



PRESS

2020 Annual Report

– Media Foundation
for West Africa

TABLE OF CONTENT

Page

01 Executive Director's Remarks

03 Who We Are

03 The COVID-19 Challenge, MFWA's Resolve

04 The Media and COVID-19 in West Africa: Stating the Facts and Documenting the Impact on Media

08 Media and Elections: Mitigating Hate Speech and Professional Lapses on Radio during Elections

08 Expanding Civic Spaces for Improved Accountability

09 Empowering Women in Online Spaces

10 #JournalistsLivesMatter: Bring Perpetrators to Book

14 Pushing for a Safer Landscape for Journalism Practice Amidst COVID-19 Outbreak

15 Acknowledgement



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

Dear Reader,

For over two decades, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has been advocating for the expansion of the frontiers of freedom of expression and media development in West Africa.

On a daily basis, we gather evidence from all the countries in the region to inform our advocacy interventions in seeking redress for infractions against journalists, media organisations and free expression advocates. We work to strengthen media organisations in the region to contribute to promoting good governance practices, and enhancing civic voices and participation in governance.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in the year 2020 further threatened the already precarious safety of journalists and media sustainability challenges in West Africa. Despite the obvious risks and challenges, journalists and other media workers navigated partial and full lockdowns to gather news about the coronavirus disease and filed reports often using unstable internet connections, to keep the public informed.

Unfortunately, while trying to serve the public with developments about the virus, they continually suffered abuses from state security agents. In some countries, journalists endured challenges with accessing the right and timely information about the pandemic to help them keep the public informed and to help them fight what was a pandemic of mis/disinformation about the COVID-19 disease.

We congratulate all journalists who braved the odds to and continue to keep the public informed about the health crisis.

With a resolve to mitigate the adverse effects of the Coronavirus disease on the media landscape in the region, and working hand-in-hand with our [national partner organisations](#) in the respective countries, we monitored, tracked and documented the devastating impact of COVID-19 on media sustainability and freedoms in the region.

Through our freedom of expression monitoring and reporting some 130 alerts, statements and reports were produced to inform advocacy. We also extended financial support to complement sustainability efforts of some media institutions in the region. Over 200 fact-check reports, dozens of explainers and a number of documentaries were also produced to counter myths, fake news and mis/disinformation about the virus.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, we brainstormed with regional experts and journalists and rewarded journalism excellence in the region through our annual West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards ([WAMECA 2020](#)).

We also petitioned a number of governments, regional and continental bodies, with our partner organisations, to seek redress for abused journalists. Following one such [petition](#) sent to the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Access to Information of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Beninois journalist, Ignace Sossou, was [released](#).

Our work also contributed to promoting issues-based and peaceful elections in Ghana, Niger and Cote d'Ivoire through media capacity building, monitoring and reporting of ethical infractions and the use of abusive campaign language in the media before, during and after the elections in the respective countries.

This report sheds more light on the significant milestones achieved over the last 12 months despite the COVID-19 challenges.

We are grateful to our numerous funding and institutional partners for supporting our work to contribute towards our vision of making West Africa a region where “all persons enjoy the right to freedom of expression without fear or threat by any actors”.

We remain committed to defending the right to freedom of expression of all persons particularly the media and human rights defenders in West Africa.

Who We Are

The MFWA is a regional independent non-governmental organisation. It is the biggest and most influential media development and freedom of expression advocacy organisation in West Africa with [national partner organisations](#) in all 16 countries of the region. The MFWA is also the Secretariat of the Continental Network of the most Prominent Free Expression and Media Development Organisations in Africa, known as the Africa Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX) Network.

In line with our Vision and Mission, we have, together with our partners, been resilient in our efforts at advancing freedom of expression rights (online and offline), improving media professionalism, and championing media-led advocacy for transparent, participatory and accountable governance across West Africa.



The COVID-19 Challenge, MFWA's Resolve

The year 2020 began with an approved annual regional programme plan of the organisation to be implemented in partnership with national partner organisations in the respective countries in West Africa. However, by February 2020, plans had to change due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the risks and uncertainties posed by it.

Initial pandemic-based regional programme plans had to also be amended continuously as the impact and effects of the disease manifested in different unpredictable ways. New working models such as working from home, had to be adopted during lockdowns despite challenges and complications posed by poor internet connection. Programme-related travel became impossible, activities requiring gathering were also impossible in the greater part of the year.

Despite these almost yearlong challenges, the organisation adopted different approaches to implement a number of projects and activities within its programme areas. This report provides updates on work done in the course of the year.

The Media and COVID-19 in West Africa: Stating the Facts and Documenting the Impact on Media

The outbreak of COVID-19 affected almost every facet of life. The virus did not only threaten lives, but national economies, state and private businesses, and services.

Efforts to bring the pandemic under control required a lot of public education and sensitisation. This was because apart from the novelty of the disease that resulted in public anxiety and debates, the pandemic was associated with proliferation of mis/disinformation on different channels. A lot was, thus, required from the media in terms of credible information for public education and sensitisation.

Unfortunately, the media industry was one of the worst affected industries. At the same time, the effects of the pandemic were worsening the already dire sustainability challenges for many media organisations in the region.

It was, therefore, important to work with the media for effective public education, for countering mis/disinformation about the pandemic and supporting the sustainability efforts of media organisations. It was also important to track the impact of the pandemic on the media sector, access to information, as well as the general freedom of expression context in the region.

The MFWA responded to these imperatives through a number of initiatives – fact-checking, impact documentation and support for media sustainability.

Fact-checking

Following the infodemic that accompanied the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, the MFWA initiated a fact-checking project in Ghana to counter false information about the virus. The project sought to counter fake news, mis/disinformation, dispel myths and sensitise Ghanaians about COVID-19. A total of 50 journalists were recruited and trained as fact-checkers under the project. Also, a [fact-checking website](#) was built, and a partnership agreement signed with [50 radio stations](#) across Ghana to help provide credible information to the people while countering fake news on the pandemic.

From April to December 2020, the project produced close to 200 fact-checked reports and explainers. The reports and explainers were taken up by the network of 50 radio stations and relayed in local languages. The radio station partners were also supported with funding to produce credible, fact-based public education programmes reaching over 10 million listeners. Journalists were also provided with guidance, as in [this short brief on how to professionally report](#) on the pandemic while staying safe. In addition, 14 audio/video documentaries, and about 15 newspaper articles and features were produced to counter false information and myths about COVID-19





Documenting the Impact

To better understand the impact of the pandemic on the media and the freedom of expression context in West Africa, the MFWA worked with its national partner organisations to produce 22 individual country-specific situational reports (published in official languages of the respective countries). The title for the publications was Media and COVID-19 and it covered most of the countries in the region such as these ones on [Nigeria](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Guinea](#), [Liberia](#), [Sierra Leone](#), [Senegal](#) and [Ghana](#). The reports highlighted the impact of the pandemic on the media, journalists and access to information among other related issues in the respective countries. Two separate webinars were also organised focusing on [Francophone](#) and [Anglophone](#) West Africa to discuss the impact of COVID-19 in the respective countries. The COVID-19 reports produced by the organisation were widely publicised and referenced at national, regional and international levels.

Support for Media Sustainability

COVID-19 wreaked a [devastating impact](#) on the media in West Africa. The pandemic, at its peak in 2020, posed a serious challenge to revenue streams of media organisations. Advertising cuts and less spending by media consumers worsened the already precarious sustainability crisis facing the region's media. Many media organisations [laid off staff](#) and cut down on production. Some were forced to adopt emergent [austerity measures](#) while looking for alternate sources of funding. Media organisations redesigned their newsrooms and how news was gathered, processed, and disseminated; others, completely shutdown.

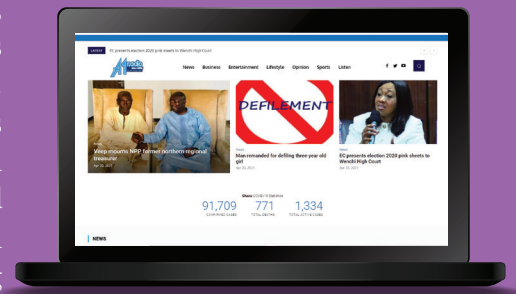
Restrictions and lifestyle changes of media consumers instigated a significant shift towards online media with a heavy reliance on the Internet and digital tools for media work. Interestingly, Online media outlets [experienced spikes in visits](#) and the prospects of improved revenue in the online space. For example, in Senegal, leading online news platform Seneweb, “saw the number of visitors on their website increased by [30% on average](#)” while MediaForce-Afrique and International Centre for Investigative Reporting in Senegal and Nigeria respectively witnessed [massive surge](#) in the number of visitors to their sites.

Legacy media, on the other hand, was the most devastated. Many of them had had some online presence (websites; social media handles) prior to COVID; but only a few, had been minded and actually invested in the potential of the digital/online space to grow their visibility and revenue in the long run.

Giving the immeasurable prospects for improved revenue and viability, especially in the face of COVID-19, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) supported five influential media organisations in five countries in West Africa to adopt new digital tools aimed at improving their online presence, audience reach and revenue generation. The beneficiary media organisations are [A1 radio](#) and [Sky Power FM](#) based in Ghana; [The Daily Observer](#) in Liberia; [Eburnie Today](#) in Cote d'Ivoire, and [La Maison des Reporters](#) in Senegal.

The MFWA financially supported the beneficiary media organisations to engage the services of digital media Consultants who assessed their online platforms – website and social media – and recommended best tools and practices to improve their presence online. This was complemented by an in-house training for a period of two weeks during which staff of the media organisations were introduced to digital marketing concepts and tools such as brand identity; creating digital videos; setting up a digital-savvy newsroom and how to use social media to effectively engage and communicate with audience. The beneficiary media organisations also received a virtual post-training coaching from the Consultants for at least three months.

In Ghana, A1 radio, a leading private radio station in Bolgatanga, the country's Upper East region, following the support, has launched a new [website](#) with digital features to feed its audience. It has also created a 10-minute local news programme that reports local content from the five Northern regions in Ghana. The station has also improved its visitor ratings according to U.S-based [Alexa.com](#) (web traffic analysis company) from 2,010th in December 2020, to be among the first 700 at the time of compiling this report in January 2021.



One of Liberia's leading private newspaper, The Daily Observer, a member of the Liberian Observer Corporation, was one of the worst hit by the pandemic. Newspaper sales in 2020 dwindled by a record 50% according to Bai Sama Best, General Manager of the Corporation. Following the institutional support from the MFWA, the media organisation has re-strategised and prioritized its website content production/management and constituted a core online team to manage the organisation's online platforms and presence.

Prior to MFWA's support, online media organisation in Senegal, La Maison des Reporters, did not have a digital media strategy. Maison des Reporters is developing a digital strategy to guide and boost its online presence and begin generating revenue from the website.

The MFWA's Media Institutional Capacity Building Support provided both financial and technical support to the named media organisations at the peak of the outbreak to improve their viability.

In addition to the financial and technical support, and in line with rethinking the future of the media industry in the region post COVID-19, the MFWA commissioned a three part study focusing on media sustainability, audience engagement strategies and media capacity building models which has been completed. The findings are intended to help inform actors within the media development space and suggest strategies for media support going forward. The 2020 West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA 2020), organised by the MFWA, was also dedicated to discussing the [Future of Journalism in Africa](#). Experts discussed issues of media sustainability during and after the pandemic. The event also honoured [outstanding journalists](#) from the region as a way of continuously inspiring excellence in journalism practice in West Africa.



Media and Elections: Mitigating Hate Speech and Professional Lapses on Radio during Elections

Five countries – Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger – were scheduled to hold national elections during the period covered by this report. Elections in the region are often associated with potential conflicts and national instability. The situation this year was further complicated by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic. The media’s role as always, was critical in contributing towards participatory and peaceful elections. A major challenge with the media in the region is their often-partisan nature mainly due to ownership by politicians; and the propensity to be used as avenues for hate speech and other forms of abusive electoral campaign content.

To help improve media professionalism and contribute towards ensuring issues-based campaigning devoid of hate speech that could trigger elections-related violence, the MFWA trained journalists in Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire and Niger ahead of their respective elections. In these countries, the content of selected media organisations were also monitored and regular reports, [such as this one](#) on Ghana, produced to highlight ethical infractions and make recommendations. The initiative has contributed to improving compliance with ethical standards and mitigating abusive language campaigning in the target countries. Across the three countries, a total of 99 media organisations were monitored jointly by national partners with reports produced every month highlighting infractions and recommending best practices.

Expanding Civic Spaces for Improved Accountability

As part of efforts to help improve citizens’ participation in governance processes and demand for accountability in governance, the MFWA has set up a regional coalition on media and good governance. This coalition brings together key organisations that work on media issues as well as those that focus on governance advocacy to complement each other in their work. The coalition is also intended to be a major platform for engaging with the regional inter-governmental body, ECOWAS, to ensure that regional level policy frameworks that promote media freedom, good governance and accountability are adopted and implemented. Apart from a virtual forum and regular engagements with coalition members, fruitful discussions have also been had with the relevant departments of the ECOWAS Commission who have indicated commitment to supporting the initiative.

In Ghana, as part of efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the recently adopted Right to Information Law (RTI), 122 key local government [officials from 56 Districts](#) across three regions of the country have been trained to enhance their knowledge of the RTI law and how it could be applied to enhance citizens’ access to information. Some 15 radio stations were also supported across the three regions to strengthen their capacity for promoting citizens’ access to information and demand for public accountability. The project has enhanced citizens-authorities engagement on matters relating to district budgets and transparent utilisation of public resources.

A follow up advocacy on accountability journalism stories that had been supported by the organisation, led to the ultimate [dismissal of the head of Ghana’s Public Procurement Authority](#) (PPA). The dismissal followed an [investigative documentary](#) that was supported by the MFWA in 2019. Following the story, the President of Ghana referred the matter to two state institutions who subsequently discovered amount in excess of US\$6million in the personal accounts of the PPA head, which he could not account for.

To further strengthen its work on investigative and accountability journalism, the MFWA is at the final stages of setting up The Fourth Estate, a non-profit journalism project (newsroom) that will focus on transparency and accountability reporting.

Empowering women in Online Spaces

Contrary to earlier assertions that the internet and other digital technologies could break barriers, bridge divides and bring about an equal playing field for economic, social and political opportunities for males and females, the internet has become another platform for perpetuating deep-seated inequalities among segments of the population, particularly between males and females. As noted in a 2020 [report](#) by the Web Foundation, globally, men are 21% more likely to be online than women. The situation is no different in West Africa where more women have limited purchasing power and financial independence relative to men. The uneven access and use of the internet is leaving many women and girls behind in tapping into the opportunities the internet offers for personal, social and economic development.

As part of interventions to reduce gender digital gap in the region, the MFWA has produced a number of [publications](#) and [policy briefs](#) to inform advocacy and policy interventions while building the capacity of women and women's rights groups to advance women's rights online issues.

Particularly in 2020, the MFWA produced a [policy brief](#) highlighting the level of conformity of Ghana's cyber security policy to international norms relating to security in cyberspace. The brief called on the government of Ghana to implement cybersecurity norms in a human-rights respecting manner.

Also, a mapping study was commissioned in Ghana to study selected national policies to identify gaps and make policy recommendations to make the policies gender responsive. Going forward, the document will serve as an advocacy material for engaging policy makers about women's rights online issues; and a reference material for other women's rights groups and organisations, the media and academia.

To deal with the rising phenomenon of digital and online harassment of women, 120 female bloggers and activists have been trained on digital literacy, online safety and privacy and the principles of women's rights online in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The [training](#) has empowered them to produce relevant content about digital literacy and online safety.

Also, as part of efforts to improve online safety in the region, the MFWA conducted daily monitoring of the online space across the region and produced quarterly digital rights reports (titled, Internet Rights Monitor). The [reports](#) highlight the abuse of freedom of expression rights online, and make recommendations for redress. As advocacy materials, the reports guide and inform MFWA's advocacy interventions, provide policy recommendations to policy makers, and serve as a rich source of information for academia and other rights organisations.



Jamila Abdulai
facilitating a women's rights
workshop



Photo credit: Carielle Doe/AFP via Getty Images

#JournalistsLivesMatter: Bring Perpetrators to Book

Attacks against journalists persist in West Africa as it is globally. Journalists are on a day-to-day basis **assaulted** and **brutalised, arrested and detained, fined/imprisoned** or even **killed** while performing their legitimate duties of gathering news and informing the public. These are human beings who have families, friends and colleagues, but they are sometimes abused and treated as second-class citizens with no rights. Unfortunately, many of their perpetrators (who are often state security agents) walk free without any form of punishment or redress. But all lives matter, and so do the lives of journalists who sometimes risk their lives to inform, educate and entertain the public – including their perpetrators.

As part of interventions to gather evidence-based information to guide advocacy, the MFWA has been monitoring, reporting and campaigning for redress of freedom of expression violations. For 2020 in particular, the MFWA's monitoring of the media and freedom of expression landscape in West Africa recorded a total of 194 violations. The 194 abuses were suffered by 454 victims (journalists, activists, media organisations and ordinary citizens). More than a third (143) of the victims reported were journalists. With the exception of Cape Verde, journalists in the remaining 15 countries in the region suffered one form of abuse or the other.

In a country like Nigeria, where a quarter (49 incidents) of the 194 violations were recorded, journalists were subjected to all kinds of attacks as sampled below.

Killings

On January 15, **Maxwell Nashan**, a journalist with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Adamawa State, was found tied and muzzled in a bush with his body hacked at several places. Nashan had been abducted from his house the previous day. He was carried to the hospital but died shortly after arriving.

On January 28, security forces **shot and killed** Alex Ogbu, a journalist with the Regent Africa Times newspaper, when they were cracking down on Shiite Muslim protesters in Abuja.

Assault

On March 28, a security officer **manhandled** Angela Nkwo-Akpolu of the Leadership newspaper in Imo State and seized her iPad as she was covering an exercise to enforce COVID-19 directives.

On April 1, 2020, members of an environment task force in Delta State, Nigeria, **assaulted Michael Ikeogwu**, Chairman of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in the State, and the Daily Post's correspondent, Mathew Omonigho, who were monitoring and reporting on the state of compliance of the COVID-19 lockdown. The journalists were attacked after they asked the leader of the task force why they were forcing some local residents to carry out a sanitation exercise despite the risk of exposure to the coronavirus and in breach of the lockdown order.

On May 26, police officers **stormed** the office of the Nigeria Union of Journalists in Warri, Delta State and assaulted Mathew Omonigho, a reporter for the Daily Post newspaper. The officers tore Omonigho's trousers, cut his belt, and bundled him into a vehicle which took him to the police station where he was furthered interrogated and intimidated to reveal the whereabouts of one Cletus Opukeme, publisher of the Daily Watch news website.

Four other journalists who went to the police station later that day to follow up on Omonigho's arrest were also detained. They were Edeki Igafe of the News Agency of Nigeria, Onyekachukwu Meluwa, (Punch newspaper), Christopher Odamah (Delta Trumpet) and Francis Sadhere (Business Day). All the five were released without charge around midnight, after the police tried unsuccessfully to extract from them information about Pukeme.

On August 3, 2020, a group of police officers **assaulted Obarayese**, a correspondent for the Daily Post newspaper, on the alleged orders of the Osun State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Prince Adebayo Adeleke. The journalist had photographed officers brutalising people who had been rounded up in a business district of the State capital, Oshogbo, for not wearing face masks to protect themselves and the public against the COVID-19, as directed by the government.

On September 19, a group of political thugs attacked Samson Adenekan, a journalist with the online newspaper Premium Times and Offem Nathaniel Ubanga a cameraman with the online broadcaster GeeTV Africa in separate incidents. The journalists were covering a gubernatorial election in Iyamho town, Edo state. The assailants, suspected to be militants of the ruling All Progressives Congress party, began the attack when they saw the journalists filming members of the group attempting to bribe voters.

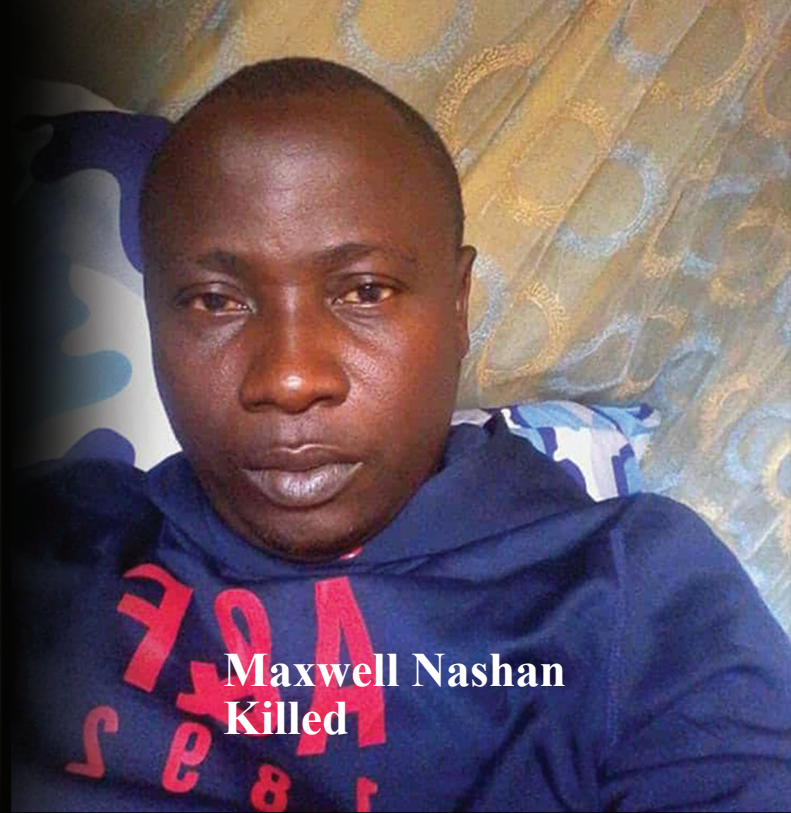
On October 24, 2020, Pelumi Onifade, a reporter with Gboah TV, an online television channel, who was covering the #EndSARS protests, was **attacked** by security officers and carried away in alongside a mob arrested by the Lagos state task force for exploiting the protests to loot a COVID-19 relief facility. About a week later, Onifade's body was found in a mortuary in Ikorodu Lagos. His family lawyer said his body had bullet wounds.

Arrest and Detention

On August 17, police in Uyo, the capital of Akwa-Ibom state, arrested Ime Sunday Silas, editor of owned Global Concord newspaper. Silas, who is also the publisher of The Profile news website, was arrested and detained after he arrived in Uyo to meet a source. He was charged with cybercrime offenses on August 18, and denied bail.



**Michael Ikeogwu
Assaulted**



**Maxwell Nashan
Killed**



**Samson Adenekan
Assaulted**



**Alex Ogbu
Killed**



**Kufre Carter
Arrested**



**Rotimi Jolayemi
Arrested**

On April 2, twelve journalists who were using the internet at the Adamawa State secretariat of the Nigerian Union of Journalists to file their reports as the lockdown had forced all commercial cybercafés to close, **were arrested** by police officers. The police accused the journalists of breaking the COVID-19 lockdown.

On April 27, the Department of State Service (DSS) **arrested** Kufre Carter, a journalist with XL 106.9 FM, in Akwa Ibom State. Carter was accused of leaking a private conversation in which the Commissioner for Health, Dominic Ukpung, was severely criticised for poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in the State. The journalist was released on bail on May 27 after he failed to meet strict bail conditions on his first court appearance on April 29.

On April 28, the police **arrested** Mubarak Bala in his home in Kaduna after a group of lawyers in Kano State petitioned the Commissioner of Police in the State, accusing the activist of insulting Prophet Muhammad on his Facebook page. He was detained overnight and transferred to Kano where the complaint was lodged. Bala has since been detained incommunicado.

On May 5, the freelance journalist, Rotimi Jolayemi, handed himself to the Kwara State Police Command where his wife and two other relatives had detained for more than a week. The journalist had gone into hiding after learning that he was **being hunted** in connection with a critical poem he had composed and shared on WhatsApp about Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed. On May 22, 2020, the police arraigned Jolayemi before a Federal High Court in Abuja on a single count of causing annoyance, insult and hatred contrary to section 24(1)(b) of the Cyber Crimes (Prohibition, Prevention etc) Act 2015. He was released on bail on June 16.

On May 8, four masked men from the Department of State Services (DSS) **stormed** the home of Saint Mienpamo Onitsha, founder of the news website Naija Live TV and carried him away at gunpoint. They detained the journalist at their headquarters in the state capital Yenagoa over his media outlet's report on the alleged collapse of a COVID-19 isolation centre in Kogi State, a report they claimed to be false. The journalist was released on bail on May 12, 2020, after he was forced to apologise.

Sentence

Still on April 28, a Magistrate Court in Utako, Abuja, **sentenced** Emma Bricks Oko, publisher of the online magazine brickswrite.com.ng, to three hours' Community Service and N5000 (about US12) fine for obstructing the work of a COVID-19 task force. Oko was arrested by members of a joint police and civil defense group after who he filming their violent enforcement of the COVID-19 lockdown against commercial motor cycle riders in Abuja.

As found in the brief narrations of incidents recorded in Nigeria above, most of the violations were perpetrated by state security agents. Unfortunately, most of the perpetrators have been left off the hook. In fact, out of the 194 violations, less than 20 received some redress actions.

The MFWA has, therefore, intensified its advocacy to bring the culprits to book through publications and petitions. In 2020, the MFWA issued over 90 alerts, statements, monthly roundups and quarterly reports about the violations with calls to the relevant stakeholders to remedy the situation.

Specific petitions were also done to seek redress for some of the violations. The MFWA collaborated with other international press freedom groups to submit petitions to several governments for the release of prisoners of conscience. Also, in collaboration with its national partner organisations, the organisation submitted a petition to the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Access to Information of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) **for the release** of jailed Beninois journalist, Ignace Sossou. The journalist was later released.

The MFWA also petitioned the Ghana armed forces over military brutalities against journalists during the COVID-19 lockdown. A letter was also sent to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Ghana Police Service to follow up on **investigations** about the killing of Ahmed Suale.

Pushing for a Safer Landscape for Journalism Practice Amidst COVID-19 Outbreak

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged, an already fragile safety of journalists condition worsened. Attacks and abuses on journalists became rampant. In response, the MFWA ramped up its press freedom monitoring by appointing a press freedom monitor for each country. This helped to improve the tracking and reporting of media rights violations to help strengthen evidence-based advocacy against such violations.

In addition to the alerts, statements and reports (mentioned above), the MFWA also trained 210 journalists from Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone on safety skills. A report on safety of journalists policies and practices among media organisations in the three countries has also been produced (pending publication) to help identify gaps and ways to address such gaps.

In Ghana, a **media-police relations framework** endorsed by all stakeholders **was launched** to help improve relations between media and police as far as safety of journalists is concerned. A similar initiative in Guinea has commenced with a committee constituted and a draft framework produced.

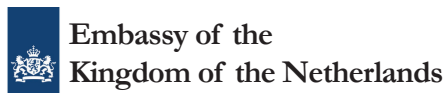
To help deal with the peculiar challenge of safety issues confronting female journalists and bloggers, a database of female journalists and bloggers is being compiled to enhance networking, collaboration and collective advocacy with such groups. So far, the data for Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone has been completed.

As part of efforts to tackle impunity for crimes against journalists, a legal defence initiative has commenced. So far, support has been extended to three journalists in Sierra Leone and Nigeria.



Acknowledgement

The MFWA is grateful to our funding partners (listed below) for supporting the work of the organisation through thick and thin. We also appreciate the contributions of all our national partner organisations for collaborating with the MFWA to promote and defend freedom of expression and media development in the region.





Media Foundation for West Africa
32 Otele Avenue, East Legon,
Telephone: +233 (0) 302 555 327

Twitter: @TheMFWA

Facebook: Media Foundation for West Africa
info@mfw.org
www.mfw.org



@themfwa



www.mfw.org



themfwa