

# Safety of Journalists in Ghana



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## Abstract

The continual threats against the lives of journalists have been blamed for Ghana's decline in the World Press Freedom Index ranking for the past two years. Even though much of the evidence for this has primarily been anecdotal, various efforts have been undertaken to compile reports of abuses through media monitoring projects to give a realistic picture of the status of safety of journalists in Ghana. While these have proven to be critical reference points, they fall short of giving a comprehensive picture of the scope and depth of issues relating to safety of journalists. This study used a survey and key informant interviews to elicit the views and reflections of key stakeholders on the matter. Among other findings, it was established that police, political fanatics, politicians, security operatives, government officials, and other journalists were among the top perpetrators of safety violations against journalists. Verbal abuse was predominant among violations suffered. Males tend to suffer physical abuse more than females while females, on the other hand, are subjected to more online trolling. Many of the respondents were dissatisfied with the posture of law enforcement agencies and the Ghana Journalists Association concerning journalists' safety. The study also found that safety provisions by media organisations (e.g., counselling support, legal aid, medical support) need to be improved. The study recommends, among others, that the state must ensure the safety and protection of journalists and that media organisations must make proactive investments to secure the safety of their employees.

**Keywords:** Safety of journalists, freedom of expression, safety violations, Ghana

## Introduction

The media play a significant role in promoting democracy. They achieve this through providing the public with information, enabling participation in governance and demanding accountability from duty bearers. In playing their role, media personnel, particularly journalists, often face danger when their stories expose wrong doers.

Across the world, there have been numerous instances of abuse and repression directed at journalists and media organizations (Repucci, 2019; Article 19, 2020) in an effort to sabotage critical (investigative) journalism. The past decade has seen this trend worsen with new forms of suppression taking hold even in societies that hitherto upheld freedom of speech, democracy, and human rights (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022). In an attempt to highlight the importance of free media, and curtail attacks on journalists, Reporters Without Borders publishes the World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) each year. The WPFI shows countries' rankings in media freedom and is often a reference point in discussions about the health of nations' democracies.

Ghana's recent ranking in the World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) has seen a downward trend. This is after hosting the World Press Freedom Day celebration in 2018. At the time, Ghana ranked 23rd in the WPFI, ahead of the USA and several other countries that are hailed for their democratic credentials. Since then, Ghana's ranking has dipped from 27<sup>th</sup> in 2019, 30<sup>th</sup> in 2020, 30<sup>th</sup> in 2021 and 60<sup>th</sup> in 2022. Experts attribute this downward trend in Ghana's press freedom rating to insecurity, and continuous threats on the lives of journalists (Reporters Without Borders, 2020; 2021). Reports by the Media Foundation for West Africa, and attacks on journalists including the murder of Ahmed Suale, an investigative journalist, give credence to suggestions about a state of insecurity of journalists in Ghanaian.

Further evidence of the eroding safety of journalists comes from the National Media Commission and the Ministry of Information's setting up of an Office on the Coordinated Mechanism on the Safety of Journalists in 2021. Its duty is to enable filing of reports on attacks on journalists, follow up on investigations and sanctions. That an office, separate from the Ghana Police Service, is needed

for reporting attacks on journalists is an indication that the decline in the safety of journalists is a reality.

This chapter seeks to understand the scope and severity of the issue. It explores the nature and extent of attacks on journalists and the parties involved. It also examines perceptions about the general attitude, and interventions by key stakeholders, (security agencies, the judiciary, civil society, media organizations, and the government) in ensuring safety of journalists. In particular, it sought to establish:

- the incidence and patterns of safety violations, both online and offline
- the nature and perpetrators of safety violations
- journalists' perceptions about the posture and responses of key stakeholders
- the proactive and reactive responses to safety violations

### ***A background on safety of journalists in Ghana: MFWA Reports 2021-2022***

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) produces quarterly reports on the media within West Africa (dubbed *Freedom of Expression Monitor*), citing incidents of violations, perpetrators of violations, targets/victims of violations, and redress in the media space. The violations identified in the reporting years 2021 and 2022 were in ten (10) different categories, including killing, kidnapping, unwarranted sentencing, physical attacks, arrests/detentions, threats, media shutdown/suspension/ban, and seizure or destruction of journalists' equipment. While the reports cover the West African region, findings specific to Ghana in 2021 and 2022 are discussed in this section.

Ghana recorded four incidents of violations (perpetrated against journalists) in the first quarter of 2021 (January – March 2021). A single incident of violation was identified for each of the following: threat, physical attack, arrest/detention, and seizure/destruction of property. A total of three out of four of these violations were perpetrated by security agents and one by an individual, (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2021).

By the second quarter of 2021, incidents of violations against journalists in Ghana had doubled from four in the initial quarter to eight. Out of this number, two were killings, four physical attacks, one was arrest/detention and the other was seizure/destruction of property. Violations were often (7 out of 8 times) committed by security agents. Further, these incidents were predominantly against journalists

(4 out of 8), activists (1), media organisations (1), and on some occasions, citizens (2) (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2021).

During the period, National Security operatives assaulted the Western North/Western Regional correspondent of Accra-based *Pent TV*, Peter Tabor. The officers, carrying out a raid on a casino in the town of Asankragua, slapped and kicked the journalist after they heard him on phone reporting their operation to the Divisional Police Commander. The officers, some in police uniforms and others in plainclothes, also seized and destroyed the phone of the journalist who had reportedly earlier identified himself to be a security person.

In the second quarter of 2021, some security personnel arrested and abused Caleb Kudah, a journalist with Accra-based *Citi FM/Citi TV*. For hours, they detained and maltreated the journalist over 'unauthorised' filming at the premises of the Ministry of National Security. Around the time he was being tortured, a team of heavily armed security officers invaded the premises of *Citi FM/Citi TV*, throwing the entire staff into panic. The officers claimed they had come to arrest Zoe Abu-Baidoo, a journalist, whom they suspected had allegedly received some video files from Caleb Kudah.

On a positive note, the country recorded a drastic dip in the number of violations in the third quarter of 2021 – a single incident of threat was recorded (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2021). In this instance, the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Assin Central constituency of Ghana, Kennedy Agyapong verbally abused, and threatened *Luv FM* Journalist, Erastus Asare Donkor. *“That boy should be beaten seriously. He is so annoying. For the foolish submissions he made before the Committee, we have to beat the hell out of him. If I were the President, I would have this boy to be whipped,”* were the harsh remarks of the MP during an interview on July 9, 2021, on *Net2 TV*, a media house he owns.

Ghana recorded two incidents of violations in the last quarter of 2021 - two radio presenters (Nhyiraba Paa Kwesi Simpson of *Connect FM* and Oheneba Boamah Bennie of *Power FM* in the Western and Greater Accra regions respectively) were arrested and detained by the Ghana Police Service (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2021). Nhyiraba Paa Kwesi Simpson was arrested on November 1, 2021 and charged with “publishing false news with the intent of causing fear and alarm to the public, contrary to the Public Order Act, and false publication of news through an electronic device contrary to the Electronic Communications Act”. Following a phone

call from a man named Stephen Kumi, who falsely claimed that Nhyiraba Paa Kwesi Simpson and his lover had been abducted during the morning broadcast on Connect FM, the presenter was taken into custody. On December 14, 2021, the Ghana Police Service's National Investigations Bureau (NIB) detained Oheneba Boamah Bennie of Power FM, stating he was under investigation for allegedly insulting and threatening President Akufo-Addo in a Facebook video. Before being released on bond, the host was held in custody for two days.

Contrary to its previous near-impeccable records, during the first quarter of 2022, Ghana recorded eleven (11) infractions (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2022), fomenting worries about a potential deteriorating press freedom environment. Among other violations, in the first quarter of 2022, Ghana recorded two incidents of physical attacks on journalists, one attack on a media organisation, as well as the arrest and detention of two journalists (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2022).

Reporter's Without Borders (RSF) in 2022 ranked Ghana 101<sup>st</sup> out of 180 countries when it comes to safety of journalists. According to the report, the criteria that grounded the rankings included the capacity to identify, collect, and disseminate news and information in accordance with journalistic practices and ethics without undue risk of physical harm, mental or emotional distress, or career harm from, for instance, losing one's job, having professional equipment seized, or being ransacked (Reporters without Borders, 2022).

## Methodology

The study adopted the mixed methods approach. The approach's strength lies in its ability to enable insights from both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey) data, allowing the researchers to gauge the scope safety violations affecting journalists in Ghana, and explanations for the complexities and contexts of that as a social experience (Mason, 2006).

## Survey

The survey method was used to explore the occurrences, nature, patterns and perpetrators of safety violations as well as perceptions about the posture, and actions of law enforcers, state actors and civil society organisations towards the safety of journalists. A convenience sampling approach was used to gather data from 115 respondents both in-person and online via the researcher's networks (e.g. online communities of journalists).

## Demographic profile of survey respondents

**Table 1:** Gender representation of participants

	Frequency	Percent
Male	66	57.4
Female	49	42.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Type of media represented</b>		
Radio	43	37.4
Television	25	21.7
Print	18	15.7
Digital media	7	6.1
Freelance	1	0.9
Converged media	21	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>

More males (nearly 60%) took part in the study than females. Respondents were journalists and reporters from traditional media and well spread across channels - radio (37.4%), television (21.7%), converged media (18.3%) and print (15.7%). Freelance journalists/reporters and journalists who worked in digital-only media outlets were the least represented (7% altogether).

## In-depth Interviews

Judgemental sampling was used to draw key informants for the qualitative inquiry. Participants included officials of the Ghana Journalists Association, Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana, the Ministry of Information, and Journalists.

## Data analysis

Results of the study are presented and discussed using the integrative mixed methods analysis. The approach posits that effectively integrating more than one source of data in data analyses will deliver a gain over using a single source or type of data (Bazeley, 2018). The value of this approach was that it helped us to complement, compare, converge, corroborate and complete the two kinds of data retrieved all at the same time.

## Findings

### Incidents and nature of safety violations

To establish the spread occurrence of safety violations, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had personally experienced safety violations in the line of duty within the last year. They were also asked to indicate knowledge of their colleagues who had such experiences. The evidence shows that safety violations is very widespread. Over a third of respondents (38%) reported having faced safety violations in the line of work. While the majority of respondents (61.7%) have had no such experiences the fact that one in every three respondents have is quite worrying.

**Table 2:** Personal encounters with safety violations

Have you suffered any form of safety or security violation in the line of duty recently (the last one year)?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	44	38.3
No	71	61.7
Total	115	100.0

The picture gets even worse. Two in every three respondents (68%) indicated awareness of a colleague journalists who had experienced safety violations in the line of duty. While this figure may represent references to the same incidents, it does still signal widespread attacks on journalists, and, importantly, the possibility of an increasing feeling of insecurity.

**Table 3:** Awareness of colleague's experiences of safety violations

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	78	67.8
No	37	32.2
Total	115	100.0

Unsurprisingly, the data points to a general sense of insecurity. Only one in ten of the respondents expressed views of a complete sense of safety. For the majority of respondents, there is a sense of ambivalence about their safety while working.

**Table 4:** Journalists' perceptions about their personal safety

Are you safe?	Frequency	Percent
Definitely not safe	28	24.4
Somewhat safe	74	64.3
Definitely safe	10	8.7
No response	3	2.6
Total	115	100.0

This, perhaps, explains why interview participants consider Ghana to still be a relatively safe place to practice as a journalist. Some were of the view that the security and safety violations journalists currently suffer is nothing compared to the era of military dictatorship, even though, in their view, there is still room for improvement.

*Those were the days [referring to the military regime] journalists were incarcerated at random. In some worst cases, some died; they paid the supreme price, but a return to constitutional rule in 1992, the climate is better. But we are not totally out of the woods yet (Interview participant, GJA official).*

*But let's be sincere, there are journalists in this country who have done biting stories of the system and walked freely; nobody has harmed them, and so, much as there have been attacks on journalists, which we should all condemn, I do not think that we operate in a very unsafe environment. (Interview participant, Journalist and morning show host).*

An official of the Access to Information Division of the Ministry of Information believed that the present information ecology may have contributed to the increased awareness of violations of journalists, resulting in rather high perception levels than used to be decades ago:

*I'll say, it could have been worse then, but because there was not much access to information as we have now as we have and the technology and everything, where people can record and report, it may seem that now it is worse. Because people didn't have access to new media technologies in the past as we have it now, it was their word against our word. But once there's technology and everything, journalists have a way of bringing out what they are going through without going through gatekeepers. They can go on social media, the public get to know about it and start running commentary (Official, Access to Information Division, MOI).*

Respondents' views were also sought as to whether they felt safe in their workplaces. Generally, perceptions about workplace safety are high with about 70 percent of respondents indicating so.

The study also examined the kinds of violations respondents had suffered.

**Table 5:** Nature of safety violations experienced

Nature of safety violations	Overall N	Overall Percent	Male %	Female %
Physical attacks	23	18.85	18.2	4.9
Verbal abuse	30	24.5	19.1	14.8
Online trolling	10	8.19	3.6	9.8
Internet stalking	1	0.81	0.9	0.0
Tapping of phone	1	0.81	0.9	0.0
Spying	2	1.63	1.8	0.0
Intimidation	26	21.3	16.4	13.1
Public shaming	6	4.92	3.6	3.3
Threats	16	9.4%	10.9	6.6
Cyberbullying	7	4.1%	4.5	3.3
Total	122	100.0%	93.7	55.8

According to the results, verbal abuse ranks first (25%) among the violations recorded. It is followed, closely, by intimidation (21%) and physical attacks (19%). It is important to note the gendered undertones to the experiences of safety violations. Males appear to be much more at risk than females. Across all violations but one (trolling), males reported more experiences than females.

Interview data corroborates the finding that verbal abuse is the commonest form of attack on journalists.

*I've had my fair share in the past, but it's all been verbal attacks. Nobody has physically attacked me." (Journalist and morning show host).*

*In our line of work, sometimes some of the individuals we expose are not happy with*

*what we do so, verbal abuse is normal for many investigative journalists, many people are not happy, so depending on how they get your contact, either via text or phone call, they tell you whatever they want to tell you (Interview respondent, investigative journalist).*

The interview data reveals that threats to journalists are mostly related to investigative journalism work, signalling the dangers that come with that terrain and the disincentive to venturing into it.

*I know that many of our colleagues are quite scared when it comes to a certain level of analysis. They'd rather go and listen to press conferences, write stories about them and publish. They try to veer off the challenging aspect of journalism, which is the most critical part the country needs. Many of the young ones whom I've been trying to mentor into investigative journalism find it scary. So, that does not allow us, as a country which is burdened with corruption, to overcome corruption challenges. But unfortunately, we have a situation where people are running away from investigative journalism because we have recorded, for the first time in recent times, death attributed to the work of an investigative journalist (Journalist and official of PRINPAG).*

Journalists' safety violations are slightly more likely to come from state actors than non-state actors. State actor-initiated infractions were eight percent more than those by non-state actors.

**Table 6:** Perpetrators of violations

Perpetrator type	Frequency	Percent
State actor(s)	52	53.3%
Non state actor(s)	45	45.9%
Others	1	1.0%
Total	112	100.0%

Below is a word cloud of the specific individuals and entities identified by respondents as perpetrators of safety violations. As can be seen, among state actors identified, politicians, security operatives, police, government officials, and the military are common examples of state actors. Non-state actors identified include respondents' colleagues, 'galamsey' operators, and business owners.



Interview participants corroborated the sentiments of the survey respondents.

*The president has, on two occasions, assured journalists in particular, and the nation in general, that the perpetrators of Ahmed's assassination would be arrested. This has not happened. The police hierarchy also assured us that some seven people had been arrested, that is about three years ago and that they were close to unravelling the circumstances under which Ahmed Suale was killed. Latif Iddrisu was brutalised right at the citadel of the police headquarters and the offenders have not been identified, let alone punished (Interview participant, GJA official).*

According to a journalist, who also happens to be a manager of a radio station, and who had experienced physical attacks, his experience with the police could be best described as nonchalant:

*I reported the issue. I went to the clinic. Then I submitted the medical report to the police. Later, they asked me to report to the police again. I went to their station and the officer wouldn't invite me nor look into the issue. He promised he would call me, but up to date they have not called me (Interview participant, journalist and station manager).*

Another interview participant said:

*Those who have been assaulted in their line of work, it is only a few that have seen successful prosecution. So, I was saying that it doesn't appear that we see enough proactiveness from the security agencies or government in ensuring that journalists who have been assaulted get successful prosecution or get compensated. I can cite our own Latif Iddrisu who was assaulted by some police officers, till date he hasn't received any compensation; the case is still pending at the court<sup>1</sup> (Interview participant, investigative journalist).*

## Provisions for safety of journalists: Media organisations

This section presents findings relating to provisions that have been put in place to ensure the safety of journalists.

**Table 8:** Provisions made by media organisations

Safety Gear			Counselling services		Medical care		Legal aid	
	N	%	N	%				
Yes	45	39.1	36	31.3	Yes	59	67	58.3
No	57	49.6	66	57.4	No	43	30	26.1
Not sure	13	11.3	13	11.3	Maybe	13	18	15.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study found that the nature of safety provisions varied across media organizations and that the least catered for was the provision of counselling services in cases where journalists experienced trauma. Nearly 60 percent of respondents indicated that such provisions did not exist in their organisations. This is followed by the provision of safety gear; nearly half of the respondents indicate failure on the part of their organisations to provide safety gear. In contrast, organisations do fairly well in providing medical care and legal aid when their journalists face attacks. In both cases, nearly 60 percent indicated that their organisations have provisions for supporting journalists who face attacks.

While some interview participants decried the non-existence of safety provisions in their organisations, one recounted that his organisation has established a protocol for reporting and seeking redress for safety violations:

*There are protocols that have been established. So, once you feel your safety is under threat, you tell management, and they activate those protocols (Interview participant, journalist).*

<sup>1</sup> Upon the State's request for settlement talks, on January 31, 2023, the Accra High Court gave the State one month to reach a settlement with Latif Iddrisu who, together with his employers, is demanding 10 million cedis in compensation for assault. However, on April 3, 2023, when the case was called, the representative of the Attorney General indicated to the court that the Inspector General of Police does not want to settle but instead wants a full trial. The case will be back in court on May 12, 2023

### Provisions for safety of journalists: GJA

At the industry level, the GJA Executive member said the association has an insurance package for journalists who suffer safety breaches during the 2020 elections:

*About five journalists suffered brutalities in the course of the election, and they were paid. Some lost their phones. As we speak, one of them has undergone three operations. His one leg is fractured, and that package took care of his operation: three operations at Ridge Hospital and he also received some money to cater for his medical care. ... [name of journalist] of GBC also had her hand POP because of what she suffered during the election. So, GJA also facilitated her treatment and financial package. ... [name of journalist] of the Daily Graphic was also operated upon because of what he suffered during the election. Again, GJA's package with SIC proved useful and he was paid the cost of operation (Interview participant, GJA official).*

An executive member of PRINPAG confirmed this during an interview with him, but he was quick to add that initiatives by the GJA had been reactionary rather than proactive:

*The GJA put together resources, sort of to provide insurance cover for journalists that were covering elections because of the potentially volatile nature. Talking about insurance, yes, insurance is good, but insurance happened at the end of the story when something had happened. Then, I think what we are looking at is what measures to put in place to prevent such adversities from happening to journalists (Journalist and PRINPAG official).*

Another way the GJA lends support to journalists to secure their safety is through training programmes on how they could personally secure their safety when on potentially dangerous beats.

*We have organized about 10 programmes on safety across the country: Takoradi, Kumasi, Cape Coast and Accra, with support from Norwegian Journalist Union and from our own resources.... In all these, we take journalists through safety guidelines. The idea is to get all of them to internalize them in their work. We do well to tell them that no story is far more important than human life (Interview participant, GJA official).*

### Provisions for safety of journalists: Civil Society

Civil society organisations (and actors) and the media complement one another to ensure a progressive society. Besides, as part of their advocacy work, civil

society can advocate certain systemic provisions for media development, including provisions for safe journalism practice. The study found that perceptions about civil society support and action towards safety of journalists are partially positive, with about half of the respondents indicating so.

**Table 9:** Perceptions about how civil society support safety of journalists

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	56	48.7
<b>No</b>	41	35.7
<b>Maybe</b>	18	15.6
<b>Total</b>	115	100.0

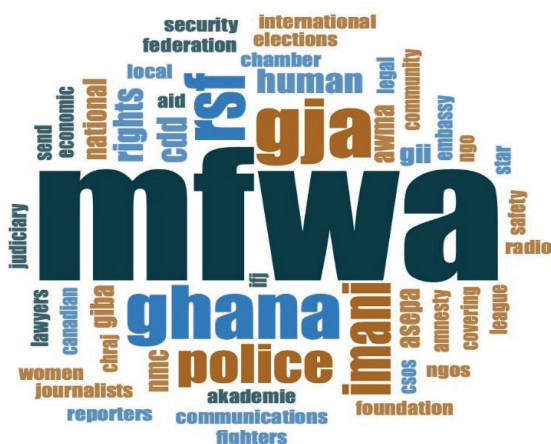
Generally, it appears that the perceptions of civil society actions towards safety of journalists emanate from efforts by international NGOs. That sector lead with close to half (48.2%) of respondents saying so. This was followed by national NGOs (24.8%) and community-based NGOs (15.0%). It would appear therefore that when it comes to pushing for safety, journalists believe local civil society organisations have more to do. Fig. 2 shows some of the civil society organisations respondents mentioned.

**Table 10:** Civil society concern for safety of journalists

	Responses	
	N	Percent
<b>Community-based NGOs</b>	20	15.0%
<b>National NGOs</b>	33	24.8%
<b>International NGOs</b>	64	48.2%
<b>Other</b>	2	1.5%
<b>None</b>	14	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	133	100.0%



**Figure 2:** Civil societies instrumental in safety of journalists



It is worthy to note the commanding power of the MFWA as a safety of journalist advocate. Besides MFWA, the GJA is also quite prominent.

*I think Media Foundation for West Africa has been very vibrant when it comes to cases of assault of media practitioners. They have been very consistent in gathering data. In some cases, if your safety is under threat, I know that they've gone to the rescue of some journalists whose safety was under threat, they provided support and, in some cases, they send those journalists to safe houses and a number of interventions that they readily make available. With the GJA, I know in the past, when there is public pressure, the GJA tends to at first issue a statement (Interview participant, journalist).*

A journalist, who doubles as a political show host who was interviewed, recounted a personal experience of how CSOs had intervened when she had suffered incidences of violations:

*I wish they had more funding to do more, but they have done more than the GJA; they've done more than the NMC and they've done more than the Ministry of Information and that is why I am singling out Media Foundation for West Africa and then CDD-Ghana because more than once the Executive Director of MFWA, Sulemana Braimah and the CDD-Ghana Director, Prof. H. Prempeh and Dr. Pumpuni Asante, have reached out to me and offered assistance. I think that CSOs have done a lot (Interview participants, reporter, and political show host).*

## Key Findings

By soliciting opinions and reflections of key stakeholders, including journalists themselves, this study sought to understand the state of journalists' safety in Ghana, which has been cited as one of the causes for the recent decline in the country's press freedom rating. Some of the study's major findings are listed below.

### The types, scope, and perpetrators of attacks

- there is a palpable sense, among journalists that their safety is a risk while working
- violations of journalists' safety are common in Ghana.
- the most common form of infraction is verbal abuse, closely followed by physical assaults and intimidation.
- attacks on journalists are gendered; men are more vulnerable to various forms of abuse; women are more likely than men to experience online trolling.
- state actors like the military and police are the worst offenders.
- violations of journalists' safety do occur internally within media organizations.
- Investigative journalists are the most at risk of attacks.

### Perceptions about the posture and responses of key stakeholders

- journalists feel that law enforcement agencies and the judiciary do little to protect their safety.
- Civil society is deemed as leading the cause for the safety of journalists.

### Provisions of safety tools and remedial actions towards journalists' safety

Provision of support to journalists who suffer attacks is weak in particular:

- the provision of counselling services in situations where journalists encounter trauma is nearly non-existent.
- there is a partial failure on the part of media organizations when it comes to providing safety equipment for reporting dangerous beats.
- when their journalists are attacked, organizations perform better than average in providing medical care and legal counsel.

## Discussion and recommendations

As often said, journalism is not a crime. A strong democracy requires strong and independent media to enlighten the public, foster constructive engagement, and hold those exercising or aspiring to public office accountable. Although significant gains have been made, independent media and press freedom are coming under growing pressure globally. Journalists are threatened, harassed, and attacked for doing their jobs. The possibility of self-censorship because of assaults is not encouraging for fearless, independent journalism.

But ensuring the safety of journalists must start with media organisations, even though the state bears equal responsibility for ensuring the safety and protection of journalists and media outlets. A fundamental requirement for the existence of independent media is the creation of a secure workplace. Media organisations have an important stake in creating a sense of safety among journalists by proactively taking an interest in their employees' safety needs. Their proactiveness in providing counselling support for trauma, medical care, safety gear for those reporting dangerous beats as well as legal aid in pursuit of justice for victims of attacks is critical. Additionally, media owners must provide reporters with security training to help them secure themselves.

As the study found, major culprits in safety infractions are state actors who must rather be seen to be protecting the media in respect of the 1992 Constitution. Attacks on journalists from state actors legitimise such actions, exposing them to more harm. At a broader structural level, it is essential that journalists can do their jobs without obstruction nor concern for their safety. State institutions and actors, particularly those in the security services must desist from attacking journalists. Security agencies in the country must prioritize protection for journalists while they perform their duties. They cannot be the ones deemed to mistreat journalists. One way they might show their support for journalists' job is by taking action to arraign perpetrators and finding justice for victims in the wake of claims of abuse. The point must be made, however, that this will largely be based on their understanding of the functions of journalism and the role journalists play in society. Therefore, it is crucial to regularly educate security forces on how they may cooperate with the media rather than view them as foe.

Where infractions occur, the only legal remedy is the judicial system, which as the study found, is deemed just as adversarial. Advocacy should target training activities for the judiciary and top-level security

officers to better orient them to supporting the work of the media in pursuit of the freedom aspirations of the Constitution.

Ghana must ensure that the appropriate agencies work to enhance journalists' safety. Investigating attacks and other mistreatment of journalists, prosecuting offenders, no matter the level of influence they have, and fostering an environment that supports the work of journalists are imperative. This is why it is gratifying to note the establishment of the Office of the Coordinated Mechanism on the Safety of Journalists by the Ministry of Information and the NMC. Its duties of receiving reports of attacks and pushing for investigation and justice are critical to building an ecosystem that is intolerant of attacks on media. However, it has since its establishment, been generally dormant. Indeed, a visit by the research team to the office met no one at post. This is a worry and the Ministry of Information and the NMC must act to bring life to the office.

Political actors and their adherents must desist from wantonly abusing journalists and realize that if a reporter appears to be prying into their business, it is only because they have a legal obligation to check what they do as public office holders. If they have any reason to be concerned, they should seek legal redress rather than resorting to abusing the power they wield.

As the umbrella organization representing Ghanaian journalists, the Ghana Journalists Association should collaborate with the various local and international bodies to promote the safety of its members. They must make an effort to alter the unfavourable perceptions that their members and the general public hold about them, including their tendency for off-handedness and impulsiveness. The GJA should be seen as one of the chief advocates for the protection of the safety of its members. The current president must make good his campaign promise of setting up a program for journalists to shield them from any misfortune, including the promise of giving journalists insurance cover and securing the brighter future of journalists, now that he is an office holder.

The positive perceptions participants have about civil society organisations that help to advocate and support the work of journalists must not wane. This means that CSOs like MFWA, CDD and GII must continue their advocacy efforts and other interventions to help journalism grow in Ghana. Their collaboration with media organisations, the GJA and other advocacy organisations may result in greater gains and must therefore be deepened.

Journalists must be motivated to learn about safety, including online safety. They must take advantage of forums that deal with these issues to familiarize themselves with both old and current trends and corrective actions that can ensure their safety.

That said, as efforts are made to prevent abuse and to secure the safety of journalists, all media outlets are urged to uphold strict professional and ethical standards to avoid using their platforms as distribution channels for scandalous and libellous content that may arouse from persons who deem themselves to suffer reputational costs as a result of such publications.

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