



Sierra Leone Association of Journalists

1st Floor, 56 Campbell Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone P.M.B. 724,

Website: www.slajsl.org; Email: slaj.salone@gmail.com

President: +232 76 470288 / +232 30 470288, Secretary-General: +232 78 445300



Towards a free and professional media

Press Release

23rd March, 2021

Report on Meeting with Ministry of Information and Communications on the Cyber Crime Bill

The **Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)**, today, Tuesday, 23rd March 2021, met with officials of the Ministry of Information and Communications to start engagement on the Cyber Crime Bill.

The Minister, Mohamed Rahman Swarray, took the cross section of the SLAJ Executive and the National Coordinator of the **Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG)** through a power-point presentation on key aspects of the bill and responded to what it calls “certain misconceptions” of the proposed legislation.

The Minister described the powers the bill gives to his office as overwhelming and rejected them entirely; saying that no minister or institution should have such powers.

The SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, firstly expressed his disappointment that the media fraternity until now was left out of crucial consultations that took place during the process of drafting the bill. Nevertheless, Nasralla said SLAJ is not averse to the enactment of a legislation that seeks to enhance protection, security and responsible use of the cyber space, but that the Association is concerned about possible interference with the civic space and infringement on fundamental human rights of free speech and people's privacy.

He informed the Ministry that SLAJ has consulted its in-house lawyers and international press freedom organizations for technical and legal opinion on the bill. SLAJ and the MRCG, he said, will hold a workshop with media leaders and journalists to discuss the bill and make valid inputs that will be submitted to the ministry and the Sierra Leone Parliament.

Meanwhile, the Coordinator of Cyber Security Unit in the Ministry, Mr. Morie Saffa, apologised on behalf of the ministry for leaving SLAJ and key media stakeholders like the IMC, RAIC and MRCG out of initial consultations on the drafting of the bill, and noted that it is never too late for the media to make valid input to the bill, which has now been tabled in Parliament.

Signed:

Mohamed Asmieu Bah
National Secretary General

