

STATE OF ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS IN NIGERIA

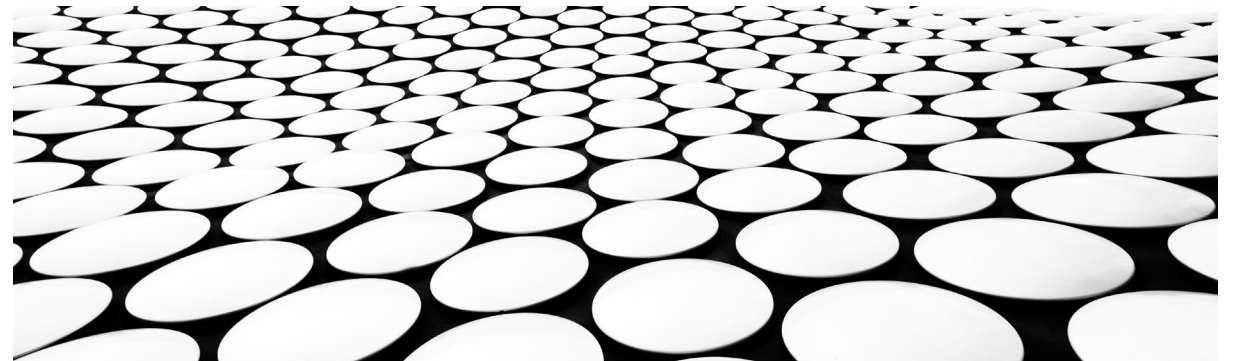
THE YEAR 2020 REPORT

PRESENTED ON THE OCCASION
OF YEAR 2021 WORLD PRESS
FREEDOM DAY



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SUMMARY

The International Press Centre under a safety of journalists' project supported by the **Open Society Foundation (OSF)** commenced the monitoring of attacks on journalists in September 2018 with the aim of providing safety advisory, issuing prompt alerts, and coordinating necessary activities on attacks/assaults on journalists and media outlets.

To ensure effective implementation and coordination, a Journalists' Safety Alert Desk was established with the engagement of a Safety Alert Officer. The Journalists Safety Alert Desk has carried out the following tasks thus far:

- Launch of a helpline with mobile number (**+2348132776441**) in response to attacks on journalists and the media
- Make contacts with journalists threatened, assaulted, or attacked.
- Draft/circulate press releases to condemn attacks and call for investigations; and
- Coordinate related advocacy initiatives on journalists who were attacked or assaulted



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SUMMARY

This report encompasses reported attacks on journalists in the year 2020 notably during the restrictions of movements occasioned by COVID-19 Pandemic and the EndSARS protests.

The report covers:

- The location of the incidents
- The media outlets affected or attacked (whether print, broadcast or online)
- The nature of the attacks
- The identities of the victims
- The gender of the victims
- The nature of injury or abuses suffered
- The alleged perpetrators



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- The report concludes that the prevalence of attacks by security agents poses herculean challenge that must be engaged by stakeholders to ensure that the media continue to function under an enabling environment.
- This becomes pertinent in view of the theme of this year's WPF, which is 'Information For Public Good'. The report contends that the media cannot properly provide information that will serve the public good in Nigeria if the lives and means of live of journalists continue to be put at risk.
- The report recommends, amongst others, the design of a safety manual with updated tips for identifying and reporting threats to safety to be made available to journalists and other media professionals. This is actually already being undertaken by IPC.



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INTRODUCTION

A baseline audit on safety and security of journalists in Nigeria that was carried out by IPC in 2015 inferred amongst others that “journalists in Nigeria face enormous safety challenges in fulfilling their professional obligations to society”. The baseline audit also concluded that the challenges of safety are partly as a result of the prevailing negative disposition of stakeholders in society including actors in governments in addition to existing institutional encumbrances under which the media operate.



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INTRODUCTION

IPC's commitment to safety of journalists is in recognition of the imperative of freedom of the media in entrenching genuine democratic system that delivers good governance and in meeting the expectations of national development which the media is constitutionally obliged to safeguard.

In 2018, IPC in partnership with OSF conducted a National Survey on Safety of Journalists and Press Freedom in Nigeria. The outcome of the survey further attested to the prevailing hostile environment which is antithetical to independent journalism practise and thereby requiring concerted advocacy and continuous engagements of stakeholders towards guaranteeing safety of journalists to enhance press freedom.



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INTRODUCTION

Therefore, this public presentation of the report on state of attacks on journalists and media in Nigeria (2020), is in continuation of efforts aimed at highlighting the prevailing challenges of safety of journalists with the aim of consolidating on the struggle including campaigns and advocacy, for a Nigerian journalism environment that is conducive for journalists and other media professionals.



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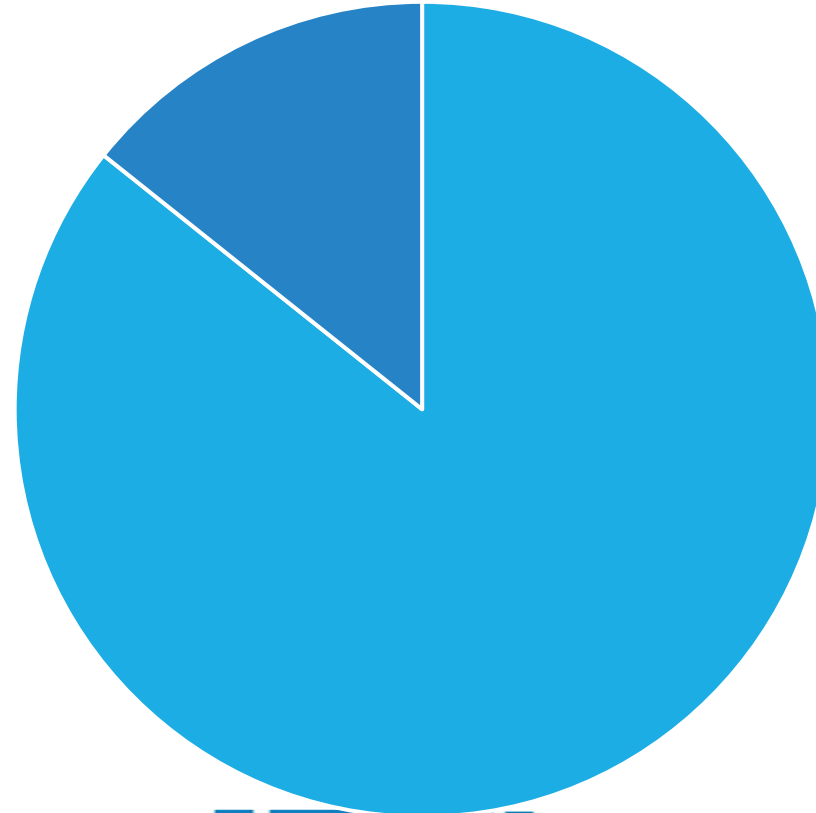
METHODOLOGY

The report on the state of attacks on journalists and media in Nigeria (2020) was generated through desk and field activities by press freedom monitors engaged in each of the country's six geo-political zones. The methodology deployed for collating the report involved monitoring of media reports as well as assessment and follow-up on information relating to reported attacks on journalists and media establishments.

THE DATA

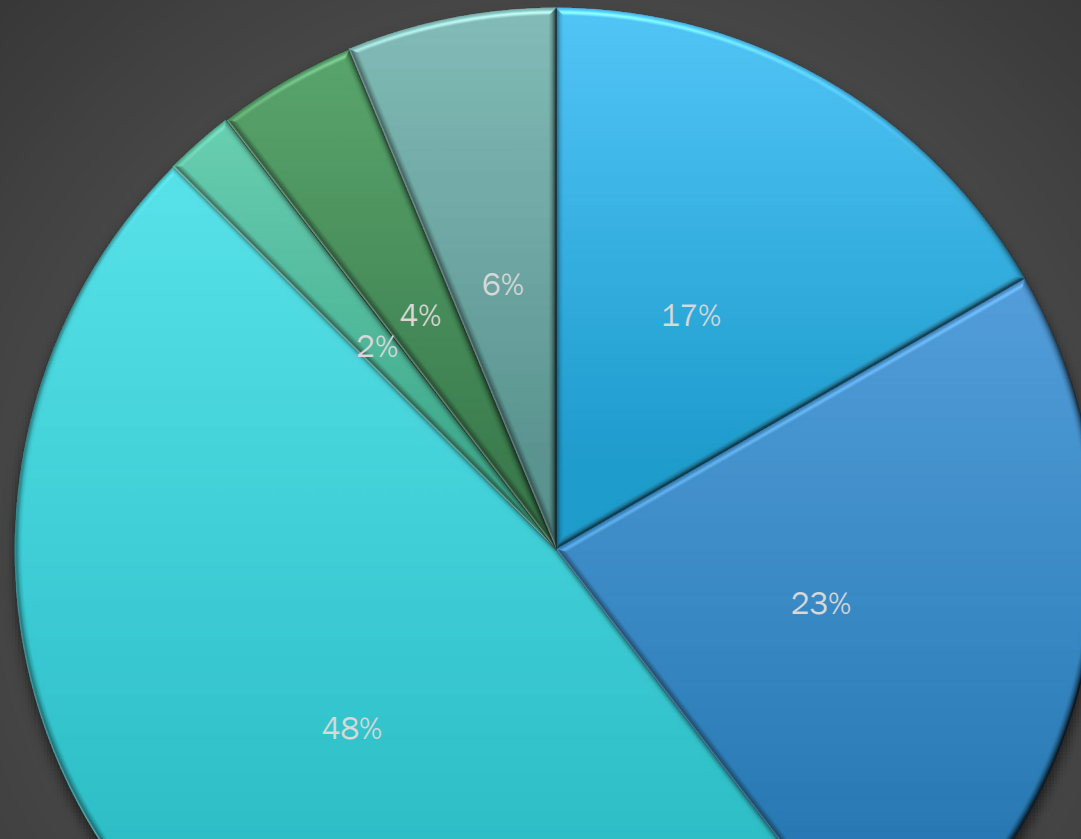
IN THE YEAR 2020, NOT FEWER THAN **FORTY-EIGHT (48)** CASES OF ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND **EIGHT (8)** ATTACKS ON MEDIA OUTLETS WERE REPORTED AND DOCUMENTED.

Attacks on journalists and media outlets



THE LOCATION OF THE INCIDENTS ACCORDING TO THE GEO-POLITICAL ZONES

S.E - 8, S.W - 11, S.S - 23, N.W - 1, N.C - 2, N.E -3





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AFFECTED STATES

Abia, Abuja, Adamawa, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Ekiti, Edo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kaduna, Kogi, Lagos, Nasarawa, Ondo, Osun, and Rivers.



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MEDIA OUTLETS AFFECTED

- Print media: Seventeen (17)
- Broadcast media: Twenty-Six (26)
- Online media: Seven (7)
- Not Specified: Five (5)
- Others: One (1)

NATURE OF THE ATTACKS



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Physical assault

Abduction

Barred from
government
house

Battery

Gun attacks

Harassment

Threats to life

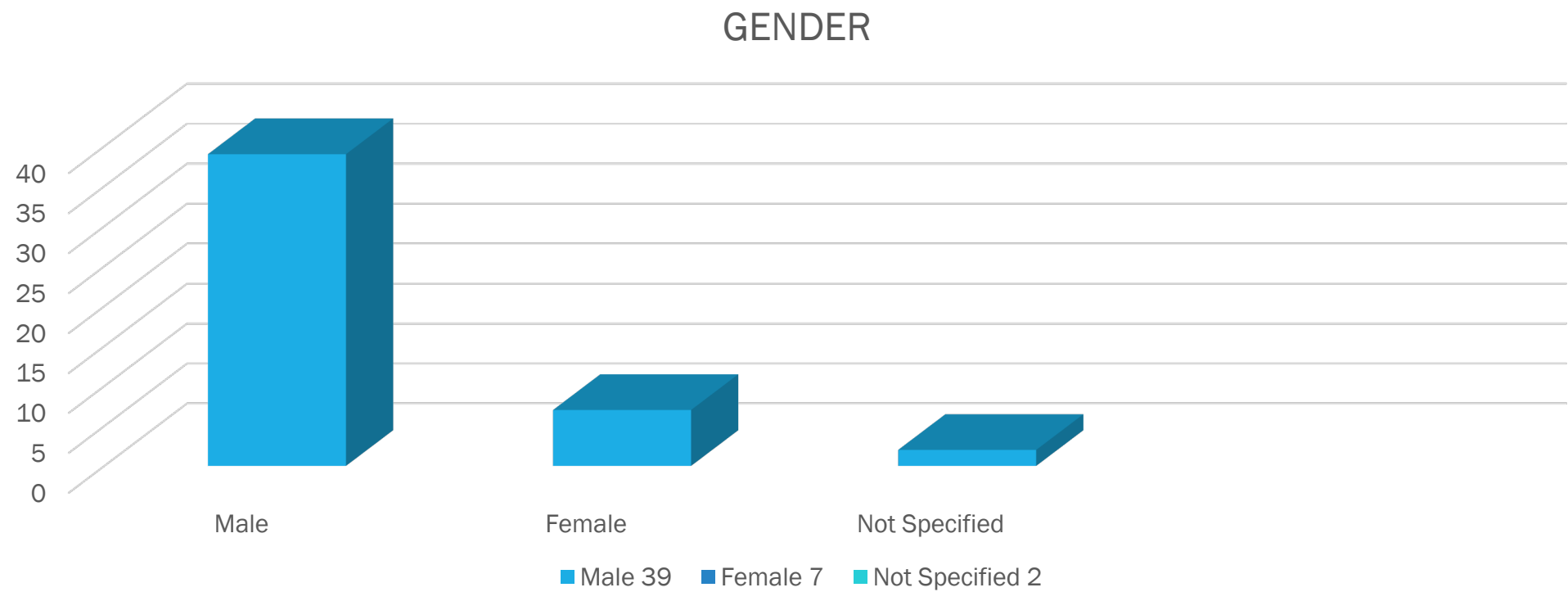
Murder

Suspension from
work

Robbery

Unlawful
arrest/detention

THE GENDER OF THE VICTIMS



ABUSES SUFFERED

- Loss of valuables
- Psychological trauma
- Body injuries
- Damaged camera
- gunshot injuries, loss of life, loss of official documents and phone destroyed



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ALLEGED PERPETRATORS

- State Taskforce
- The Military
- The Police
- The DSS
- The Politicians
- Political supporters / thugs/ Unknown gunmen
- Hoodlums
- Management of Imo Broadcasting Corporation
- NSDC
- Electricity Distribution Companies



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ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

March 26, 2020: Vincent Ake of Tide Newspaper (a state-owned newspaper) was sacked by the Governor of Rivers State for publishing report on the first case of COVID-19 in Rivers State without first getting approval from the Taskforce on Coronavirus set up by the state government.

March 28, 2020: Angela Nwoko-Akpolu of Leadership Newspaper was assaulted by operatives of DSS while investigating a suspected case of Covid-19 at a hotel in Owerri, Imo State.



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ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

March 28, 2020: Punch Newspaper circulation vehicle was attacked by the Military on its way to distribute one of its title to states in the South-South region. The windscreen was destroyed alongside the tyres.

April 1, 2020: Michael Ikeogwu (NUJ Chairman, Delta State) and Mathew Omonigho of Daily Post were assaulted by men from the Delta State Task Force on Environment in Uvwie Local Government Area of the Delta State while there to monitor the stay-at-home order by the government as a measure taken to curtail the spread COVID-19 pandemic in the state.



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ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

April 15, 2020: Linus Chima and the Delta Broadcasting Service team were assaulted by security agents for covering scenes of clear violation of the social distancing directive by both the federal and state governments.

April 15, 2020: Norbert Amede a photojournalist with Pointer Newspaper, was assaulted by men of the Nigerian Police at Ibusa, Oshimili North Local Government Area of Delta State.

April 15, 2020: Jide Bello of NTA was molested and bruised while returning home from work by Soldiers of the 32 Artillery Brigade, Nigerian Army, Owena Cantonment, Akure, Ondo State.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE END SARS PROTEST

- Television Continental (TVC), Lagos: The television station was attacked and partly burnt by hoodlums on Wednesday, October 21, 2020. Journalists and media professionals working in the establishment were also molested by the hoodlums. <https://guardian.ng/news/hoodlums-attack-tvc-in-lagos/>
- Channels Television, Lagos: Security personnel attached with the station were assaulted, which led to the temporary halting of broadcast by the station on Wednesday, October 21, 2020. <https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/21/breaking-channels-tv-ltv-allegedly-attacked-shut-down/>
- Toyin Yusuf, Reporter, Osun State Broadcasting Corporation: He was attacked alongside with a member of the Nigerian Union of Journalists by some angry youths while covering the protest in Osun.
- Arise Television, Lagos: The crew from the station were prevented from carrying out their legitimate duty at the Lekki Toll Gate, Lagos, by a group of soldiers on Wednesday, October 21, 2020.
- The Nation Newspaper, Lagos: the station was set on fire by hoodlums which halted activities in the organization on Wednesday, October 21, 2020.



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ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE END SARS PROTEST

- Reporters with Punch Newspaper: Policemen in Lagos State tortured journalists with Punch Newspaper for covering the #End SARS protests. <https://punchng.com/lagos-policemen-torture-punch-journalists-for-covering-endsars-protests/>
- Africa Independent Television (AIT), Benin: The station was set on fire by hoodlums which halted activities in the organization on Wednesday, October 21, 2020.
- Osun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC): The station was attacked by hoodlums. The hoodlums destroyed their gate and built a bonfire in front of the state-owned television station on Wednesday, October 21, 2020. www.premiumtimesng.com
- Akpokona Omafuaire of Vanguard Newspaper, Delta: He was brutalized by the police, on his way to an official assignment during the curfew imposed by the Delta State Governor on Friday, October 23, 2020. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/10/police-attack-vanguard-reporter-damage-car-in-delta/>
- Emmanuel Adeyemi of Sun Newspaper, Kogi: He was hit by a stray bullet in Lokoja on Monday, October 26, 2020.



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**REFER TO WORD DOC. ON FULL TABULAR REPORT OF ATTACKS ON
JOURNALISTS WHICH OCCURRED 2020**

SOME ACTIONS TAKEN THUS FAR...



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Public Enlightenment and Advocacy

Press statements were issued to condemn the attacks which varied from assaults, battering etc. The press statements were published in print, broadcast and online mediums. Some of the mediums that have assisted in publishing the press statements include: *The Guardian Newspaper, Leadership Newspaper, Vanguard Newspaper, Punch Newspaper, The Nation Newspaper, Premium Times, National Mirror, ThisDay Newspaper, Daily Sun, News Agency of Nigeria, PM News, Today News, Black box, National wire, Raypower, Newsdot.ng* among others.

Monitoring and follow-up on victims of attacks

The help desk has been relevant in reaching out to victims of attacks and assaults for the purposes of offering support and encouragement as well as to facilitate relevant interventions with the following as examples:

SOME ACTIONS TAKEN THUS FAR...



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15/1/2020: A call was placed through to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) council in Adamawa, and the P.R.O of the State police. Both confirmed the assault and death of Maxwell Nashan (FRCN) who was assaulted and killed by political thugs. Two suspects were later arrested by the police.

18/6/2020: A call was placed through to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) council in Anambra state pertaining to the kidnapping of Matthew Onwuasoanya of National Light medium, who was abducted at his residence. IPC apart from issuing a press statement demanding for his release, was in touch with the NUJ state council until he was released.

4/7/2020: A call was placed through to the Vice Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) council in Ebonyi state pertaining to the abduction of the NUJ Chapter Chairman (Tony Nwizi) at his residence. IPC apart from issuing a press statement demanding for his release, was in touch with the NUJ state council until he was released.

1/10/2020: IPC joined the many other stakeholders to condemn the physical assault by the police on Olukayode Jaiyeola of Punch Newspaper. Within 24hours the Lagos State Commissioner of Police ordered the immediate arrest of the police officer who perpetrated the attack.

26/10/2020: IPC reached out to Emmanuel Adeyemi of Daily Sun Newspaper who suffered a gunshot injury during the ENDSARS protest. He was rushed to a private clinic where he was treated.

SUCCESS STORY

- The Safety Alert Desk has so far created more awareness to the public on the vulnerability of journalists and media profession especially through press statements.
- The initiative has assisted in documenting incidents of attacks and assaults on journalists and the media.
- Through the initiative, effective tracking and intervention of the situation of victims of media attacks / assaults has been possible.
- The initiative has created a ready link between affected journalists / media originations and Safety Alert Officer who provides relevant information to stakeholders and able to mobilize possible intervention, as well as assistance or support where necessary.
- The initiative has offered journalists who are victims of attacks / assaults psychological relief with the knowledge that efforts are being made to fight their cause.
- The initiative has sought to promote partnership and or collaboration by stakeholders to take appropriate actions when journalists or media outlets get attacked
- The issuance of press releases on safety of journalists and the media have helped to mobilise sustained public interests in the issue of safety of journalists and the dire situation of the media in Nigeria.



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CHALLENGES



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Information on threats to safety and security are often not shared by journalists who are the victims or volunteered to relevant stakeholders for necessary actions for reasons that are not unconnected with lack of proper understanding of the inherent dangers of living with such threats.

Whereas journalists who are victims of coordinated or spontaneous attacks require follow-up assistance, however, there has been less than considerable interest amongst colleagues in the media to keep such incidents or abuses on the front burner of national issues beyond the initial reportage. The low level of solidarity and lethargy of information sharing amongst journalists on situation of abuses and attacks on media and professionals remains a major concern.

Much as the help desk is relevant in providing succor to journalists who are victims of attacks, there is however the challenge with regards to lack of enthusiasm by media establishments to give the necessary support to victims of attacks and abuse to enable them seek redress and possibly get justice.

CONCLUSION



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It is imperative for journalists to demonstrate greater sense of solidarity in dealing with attacks on media and abuses on the rights of colleagues in the profession. Sharing information relating to similar experiences and circumstances of attacks by journalists and victims could be useful for interrogating and overcoming the predisposing factors that make journalists vulnerable to victimization.

In most cases, available information provided to the help desk by victims; particularly as it pertains to identities of attackers or perpetrators of abuse may not be adequate enough considering the spontaneity of the incidents. It would therefore be helpful if colleagues who were on the same beat or at the scene of the incidents could volunteer further credible information to assist in apprehending and prosecuting abusers of journalists and attackers of the media.

It is however noted that abuse by security agents still feature as dominant challenge in spite of decades of advocacy aimed at demanding change from relevant authorities of security agencies. There is the need for relevant authorities to priorities sensitization and reorientation of security agents on the rights and privileges of journalists as part of deployment personnel on security assignment; particularly in crisis situation.

thank
YOU
SO MUCH

