



Sierra Leone Association of Journalists

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INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS:

SLAJ Urges Government to Drop all Ongoing Cases of Criminal and Seditious Libel

Freetown / 2nd November, 2020

The **Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)** is today (2nd November, 2020) joining other organisations around the world to observe the **‘International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists’** by calling on the **Government of Sierra Leone** and its agencies to not only protect and promote freedom of speech always, but to also help to ensure the safety and security of all journalists working in the country at all times.

“In line with the United Nations Resolution urging Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity against journalists, we urge Government and its agencies, especially the national security forces, to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, and to take appropriate action against perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers,” said SLAJ President, **Ahmed Sahid Nasralla**.

He added: *“Since this year’s End Impunity day comes shortly after the symbolic signing of the repeal of the obnoxious Criminal and Seditious libel law, we call on the Government of Sierra Leone to immediately drop all ongoing cases of Criminal and Seditious Libel in our courts.”*

Apart from violence, SLAJ also notes with serious concern other forms of attacks such as discrimination, intimidation and harassment against journalists and media workers. We therefore call on specifically on **local authorities**, the **Judiciary** and the **Parliament of Sierra Leone** to exercise their supreme powers with caution and due consideration of the crucial work of journalists to hold public institutions to account and to bring the news to the people on a daily basis.

Over the years, SLAJ, through the **Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG)**, has been monitoring and publishing reports on press freedom and freedom of expression situation in Sierra Leone. The last report on ‘Press Freedom in Sierra Leone’ released in May 2020, highlighted the status of **26 cases** of various attacks on journalists in Sierra Leone over a two-year period (most of which were based on alleged breaches of **Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965**), indicating a general decline in crimes against journalists. With the repeal of this anti-free speech law, SLAJ hopes the situation with the safety and security of journalists and media workers will continue to improve.

Meanwhile, SLAJ calls on media houses to also put in-house policies in place to ensure the safety and security of their workers and to ensure their professionalism always.

Signed:

Mohamed Asmieu Bah
NATIONAL SECRETARY GENERAL

