment Worth Millions Stolen**

On July 26, 2025, persons believed to be armed robbers invaded the premises of Radio Nigeria Prime 101.5FM at Jimbe in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State, and took away broadcasting and transmission equipment worth millions of Naira.

The armed robbers reportedly operated for more than three hours without any challenge from security agencies.

Reacting to the incident, the General Manager of the Station, Mr. Momoh Jimoh Adeiza, explained that they woke up to see that the station had been

attacked by armed criminals who stole some of their equipment.

“This is a major attack on the station. We are currently off air right now because our equipment have been stolen by these armed criminals. When they came, they tied up our security man on duty to carry out their nefarious activities. Where do we go from here now?” Mr. Adeiza said.

He urged security agencies to intensify their efforts in apprehending the criminals, noting that the incident has been reported to the Zonal Director. Mr. Adeiza also appealed to the relevant authorities for assistance to help the station resume broadcasting.

Narrating his ordeals with the suspected criminals, the security man on duty, identified as Mr. Daniel Haruna, said the hoodlums were armed with dangerous weapons such as guns and cutlasses.

Mr. Haruna said that the robbers stole the copper part of the feeder lines, 22 pieces of modules, armoured cables, generator batteries, and other items during the attack.

“They were more than 10 armed criminals that attacked our station. They came around 1am this Saturday morning with guns and cutlasses. When they pointed touch light on me, they immediately grabbed me, tied me to a tree and blindfolded my eyes,” he stated.

Aside from the theft of equipment, the robbers destroyed some parts of the station during the invasion.

### **Armed Men Invade Private Radio Station in Bayelsa State**

Some men armed with guns on two separate days, Saturday, May 17, 2025, at about 2:10 pm and on Sunday, May 18, 2025, at 4:40 pm, invaded a private radio station, Rhythm 94.7 FM in Swali, a suburb of Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, and carted away valuables, including mobile phones, recorders, and operational gadgets belonging to staff on duty, leaving the staff traumatised.

Condemning the attack, the Bayelsa State Council of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in a statement signed by the State Council Chairman, Tonye Yemoleigha, and the Secretary, Stanley Imgbii, described it as an attack on press freedom. The NUJ called on security operatives to apprehend the perpetrators of the attack, asking the state's Commissioner of Police to lead the operation. The Union also urged the Commissioner to station a patrol van

around the radio station to prevent a recurrence.

#### **4.7 Harassment**

##### **NRC Managing Director Threatens, Assaults Female Journalist**

On August 27, 2025, Mr Kayode Opeifa, the Managing Director of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), harassed, intimidated, and assaulted Ms Ladi Bala, the Transport Correspondent of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), while covering the aftermath of a derailed train along the Abuja-Kaduna rail corridor. He also insulted Ms Grace Ike, chairperson of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Council, who tried to intervene.

Ms Bala, who is the immediate past President of the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NUJ FCT Council), was subjected to unprovoked verbal attacks when the NRC boss questioned her presence, disrupted her live reporting and ordered security operatives to bundle her from the scene.

Mr Opeifa allegedly disrupted Ms Bala's live report, calling her "stupid," "foolish," and "useless", while questioning her appearance and professionalism. The NRC boss further reportedly threatened to report her to security agencies, the Presidency, and NTA management to ensure that she is dismissed. He thereafter ordered security operatives to forcibly take her out of the venue.

He also threatened and insulted the Abuja Council NUJ Chairman, Ms Grace Ike, who inquired, trying to hear his own side of the story and to resolve the situation.

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Council, condemned Mr Opeifa's action, describing it as dehumanising and a gross violation of press freedom.

The NUJ FCT Council, through its secretary, Comrade Jide Oyekunle, demanded an immediate and public apology from Opeifa and urged the NRC to take decisive action to prevent a recurrence.

Mr Opeifa later apologised, saying, "The NUJ demanded an apology from me, and as a friend of the house, I apologise for what happened and take full responsibility". He described his remarks against the journalist as

“regrettable”, saying he was under pressure while managing the situation.

He said: “Acting under pressure and in the heat of the moment while trying to ensure safety, I uttered some unkind words for which I take full responsibility.

“To her, I offer my fullest apology. I also extend the same to the NTA, NAWOJ, and the wider journalism community. I have fought alongside journalists before; I am not their enemy.

“The media remain our partners, not adversaries. We will deepen collaboration with the NUJ, NAWOJ, and civil society to promote transparency and public trust.”

### **Governor's Security Aide Harasses Journalists at Lagos Empowerment Event**

On August 23, Mr Kunle Fagbemi, the Chief Security Officer (CSO) to Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, harassed members of the governor's press crew during an empowerment programme organised by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals, in collaboration with the Renewed Hope Initiative, a project of the wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, at Lagos House in Ikeja.

Eyewitnesses said the CSO stopped the bus conveying the governor's press crew. He confronted the journalists, and accused them of being “disruptive” and “unprofessional,” creating tension at the venue before guests and dignitaries.

Although no physical altercation was reported, the journalists expressed concerns about their safety and the recurring trend of intimidation faced in the hands of the CSO while covering government events.

### **DSS Operatives Harass Journalists Covering Edo State Election Tribunal**

On January 20, 2025, some operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) harassed journalists who converged at the High Court in Benin to cover the Edo State election tribunal and prevented the journalists from covering the tribunal sitting.

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council in a statement issued by Festus Alenkhe and Andy Egbon, the chairman and secretary respectively condemned the attack saying the attempt to bar journalists from performing their constitutional duties is a blatant assault on press freedom and

the fundamental right of citizens to information and free speech. They called on the Director-General of the DSS and the Edo State Director of the service to take immediate steps to caution their personnel and prevent future occurrences.

On January 21, the state governor, Monday Okpebholo ordered an investigation into the incident directing the security agency to investigate the claims.

They Edo State NUJ praised the governor for his immediate response to the reported incident and commended his commitment to safeguarding the rights and safety of media practitioners in the state.

#### **4.8      Killed**

##### **Mob Burns Woman to Death in Niger State for Alleged Blasphemy**

On August 30, 2025, a mob in Kasuwan-Garba town in Mariga Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State, North-central Nigeria, set a woman, identified as Amaye, ablaze for alleged blasphemy against Islam's holy Prophet Muhammad.

The woman, a food vendor, was said to have made the alleged blasphemous remarks at her restaurant after a customer jokingly expressed interest in marrying her to “fulfil the Sunnah”, the tradition of the Prophet.

Reports say that the woman was first taken to the palace of the District Head of Kasuwan-Garba, interrogated, and then handed over to security operatives for investigation. A mob allegedly overwhelmed the security operatives, lynched, and set her ablaze.

Confirming the incident, Mr Wasiu Abiodun, a Superintendent of Police and the Spokesperson for the Niger State Police Command, said: “On 30/8/2025 at about 2 pm, a report received indicated that one Amaye, a female of Kasuwan-Garba, Mariga LGA, made some comments against the Islamic prophet.

Unfortunately, it led to a mob attack, and she was set ablaze before the reinforcement of the security teams. Meanwhile, efforts are being made to ensure that arrests are effected, investigated and prosecuted”.

##### **Photojournalist Murdered in Kogi State**

On July 22, 2025, a photojournalist with Inside Story, an online news outlet based in Lokoja, Kogi State, identified as Mr Ayo Aiyepeku, was murdered,

allegedly by a neighbour, Mr Adebayo Pelumi, who reportedly resides in the same compound housing the Inside Story office.

A colleague of the photojournalist who witnessed the killing said he was in the office with Mr Aiyepeku doing some video and photo editing when the suspect called him to help him out on his poultry farm, which is also inside the same compound.

According to Mr Aiyepeku's colleague, "It was around 7:30 pm when the suspect called him, but he didn't know that Ayo was not the only person in the office. Immediately, Ayo gets out, Adebayo hits him with an iron repeatedly and kills him there."

The eyewitness said he saw Mr Pelumi lifting the body into a deep freezer before moving the body into his Hilux Van, prompting him to raise alarm, adding "I called some people on the phone who mobilised the vigilante in the area, but before they came, Adebayo had made away with the dead body.

The witness further disclosed that along with the vigilante, they searched the area but could only see blood stains in the freezer and around the poultry stall.

He said while he was still with the vigilantes, Mr Pelumi drove into the compound with his van, and when he saw them, he refused to stop but reversed and drove away. The vigilantes chased him, and while trying to escape, his car had an accident during the chase, which made him jump out of the vehicle and run away.

The case was reported on July 23 at the State Police Headquarters in Lokoja.

Mr Pelumi was later found dead in a hotel in an apparent suicide which raise suspicion.

#### **4.9 Shut Down**

#### **Labour Unions Forcefully Shut Down Lagos Media Stations Over Pay Dispute**

Labour unions, including the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers' Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU), and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), on January 13, 2025, embarked on a strike and shut down Lagos State-owned broadcast stations, including the Lagos Television, Radio Lagos/Eko FM, and Lagos Traffic Radio, in protest over unresolved payroll issues.

The unionists took this action to back up their demand that about 245 workers be added to the government's payroll. They are protesting their non-inclusion in the state's Oracle database for salary payments and the non-payment of the minimum wage. The striking media workers specifically demanded for: payment of the newly-implemented minimum wage; remittance of their pension contributions; adequate training and capacity-building programmes for staff; and integration into the Oracle database for efficient payment and performance-based management.

The stations were forced off-air for 48 hours by workers who switched off transmitters and severed cables and forced other workers to join the strike.

The protesting workers carried placards bearing various inscriptions to press home their demands. Some inscriptions on the placards read: "Give us Oracle and take the revenue generated", "Palliatives and subventions are not working", "Oracle is the answer", and "All we need is Oracle! Save our today and secure our future".

The other inscriptions read: "Non-implementation of new minimum wage is anti-labour", "Minimum wage, a must! Our sweat is drying up", "Save us from career stagnation", and "LTV, Radio Lagos, Traffic Radio are not liability, we are asset to the government".

Mr Adeleye Ajayi, the Chairman of the Lagos State Council of the NUJ while addressing newsmen said that the media workers were demanding fair treatment and wages for being at the centre of promoting government policies.

He disclosed that both the NUJ and RATTAWU had given different ultimatums and exercised enough patience for the government to meet their demands.

Mr. Ajayi said: "Both NUJ and RATTAWU are quite aware of this. We have given different ultimatums: a 10-day ultimatum, a 21-day ultimatum, and the last and final one was a seven-day ultimatum."

He said these ultimatums were enough for the state government to accede to the requests of its members.

The NUJ Council Chairman insisted: "Our members should be integrated to the Oracle database. Oracle database is like the IPPIS system in the Federal Civil Service that creates a seamless way of paying workers' salaries and other benefits."

He urged the government to look into the issue of minimum wage which is being enjoyed by other state workers, adding that: “Our workers here are not benefiting from the minimum wage like other state workers. Workers of the state broadcast corporations should benefit from the minimum wage.”

#### **4.10 Summons**

##### **Police Summon Punch Correspondent Over Unpublished Story**

The Nigeria Police Force, Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) Annex in Enugu, on June 23, 2025, summoned Mr Raphael Ede, the Enugu State correspondent of The Punch newspaper, over an unpublished story.

Mr Ede disclosed in a press statement that the police invitation was sent to him via a WhatsApp message, asking him to appear at the FCID Annex in Enugu on June 24, 2025. The police invitation sent to Mr Ede reads in part, “My name is Detective Orji Godson. I am a police officer serving at FCID Annex Enugu. My formation is investigating a case of conspiracy, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace in which you featured prominently. In view of this, you are kindly requested to interview the AIG FCID Annex Enugu via AIG team leader on 24/06/2025 to throw more light on the allegations.”

The police officer who invited the reporter informed him that the invitation was centred on an investigative report Mr Ede is currently working on involving officials of the Enugu State Government and some parties.

The journalist said he responded to the invitation, asking the police officer to officially write his employer on the subject matter. Meanwhile, Mr Ede said he has reported the matter to two human rights organisations, the Civil Rights Realisation and Advancement Network and the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre. Meanwhile, the human rights groups, in turn, have also written petitions to the Inspector General of Police, the Police Service Commission, and the Assistant Inspector General of Police at the Force Headquarters in Abuja, asking them to look into the matter.

##### **Police Summon Lagos Journalist for Alleging Corruption, WAEC Certificate Forgery Against Epe LG Chairperson**

The Police in Lagos have summoned journalist Mr Yomi Agbaje, popularly known as Aagba Akin, over allegations of corruption and forgery of West

African Educational Council (WAEC) certificates he made against the Epe Local Government Chairperson, Princess Surah Animashaun.

Mr Agbaje, who has been vocal in his allegations of corruption and mismanagement within the local government, shared the letter of summon from the police on his Facebook page and called on Nigerians to come to his aid as he fears for his life.

Mr Agbaje wrote on his Facebook page: “I have been joining my voice to speak out against the alleged oppressions, sale of government properties, forced land grabbing, and certificate forgery by the Chairman of Epe Local Government. As a fundamental human right, I am exercising my freedom of speech to hold our leaders accountable.”

According to the journalist, the police summons cites allegations of cyberbullying and conspiracy, and he says it is an attempt to silence his reporting, vowing that he remains steadfast in his mission for justice.

“Silencing dissenting voices won't solve the problems plaguing our community. We must stand together to fight for our rights and resources. The struggle for justice and equality continues, and we won't back down,” he added.

### **Journalist Summoned by INTERPOL over Alleged Cyberstalking and Criminal Defamation**

Mr. Peter Olasupo, an Ibadan-based journalist with 32 FM 94.9 radio station in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, said on January 5, 2025 that the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) had summoned him to report to the Force Headquarters in Abuja at 11:00 AM in furtherance of the investigation into allegations of cyberstalking and criminal defamation.

Mr. Olasupo said he was asked to report in Abuja on December 30, 2024, but that he missed the date and his legal counsel, Barr. Yomi Ogunlola responded on his behalf and rescheduled his appearance to January 13, 2025. He also added that the letter of invitation left out the specific details of the allegations.

He expressed concern over the high cost of flights and safety issues attributed to road travel, and how he would transport himself to Abuja from Ibadan, where he lives.

In a Facebook post, he said: “INTERPOL, if you truly want to facilitate this process, shouldn't you at least provide travel allowances? Or will you use

police helicopter to carry me? Traveling by air is costly these days, and traveling by road has its risks. Yet, here I am, being summoned to Abuja. Nonetheless, I will do what is required.”

The Nigerian Police have often been accused of misusing criminal defamation laws and provisions of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015 to target journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens, undermining freedom of expression and the civic space.

#### **4.11 Others**

##### **DSS Arraigns Sowore for Alleged Cyberbullying**

On November 25, 2025, the Department of State Services (DSS) arraigned Mr Omoyle Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters, at the Federal High Court in Abuja for allegedly cyberbullying President Bola Tinubu. Appearing before Justice Mohammed Umar, Sowore pleaded not guilty, while his lawyer, Marshal Abubakar, challenged the competency of the charge when the matter was called for his plea.

According to reports, Abubakar told the court that a preliminary objection had been served on the counsel to the government, Mr Akinlolu Kehinde (SAN), but noted that it was only handed to the DSS lawyer a few minutes before the proceedings began. He argued that his client could not enter a plea on what he considered an incompetent charge. In response, Kehinde strongly opposed Abubakar's submission.

Mr Kehinde argued that the application was not yet ripe for consideration, noting that the business of the day was Sowore's arraignment. He described the preliminary objections filed by Sowore's lawyer as a tactic to delay the proceedings and reminded the court that numerous adjournments had already been granted at Sowore's request.

Citing Section 396(3) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015, Mr Kehinde emphasised that no application should be entertained before Sowore's arraignment. Also, lawyers representing X Incorp (formerly Twitter) and Meta (Facebook) Incorp, the second and third defendants, respectively, did not oppose the application, allowing the defendants to take their plea.

In a brief ruling, Justice Umar agreed with the DSS lawyer, ordering that Sowore's arraignment should proceed. The DSS, in its charge marked

FHC/ABJ/CR/484/2025, accused Sowore of making a false claim against President Bola Tinubu by labelling him “a criminal” on his X and Facebook accounts.

The security agency named Sowore, the 2019 and 2023 presidential candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC), as the first defendant, while joining X Incorp and Meta Incorp as the second and third defendants.

### **Church Members Arraigned Over Defamatory Social Media Posts**

Two members of the Faith and Miracle International Church in Ibadan, Tofunmi Oluwaseun, 21, and Ibikunle Akanbi, 46, were arraigned at the Iyaganku Magistrates' Court, Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, on allegations of defamation. The duo is facing a three-count charge of conspiracy, defamation, and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.

According to the prosecutor, Inspector Adeshina Folaranmi, the defendants committed the offences on October 2, 2025, at about 1:21 p.m., at Awotan, Ibadan. He told the court that the accused persons published defamatory statements on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook against their pastor, Gbemiga David, with the intent to tarnish his image and that of the church. Folaranmi further alleged that the defendants called their pastor a “mad man” and claimed that people used to die in his church, actions the prosecution claimed were likely to cause public unrest.

The prosecutor said the offences contravened Sections 516, 375, and 249(d) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000. However, both defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges and their counsels appealed for bail to be granted on liberal terms.

Presiding Magistrate Oluwabusayo Osho granted bail to each defendant in the sum of ₦500,000, with two sureties in like sum, and adjourned the case until January 29, 2026, for hearing.

### **Kano State Censorship Board Suspends 22 Hausa Films for Alleged Breach of Regulatory Protocols**

On May 19, 2025, the Kano State Censorship Board announced the suspension of 22 Hausa film series for allegedly breaching regulatory protocols that mandate prior censorship approval before public distribution.

Mr Abba El-Mustapha, the Executive Secretary of the Board, disclosed the suspension following a management meeting and internal consultations, saying the titles were suspended because they were not submitted for the

mandatory censorship process before production, marketing, streaming, or broadcast.

Mr Abdullahi Sani Sulaiman, the Board's Information Officer, listed the affected series as: Dakin Amarya, Mashahuri, Gidan Sarauta, Wasiyya, Tawakkaltu, Mijina, Wani Zamani, Labarina, Mallaka, and Kudin Ruwa.

The rest are: Boka Ko Malam, Wayasan Gobe, Rana Dubu, Manyan Mata, Fatake, Garwashi, Jamilun Jiddan, Shahadar Nabila, Dadin Kowa, Tabarmar Kishiyata, and Rigar Aro.

The Board said all producers and stakeholders must comply with censorship laws regulating production, marketing, streaming, and broadcasting in Kano State, warning that: "Non-compliance could result in legal consequences."

Producers of the affected films were instructed to halt all forms of broadcast or streaming of the titles immediately and submit their content for censorship approval within a one-week window from May 19, 2025.

The statement said: "All producers and owners of these films must stop airing or streaming their content immediately and are required to submit their productions to the Board for censorship between Monday, May 19, and Sunday, May 25, 2025."

The Board also called on TV stations and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to assist in enforcing these regulations, aligning with efforts to promote professionalism and growth in the Kannywood industry.

## C H A P T E R **FIVE**



### **5.0 MRA's Interventions on Freedom of Expression Issues**

Against the backdrop of persistent attacks on freedom of expression and the media in 2025, MRA undertook a series of targeted interventions to protect journalists, uphold press freedom, and strengthen accountability mechanisms. These interventions were designed to respond directly to documented violations while also addressing structural weaknesses that enable abuse. They included legal and litigation assistance in cases involving infringements of freedom of expression, capacity-building programmes for journalists and civil society organisations, including initiatives on the safety of female journalists, advocacy and training on the effective use of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, as well as the production of publications and the issuance of press statements to inform the public and influence policy and institutional reform.

#### **5.1 Legal and Litigation Assistance Undertaken by MRA in 2025**

1. MRA and the International Press Centre (IPC) in July 2025 filed an appeal at the Court of Appeal, Abuja, challenging the trial court's findings on service and locus standi, contending that the court erred in law by disregarding evidence of service and by denying them standing despite their role as public interest organisations. They further argued that the suit was dismissed on technical grounds without consideration of the substantive constitutional and public interest issues concerning the CCB's statutory duty to investigate allegations of abuse of office by public officials.

MRA and IPC had on November 9, 2021, instituted an action against the

Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), seeking to compel it to investigate a petition alleging abuse of office by the former Governor of Ebonyi State, Mr David Umahi, arising from the arrest of a journalist and the imposition of a lifetime ban on two journalists from accessing government facilities in the State.

As of the end of the year, no date had been fixed for its hearing of the appeal.

2. In a judgment delivered on 27 October 2025, the Federal High Court, Lagos dismissed the public interest action filed by MRA against the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) seeking judicial intervention in respect of the Federal Government's continued failure to implement the Anti-Torture Act, 2017, particularly the non-issuance of the operational rules and guidelines required for the effective enforcement of the Act.

The Court held that MRA had failed to sufficiently establish the requisite interest to maintain the suit. It further found that the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation had prepared and forwarded a draft of the rules required for the implementation of the Anti-Torture Act to the office of the President for approval, which had not been granted at the time. On the basis of these findings, the court declined to grant the substantive reliefs sought and dismissed the suit.

The case was initially assigned to Justice Tijjani Garba Ringim but was reassigned to Justice Owoeye Alexander Oluseyi following Justice Ringim's transfer out of Lagos State. Prior to instituting the suit, MRA, by a formal letter dated August 20, 2021, demanded that the AGF discharge his statutory obligation to develop and publish the requisite regulatory framework for the Act. According to MRA, the AGF's failure to respond or take concrete steps pursuant to that demand constituted a breach of statutory duty and had the effect of stalling the practical operation of legislation enacted to curb one of the most egregious violations of human rights.

3. On December 1, 2025, Justice Chukwujekwu Joseph Aneke of the Federal High Court, Lagos, adjourned by to 24 February 2026 for judgment an action filed by MRA on behalf of a journalist, Ms Blessing Oladunjoye against the Nigerian Shippers' Council and its Executive Secretary over the Council's refusal to grant her access to information she requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. This was after several adjournments and when all pending applications and the

substantive claims had been argued and adopted. The suit arose from a written request dated 26 October 2020, seeking information on the Council's compliance with the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), 2019.

In the action, Ms Oladunjoye sought some declaratory and injunctive reliefs, contending that the refusal to disclose the requested information violated her right of access to information guaranteed under sections 1(1) and 4 of the FOI Act. She asked the court to compel disclosure of information relating to the Council's data protection policies, data processing practices, and compliance audits under the NDPR, and to award her ₦1 million as exemplary and aggravated damages for the unlawful denial of her request.

4. In 2025, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) instituted a public interest action at the Federal High Court, Abuja, against the Federal Government, the Attorney-General of the Federation, the Inspector-General of Police, and the Nigeria Police Force, seeking judicial intervention to address what it described as persistent and gender-specific attacks against female journalists nationwide. Commenced by Originating Summons under the Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules, the suit seeks declarations that recurrent harassment, intimidation, assaults, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, threats, and other gender-based violations against female journalists amount to breaches of rights guaranteed under the 1999 Constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.

Relying on its observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, MRA brought an action in the public interest on behalf of female journalists, contending that the Nigerian government failed to prevent violations against them, investigate reported cases, prosecute perpetrators, or provide effective remedies. The organisation sought, among other reliefs, orders compelling the establishment of comprehensive, gender-sensitive protection mechanisms, the investigation and prosecution of offenders, institutional reforms including mandatory training for law enforcement agencies, and a perpetual injunction restraining state actors from interfering with the work of female journalists. The suit was supported by documented cases from several states, which MRA argued demonstrate a systemic pattern of violence and impunity that undermines press freedom and Nigeria's

domestic and international human rights obligations. As at the time of writing this report, no hearing date had been fixed commencement of the suit.

5. Media Rights Agenda (MRA) provided legal assistance to an Abia State-based journalist, Ms Charity Uwakwe, to institute a ₦5 million fundamental rights action at the Federal High Court, Umuahia, before Justice Kehinde Ogundare, against the Abia State Government and the Nigeria Police Force. The suit challenges the forceful detention, physical assault, intimidation, and degrading treatment meted out to Ms Uwakwe on June 30, 2023, while carrying out her lawful journalistic duties. Commenced on 13 June 2025 by Originating Summons pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules, 2009, the action seeks declaratory and ancillary reliefs for violations of her constitutionally guaranteed rights.

The respondents in the suit include Mrs Oluchi Franklin, Public Relations Officer of the Abia State Ministry of Women Affairs; the Abia State Government; the Attorney-General of Abia State; the Nigeria Police Force; and the Commissioner of Police, Abia State.

In the suit, Ms Uwakwe is seeking, among other reliefs, declarations that her unlawful detention, physical assault, verbal abuse, and public humiliation, carried out by Mrs. Franklin under the authority of the State Government, constituted violations of her rights to dignity, personal liberty, and freedom of expression, as well as a denial of access to justice arising from the refusal of police officers to process her complaint without an unlawful inducement. She further seeks orders compelling the investigation and prosecution of those responsible, payment of ₦5 million as general and exemplary damages, a perpetual injunction restraining further harassment, and a public apology to be published in national newspapers.

The matter was fixed for hearing on January 22, 2026.

6. A public interest action instituted on July 27, 2021, by MRA at the Federal High Court, Lagos, against the Attorney-General of the Federation seeking to compel the Federal Government to comply with its obligations under Principle 20 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, particularly

its duty to adopt concrete measures to ensure the safety of journalists and other media practitioners in Nigeria was beset by repeated change of judges and adjournments and by the end of 2025, no date has been fixed for hearing.

The suit seeks judicial enforcement of Principle 20, which requires State Parties to protect journalists, promptly investigate and prosecute attacks against them, and promote a safe, enabling, and independent media environment. MRA contends that the persistent failure of the Nigerian government to implement effective legal, institutional, and practical safeguards for journalists constitutes a breach of Nigeria's obligations under both the Declaration and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The matter, now pending before Justice Deinde Isaac Dipeolu of the Federal High Court, has been beset by repeated adjournments since it was first fixed for hearing on 19 October 2022. The delays have been attributed to the absence of counsel representing the Attorney-General of the Federation, court holidays and judicial vacations, religious observances, and instances where the court did not sit. Additionally, the case which was initially presided over by Justice Peter Odo Lifu, was reassigned to Justice Nnamdi O. Dimgba, and later transferred to Justice Dipeolu following Justice Dimgba's elevation to the Court of Appeal.

MRA maintains that the suit underscores enduring concerns regarding the safety of journalists in Nigeria and argues that, in the absence of decisive government action, attacks on media practitioners will continue with impunity, thereby undermining press freedom, democratic governance, and the public's right to information. At the time of this report, a new hearing date had not been communicated.

7. MRA's pursuit of getting the authorities to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr Pelumi Onifade, a 20-year-old journalist with Gboah TV, who died in controversial circumstances while covering the #EndSARS protests in October 2020 led to Federal High Court, Lagos, judgment which ordered, among other things, that the Attorney-General of Lagos State should initiate a Coroner's Inquest to investigate Mr Onifade's death, ascertain its cause, and identify any persons or institutions responsible.

Pursuant to the judgment, a Coroner's Inquest was convened before the Lagos State District Coroner, Mrs Temitope Oladele. The inquest was

marked by repeated adjournments arising largely from delays in obtaining critical medical and forensic records from relevant institutions, particularly the Ikorodu General Hospital and the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH). The coroner issued multiple directives to the Office of the Attorney-General of Lagos State to liaise with institutions including LASUTH, Ikorodu General Hospital, the DNA and Forensic Centre, the Lagos State Task Force, and Gboah TV, to produce documents relating to the recovery, identification, and post-mortem examination of the deceased.

At various sittings in 2025, counsel to MRA and the Onifade family, Mr Monday Arunsi, repeatedly informed the Court of the failure of Ikorodu General Hospital to comply with court orders directing the release of medical records relating to the deposit, release, or current status of Mr Onifade's remains. Following continued non-compliance, the Coroner ordered the issuance of Form 48 (Notice of Consequences of Disobedience of Court Order) against the Medical Director of Ikorodu General Hospital, thereby initiating contempt proceedings.

The coroner also ordered LASUTH to produce a comprehensive and specific report relating to an unidentified body bearing mortuary tag number 1385, which is believed to correspond with Mr Onifade's remains and on which a post-mortem examination was reportedly conducted in November 2020. Proceedings were further delayed by industrial action at LASUTH, which prevented hospital personnel from responding to the Court's directives.

As at the latest adjournment in 2025, the coroner reiterated the obligation of the relevant medical institutions to comply with subsisting court orders and adjourned the inquest to January 21, 2026, for further mention, pending compliance with the orders for the production of medical and forensic reports critical to determining the circumstances and cause of Mr Pelumi Onifade's death.

8. MRA, in 2025, provided legal assistance to Lagos-based journalist Ms Ayomide Eweje in a Federal High Court, Lagos suit against Ikorodu General Hospital and its Medical Director for refusing to disclose information on the handling of the remains of Mr Pelumi Onifade, a journalist who died during the #EndSARS protests in October 2020.

Filed by Mr Monday Arunsi under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011, the suit seeks declarations that the hospital's refusal violates Ms

Eweje's statutory right of access to information, an order compelling disclosure of records relating to receipt, custody, and handling of the body, deposition of the information with the Court, and ₦1 million in exemplary damages. She also requested criminal proceedings against the hospital for wrongful denial of access.

Ms Eweje emphasised the overriding public interest in transparency and accountability in managing public mortuaries. The matter was adjourned to January 22, 2026 for mention.

9. MRA supported investigative journalist, Ms. Juliana Ebere Francis, to file a suit at the Federal High Court, Lagos against the Lagos State Commissioner of Police and the Nigeria Police Force for failing to respond to her FOI request of 16 June 2025 concerning child trafficking and police complicity.

Filed by Mr Monday Arunsi, the suit seeks to compel the Police to provide the requested information, declare their refusal a violation of her FOI rights, award ₦1 million in exemplary damages, and initiate criminal proceedings against responsible officers. The request covers the release of a 10-year-old trafficked victim, non-arrest of key suspects, and non-prosecution of offenders.

The matter, emphasising urgent public interest and child protection, was set for hearing on September 25, 2025, but was adjourned to February 4, 2026.

10. MRA provided legal assistance to Enough is Enough (EiE) Project Nigeria in a protracted Freedom of Information (FOI) litigation arising from a suit against First Bank of Nigeria Plc over its refusal to disclose information relating to a controversial public transaction.

The matter, presently before the Court of Appeal, Lagos Division, followed an appeal by First Bank against the judgment of the Federal High Court, Lagos, which ordered the bank to disclose details of a loan facility granted to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) for the 2013 purchase of two bullet-proof BMW vehicles for the then Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Stella Oduah.

The substantive suit was instituted on January 9, 2014, at the Federal High Court, Ikoyi, Lagos, by EiE Nigeria under the Freedom of Information Act. In a judgment delivered on June 15, 2015, Justice Mohammed N. Yunusa granted EiE Nigeria's claims and ordered the disclosure of the

requested information. First Bank subsequently filed a Notice of Appeal on September 11, 2015.

Following delays in the transmission of the record of appeal, the Court of Appeal, on January 10, 2022, granted First Bank's application for extension of time and directed EiE Nigeria to regularise its processes. The appeal later came up on November 27, 2025, when EiE Nigeria's application to regularise its Brief of Argument was granted, with the parties represented by counsel.

The Court of Appeal adjourned the matter to April 13, 2026, for the substantive hearing of the appeal.

11. MRA provided legal assistance to Ms. Blessing Oladunjoye, a journalist and publisher of *BONews*, to institute an action against the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO) and its Director-General, arising from the institution's refusal to grant her access to information requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The suit challenges FIIRO's failure to disclose information relating to its compliance with the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) 2019, following a written request made by Ms. Oladunjoye on October 26, 2020. The action was filed at the Federal High Court, Lagos, and heard by Justice Daniel Emeka Osiagor.

In the suit, which was commenced on March 1, 2022, Ms. Oladunjoye sought declaratory and injunctive reliefs, contending that FIIRO's failure or refusal to grant her access to the requested information constituted a violation of her right of access to information guaranteed under sections 1(1) and 4 of the Freedom of Information Act. She asked the court to compel FIIRO to disclose extensive information relating to its data protection and privacy practices under the NDPR 2019, including its data protection policies, the identity and training of its Data Protection Officer, details of its data processing activities, the number of individuals whose personal data it processes annually, and comprehensive audit reports on its privacy and data protection compliance. She also sought an order directing FIIRO and its Director-General to pay ₦1 million as exemplary and aggravated damages for the alleged flagrant and unlawful denial of her statutory right to access information.

Following the adoption of final written addresses, Justice Osiagor adjourned the matter on September 24, 2025, to November 21, 2025, for judgment. Although the court did not sit on the scheduled date, judgment

was subsequently delivered on December 2, 2025.

12. MRA provided legal assistance to Ms Blessing Oladunjoye, a journalist and publisher of *BONews*, in a Freedom of Information (FOI) suit against the Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech) before the Federal High Court, Lagos.

In a judgment delivered by Justice Daniel Emeka Osiagor, the Court held that Yabatech unlawfully denied Ms Oladunjoye access to information relating to its compliance with the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), 2019, which she had requested by a letter dated October 26, 2020. The Court ordered Yabatech to disclose all the requested information and awarded ₦300,000 as exemplary and aggravated damages for the violation of her right of access to information.

The Court described the information sought as being of clear public interest and rejected Yabatech's claim that it was exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, holding that the requested records related to the institution's statutory data protection obligations and were subject to disclosure. Justice Osiagor emphasised that compliance with the FOI Act and the NDPR is mandatory for public institutions in order to promote transparency and accountability.

Following the judgment, Media Rights Agenda in 2025 provided legal assistance to Ms Oladunjoye in the execution and enforcement of the Court's orders.

13. MRA provided legal assistance to Abuja-based journalist, Ms Godsgift Onyedinefu, in two Freedom of Information (FOI) suits challenging the refusal of the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development to disclose information on the cost of Nigeria's participation in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

In the judgments delivered by Justice Donatus Uwaezuoke Okorowo of the Federal High Court, Abuja, the Court held that the failure of both ministries to provide the requested information amounted to an unlawful violation of the journalist's right of access to information under the FOI Act, 2011. The Court ordered each ministry to release the requested information within seven days and awarded ₦1 million against each ministry, totalling ₦2 million, as exemplary and aggravated damages.

The two suits, filed on July 26, 2019, were instituted on Ms Onyedinefu's behalf by Mr Charles Musa, a Lagos-based lawyer and member of MRA's

Network of FOI Lawyers. In the first suit, she sued the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, its Minister, and the Attorney-General of the Federation, while in the second suit, she sued the Federal Ministry of Finance, its Minister, and the Attorney-General of the Federation. The actions arose from the ministries' failure to respond to her FOI requests dated June 3, 2019, seeking details of the total cost of Nigeria's participation in the 2018 World Cup and whether budgetary allocations were approved for it.

In his rulings, Justice Okorowo affirmed that public institutions have a statutory duty to provide requested information or issue a valid written notice of denial in accordance with the FOI Act. He emphasised that access to information is fundamental to transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy. While the Court struck out the Attorney-General of the Federation from both suits on constitutional grounds, it upheld all other reliefs sought by the journalist.

Media Rights Agenda, in 2025, provided Ms. Onyedinefu with legal assistance in the execution and enforcement of the judgments.

## **5.2 Capacity Building**

### **5.2.1 Safety of Female Journalists**

MRA convened two workshops on the Safety of Female Journalists in Nigeria in recognition of the pivotal role of female journalists in the democratic and development processes of Nigeria.

The workshops, organised with support from the Toronto, Canada-based global network of freedom of expression organisations, International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), through its Safety and Justice Grant were held in Lagos and Abuja.

The objectives of the workshops were to sensitise participating journalists on how to leverage available legal frameworks for their protection; identify remedies available to them when their rights are threatened or violated; as well as existing national and regional redress mechanisms. In addition, the workshop familiarised participants with actions that could potentially constitute attacks on female journalists and/or violations of their rights, as well as what they can do to protect themselves.

The first workshop took place in Lagos on July 29 and 30, 2025, while the

second workshop took place in Abuja on August 12 and 13, 2025.

## **5.2.2 FOI Act Training Workshops for Journalists and CSOs**

MRA organised two Freedom of Information (FOI) Training Workshops for Journalists and representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as part of MRA's efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance through the effective use of the FOI Act, 2011.

The workshops were organised to build the capacity of journalists and civil society actors to understand and utilise the Act as a tool for accessing public information, conducting investigative journalism, monitoring government activities, and advocating for open government.

Held in Lagos and Abuja, the workshops featured presentations, practical sessions, group discussions, and experience-sharing on the use of the FOI Act as a tool for investigative reporting, civic monitoring, and democratic governance. It also examined the state of implementation of the FOI Act as well as the role of the media and civil society in advancing transparency, accountability, and citizens' access to information.

The Lagos workshop took place on November 12 and 13, 2025 and was made up of media professionals and representatives of civil society organisations from different states across the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria.

The Abuja workshop, which was held on December 9 and 10, 2025, brought together participants from the media and civil society organisations from Abuja and across states in the North-West, North-Central and North East geo-political zones of Nigeria.

The workshops were supported by funding from Luminate.

## **5.3 Publications**

### **4.3.1 When Protectors Become Predators: The State Against Freedom of Expression in Nigeria, 2025**

Produced to commemorate the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI) on November 2, 2025, this report documents a disturbing pattern of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, harassment, physical violence and other forms of attacks against journalists and media workers by security and law enforcement agencies, intelligence operatives, and other government officials.

It highlights how those entrusted with maintaining law and order become instruments of repression, targeting journalists for doing their legitimate work of informing the public and holding power to account.

By focusing on violations perpetrated by state agents, the report underscores one of the most troubling contradictions in Nigeria's governance: the failure of public institutions and officials to respect and protect the rights they are sworn to uphold.

### **5.3.2 The Onslaught Intensifies: A Mid Term Assessment Report on Media Freedom Under the Tinubu Administration**

The document analyses and illuminates the extent to which the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu either advanced or undermined the freedom of expression landscape in Nigeria. It draws upon empirical evidence, legal and policy developments, case studies of violations, and the lived experiences of journalists, media workers, civil society actors, and citizens.

The assessment is the result of rigorous research, monitoring, and analysis conducted over the first two years of the Tinubu presidency. It reflects the commitment of Media Rights Agenda to ensure that the principles of open governance, media freedom, and human rights remain central to national discourse and development.

It was produced in June 2025 to assess the President Tinubu administration's respect for freedom of expression two years into his first tenure.

### **5.3.3 Leveraging Digital Tools for Journalism Practice**

This publication, ***Leveraging Digital Tools for Journalism Practice***, is a practical and strategic guide to help journalists navigate, function and thrive in this dynamic digital environment. It provides numerous examples of technological devices and digital tools that can enhance journalistic work, as well as those that can be leveraged to mitigate the risks that come with working online.

It is part of MRA's commitment to supporting media professionals in embracing innovation while upholding the core values of the journalism profession, such as accuracy, fairness, balance, integrity and accountability, while also protecting themselves and defending media freedom.

Through this resource, we have outlined some of the digital tools and technologies that can enhance journalistic work – from news and information

gathering to news processing and fact-checking, as well as telling compelling stories, disseminating the stories, and engaging audiences. It also contains information about tools that enhance the security of media professionals, their sources of information, their devices and materials.

The publication is also designed as a call to action; for journalists to build their digital capacity and leverage available digital tools and technological devices, for media organisations to invest in digital literacy and, in appropriate cases, provide or procure the required devices and equipment for their journalists, where those tools and devices are not free or where premium versions would best serve the needs of journalists.

### **5.3.4 Legal Protections for Female Journalists in Nigeria – A Resource Guide**

*Legal Protections for Female Journalists in Nigeria – A Resource Guide* identifies and brings together a variety of legal and policy frameworks as well as other documents, which establish rules, principles, or obligations that can be leveraged to protect female journalists through civil litigation, criminal prosecution, advocacy or use of regional and international mechanisms.

The documents are in various forms, including relevant provisions of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, as amended; national laws, regulations and policies; regional frameworks, and international instruments. While some of them are of a binding nature and therefore legally enforceable, others are non-binding and merely provide guidance or are aspirational.

The Guide includes frameworks that are specific to female journalists; those that apply to journalists in general, including female journalists; and those that seek to protect women and girls or promote their interests and would therefore also benefit female journalists.

### **5.3.5 A Vote Against Transparency: A Report on Allocations for Freedom of Information Implementation in the 2025 Federal Budget**

This publication examines the Federal Government's 2025 budget through the lens of Freedom of Information (FOI) compliance. The report reveals that only 13 out of over 1,300 public institutions made any budgetary provision for FOI-related activities, with total allocations amounting to just 0.000464 per cent of the proposed ₦49.74 trillion 2025 federal budget.

Through clear data analysis and three-year comparative trends, the publication demonstrates that despite a nominal increase in FOI funding,

government commitment to effective FOI implementation remains extremely weak. The report highlights structural challenges such as poor record management, limited digitisation, lack of training, and weak oversight, while offering practical recommendations to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public participation.

Overall, the publication reinforces MRA's advocacy for open governance and underscores the critical link between FOI implementation and the effective use of public resources in Nigeria.

#### **5.4 Press Statements Issued by MRA in 2025**

##### **MRA Accuses Federal Government of Undermining FOI Act Through Poor Funding**

On January 15, 2025, MRA issued a statement accusing the Federal Government of undermining the effectiveness of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act by persistently under-funding its implementation, noting that only one percent of Federal public institutions made allocations in their 2025 budget proposals for FOI-implementation and related activities.

In a statement announcing the release of its 22-page report titled "*A Vote Against Transparency: A Report on Allocations for Freedom of Information Implementation in 2025 Federal Budget*", MRA observed that only 13 out of over 1,300 Federal public institutions have provisions for FOI implementation in their budgets, with a proposed total allocation of N230,825,750.00, representing 0.000464 percent of the Federal Government's budget of N49.74 trillion.

MRA's Programme Officer, Mr. John Gbadamosi, said in the statement: "There is a temptation to argue that it is far more important for the Government to spend resources on tangible projects such as infrastructure and other capital projects than on the implementation of the FOI Act. However, as noted in MRA's 2024 report on this subject, without adequate investment in the implementation of the FOI Act to ensure that the government is transparent and accountable, all other allocations and expenditures for infrastructure, facilities or other development projects would be at risk and could easily be misappropriated."

He insisted that "the long-term benefits which the effective implementation of the FOI Act can bring to the country and its democratic process, including enhancing government transparency, efficiency and responsiveness;

engendering greater public participation in governance, improving public trust and confidence in government, ensuring that members of the public have accurate and reliable information about how they are governed, contributing to the emergence of a knowledge society, among others, make it imperative that far more significant resources necessary to make the Act effective are allocated.”

Mr. Gbadamosi identified the public institutions which have allocations for FOI implementation and related activities as the Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board, Bureau of Public Service Reforms, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Federal Ministry of Works, and Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning.

The others are Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Ministry of Environment, National Library of Nigeria, National Commission for College Education Secretariat, Federal Ministry of Steel Development, Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation, and the Nigerian Law Reform Commission.

Noting that the level of funding in the Federal Government's 2025 budget proposals for FOI implementation and FOI-related activities by public institutions recorded a significant increase of 96.76 percent over the level for 2024 in terms of the amount allocated while the number of institutions with provisions in their budgets rose from 10 to 13, Mr. Gbadamosi insisted that the total amount budgeted for FOI implementation overall nonetheless remained extremely poor.

He argued that without adequate resources to support the full implementation of this critical piece of legislation, the FOI Act will become a symbolic but ineffectual gesture rather than a functional tool for transparency, adding that the persistent neglect of the FOI Act in enforcement and the allocation of resources is undermining Nigeria's democratic practice and fueling the culture of secrecy and corruption that the FOI Act was designed and intended to combat.

Mr. Gbadamosi said: “It is quite disheartening that nearly 14 years after the FOI Act became Law, the Federal Government has for the most part failed to provide the necessary financial, technical and human resources as well as infrastructure and political will to ensure its full and effective implementation, thereby displaying a clear lack of commitment to transparency, accountability, and good governance.”

According to him, besides the lack of commitment as evident in the persistent under-funding of public institutions for the implementation of the FOI Act, the Federal Government continues to condone the willful disregard for the Law by the vast majority of public institutions as no single government ministry, department or agency has ever been sanctioned or reprimanded for flouting the Act, even when they disobey or ignore court orders mandating compliance with provisions of the Act.

He called on the Federal Government to be guided by the 12 specific recommendations contained in the MRA report, including allocating resources to the Federal Ministry of Justice to strengthen its oversight role of monitoring and ensuring compliance by all other public institutions with the FOI Act, such that it can assess the performance of all other public institutions in implementing the Act, track response times, identify bottlenecks, and gather a wide range of data on usage of the Act as well as compliance with various duties and obligations.

### **MRA, Other CSOs Commend Nigerian Bar Association President for Supporting the Rule of Law**

MRA and 15 other civil society organizations (CSOs), on January 31, 2025, commended the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Mr. Afam Osigwe (SAN), for his principled demonstration of support for the rule of law by appearing at the Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday, January 29, 2025 to observe proceedings in the arraignment of human rights and pro-democracy campaigner, Mr. Omoyele Sowore, on alleged cybercrime charges.

They said the symbolic yet courageous act of the NBA President underscores the critical role of legal professionals in general and the NBA in particular in safeguarding democratic principles and ensuring that justice prevails in our society.

The NBA President's presence in court, according to the statement, sent a strong message about the importance of transparency, fairness, and accountability in the judicial process. It demonstrated that the legal profession remains vigilant and committed to upholding the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Nigeria.

The groups said they recognise this action as a significant step towards promoting public confidence in the judiciary based on the fact that while no one is above the law, there are at the same time widespread concerns about

persistent disregard for due process and judicial independence.

They said in light of the commendable gesture, they urge the Nigerian Bar Association to institutionalise court observation by establishing dedicated legal monitoring teams to undertake such trial observations. The CSOs also called on the NBA to play a proactive role in advocating for judicial reforms, ensuring the protection of human rights defenders, and challenging the weaponization of the Cybercrime Act against activists and journalists. This, they said, would serve as a further practical demonstration of the legal profession's commitment to protecting human rights and democratic principles, especially given that one of the NBA's institutional core objectives is "to promote and protect the principles of the Rule of Law and respect for Human Rights".

The CSO groups further recommend that the NBA engages with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to develop a framework for identifying cases that require observation and ensuring continuous advocacy for judicial integrity.

They said: "The collective responsibility of legal practitioners, civil society, and citizens is crucial for the preservation of democracy and the rule of law. We stand ready to support the NBA in any way necessary to ensure the success of this initiative."

They called on all stakeholders to remain vigilant in the defense of justice and democracy in Nigeria.

### **The signatories to the statement are:**

1. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
2. Hope Behind Bars Africa
3. Restorative Justice for Africa Initiative
4. Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
5. Yiaga Africa
6. NULAI NIGERIA
7. BO Foundation for Inclusive Media (BOFIM)
8. Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria (HRJN)
9. International Press Centre (IPC)
10. Global Rights
11. Nigeria Network of NGOs
12. Sesor Empowerment Foundation
13. Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC)
14. Dataphyte Foundation
15. Digicivic Initiative
16. TechHerNG

## **IPI, MRA Issue Resource Guide on Instruments Protecting Press Freedom in Nigeria**

On February 4, 2025, the International Press Institute (IPI), based in Vienna, Austria, and MRA announced the publication of a groundbreaking resource guide designed to empower journalists, media organizations, media freedom advocates and other stakeholders with comprehensive knowledge of national, regional, and international laws, mechanisms, and frameworks that protect press freedom in Nigeria.

Titled “Press Freedom in Nigeria: A Resource Guide of National, Regional and International Laws, Mechanisms and Frameworks”, the 50-page Guide was produced as part of IPI's Africa programme, which is supported by the Government of Canada's Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion (OHRFI).

The Guide is a compilation of domestic, regional, and international laws, treaties, protocols, and case law that comprise the frameworks for the protection of media freedom, the right to access information, and the safety of journalists in Nigeria. It also includes laws that limit freedom of expression and press freedom.

According to the organisations, the Guide can be used as a resource by domestic and international advocacy organisations and other stakeholders working to support and improve the environment for media freedom and journalists' safety in Nigeria and across Africa.

In announcing the publication, MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, said: “This resource is intended to serve as a vital tool for understanding the legal landscape governing media freedom and offers practical insights on how to navigate and leverage legal protections to defend the rights of journalists and media practitioners. By mapping out the key legal provisions and institutional mechanisms available in Nigeria, at the African level and globally, the Guide provides a critical reference for media professionals and advocates working to safeguard freedom of expression.”

He stressed that “As threats to press freedom continue to evolve and intensify in Nigeria, it is more important than ever for journalists and media organizations to understand the legal tools available to protect themselves. This Guide will empower them with the knowledge needed to confront these challenges.”

The Guide features an overview of Nigeria's constitutional provisions and media laws protecting press freedom; key regional frameworks, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa; relevant international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as practical tips on utilizing legal mechanisms to combat censorship, harassment, and other threats to media freedom.

Mr. Longe explained that “The publication of this resource guide underscores the commitment of IPI and MRA to strengthening media freedom and fostering a safer and more enabling environment for journalism practice in Nigeria.”

### **MRA Calls for Legitimate Measures to Ensure Safer Internet for Users in Nigeria**

On February 10, 2025, MRA called on Federal and State governments to take legitimate measures to safeguard the rights and safety of internet users in Nigeria, stressing that the frequent abuse and misuse of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015 by public officials and powerful individuals to intimidate and harass journalists, activists, and citizens exercising their constitutional rights to freedom of expression is undermining cyber-security.

In a statement issued ahead of the 2025 Safer Internet Day (SID), MRA noted that although originally intended to combat genuine cybercrime threats such as fraud and cybersecurity breaches, the Cybercrimes Act has unfortunately become a tool for censorship and suppression given the growing number of cases where charges of cyberstalking and other provisions of the law are weaponized to stifle dissent and punish legitimate criticism of public officials and influential private citizens.

MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, said in the statement: “These actions not only undermine democratic principles but they also violate Nigeria's obligations under regional and international human rights instruments, which guarantee and protect the rights to freedom of expression and access to information.”

He noted that the theme of this year's SID, “*Together for a Better Internet*,” underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating an online space that is safe, human rights-respecting, and accessible for

everyone, especially young people and vulnerable populations.

According to Mr. Longe, “while Nigeria has made significant strides in the adoption of digital technologies, threats such as online scams, data breaches, misinformation and disinformation, and other harmful content persist. There is therefore an urgent need for effective legal and policy frameworks that protect users without undermining their rights to privacy, freedom of expression, access to information and other human rights online.”

He therefore called on the Federal Government to review and amend the Cybercrimes Act to prevent its misuse, ensure that it is rights-respecting, that it aligns with international human rights standards; provide clear guidelines for the application of the Act to prevent arbitrary or politically motivated prosecutions; and to hold accountable security and law enforcement officials or individuals who misuse the law to harass and intimidate citizens.

Mr. Longe also requested the government to embark on digital literacy programmes to educate citizens about online risks and how to protect themselves; partner with tech companies to create tools and resources that promote online safety while maintaining user rights, and ensure accountability for individuals and organizations engaged in malicious online activities.

He urged the judiciary to remain vigilant in upholding the rights of Nigerians by dismissing and discouraging frivolous cases brought under the guise of cybercrime charges and ensuring that the law is applied fairly and justly to achieve legitimate objectives.

Mr. Longe expressed MRA's determination to promote and defend digital rights and advocate for a free and open digital environment, saying “Together, we can create an internet environment where everyone, regardless of their age or background, can access information, express themselves freely, and engage responsibly.”

### **MRA Commends Government's Budget Transparency Directive to Tertiary Institutions, Urges Extension to All MDAs**

MRA commended the directive issued by the Federal Government instructing all Federal tertiary institutions to publish their budgetary allocations, other financial information and institutional data online, saying the move represents a critical step toward greater transparency and accountability in the education sector and demonstrates a laudable

commitment to open governance.

The organisation, however, urged the Federal Government to formally extend the directive to all its ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), arguing that “Transparency should not be selective. Making budgetary and other financial information of public institutions accessible to citizens across all sections of the public service is essential for fostering a culture of accountability, combating corruption, and promoting citizen engagement in governance.”

The Federal Ministry of Education issued a directive on April 5, 2025, signed by Mrs. Folasade Boriowo, its Director of Press and Public Relations, in which it announced that the Minister of Education, Dr. Maruf Tunji Alausa, has issued a directive mandating all Federal Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts to publish key institutional data on their official websites, effective immediately but no later than May 31, 2025, in an effort to “entrench transparency, accountability, and good governance in Nigeria's tertiary education system.”

According to Mrs. Boriowo, each institution must provide, among other things, its annual budgetary allocation in full detail, including a breakdown of expenditure; disclose research grant revenues from the previous year, distinguishing between two sources such as grants obtained from domestic bodies and those received from international sources; and display its TETFund allocation for the current year, showing the total amount received as well as financial support for academic and infrastructural development.

In a statement issued on April 7, 2025, in Lagos by its Programme Officer, Mr. Timileyin Adams, MRA praised the Ministry for the directive and the various measures outlined in the statement, urging it to ensure that it follows through on its pledge to conduct periodic reviews of institutional websites and take appropriate administrative actions against non-compliant institutions in order to enforce compliance. He stressed that the measures and their effective implementation would serve as a deterrent against corruption in Federal tertiary institutions and significantly contribute to improvements in service delivery in the education sector.

Mr. Adams said: “But it is also necessary to extend these measures to other sectors of the public service. By mandating the online publication of budgetary and other financial information as well as key institutional data for all public institutions, the government will be taking a bold step that can empower citizens, foster public trust in government, and enable effective

monitoring of public spending in all sectors of the public service. We believe that such an initiative will not only enhance institutional integrity but also help address issues of mismanagement and corruption that have long plagued many public institutions.”

Noting that Section 2(3) of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011 has already provided the legal basis for such disclosures by making it mandatory for all public institutions to proactively publish their “information relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds” as well as other institutional data, he argued that by expanding the directive to all other public institutions, the government will be reinforcing existing law, ensuring compliance with a crucial aspect of the FOI Act, and demonstrating genuine political will to uphold transparency across all sectors.

Mr. Adams called on the relevant oversight institutions, including the Budget Office of the Federation and the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation as well as the Attorney-General of the Federation, who has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the FOI Act, to ensure compliance with this directive and to support the creation of user-friendly platforms for public access to such data, saying that public participation in ensuring compliance and engagement with the information are imperative for building public trust in government and achieving the ultimate objective of the directive.

He reaffirmed MRA's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote access to information, transparency, accountability, and democratic governance and urged the government to aim for the emergence of a fully open and accountable Federal public service.

### **MRA Commends Supreme Court's Judgment on FOI Act, Describes it as a 'Democratic Milestone'**

On April 12, 2025, MRA commended the April 11, judgment by the Supreme Court which confirmed the applicability of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011 to all tiers of government with the organization describing it as “a democratic milestone in Nigeria which affirms the principle that governments at all levels are accountable to the public.”

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, noted that the Supreme Court's decision has strengthened the legal foundation for open government and provided additional impetus for the media, civil society organizations and citizens across the country to fight

corruption and work to eradicate the scourge of secrecy in all our public institutions.

Mr. Longe said: “MRA is obviously pleased by the judgment of the Supreme Court confirming what has always been our position on this issue, that the FOI Act is binding on all public institutions at federal, state, and local government levels. It is a historic decision that has finally settled this issue and we see it as a resounding victory for transparency, accountability, and the right of every Nigerian to access information held by public institutions, regardless of their state of residence or the level of government involved.”

He noted that “over the last 14 years, some state governments and institutions have claimed that the FOI Act only applies to federal public institutions because they had not “domesticated” it in their respective states. This was obviously a ploy by such state governments to avoid being transparent or accountable as nothing stopped them from passing their own freedom of information laws if they genuinely believed that the Law passed by the National Assembly did not cover their institutions and agencies. The Supreme Court's judgment brings an end to that long-standing uncertainty, which we believe to have been contrived by state governments that did not want to be accountable.”

Saying that the judgment sends a clear message to all governments no public institution in Nigeria is above the duty to be transparent, Mr. Longe commended the courage, foresight and steadfastness of the litigants and their legal representatives who pursued the matter to the highest court of the land.

He also applauded the Supreme Court for upholding the principle that the public has a right to know how they are governed, including how public resources are managed.

Mr. Longe said: “Media Rights Agenda calls on all public institutions, especially at the state and local government levels, to immediately begin implementation and ensure full compliance with the FOI Act, including by responding to requests for information, proactively publishing all information subject to proactive disclosure, designating FOI Desk Officers as required by Act, and instituting efficient and effective procedures for members of the public applying for information.”

He urged civil society organizations, the media, and citizens across the country to make full use of the law to demand accountability from public institutions at all levels and participate meaningfully in governance.

## **MRA Launches Visual Brief to Commemorate 2025 World Press Freedom Day, Calls for Responsible Use of AI in Journalism**

On May 2, 2025, ahead of the year's World Press Freedom Day on May 3, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) launched an informative visual brief to highlight the urgent need for responsible and ethical deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism, especially within Nigeria's media landscape.

The visual brief, developed under the 2025 global theme, "*Reporting in the Brave New World – The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media,*" explores the opportunities and dangers AI poses to media freedom in Nigeria and across the world.

In a statement released in Lagos by its Programme Officer, Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA noted that AI is quickly changing the way news is produced and consumed, adding that it offers powerful tools that can assist journalists in analysing data, translating stories into local languages, and extend the reach of vital information, especially to underserved areas with limited media infrastructure as AI can help to ensure that essential news and information are also disseminated to such communities.

However, Mr. Gbadamosi warned that the same technology is being weaponised to undermine truth and press freedom, saying: "While AI can be used to advance journalism, it can just as easily be exploited to spread disinformation, create deepfakes, and drown out independent voices with algorithmically generated propaganda."

According to him, "In Nigeria, journalists face threats that go beyond just physical dangers; such threats now also encompass digital, algorithmic, and systemic harms and challenges, which requires media professionals to ensure that AI enhances, rather than undermines, media freedom and that technology is used to promote the truth, not distort it."

The visual brief breaks down key concepts like misinformation, disinformation, mal-information, and information overload, which are increasingly shaping Nigeria's digital media ecosystem. It also raises concerns about AI-enabled surveillance, political manipulation, and the marginalisation of community-based journalists.

Mr. Gbadamosi explained that through the visual brief, MRA is also canvassing support for independent media outlets, transparent AI regulation that reflects Nigeria's socio-political realities, widespread digital literacy to

empower citizens to navigate the information space and greater accountability from technology companies for the content and influence of their platforms.

He therefore urged all stakeholders to advocate for responsible AI usage and a free, independent, professional and vibrant media environment in Nigeria, stressing that “when media freedom thrives, democracy lives.”

The visual brief is available for download at <https://bit.ly/4cXfVt7>.

## **Media Rights Agenda Calls for Effective Implementation of FOI Act on its 14th Anniversary**

In commemoration of the 14th anniversary of the enactment of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) on May 28, 2025 called on all public institutions at the Federal, State, and Local Government levels to commit to the full and effective implementation of the Law, which was signed into force on May 28, 2011.

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA noted that over the past 14 years, the FOI Act has served as a critical tool enabling transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance but expressed disappointment that its implementation has been marred by widespread non-compliance, deliberate resistance to the Law by public officials, and weak enforcement mechanisms.

MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, said: “The importance of the Freedom of Information Act as a cornerstone of democratic governance is globally recognised. It is an essential tool for combating corruption, building knowledge societies, and enabling citizen participation in governance. Yet, too many public institutions continue to treat the Act with disdain by ignoring requests for information or refusing such requests, failing to designate FOI Desk Officers, and failing to submit their annual implementation reports to the Attorney-General of the Federation as required by law.”

He noted that although civil society organisations, media organisations and professionals as well as concerned citizens have made commendable efforts to utilise the Act, many of them have faced arbitrary denials, delays, and intimidation in the process, in addition to the fact that many court decisions and orders in favour of access to information are often not complied with.

According to Mr. Longe, despite these implementation challenges, the FOI Act has enabled critical revelations, from exposing corruption to holding

public institutions accountable, while journalists and civil society organisations actors in particular, have utilised the Act to uncover mismanagement of public funds, advocate for service delivery reforms, and amplify citizens' voices.

He said the Supreme Court's recent decision that the FOI Act is applicable to all levels of government has reinforced the Act's legal standing, stressing that the judgment also highlights the urgent need for state and local governments to develop and adopt implementation plans for the Act without delay.

Noting that persistent implementation challenges such as poor record-keeping, inadequate funding, and bureaucratic resistance have continued to undermine compliance, Mr. Longe called on governments at all levels to ensure full compliance with all provisions of the Act, including proactive disclosures and timely responses to requests, and strengthening enforcement by empowering oversight mechanism and sanctioning persistent defaulters.

In addition, he urged governments to enhance awareness and training for public officials on their obligations under the law; promote state-level implementation of the Act in all parts of Nigeria, as well as protect and encourage citizens, journalists, and whistleblowers who seek to exercise their right to know.

Mr. Longe announced that in commemoration of the 14th anniversary of the Act, MRA has also released a short video documentary highlighting some significant milestones in MRA's efforts over the years to ensure the effective implementation of the FOI Act.

### **MRA Condemns NEITI's Call to Amend FOI Act to Punish Alleged 'Misuse'**

MRA, on June 6, 2025, condemned the call by the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Dr. Orji Ogbonnaya Orji, for an amendment to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011, to impose punitive measures on "fake CSOs" allegedly "misusing" the law to blackmail public institutions, describing the call as an attempt to discredit the Act and weaken it.

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA said such a proposal is not only ill-conceived but deeply troubling as it undermines the spirit and purpose of the FOI Act, which was enacted to guarantee a right of access to information, promote transparency, and combat corruption, adding that "suggesting punitive measures based on vague, subjective and unsubstantiated claims of

'misuse' poses a huge risk of the Act becoming a tool for silencing journalists, researchers, civil society actors, as well as other citizens and members of the public who legitimately seek information."

MRA's Programme Officer, Ms Ayomide Eweje, said in the statement, "We reject any narrative that seeks to criminalise the exercise of a fundamental right under the guise of protecting public institutions. The appropriate response to concerns about abuse of the FOI Act, even if such concerns are legitimate, is institutional transparency, including routine compliance with the Act by all public institutions to ensure its effective implementation and rigorous enforcement of the current mechanisms for ensuring compliance so that no public institution or official is put in a vulnerable position where they can be blackmailed."

She described as illogical NEITI's claim that "fake NGOs" had hijacked the FOI Act and were using it to blackmail public institutions, arguing that since every person has a right to request information under the Act, there is no need for anyone to pretend to be representing a non-governmental organisation, whether fake or genuine, in order to use the Act; and that when public officials disclose any information requested from them, there is no way they can be blackmailed as any information that is obtained from any public institution under the FOI Act is effectively information that is publicly available and has no blackmail value.

Besides, Ms Eweje noted, if public institutions have grounds for withholding requested information, they also cannot be blackmailed for denying such requests for information as they will be standing on solid ground, adding "you can only complain of blackmail if you have done something wrong or even criminal, in which case the appropriate response should not be to amend the Act to protect public officials or institutions engaged in wrongdoing or criminal activities."

She observed that blackmail and extortion are already criminal offences contained in various Federal and State laws in virtually all the States of the Federation and that there is no conceivable reason why anyone using the FOI Act to blackmail public institutions or officials or to extort money or other favours from them cannot be prosecuted under the existing criminal laws without amending the FOI Act to introduce the offences into it.

Ms Eweje said it was particularly disappointing that such a call was coming from the head of NEITI, an agency created to deepen accountability in the extractive sector and strengthen public trust, adding that "Dr. Orji's position

contradicts the global standards of openness that NEITI claims to uphold and could damage the credibility of the agency both locally and internationally.”

She urged that instead of seeking to discredit the FOI Act or weaken it, NEITI and other public institutions should commit to full compliance with their disclosure obligations under the Act, build internal capacity to manage FOI requests efficiently and speedily, and promote a culture of openness as a tool for building public confidence in public institutions and government in general.

Ms Eweje declared that MRA and its partners across different sectors and stakeholder groups all over the country remain committed to defending the FOI Act against any attempt to dilute its provisions and effectiveness or to punish citizens and other members of the public for exercising their rights under the Act.

### **Media Rights Agenda Launches Practical Guide for Journalists on Leveraging Digital Tools**

On June 19, 2025, MRA announced the publication and official launch of a comprehensive new guide titled *"Leveraging Digital Tools for Journalism Practice,"* aimed at equipping journalists and other media professionals with essential knowledge and tools for modern-day reporting, investigation, and storytelling.

According to Ms Ayomide Eweje, MRA's Programme Officer and author of the 164-page guide, the publication identifies and explains how to use dozens of digital tools and technologies that can enhance the work of journalists across the entire gamut of the journalistic process, from news and information gathering, to news processing as well as news and information dissemination while also giving them cutting-edge tools to protect themselves, their sources of information, their devices and other journalistic materials.

She said in a statement issued in Lagos that “The publication is a necessary response to the realities of journalism in a rapidly evolving digital age. It offers practical, hands-on information for journalists about various digital tools to enable them effectively navigate today's fast-paced digital environment, covering tools for news gathering, fact-checking, cybersecurity, multimedia storytelling, audience engagement, countering misinformation and disinformation, online harassment, and surveillance.” Ms Eweje explained that the publication is also intended to equip journalists with the tools they need not just to survive, but to lead and innovate in their profession while safeguarding their rights, protecting their sources of

information, and ensuring the integrity of their work.”

She noted that over the past two decades, the tools, devices and platforms used in journalism have evolved at an extraordinary pace with the traditional reporting methods, across the entire spectrum of information gathering, processing and dissemination now being augmented by an ever-increasing array of digital tools for real-time communication and collaboration, multimedia storytelling, investigative research, verification and fact-checking, among others.

These tools, Ms Eweje said, have boosted the capacity of journalists to report from remote locations, tell more compelling stories, and engage directly with audiences in ways that were previously unimaginable, although at the same time, they have introduced new layers of complexity and threats, forcing journalists to pay more attention to data privacy, online harassment, platform algorithms, and digital literacy as integral parts of their work.

She argued that as journalism continues to evolve, so too must the knowledge, skills, mindsets and equipment of those who practice it, and urged journalists to use the guide and other resources to build their digital capacity and leverage all available digital tools and technological devices in all aspects of their professional practice.

She also called on media organisations to invest in digital literacy programmes for their journalists and, where necessary, provide them with financial resources to acquire the required facilities, since not all the tools and devices are available free of charge.

In the Preface to the publication, MRA's Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, said: “For journalists, the digital era presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges - from the ability to report stories in real time and reach global audiences or even previously marginalised communities, to navigating constantly evolving online threats, including surveillance, online harassment and trolling, hacking and account takeovers, misinformation, disinformation, deepfakes, and censorship, among others.

Ms Eweje said MRA would make the guide available to media organisations and newsrooms, journalism training institutions, and media development organisations across Nigeria and the continent and also make it accessible on its website.

## **MRA Calls for Stronger Legal and Institutional Protections for Whistleblowers in Nigeria**

On June 23, 2025, MRA called on the Federal Government to take urgent and concrete steps to strengthen legal and institutional protections for whistleblowers in recognition of their critical role in exposing corruption, human rights abuses and other wrongdoing, describing them as a cornerstone of transparency, accountability, and good governance.

In a statement issued in Lagos to mark the 2025 World Whistleblowers' Day, MRA stressed that whistleblowers serve the public interest by courageously disclosing information that would otherwise remain hidden, often at great personal risk, noting that in Nigeria, they continue to operate in a climate of fear, retaliation, and legal uncertainty, which deters many others from coming forward with information about wrongdoing.

Ms Ayomide Eweje, a Programme Officer at MRA, said in the statement: “We note that the current whistleblower protection framework in Nigeria remains weak, fragmented, and largely ineffective. The Federal Government continues to threaten whistleblowers with prosecution despite the whistleblower protection provisions in Section 27(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Besides, the Whistleblower Policy adopted by the Government in 2016 was not designed to provide protection for persons who risk everything to expose corruption, misconduct, human rights violations, threat to public safety, or other wrongdoing, but is merely aimed at assisting the government to recover looted public funds.”

According to her, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of whistleblowers has left them vulnerable to threats, harassment, job losses, and physical harm, adding that successive governments in Nigeria have failed to acknowledge the immense value that whistleblowers bring to the society and the important role that they play in combating corruption, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

Ms Eweje argued that whistleblowers are often motivated by a patriotic duty and a commitment to the greater good, noting that “whistleblowers are the eyes and ears of our society; they step forward so that the rest of us can see and act. When whistleblowers speak up, everyone benefits; public funds are better managed, there is more efficient delivery of public services, trust in institutions grows, and we have better governance. Yet without reliable channels to report wrongdoing, we risk enabling critical information about

wrongdoing to stay hidden.”

She lamented that despite the essential role that such courageous individuals play in ensuring that powerful actors in the society are held accountable, they continue to face harassment and intimidation, legal hurdles, retaliation instead of protection, sometimes paying for their selfless acts with their lives or liberty.

Ms Eweje therefore urged the National Assembly to prioritize the passage of a robust whistleblower protection legislation that guarantees confidentiality in reporting in appropriate cases, shields whistleblowers from reprisals, and establishes secure reporting channels while also establishing an independent whistleblower protection agency with the mandate to investigate reprisals, support whistleblowers, and enforce sanctions against those who retaliate against them.

She highlighted the importance of public education and awareness in fostering a culture that values and protects whistleblowing and called on civil society organisations, the media, and professional bodies to work collaboratively to de-stigmatise whistleblowing and ensure that those who speak out are not isolated or vilified.

Ms Eweje said: “On this World Whistleblowers Day, we stand in solidarity with whistleblowers in Nigeria and around the world who have paid a high price for speaking out, particularly against powerful individuals in society. We reaffirm our commitment to advocating for their rights and working towards a society where exposing wrongdoing is not only protected but also celebrated as a courageous act of public service.”

The theme of the 2025 World Whistleblowers' Day is "Protecting the Truth-Tellers", and the Day focuses on raising awareness about whistleblowing, combating corruption, and encouraging a positive culture of speaking up within organisations. This year's campaign, "we're all ears," seeks to highlight the importance of whistleblowing and support those who speak up against wrongdoing.

## **MRA Welcomes Speaker Tajudeen Abbas' Proposals for Strengthening FOI Compliance**

On June 25, 2025, MRA welcomed the proposals made on June 24, 2025, by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honourable Tajudeen Abbas, aimed at improving compliance by public institutions with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011 and ensuring its effective implementation. MRA

described the proposals as “a renewed opportunity to institutionalise transparency in public affairs and strengthen citizens' trust in Government.”

Commending the Speaker's call for “mandatory and enforceable budgeting for FOI compliance by all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs)” of government during the annual appropriation process, the organisation urged the National Assembly to take urgent and concrete steps to implement the proposals.

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, praised the Speaker for his “clear recognition of the critical role that access to information plays in ensuring transparency, accountability, and participatory governance”, adding that “We consider his proposals, which are in total alignment with similar recommendations by Media Rights Agenda over the years, to be a timely and important step towards addressing the persistent culture of secrecy and non-compliance that has undermined the effectiveness of the FOI Act for over a decade.”

In an address delivered on his behalf on Tuesday at the opening ceremony of a workshop titled “Upholding Accountability and Transparency in Governance: A Comprehensive Review of FOIA Law for Public and Corporate Organizations”, the Speaker said the 10th House may consider FOI compliance as a condition for budgetary considerations for those MDAs that are reluctant to comply with the Act and habitually fail to honour their obligations under the law.

Mr. Longe expressed support for the Speaker's position that the financial allocations for FOI-related activities in the Federal Government's budget of less than 0.0005 percent of the national budget, is negligible and unacceptable, saying “We are in complete agreement with the Right Honourable Speaker that transparency cannot be treated as a marginal expense, which is consistent with the point we made in our report titled 'A Vote Against Transparency: A Report on Allocations for Freedom of Information Implementation in 2025 Federal Budget', released on January 15, 2025.

### **MRA Calls on Federal Government to Implement ECOWAS Court Judgment on Blasphemy Laws**

MRA called on the Federal Government to take urgent measures to implement and give full effect to the April 9, 2025 judgment of the ECOWAS Court of Justice, which declared aspects of Kano State's blasphemy laws a

violation of Nigeria's obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Urging the Government to promptly comply with the Court's directive to bring all such laws in Nigeria into conformity with its international human rights obligations, MRA stressed that failure to abide by the judgment would not only undermine the rule of law and weaken the regional human rights system but also further tarnish Nigeria's reputation as a democracy committed to the fundamental rights of its citizens.

In a unanimous judgment by three judges in a suit filed by a human rights organization, Expression Now Human Rights Initiative, the ECOWAS Court held on April 9 that the blasphemy provisions in the Kano State Penal Code, its Sharia Penal Code Law of 2000, and similar provisions in other laws violate key human rights guarantees, particularly the right to freedom of expression, guaranteed by the African Charter and the ICCPR.

The Court further ruled that Nigeria, as a State Party to the African Charter and the ICCPR, is bound to ensure that its domestic laws, including state-level legislation, comply with these international instruments. It accordingly ordered the Federal Government to ensure the repeal or amendment of blasphemy provisions in the Kano State Penal Code, its Sharia Penal Code Law of 2000, and similar provisions in other laws as they are incompatible with Nigeria's obligations to guarantee freedom of expression under the regional and international instruments.

In a statement issued in Lagos on July 16, 2025, Mr. Monday Arunsi, Acting Head of MRA's Legal Department, said the organization agreed fully with the Court's reasoning when it stated that "capital punishment is typically reserved for serious crimes like murder, terrorism or genocide where there is a clear victim who has suffered grave harm, not speech or disrespect. The Court is of the opinion that there are less restrictive ways in which the State could limit the freedom of expression for the purpose of ensuring respect for the religious beliefs of others and the preservation of public peace.

According to Mr. Arunsi, "Nigeria cannot pick and choose which of its international obligations to respect. The judgment of the ECOWAS Court is binding, and the Federal Government has a legal and moral duty to comply with it and ensure that the provisions of all federal and state laws are consistent with the regional and international instruments to which it is a State Party and, in particular, that the laws protect the rights and freedoms

enshrined in the African Charter and the ICCPR, which Nigeria has voluntarily ratified. Compliance is, therefore, not optional.”

He noted that the Court's decision reinforces longstanding concerns by human rights advocates in Nigeria and internationally that certain provisions of the Sharia Penal Code of Kano State and similar laws in many other States, particularly those criminalising blasphemy and prescribing harsh punishments such as the death penalty, are inconsistent with international human rights standards.

Mr. Aransi called on the Federal Government to “demonstrate leadership in the region by taking immediate steps to engage with the Government of Kano State and other states with similar laws to ensure a comprehensive review and reform of such legislation, in line with Nigeria's international obligations and in compliance with the orders of the Court.”

He stressed that such reforms should include the amendment or repeal of all provisions that violate the right to freedom of expression, while preserving freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, adding that “Respect for the rule of law and for the decisions of competent international courts is fundamental to the protection of human rights, the promotion of justice, and the preservation of Nigeria's standing in the international community.”

Mr. Aransi also urged the National Assembly, the National Human Rights Commission, and other relevant institutions to play their part in ensuring that the Nigeria's legal framework fully aligns with its commitments under regional and international human rights treaties.

### **MRA, IPC Appeal Judgment in Suit to Compel CCB to Investigate David Umahi Over Attacks on Journalists**

On July 25, 2025, MRA announced that it had, in conjunction with the International Press Centre (IPC) filed an appeal against the judgment of a Federal High Court in Abuja which dismissed their suit requesting it to compel the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) to investigate their April 24, 2021, complaint against then Ebonyi State governor, Mr David Umahi, whom they alleged abused his office and breached his oath of office when he ordered the arrest of a journalist and banned two journalists for life from entering any government facility in the State.

In a Notice of Appeal filed on their behalf by Abuja-based lawyer, Mr. Noah Ajare, at the Court of Appeal in Abuja, they said they are dissatisfied with the judgment delivered by Justice Obiora Atuegwu Egwuatu in which he ruled

that MRA and IPC failed to prove by credible evidence that their petition to the CCB was delivered to the Bureau and its Chairman, and expressed concern that the two organizations may be “crying more than the bereaved” as the affected journalists whose rights they were defending had not made any complaint to the CCB.

Justice Egwuatu's judgment arose from a suit filed by the organizations on November 10, 2021, against the CCB and its Chairman after they submitted a joint petition to the CCB on April 24, 2021, as well as a follow-up on October 21, 2021, and it failed to act on it. In the suit, MRA and IPC asked the court, among other things, to issue an order of mandamus compelling the CCB to carry out its duties as outlined in the Third Schedule to the Constitution, particularly Paragraph 3(e), and investigate their complaint against Mr. Umahi.

In their four-point Notice of Appeal, MRA and IPC are asking the Court of Appeal to uphold their appeal and set aside the entire decision of the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, dismissing their suit as contained in the judgment delivered on November 29, 2024.

In their first ground of appeal, they contended that the Federal High Court erred in law by holding that they did not prove by credible evidence that their letters of complaint were served on the CCB and its Chairman as the court failed to properly consider the evidence presented by them, including the email sent to the CCB through its official email address and the courier evidence with waybill number 7186272155, which established service on October 21, 2021, adding that the court overlooked testimonies and documents that corroborated the claim of proper service.

In their second ground of appeal, MRA and IPC said the court misdirected itself in ruling that they did not have locus standi as NGOs to bring the action on behalf of the journalists as the court failed to recognize that as organizations dedicated to media rights and freedom of expression, they inherently possess the standing to advocate for the public interest.

Besides, they said the court did not adequately consider the implications of public interest and the role of NGOs in promoting accountability and transparency.

In their third ground of appeal, the organizations complained that the court erred in law in dismissing the case without properly considering the substantial public interest issues raised by them regarding the rights to

freedom of expression, good governance and accountability.

According to them, the Court did not address the implications of the CCB's alleged failure to act on the complaint, which relates to societal accountability and that the court's dismissal of their suit on technical grounds undermined the merit of the substantive issues at hand, particularly those concerning the public well-being and governance.

In their fourth ground of appeal, MRA and IPC alleged that the court wrongfully dismissed their case without evaluating whether the CCB and its Chairman failed in their duty to investigate the allegations made by them.

They said the court erroneously concluded that the lack of proof of service negated the entire case, rather than considering the responsibility of the CCB and its Chairman to address complaints by the public.

Besides, the organizations argued that the court's dismissal of their suit ignored established principles regarding the duty of public bodies to investigate legitimate public complaints.

### **Attacks against Journalists Intensifying under Tinubu Administration, Says MRA in New Report**

In a mid-term assessment report on the Tinubu Administration's first two years in office released on July 28, 2025, MRA decried what it described as an alarming escalation of attacks on media freedom and civic expression, particularly through the misuse of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act by law enforcement agencies to silence or punish journalists and critics of government.

According to the report, titled "*The Onslaught Intensifies: A Mid-term Assessment Report on Media Freedom under the Tinubu Administration*," between May 29, 2023, and May 29, 2025, MRA documented 141 incidents of attacks on journalists, media workers, and ordinary citizens for the peaceful expression of their views on a variety of issue, including governance, economic hardship, the security situation in the country, among others.

MRA said of these incidents, 61 cases (43.26 percent) were perpetrated by operatives of the Nigeria Police, while the Department of State Services (DSS) was responsible for seven cases (4.96 percent) with the two agencies collectively accounting for nearly half of all documented violations of media rights and freedom of expression across the country over the last two years.

It argued that the Tinubu Administration bears legal responsibility for all of these incidents, in accordance with Principle 20(5) of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, which holds that States are “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.”

In a Preface to the report, MRA's Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, said: “we are seeing threats to media freedom in Nigeria through the continued implementation of repressive laws, such as the Cybercrime Act which is frequently used to target, silence or punish journalists; the enforcement of politically motivated regulatory sanctions; arrests and detention or other forms of attacks on journalists; surveillance or intimidation of media practitioners; and censorship of government-controlled broadcasters, among others threats and attacks.”

Describing the report as a “timely intervention in a political climate where democratic gains continue to face increasing threats from censorship, regulatory overreach, violence against journalists, and the misuse of digital surveillance technologies,” Mr. Ojo explained that its objective “is not merely to criticize but to document, analyse, and illuminate the extent to which the current administration has either advanced or undermined the freedom of expression landscape in Nigeria.”

MRA said among the most disturbing findings in the report was the continued abuse of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) of 2015, as amended, particularly its controversial Section 24, which law enforcement agencies have exploited to arrest, detain, and prosecute journalists and social media users over critical or dissenting expressions online.

The organization recorded many cases of such misuse, including the arrests of Mr. Emmanuel Uti, a journalist with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ); Mr. Destiny Ekhutomuen, a blogger in Edo State; four editors and reporters from Informant247 in Kwara State; Mr. Dele Farotimi, a lawyer and human rights advocate; and several others who faced excessive bail conditions or prolonged detention.

According to MRA, the frequent misuse of the Cybercrime Act had become so outrageous that it resulted in an unprecedented move by the Heads of the Missions of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, and

Finland in Nigeria, who issued a stern reprimand in a joint statement issued in June 2025 criticizing the Nigerian government's abuse of the Act and calling for urgent reform in the law and its implementation.

The report noted that the Tinubu Administration has treated internationally and constitutionally protected rights such as peaceful protests and dissent as crimes, going so far as to charge peaceful protesters, including minors, with treason, an offence which carries the death penalty, in complete disregard of the fact that dissent and criticisms of government are not just permissible features of democracy but are, in fact, regarded as essential for its survival, vitality, and legitimacy.

It stated that many journalists covering such peaceful protests have been beaten or brutalized, arrested and detained for varying durations, and have had their equipment seized or damaged, with no single perpetrator of any of these attacks being held accountable.

In its statement announcing the launch of the report, MRA's Communications Officer, Mr. Idowu Adewale, said: "It is deeply ironic and troubling that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, himself a former pro-democracy activist and owner of multiple media outlets across print, radio and television, now presides over an administration increasingly defined by the repression of the very freedoms he once championed."

MRA called on all stakeholders, including the media community, civil society, the Judiciary, the National Assembly, and the international community, to put relentless pressure on the Government to undertake meaningful reforms that uphold media freedom and the broader right to freedom of expression and democratic values in Nigeria.

### **MRA Calls on Niger Governor Bago to Immediately Reopen Badegi Radi**

MRA, on August 4, 2025, condemned the closure of Badegi 90.1 FM, a private radio station based in Minna, Niger State, on August 1, 2025, on the orders of the Governor, Mr. Mohammed Umaru Bago, describing the action as illegal, arbitrary and a dangerous assault on broadcasting freedom. It called on the Governor to immediately and unconditionally reopen the station and issue a public apology for the closure.

Governor Bago reportedly ordered the State Commissioner of Police to seal off the station for alleged incitement of violence and directed that the license of the radio station be revoked, according to a statement by Mr. Bologi

Ibrahim, Chief Press Secretary to the Governor.

Mr. Ibrahim claimed in the statement that the “daily activities of the radio station have been unethical”, adding that “Governor Bago also accused the owner of the station of incitement of the people against the government.”

Describing the Government's action as undemocratic, illegal and unjustifiable, Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, noted in a statement issued in Lagos that criticism of the government is not crime as it is integral to any functioning democracy, in addition to the fact that it is a constitutional right and duty imposed on the media by Section 22 of the Constitution.

In any event, he argued, the Governor lacks any constitutional or statutory authority to order the closure of any broadcast station in Nigeria or the revocation of the broadcasting license of any broadcast media organization.

Mr. Gbadamosi said: “The Governor's action amounts to an abuse of his office and a clear breach of the Code of Conduct for Public Officers under the 1999 Constitution, as amended, particularly Paragraph 9 of the Code. Should the Governor fail to immediately and unconditionally reverse his directives, we will take appropriate action to ensure that he is held accountable for this egregious violation of the constitutional right to freedom of expression and the corollary rights of the people in the State to receive ideas and information.”

Citing the provisions of Paragraph 9 of the Code of Conduct for Public Officers, which states that “A public officer shall not do or direct to be done, in abuse of his office, any arbitrary act prejudicial to the rights of any other person knowing that such act is unlawful or contrary to any government policy”, he noted that there is no doubt that the Governor's actions amount to a violation of the Code as he has no authority to order the shutting down of the station or the revocation of its license.

According to him, Governor Bago knows or ought to know that he has no power to shut down any radio station or to direct the revocation of its license, as the regulation of broadcasting in Nigeria is not under his control or authority. He added that by nonetheless purporting to exercise powers and authority which he does not have, in violation of the rights of the owners and staff of the radio station as well as the access to information rights all the residents of the State who receive news and information from the station, the Governor has abused his powers, violated his oath of office and breached the

## Code of Conduct for Public Officers.

Mr. Gbadamosi stated that although it is clear from the action of the Governor that he wants to have in the State only media outlets that will sing his praises, he has to curtail such desires and be prepared to tolerate criticisms and negative reporting from the media since the same Constitution under which he derives his powers and authority, which he is now misusing, has also given the media the duty and freedom to “uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.”

He said: “Governor Bago has advised to concentrate his attention and efforts on performing his functions and carrying out the responsibilities of his office in accordance with the Constitution, which states that the primary purpose of government is to ensure the security and welfare of the people, and allow the media to similarly perform the functions imposed on them by the Constitution, the most important of which are reminding the government of its responsibilities to the people and holding the government accountable to the people.”

Mr. Gbadamosi urged the NBC to assert its independence in the matter by acting decisively against any attempt to illegally usurp its authority while also upholding the independence of broadcast media under its regulatory purview.

He called on Governor Bago to immediately and unconditionally reopen Badigi 90.1 FM and issue a public apology to the proprietors, management, staff, and listeners of the station for the arbitrary and unlawful violation of their rights and also give a public undertaking to respect the independence and freedom of the media to operate without such arbitrary interference or political intimidation.

## **MRA Welcomes Adoption of Policy Framework on Information Integrity in West Africa and Sahel**

MRA on September 8, 2025, welcomed the adoption of a Policy Framework on Information Integrity in West Africa and the Sahel, describing it as a timely and necessary step towards addressing the growing challenges of disinformation, misinformation, and other threats to the information ecosystem in the region.

The outcome document was adopted on September 5, 2025 at the end of a three-day multi-stakeholder Regional Conference on Information Integrity in West Africa and the Sahel, organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of

Cape Verde. The conference took place on September 3 to 5, 2025, in Praia, capital of Cape Verde.

The 19-page Policy Framework, which seeks to foster trust in the information ecosystem, as well as advance digital platform governance and human rights was adopted in response to rising threats to information integrity as the region continues to witness a growing proliferation of disinformation and hate speech, as well as the misuse of digital and emerging technologies to harm citizens, other populations and societies.

In a statement by its Programme Officer, Ms Adesewa Akintokun, MRA commended the efforts of the UNESCO, governments, regional institutions, and civil society stakeholders who contributed to the development of the framework, saying “At a time when the spread of false and misleading information undermines democracy, fuels conflict, and erodes public trust in institutions, this initiative provides an important blueprint for fostering a healthier and more resilient information environment.”

She said MRA is particularly encouraged by the framework's emphasis on upholding fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and access to information, while promoting accountability, transparency, and ethical standards across both state and non-state actors and stressed that “this balanced approach is critical to ensuring that efforts to combat harmful content do not become a pretext for censorship or suppression of legitimate expression.”

Ms Akintokun described the adoption of the Policy Framework, along with the “Praia Action Plan for Information Integrity in West Africa and the Sahel” and the “Guide for Regulators to Implement the Information Integrity Model Policy Information & Framework in West Africa and the Sahel” as positive milestones, noting that the true measure of the Framework's success will depend on the effectiveness of its implementation.

She therefore urged all stakeholders to demonstrate the political will, commitment, and collaboration necessary to translate the important document into concrete actions that will advance information integrity and democratic resilience in West Africa and the Sahel.

Ms Akintokun said: “As an organization committed to advancing media freedom, access to information, and the digital rights of citizens, MRA looks forward to working with national governments, regional bodies, civil society organizations, the media, and other stakeholders in the effective

implementation of the framework,” adding: “We will continue to advocate for policies and practices that safeguard journalists, strengthen media institutions, and empower citizens to engage meaningfully in democratic governance.”

## **MRA Condemns Escalating Attacks on Journalists, Urges International Pressure to End Impunity**

MRA in a statement issued on September 11, 2025, condemned the alarming rise in attacks, intimidation, and harassment of journalists across Nigeria, including the recent arrest and detention of Mr. Hassan Mai-Waya Kangiwa in Kebbi State on the orders of Governor Nasir Idris, following the circulation of a video that exposed the deplorable state of facilities at the Kangiwa General Hospital in the State.

Warning that the trend, if unchecked, poses a grave threat to media freedom, freedom of expression, and citizens' right of access to information, MRA called on regional and international human rights mechanisms to take urgent measures to redress the situation by closely monitoring Nigeria's compliance with its human rights obligations and holding the government accountable for breaches of those obligations.

Hassan had posted a video online showing an elderly patient lying helplessly on a bare metal bed frame without a mattress, sparking outrage across the country and renewed calls for accountability in the health sector. Rather than addressing the clear neglect and decay in the hospital system revealed in the footage, Governor Idris chose to punish the journalist by criminalising his work and violating his rights as a journalist.

According to eyewitnesses, security operatives stormed Hassan's residence in Kangiwa town late in the night of Sunday, September 7, 2025, arresting him in front of his family. His phones and work equipment were seized during the raid, raising further concerns about the violation of his privacy and professional rights.

Hassan was initially held at a local police station before being transferred to Birnin Kebbi, the State capital, reportedly on the Governor's orders. Since then, police authorities have refused to disclose the charges against him or grant access to his lawyers, effectively keeping him cut off from his family, friends, and legal representation.

Noting that the incident is not isolated but part of a disturbing pattern of attacks against journalists in Nigeria who are carrying out their professional

duties, Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, said that "These repeated incidents highlight the deteriorating environment for media freedom in Nigeria. The culture of impunity, enabled by government, has emboldened perpetrators, both state and non-state actors, who now attack journalists without fear of consequences."

He called on the State Government to immediately and unconditionally release Hassan and advised Governor Idris to desist from persecuting journalists and instead focus on addressing the decay in public infrastructure, which his government has a responsibility to fix."

Mr. Gbadamosi identified other recent cases of attacks against journalists in Nigeria to include, among others:

- The beating of Olatunji Adebayo, a correspondent with The Punch newspaper, in June 2025 and seizing of his equipment by security operatives while he was covering a protest in Ibadan, Oyo State.
- The July 2025 harassment of Blessing Okonkwo, a freelance broadcast journalist in Anambra State, who was also assaulted by police officers who accused her of "unauthorized reporting" while she was filming a demolition exercise.
- The detention of Ibrahim Garba, a Daily Trust photojournalist in Kano, who was detained for hours in August 2025 and physically assaulted by political party loyalists while he was covering a campaign rally.
- The harassment, intimidation, and verbal assault on Ms Ladi Bala, Transport Correspondent of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and former President of the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), by Mr. Kayode Opeifa, Managing Director of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), on August 27, 2025, while she was covering the derailment of a train along the Abuja-Kaduna rail corridor. He is reported to have disrupted Ms Bala's live reporting and ordered security operatives to bundle her from the scene, while threatening to report her to security agencies, the Presidency, and NTA management to ensure that she is dismissed.
- The detention of Sodeeq Atanda, a senior reporter with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ), who was arrested by the Ekiti State Police Command on September 9, 2025, in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, after he honoured an invitation by the Police over his reporting exposing alleged sexual harassment reportedly perpetrated by Abayomi Fasina, the Vice Chancellor of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE).
- The unwarranted summoning of Fisayo Soyombo, founder of the FIJ,

by the Ekiti State Police Command, directing him to appear before the Police in Ado-Ekiti on September 15, 2025, for alleged conspiracy, criminal defamation, cyberbullying, and blackmail.

MRA enjoined the Federal Government to order immediate, independent and transparent investigations into all reported attacks on journalists and prosecute the perpetrators, adding that there is a subsisting order by a Federal High Court in Abuja made on February 16, 2024, directing the Federal Government, among other things, to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of all attacks against journalists.

It called on the Federal Government to tow the path of the rule of law and end the pervasive culture of impunity for crimes against journalists by complying with the court's orders and ensuring that perpetrators of violence and other forms of attacks against journalists are brought to justice.

The organization also urged the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), particularly its Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa as well as the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, to engage the Nigerian Government and raise, as a matter of urgent concern, the country's growing attacks on journalists and demand accountability for such attacks, and safeguards for media professionals.

Mr. Gbadamosi said: "Nigeria has committed itself to upholding human rights standards at both regional and global levels. It must now be held to account for its failure to live up to these commitments and protect journalists and the media. The international community cannot afford to remain silent in the face of these attacks."

### **MRA Calls for Protection of Free Expression, Civic Space on International Democracy Day**

MRA called on Governments in Nigeria to rededicate themselves to strengthening democratic institutions, safeguarding civic space, protecting free expression, and ensuring the free flow of information as essential pillars of democracy as it joined the global community in commemorating this year's International Day of Democracy.

Noting that this year's theme, "Achieving Gender Equality, Action by Action," is particularly relevant for Nigeria, where there has been a scandalous marginalization of women in governance at all levels, MRA stressed that gender equality is not only a human right but also a fundamental

requirement for a resilient and inclusive democracy.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/62/7 on November 8, 2007, in which it decided to observe September 15 of each year as the International Day of Democracy and invited all UN Member States, organizations of the UN system, regional and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to commemorate the Day in an appropriate manner that contributes to raising public awareness.

In a statement issued in Lagos on September 15, 2025, to mark the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Day, Mr. John Gbadamosi, MRA's Programme Officer, said: "As we mark this year's International Democracy Day, we wish to remind our leaders at all levels of government that democracy is more than elections; it is about creating an open society where transparency and accountability, equal participation, and human rights are guaranteed."

According to him, "Democracy thrives when all citizens, women and men alike, are able to participate equally in shaping their societies. Unfortunately, Nigerian women continue to face disproportionate barriers in politics, governance, and the media, among other sectors. Structural inequalities, gender-based violence, online harassment, and under-representation in decision-making processes undermine both women's rights and the quality of Nigeria's democracy. Achieving gender equality, step by step and action by action, is central to building the open, just, and accountable Nigeria we all desire."

Mr. Gbadamosi identified Nigeria's current democratic challenges to include a shrinking civic space where dissent and critical opinions are not tolerated, rising disinformation, and frequent attacks on journalists which threaten to undermine democratic gains, adding that "Democracy cannot thrive where citizens lack access to information, where the media is under attack, and where voices critical of those in power are silenced."

He said corruption has become one of the biggest betrayals of Nigeria's democracy, noting that although every new government has vowed to fight corruption, public resources continue to disappear, enriching a few while leaving millions in poverty, with the result that instead of democracy delivering prosperity, corruption has deepened inequality and eroded people's trust in democracy."

Although he acknowledged that Nigeria has made some progress since the

return to democratic rule as the country has experienced the longest stretch of civilian rule in its history, marked by peaceful transfers of power, he contended that recent developments, including the rampant harassment of journalists, growing intolerance of dissent, and inadequate implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011, show that the democratic culture is yet to mature and remains fragile.

But Mr. Gbadamosi argued that “although democracy has not yet delivered its full dividends in Nigeria, it still offers the best path forward for the country as through collective step by step action, we can build a democracy that works for everyone.”

In order to strengthen and sustain Nigeria's democracy, he urged the Federal and State Governments to guarantee freedom of expression and media freedom by ending attacks, harassment, and censorship of journalists and media workers; fully implementing the FOI Act to ensure transparency and accountability in governance; and safeguard digital rights and Internet freedom by enacting rights-respecting regulations that foster access, innovation, and citizen participation.

Mr. Gbadamosi called on governments to promote women's political participation by adopting affirmative measures to increase women's representation in elective and appointive offices, stressing that “Gender equality must be built step by step, through laws, policies, and everyday practices that dismantle discrimination and create equal opportunities for women and men. Only then can we truly say that our democracy is inclusive and representative.”

In addition, he said, governments should combat disinformation and protect information integrity through inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches that empower citizens to identify and resist falsehoods without stifling legitimate speech; and protect civic space by ensuring that civil society organizations and citizens can freely associate, assemble, criticize governments and government officials, and participate in democratic governance without fear of reprisals.

Mr. Gbadamosi urged ordinary citizens, civil society organizations, the media, and the international community to remain vigilant in defending Nigeria's democratic institutions and practices, emphasizing that democracy must be nurtured daily through collective action and respect for fundamental rights.

## **MRA Condemns INEC's Exorbitant Charge for Information Request under FOI Act**

MRA, on October 16, 2025, condemned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for attempting to frustrate a legitimate Freedom of Information (FOI) request by demanding an outrageous fee of over N1.5 billion for a copy of the National Register of Voters and list of polling units in Nigeria, describing its demand as a blatant attempt to weaponize cost as a tool for denying access to vital public information.

In a statement issued in Lagos, MRA's Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, noted that “the National Register of Voters and the list of polling units are arguably the most essential public records needed by civil society organizations, political parties, election observers, and the media to effectively monitor the electoral process,” arguing that by “placing such a colossal financial barrier in the way of a requester, INEC is deliberately hindering the public's right and ability to scrutinize its operations, thereby compromising transparency and avoiding accountability.”

MRA's statement followed a letter from INEC, dated October 13, 2025, and signed by Ms Rose Oriaran-Anthony, Secretary to the Commission, in response to an October 8, 2025 request filed by the law firm of V-C Ottackpukpu & Associates, in which it demanded the payment of N1,505,901,750.00 as cost of producing the Voters Register and list of all polling units in Nigeria as a condition for releasing the information.

Describing the charge as excessive, prohibitive and a clear violation of the spirit and letter of the FOI Act, Mr. Ojo said: “Section 8(1) of the FOI Act clearly stipulates that fees shall be limited to standard charges for document duplication and transcription, where necessary. The staggering amount of over N1.5 billion cannot be a standard charge for duplication and is a clear and deliberate attempt to make public data inaccessible to the public. This is an affront to transparency and democratic accountability.”

He pointed out that in the exercise of his powers under the FOI Act, former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Mohammed Adoke (SAN) issued Guidelines for public institutions on the Implementation of the Act, in which he stipulated the fees chargeable for duplication of records under the Act, limiting photocopy or scanning and printing to a maximum of N10 per page.

Mr. Ojo argued that the list of 93,469,008 registered voters and list of 176,846

polling units in the country could not number up to 150 million pages, for the cost of duplicating those lists to amount to over N1.5 billion at the legally permissible rate of fees.

Besides, he noted, In November 2017, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted the Guidelines on Access to Information and Elections in Africa, as a soft law instrument “to provide guidance to States on the categories of information on the electoral process that must, at the minimum, be proactively disclosed.”

According to him, Paragraph 17(e) of the Guidelines requires any election management body in Africa, during pre-election periods, to proactively disclose “Voters roll containing information allowing the unique identification of each voter, including the full name, identity number, photograph (where it exists), gender and age of each voter, and any subsequent amendments to this information”.

Mr. Ojo stressed that the requested documents, the National Register of Voters and the list of polling units, are public records that are fundamental to electoral transparency and are likely already digitized and centrally stored, which means that the cost of reproducing such electronic data is negligible and would certainly not be in millions of Naira.

He warned even on a charitable interpretation of INEC's action, with its mandate to conduct free, fair, and credible elections, which hinges on public trust and transparency, the response of the Commission sends a strong signal that it is prioritizing bureaucracy and profit over its constitutional and statutory obligations to the Nigerian people, or that it is deliberately impeding public scrutiny of its operations.

Mr. Ojo said: “The primary objective of the FOI Act is to make public records and information freely available. If allowed to stand, this action by INEC sets a dangerous precedent, which will encourage other government agencies to impose exorbitant fees, effectively nullifying the gains of the FOI Act and rolling back this transparency initiative in Nigeria.”

He therefore called on INEC to immediately and unconditionally withdraw the outrageous fee demand and provide the requested information either completely free of charge, in accordance with the principle established by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, or at a fee that strictly adheres to the provision of Section 8(1) of the FOI Act and the Attorney-General's FOI Implementation Guidelines.

## Media Rights Agenda Issues Report Highlighting Rampant Attacks on Journalists by Government Officials

On November 3, 2025, MRA released a report titled "*When Protectors Become Predators: The State Against Freedom of Expression in Nigeria*", documenting a disturbing pattern of attacks, intimidation, and harassment targeted at journalists and other media workers by security, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies, which are the very institutions that are supposed to protect them.

The 129-page report, issued in commemoration of this year's International Day to End Impunity (IDEI) for Crimes Against Journalists, highlights how those entrusted with maintaining law and order as well as protecting citizens, including journalists, have instead become instruments of repression, targeting journalists and other media workers for doing their legitimate work of informing the public and holding power to account.

It revealed that government officials were responsible for nearly 74 percent of all attacks on journalists and freedom of expression recorded by MRA in Nigeria between January 1 and October 31, 2025, with the Nigeria Police Force emerging as the worst offender, accounting for 45 percent of all incidents of violation of media rights.

Other perpetrators of attacks on journalists include operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS), various branches of the military and paramilitary agencies, as well as elected and appointed political office holders at federal and state levels, among others.

According to MRA, at least 69 incidents were documented during the period under review, including arbitrary arrests and detention, physical attacks, threats to life, invasions of media offices, abductions, and other forms of harassment or intimidation of journalists performing their legitimate professional duties.

MRA's Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, said: "The report shows that journalists in Nigeria are increasingly under siege, not just from criminals and insurgents, but principally from the very state institutions charged with protecting them," adding that "This trend is a direct contradiction of the Government's constitutional and international legal duty to guarantee the safety of media practitioners and uphold the public's right to be informed. It represents a fundamental breakdown of law enforcement accountability and a direct assault on democracy and the rule of law."

The report noted that the climate of pervasive impunity for attacks against

journalists has not only eroded public trust in government institutions but has also continued to fuel further violations as perpetrators are rarely identified, investigated or prosecuted, creating an environment of fear and self-censorship that is weakening democratic governance.

MRA insisted that ensuring the safety of journalists is a legal and moral obligation of the Government, enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution, Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other regional and international human rights instruments.

It therefore called on the Federal Government to establish and enforce accountability mechanisms for government officials involved in attacks on journalists; as well as reform and re-train security, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies to enable them to respect and uphold human rights and media freedom.

The organization also proposed the establishment of a national multi-stakeholder protection mechanism for journalists and the adoption of urgent measures to put an end to the misuse of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015, as amended, and other repressive laws against the media.

MRA called on the National Assembly to enact legislation that specifically criminalizes attacks on journalists and urged the National Judicial Council (NJC) to develop and adopt a system for monitoring the misuse of judicial processes to harass journalists while also taking measures to prevent such further abuses.

## **Media Rights Agenda Wins MEA Business Awards 2025 for Media Freedom and Digital**

On December 23, 2025, Media Rights Agenda announced that it had been named Best Media Freedom and Digital Rights Organisation in Nigeria for 2025 by the United Kingdom (UK)-based Middle East and Africa (MEA) Markets Magazine in its MEA Business Awards 2025, which “celebrates the depth and diversity of the Middle East and Africa's dynamic business landscape, recognising those who are driving growth, adapting to change, and making a meaningful impact across the region.”

In a statement issued in the UK announcing an extensive list of the award winners, MEA Markets highlighted “the excellence flowing through the vibrant region in spite of any industry challenges” and praised “the

achievements of the trailblazers creating even more opportunities.”

It noted that “From power solutions to ecofriendly food waste disposal solutions, regulatory reporting services to homeschooling resources, and so much more, this year's instalment is a powerful example of the growing excellence of business in the region.”

Also announcing the conferment of the award for the “Best Entertainment Venue and Facility, 2025” on the Beyon Al Dana Amphitheatre in Bahrain, the 2025 Awards Coordinator, Kaven Cooper, said: “We work tirelessly to recognise and reward those companies and individuals which continually raise the bar across the corporate landscape.”

MEA Markets said MRA was recognised as the deserving recipient of the Best Media Freedom and Digital Rights Organisation following MEA Markets “merit-led research and evaluation process.”

MRA has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, based in Banjul, The Gambia and works to promote and defend the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, digital rights and access to information.

Now in its ninth year, the MEA Business Awards, organised annually by MEA Markets, celebrate organisations across the Middle East and Africa that demonstrate excellence, innovation, and impact within their sectors. Winners are selected through a rigorous assessment of performance, influence, and contribution to their fields.

## About Media Rights Agenda (MRA)

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) was established in 1993 as an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation for the purpose of promoting and defending the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information, as well as digital rights and freedoms. However, it was formally registered in 1997 with the Corporate Affairs Commission. It also has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, The Gambia.

### Activities

MRA's activities are varied and include, but not limited to public awareness and enlightenment, research and publication, litigation and legal services, advocacy and campaigns, as well as training and capacity building. It implements activities in the following areas:

#### **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 conducts strategic litigation aimed at improving the legal, regulatory and institutional environment for media practice in Nigeria as well as advancing the frontiers of the right to freedom of expression.

It has pursued both approaches at Nigerian domestic courts as well as before international judicial forums, including the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, where it has litigated a significant number of cases on freedom of expression and media freedom.

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

## **Advocacy/Campaigns**

MRA runs an Advocacy and Campaigns Programme under which it has 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 was proposed by Media Rights Agenda to the National Assembly in July 1999 and finally became Law on May 28, 2011, although it had previously been passed by the National Assembly in 2007 but did not become law at that time as then President Olusegun Obasanjo refused to assent to it. The Act guarantees any person a right to access information in the custody of government, its agencies and institutions as well as private bodies carrying out public functions, providing public services or utilising public funds.

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 media 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 campaigns for the adoption of Access to Information laws in different countries in Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Ghana, Zambia, Namibia, among others. MRA has also been involved in regional campaigns to advance digital rights and Internet freedoms.

## **Training/Capacity Building**

MRA organises training workshops, seminars and conferences 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

practising journalists to training opportunities available outside Nigeria and, in some cases, assists journalists with securing admission to such training programmes.

