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STATE OF JOURNALISTS' SAFETY DURING THE FEBRUARY 2023 PRESIDENTIAL & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

A REPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS CENTRE (IPC), LAGOS NIGERIA

1. INTRODUCTION

In line with the belief that the media plays important roles in the electoral processes and elections, the International Press Centre (IPC), Lagos-Nigeria along with other media support and media professional groups as well as other stakeholders including the civil society, has over the years spearheaded the campaign for the creation of an enabling environment for the media to effectively perform these roles. At the same time, IPC has also engaged in regular publication of resource materials and constant building of journalistic and media capacity for impactful reporting of elections.

It was in the context of the above that the Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage was first produced by IPC in 2014 while it was subsequently reviewed and updated in 2018 and 2022 by media stakeholders especially umbrella media professional groups, individual media outlets, media development groups and journalism training institutions.

Among others, the [Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage](#), under its statement of broad principles, obligates the government and its law enforcement and security agencies, the political parties and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to provide such enabling environment. In the specific case of the government and the political parties, the Code requires them to protect journalists on election duty from attacks and promptly apprehend perpetrators of attacks should they occur.

Pursuant to the above objectives and in order to ensure effective implementation and coordination of efforts geared towards the safety of journalists during the 2023 general elections held on Saturday February 25, 2023, IPC established a **Journalists' Safety Alert Desk** managed by the press freedom officer and assisted by field monitors across the geo-political zones of the country, to carry out the following tasks:

- Offer helpline for journalists who may face threat or attack on the field;
- Make contacts with journalists threatened, assaulted, or attacked.
- Make statements and send out alerts on threats and or attacks; and
- Coordinate related advocacy initiatives on journalists who may be attacked or assaulted while covering the elections.

Prior to the establishment of the Safety Alert Desk, IPC also launched a [safety and professional advisory](#) for journalists with the aim of promoting the personal safety of journalists covering the 2023 general elections and subsequent ones; ensuring that journalists covering the elections are fully equipped with knowledge on safety

precautions to take while on the field; ensuring professionalism in the coverage and reportage of the presidential elections and subsequent ones; and complementing national and international standards for reporting electoral processes and elections.

2. ELECTION-DAY EXPERIENCE

Despite all the above efforts, it is regrettable that a number of journalists and other media professionals were subjected to harassment and intimidation during the Presidential and National Assembly elections of Saturday February 25, 2023.

The summary of the attacks is as follows:

Name of Journalist	Gender	News Medium	Nature of Attack	Alleged Perpetrators	Location of Attack
Gbenga Oloniran	Male	Punch Newspaper	Physical assault	Police personnel	Rivers State
Crew members	N/A	News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)	Damage of vehicle	Angry youths	Oyo State
Dayo Aiyetan	Male	Executive Director, International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR)	Physical assault	Political thugs	FCT, Abuja
Akam James	Male	Daily Post	Physical assault	Political thugs	Bayelsa state
Princewill Sede Jeany Metta	Male Male	Upfront news magazine	Physical assault	Political thugs	Bayelsa state
Joe Kunde Miebi Bina	Male Male	Television Continental (TVC)	Physical assault	Political thugs	Bayelsa state
Isaac Afolabi	Male	Radio Nigeria	Harassment	Army Personnel	Ondo state
Team of journalists led by Michael Odumefune (News Editor of Odenigbo FM)	N/A	N/A	Intimidation & Harassment	Army Personnel	Anambra state
Adebola Ajayi	Female	Peoples Gazette	Physical assault	Political thugs	Lagos state
Haruna Salihu Mohammed	Male	Wikki Times	Unlawful arrest/detention	Police personnel	Bauchi state

3. CONCERNS AND DEMANDS

Ahead of the Governorship and State Assembly elections on March 11, 2023, IPC is again calling on the government and the law enforcement and security agencies to prioritise the

sensitization and orientation of election-day personnel on the need to accord priority to the protection of journalists whose status is that of frontline workers on election day. The political parties are also enjoined to call their supporters to order and desist from threatening and attacking journalists.

IPC also calls the law enforcement and security agencies and INEC need to investigate all the above documented cases with a view to prosecuting and meting of appropriate punishment to the alleged perpetrators.

The media being a major stakeholder in the elections should also be given top priority by INEC which should ensure that all accredited journalists are given other necessary toolkits such as car stickers, reflective jackets, etc, in addition to the accreditation tags.

Media owners also have a major role to play be ensuring they provide all the safety tools journalists will need on the field while building their capacity on how to avoid landmines on the field.

4. THE SPECIFIC CASE OF HARUNA MOHAMMED

IPC hereby calls for the immediate release of Haruna Salihu Mohammed, Publisher of Wikki Times who has spent more than 24hrs in detention.

We demand that he should be charged to court should his traducers believe he has committed any offence.

 <h2 style="margin: 0;">IPC Journalists' Safety Alert Desk</h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Summary of attacks/harassment of journalists during the February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cases: 10 • Journalists involved: 20+ • Location: 7 States and FCT 	
Victims	Location of Attack
Gbenga Oloniniran	Rivers State
Crew members	Oyo State
Dayo Aiyetan	FCT, Abuja
Akam James	Bayelsa state
Princewill Sede	Bayelsa state
Jeany Metta	
Joe Kunde	Bayelsa state
Miebi Bina	
Isaac Afolabi	Ondo state
Team of journalists led by Michael Odumefune (News Editor of Odenigbo FM)	Anambra state
Adebola Ajayi	Lagos state
Haruna Salihu Mohammed	Bauchi state
<i>Source: Field monitors/incident reports by IPC Journalists' Safety Alert Desk</i>	

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