Global Press Freedom Deteriorates in 2002

40 Media Professionals Killed so far –WAN

A new report on the global press freedom situation released last month by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) has shown that press freedom worldwide deteriorated in the year 2002. It said the year was marked by an increased number of journalists jailed. Between January 1 and November 1, 2002, 40 media professionals were killed and 119 journalists jailed, says the report. During the same period last year, 111 journalists were jailed.

Giving the breakdown of the figures of the countries leading in the attack on journalists and media workers, the report said Colombia again led with 10 media workers killed so far, Russia came second while four media workers killed. In Mexico and the Philippines which were “most seriously hit,” three journalists were killed in each of the countries. In the case of jailing of journalists and media workers, it said Nepal was ahead with 24 jailed media workers, Eritrea as the runner-up had 18 journalists in jail, and the three steady jailors, Burma 15, China 11, and Iran 10 trailing.

The report lamented that there was very little or no progress at all in countries that had long-standing freedom of expression problems while in some “where progress had been identified (Namibia, West Africa, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and East Europe), recent developments showed that there is still a long way to go for the media.”

In spite of the “depressing statistics” however, there were certain breakthroughs in countries like the Republic of Benin and Ghana as well as South Africa, with the highest level of press freedom in the African continent. There were also improvements in press freedom in Somalia and Sudan.

Post war Afghanistan also witnessed a dramatic increase in print publications and a recent media conference was successfully used in committing the government to serious improvements
for press freedom. The report also indicated that positive development continued in Peru while the professional level in the national press continued to grow in Russia “although there are very serious problems in the regions.”

“In China, there is a growing ambition among newspapers to develop professional operations, financially and editorially. However, “there is still no press freedom and the regime continues to clamp down on Internet operations that try to avoid direct government control,” the report added.

The report did a regional analysis of global press freedom which it divided into five-Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe and Central Asia, and Middle East and North Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the report said “is still going through difficult times” but the number of journalists killed so far was still restricted to four. It further beamed its searchlight on Zimbabwe and Eritrea which it said “have launched a real war against journalists and independent media.” These countries daily resort to arrests, prosecution, harassment, and censorship of journalists and independent media.

In Zimbabwe, president Mugabe continues to stifle the press. In addition to the constant arrests of journalists, the Daily News newspaper and other independent titles were also fire-bombed and the working environment for journalists especially Geoffrey Nyarota, WAN’s 2002 golden pen winner, and independent media is very dangerous. The Mugabe regime continues to harass foreign correspondents reporting in the country.

Press freedom in Eritrea remains “extremely critical” with the proscription of independent media in September 2001 and the breaking off of diplomatic relations with most western countries. Dozens of journalists have been arrested and several others have fled the country in the face of government continued clamp down on the press.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo there is no respite in the authorities’ persecution of the press. Hopes of any serious improvement of the situation for the press, despite a Presidential pardon to journalists, have been stifled; same goes for Togo and Rwanda. The civil war in the Ivory Coast worsened the working conditions for the press while there are still serious problems in Nigeria. The situation in Liberia is also worsening with several journalists living and working in exile. Practising journalism remains a very dangerous enterprise in Chad, Niger Republic and Burkina-Faso and independent media are restricted in Namibia, Zambia, Angola and Swaziland “in the national interest.”

In addition to the breakthroughs in the high level of press freedom in the Republic of Benin, Ghana and South Africa, the situation in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan also improved, with the release of imprisoned journalists who had served long prison terms.

Working as a journalist in Latin America, where press freedom violations are increasingly numerous, is still very hazardous. By November 1, 15 journalists had been killed in that sub continent. A breakdown of this figure showed that Columbia leads with 10 journalists killed, three in Mexico, and one each in Bolivia and Venezuela.

While nine journalists were killed in Columbia in 2001, 10 have been killed in the first ten months of 2002. Powerful drug mafia frequently threaten and sometimes kill journalists with impunity but most attacks on the press in Columbia are linked to the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the guerrillas of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

According to report, it remains by far “the most dangerous country for media professionals.” Corrupt government officials who assault journalists with impunity are also a great problem as attacks from them are rarely investigated. Several journalists have had to flee the country after receiving death threats and knowing the potency of such threats.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela exhibits a strong hostility towards the press and has persistently accused it of “undermining” the country. He made several verbal attacks on them. Journalists and media houses remain targets of continued harassment, intimidation, threats and even bomb attacks. On April 11, one journalist was killed and several injured in Venezuela. Most
of the attacks on journalists arose out of the inflammatory comments of President Chavez against
the press and he is not relenting in his war against the press.

The report accused some US news media of playing “uncritical patriotic role” in the US
fight against terrorism following the September 11 terrorism attacks. It said: “There are still
unsolved problems for the press in obtaining access to information about the prisoners kept at the
Guantanamo military base.”

There have been no improvements in press repression especially the independent press in
Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. They remain “extremely dangerous to
work for the independent press,” as the situations in these countries are worsening.

In Chile and Peru, there was improvements and “the volatile situation in Argentina has not
brought structural deterioration in the conditions for the traditional free Argentinean press.”

Eleven journalists have been killed in Asia with four of these as a result of the continued
escalation of hostilities between India and Pakistan with two journalists killed in each of the
countries in the wake of the hostilities.

Three journalists have been killed in the Philippines where the press is regularly attacked.

In the island of Mindanao, separatist Muslim guerrilla groups waging war against the Philippine
army. Journalists are especially vulnerable. It remained a very dangerous place to practice
journalism despite its outstanding tradition of investigative journalism.

China withdrew economic support for the press and newspapers are hardly given any
breathing space. They are closely monitored and there have been serious crackdown on Internet
access. Over 17,000 Internet cafes have been closed. Reporting “state secrets,” social issues like
AIDS, and above all cyber dissidence is considered as serious attack against Beijing.

In Burma, it is almost impossible for a free press to exist, and it is another leading jailor of
journalists. Fifteen of them are known to be in prison in the country. In this country, even such
mundane and innocuous issues as bad football performances are censored. International radio is
the main uncensored media to which the ordinary people have unhindered access. The privately
owned, local English-language Myanmar Times newspaper is too expensive for the majority of
the population to buy. The lack of information and debate in the country worsens ethnic tensions,
corruption, poverty and other social problems. The authorities strictly restrict visas to foreign
journalists who have huge difficulties in obtaining them with many of them put on its black list.
More than a dozen journalists remain in jail, among them the joint WAN Golden Pen laureate, U
Win Tin, 72, despite the release of journalists Soe Thein, in June, and San San Nweh, in July, as
well as the more recent release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Bangladesh proves extremely difficult for media practice: two journalists have been killed
and there have been several cases of death threats as well as arrests and legal restrictions. It is
risky to report on corruption, organized crime and other political or religious violence. Attacks
resulting from reporting these are rarely brought to book.

Nepal holds the record of jailing 24 journalists and four other media workers, the highest
in Asia. Two journalists have also been killed. The November 2001 proclamation of state of
emergency has seen scores of journalists detained. The authorities imposed censorship and
arrested reporters in the face of the fight between the army and the Maoist guerillas. The army
monitors the media and despite the existence of a private press, does not allow report on
corruption, poverty and nepotism.

Vietnam has given no place to press freedom.

In Europe, “press freedom has stood its ground” with the legal framework of press
freedom solidly established. In addition, the direct terror against the press in the Basque country
of Spain also diminished. A Copenhagen, Denmark appeals court overturned a lower court ruling
that gave police the right to bug a journalist in order to get his sources of information within the
Islamic community. The appeals court ruled that “the police’s need for information from the
journalist was not strong enough” to justify a suspension of the law giving the media the right to
protect its sources.
In Central Asia, the authorities closely monitor the media including in the former Soviet Union countries and in the Balkans. Four journalists were killed in Russia while several Asian countries, under the pretext of the war against terrorism, have stifled the press.

In the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, criticisms against the ruling régime often attract the wrath of the authorities which follow such with arrests, defamation lawsuits, police raids etc.

In Poland, the Miller-government’s was attempting to clamp down on Rzcezpospolita and new legal proposals on ownership that will make it very difficult for private media to thrive and at the same time bring more electronic media under government or state control are in the legislative mill. The same tendencies are playing themselves out in Romania, Yugoslavia, Moldova, and in Macedonia.

Russia has lost four reporters and President Putin has stifled the press with prosecutions and police raids. The political alliance set up between Russia and the international coalition against terrorism after 11 September has given Putin an even greater feeling of impunity over the media. Journalists are frequently attacked with impunity. While the Russian press has initiated the professional debate about journalistic and editorial standards in reporting delicate issues in the aftermath of the Chechen terrorists attack in Moscow, the Russian Parliament passed very restrictive legal measures aimed at direct censorship of the media in such conflict situations. Editors and journalists are often exposed to pressure, threats and made targets of attacks from local authorities and local criminals.

In Belarus, journalists regularly face assault, threats and restrictive measures with several of them languishing in jail.

The report said: “The Middle East and North Africa are still dominated by authoritarian régimes and too few changes have been noticed since the arrival to power of a younger generation of sovereigns (Morocco, Jordan and Syria).” It says further that although there have been some openings to new media opportunities, the authorities have at the same time have stuck to old habits of censorship, harassment, arrests, and criminal prosecutions.

Television and the Internet have helped to liberalise the access of the people of North Africa and the Middle East to information and the press especially with Al-Jazira and satellite TV channels. They have become more popular and people have managed to have access to them despite the attempts to restrict their contents.

Though there are slow and cautious improvements in press freedom in Iran, it nevertheless features among the largest jails in the world for reporters.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflicts have “resulted in repeated violations of international laws, and press freedom has very difficult conditions on both sides.”

A number of pan-Arab newspapers based in foreign countries, as well as in the more “liberal” countries (like Lebanon or Qatar), however contribute to positive developments in the region.

The worsening situation in Israel and the occupied territories which has led to an intensified cycle of terrorist attacks and army retaliation has resulted in very many cases of attacks on the media especially international correspondents. Three reporters have lost their lives in the conflicts. Media professionals have been most vulnerable. They are injured by army crossfire, harassed and physically assaulted. The Israeli army has destroyed some Palestinian media outlets in contradiction of international laws. The Israeli authorities renewed less than half of all Palestinian correspondents’ press cards while at the same time, there is hardly any space for press freedom on the Palestinian side while authorities have also come down hard on free public expression of opposing views and tried to control the Palestinian media by arbitrary arrests and intimidations of journalists, as well as shutting down or censoring media outlets.

“On the positive side is the coverage provided by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz and the Internet sites set up by both Israeli and Palestinian reporters like the Bitter Lemons website.”

Tunisia manifests a hypocritical posture: it has one of the worst press freedom records in the region. Although American and other western authorities often refer to it as a nation
committed to freedom and democracy, it in fact regularly abuses press freedom. It pretends to be an open and hospitable country while masking a cruel reality of repressive attitude towards the press. “President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali’s régime assaults journalists, dismisses them from their jobs, denies them accreditation, censors and arrests them.” The country maintains a tight control of the Internet.

Press freedom advocates are however not watching the situation from the sidelines. They are doing everything within their means to change the situation. WAN and several other freedom of expression groups have protested attacks on the press and written to heads of government to put in place conditions for the conducive practice of journalism and the exercise of the right to freedom of expression. WAN says up to November 1, it had issued almost 200 protests against serious violations of press freedom in more than 80 countries.

Media Freedom in Retreat as Governor Sentences Journalist to Death

Media freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria were in retreat last month as muslims in the northern part of the country resorted to violence to protest a controversial article published by ThisDay newspaper over the Miss World beauty pageant.

The article entitled: “The World at their Feet”, and published in the ThisDay newspaper of November 16, led to a series of attacks on the newspaper’s offices and staff, including the imposition of a fatwa (death sentence) by the Zamfara State acting governor, Alhaji Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi on the author of the article, Miss Isioma Daniel, who is the Style Editor of ThisDay; the newspaper’s editor and the publisher.

Four days after the publication of the article, as early as 6.30 am on November 20, hundreds of youths suspected to be Muslim fanatics, armed with daggers, machetes, clubs and gallons of petrol stormed the newspapers and news magazines distribution centre in Kaduna. They impounded copies of the day’s edition of ThisDay and burnt them.

They also invaded the paper’s sales office on Ahmadu Bello Way and removed all unsold copies of the paper. They also set them on fire. Thereafter they headed for the newspaper’s regional office located at 17B Attahiru Road in Kaduna and set the building on fire. The protesters later marched to Tudun Wada suburb of the city where some Muslim leaders later addressed them and passed a fatwa (death sentence) on the publisher, Nduka Obaigbena and the Editor, Eniola Bello, declaring ThisDay an enemy of Islam.

The actions were taken despite a retraction of the article and the several apologies published in different editions of Thisday newspaper by the editor and publisher for “portions that may be considered offensive to ... our Muslim brothers,” which it said had been “published in error after being removed by the supervising editor.” Apologies were also sent to Nigerians by means of text message through mobile phones.

The riots continued and spread to other part of Northern Nigeria including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory where protesters carried out an orgy of destruction.

On November 22, the Kano State House of Assembly passed a resolution banning the sale and distribution of ThisDay newspaper in the state. Making the resolution public, the Speaker said the House would not fold its arms and allow individuals, groups or organisations to cast aspersion on Islam and its prophet. An Islamic cleric in the State, Ustaz Mohammed Ibn Usman in his sermon also accused the ‘South-Western’ press of unfavourably attacking Islamic values.

On November 25, the Zamfara State government and some Muslim leaders passed a fatwa on the writer of the article, the editor, and publisher and labeled ThisDay newspaper an enemy of Islam.

Addressing a rally in Gusau, Alhaji Shinkafi, instructed all muslims to behead Miss Daniel as a religious duty. He added that he was in touch with the state governor, Alhaji Ahmed Sani, who was performing the lesser hajj in Saudi Arabia and that the governor acceded to the directive that the spilling of the blood of Miss Daniel would be lawful.
Mr. Simon Kolawole, the editor of the Saturday edition of ThisDay newspaper was arrested on November 22 and detained by security agents in Abuja. He had been invited for a chat by officials of the State Security Service (SSS) over the article written by Miss Daniel. Upon reporting at the SSS headquarters in Abuja, Mr. Kolawole was taken to unknown destination and detained incommunicado. Miss Daniel was also asked to report at the SSS office in Abuja.

Mr. Kolawole was released three days later, but was asked to be reporting to the Lagos office of the SSS.

Local and international human rights groups protested the attacks on the newspaper and journalists in its employment and called on the Nigerian authorities to protect the lives of journalists.

In Nigeria, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and four other media organizations wrote to President Olusegun Obasanjo on November 26 asking him to take urgent steps to protect the lives of Isioma Daniel and other journalists working with ThisDay newspaper.

In the joint letter signed by MRA’s Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo; Mr. Richard Akinnola, Chairman of the Center for Free Speech (CFS); Mr. Sola Isola, the Executive Director of the Independent Journalism Center (IJC); Mr. Wale Adeoye, Chairman of Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER); and Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Coordinator of the International Press Centre (IPC), the organizations drew the President’s attention to publications in newspapers reporting the fatwa passed on Miss Daniels by Alhaji Shinkafi, and the burning of ThisDay newspaper’s Kaduna office by a group of protesters on November 20.

The organizations also noted the detention of Mr. Kolawole on November 22 by security operatives at the Abuja headquarters of the SSS. They also observed that the Kano State House of Assembly had in the previous week passed a resolution banning the circulation of ThisDay in the state.

The organizations said: “What we see in these series of events suggest to us that they go beyond mere reactions to a report considered offensive by a section of the Nigerian populace. They constitute attacks on freedom of expression, freedom of opinion and freedom of the press. The fatwa placed on Isioma Daniel especially, constitutes an attack on and a violation of the right to life, freedom and liberty of a Nigerian citizen as duly enshrined in the constitution.”

In the letter copied to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Kanu Agabi; Senate President, Chief Anyim Pius Anyim; and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Umar Ghali Na’Abba, the organizations conceded that the ThisDay report raised pertinent questions about the social responsibilities of the press, the need for journalists to exercise caution while handling sensitive reports and the imperative of respecting the feelings of others while reporting.

But they stressed that as President and Commander-In-Chief as well as the Chief Security Officer of the country, President Obasanjo has “a responsibility to protect the lives of all citizens irrespective of professional calling, religion, or tribe.”

They therefore asked him to fulfill this constitutional duty by taking immediate and urgent steps to protect Miss Daniel’s life and the lives of other journalists in the employment of the entire newspaper group.

In a similar move, the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and the World Editors Forum (WEF) wrote to President Obasanjo on November 29 asking him to do everything in his power to ensure that the fatwa against Miss Daniel is repealed and take all steps necessary to ensure her protection.

In a letter routed through Nigeria’s permanent representative to the United Nations, Seok Hyun Hong, WAN’s President, and Gloria Brown Anderson, President of WEF, said they were writing on behalf of WAN and WEF “which represent 18,000 publications in 100 countries” to express serious concern at the proclamation of the fatwa against Miss Daniel.

The two global organizations said: “While publication of the article might have been ill-advised, we respectfully call on you to do everything in your power to ensure that the fatwa against Ms Daniel is repealed and that all steps necessary to ensure her protection are taken.”
The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world’s largest journalists’ group, in its reaction condemned the rioters who attacked the offices of Thisday newspaper and called for dialogue.

IFJ General Secretary, Aidan White, said: “Controversy over journalism that touches sensitive issues requires dialogue not violence to find solutions,” adding that people who have complaints about what newspapers were reporting should seek to engage in talks with editorial chiefs. He therefore called on leaders of the Muslim community to meet to talk through differences.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) through its Executive Director, Ann Cooper expressed concern over Isioma’s safety.

Miss Cooper said: “In this whole controversy, I think something that has been completely lost is the universal right to freedom of expression.” She cited article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR) which she affirmed guarantees everyone the freedom to express himself or herself without fear of reprisal.

In a press statement issued on November 26, the London based free expression organization, the Centre for Research Education and Development of Freedom of Expression and Associated Rights (CREDO), called on the Nigerian government not to be an opportunist in punishing media for previous critical reports, and cautioned the media against self-censorship.

CREDO’s Coordinator, Rotimi Sankore stated, “While we agree that journalists should be sensitive to and respectful of peoples religious beliefs, we are particularly concerned about statements and calls by government officials and public figures suggesting that further punitive action will be or should be taken against the writer, editor, publication and publisher of ThisDay for the error in an article linked to the protests.”

He insisted that “In a democratic society, it is not the place of the government to punish the media for errors, or contents of news reports, features or opinion articles. Any redress sought must be through the judiciary, or through an independent ethics or complaints body not appointed by or dominated by the government. This is because aside from providing news and information and a platform for debate and exchange of ideas, the media also plays a vital role of sustaining democracy through holding the government to account. The media cannot play this role, if the government can arbitrarily arrogate to itself, power to punish the media”

In a separate statement issued two days later, CREDO called for the resignation of the Zamfara State deputy governor on the grounds that:

- The position of deputy governor is a public trust as with all elected offices. The first duty of elected public officials is to defend constitutional rights including all human and democratic rights.
- A deputy governor is the deputy chief security officer of the State with responsibility of guaranteeing human safety and security, and the right to life.
- His statements effectively advocate the extra-judicial murder of a fellow Nigerian, which is a crime under Nigerian and international law.

Mr. Sankore argued that going by these democratic principles, the deputy governor has violated key obligations of public office holders.

He urged the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun to initiate investigations into the statements and actions of the deputy governor and called on the Zamfara State Government, in whose name the fatwa was issued, to join the federal government in voiding it.

CREDO asked “President Obasanjo and all democratic and judicial institutions of the Nigerian government to go beyond opposing the fatwa, and reaffirm unequivocally, the supremacy of all constitutional and democratic rights over any pronouncements by any person whether public office holder or private citizen.”

The Paris-based free expression organization, Reporters sans frontiere (RSF) - Reporters Without Borders – also issued a statement in Paris saying it was alarmed at proclamation of the fatwa.

The organisation appealed to President Obasanjo and other officials to take urgent steps to protect Miss Daniel.
“Even if one agrees that printing this article was ill-advised in the very tense situation in Nigeria, it is unacceptable that people can with complete impunity call for the author to be murdered,” said RSF’s secretary-general, Robert Ménard.

He argued that: “There are laws in Nigeria and if the government wants to, it can prosecute Isioma Daniel. But under no circumstances must it allow religious fundamentalists to put her life in danger.”

The Federal Government, reacting through the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Prof. Jerry Gana declared the sentence “null and void,” promising it would not be enforced. He declared that “the government under the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria will not allow such an order in any part of the Federal Republic, because the Federal Republic is governed by the rule of law. The Constitution of the Federal Republic is the supreme law of the land and the laws do not provide for anyone who has done something like what Thisday has done to be killed.”

Dr. Lateef Adegbite, the secretary general of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA), the nation’s highest Islamic body also disagreed with the Zamfara State government’s pronouncement. He anchored his disagreement on the fact that the journalist is not a Muslim and that the newspaper had retracted the article and published apologies.

His position tallied with that of a Saudi minister of Islamic Affairs official, Sheikh Saadal-Saleh who said, “they have no right to kill if the person expresses regret and apologies as it is considered repentance. But if the person stands by his statement, then the matter should be referred to a Sharia Court to decide on a punishment…..”

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Editorial: New Wave of Arson Attacks on the Media

On August 30, arsonists secretly entered the office complex of the Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State (BCA) and set part of it ablaze with devices identified to be locally made bombs. The arsonists first sprayed the electricity transformer within the complex with petrol before detonating the bomb. The roof of the structure housing the electricity transformer was blown to pieces.

Unknown persons on November 15 bombed the premises of Ilorin-based National Pilot, a newspaper owned by Dr. Bukola Saraki, son of the prominent Kwara State politician, Dr. Olusola Saraki. The blast, which injured five persons, also destroyed the centre roof of the main building of the newspaper house. The publisher of the newspaper alleged that the government of Governor Mohammed Lawal was behind the incident.

On November 20, hundreds of Muslim youths poured into the streets of Kaduna to protest against an article alleged to have blasphemed Prophet Mohammed in the 16 edition of ThisDay newspaper.

The protesting youths stormed newspapers and magazine distribution centers, impounded the ThisDay supply for that day and burnt them. At ThisDay’s sales office, they removed all unsold copies kept in the office and set them on fire. Not satisfied, they invaded the paper’s regional office located at 17 Attahiru Road in Kaduna and set it ablaze.

These incidents of arson on media houses is assuming a dangerous and frightening pattern especially in a democracy where the rule of the law rather than impunity should hold sway.

The Nigerian Police and other security agencies are not helping matters in that no person has been brought to book in any of the cases.

We recognize that in the course of exercising the right of freedom of expression, some other persons’ rights and sensibilities may be encroached upon. There are various avenues through which aggrieved persons can channel get redress. They include the Nigerian Press Council, the National Broadcasting Commission and the law courts.
We therefore call the nation’s security services to sit up and provide the much-needed protection for journalists and media workers/houses to operate under a conducive atmosphere. They must, by their action, impress it upon citizens that the era of impunity is gone and that the new democratic era is one of fresh air for everyone. We also call on any person who feels aggrieved by any media in Nigeria to seek redress through any of the avenues listed above. For our democracy to thrive, the right citizens to freely express themselves must not be abridged. It is through the exercise this right that everyone can be held accountable for his/her action and transparency in all aspects of our public life maintained.

**BBC News Site Rated the Most Popular News Website**

A research conducted by Nielsen/NetRatings has identified [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk) as the most popular news site. The site, according to the research, regularly attracts an audience of at least two million visitors per month. Over the last six months, the audience has peaked in June 2002 when over three million people visited the site.

Other news sites trail behind it in terms of visits and how long these visitors stay on the sites. Among the newspapers-websites, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) (owned by the Guardian of London) receives the most visitors, regularly attracting over one million visitors per month to its site. Cable News Network (CNN) site [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), the Financial Times [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com) and the website of the Telegraph Newspaper in London [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk) follow with, on average, half a million visitors each per month.

Again, in terms of time spent on each site, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk) performs best with up to 55 minutes on average in a month. Amongst the online newspapers, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk) performs best, with visitors spending between 16 and 27 minutes each per month. [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com) experienced a decline in the amount of time its visitors spend on its site since it introduced a subscription for some of its services last July.

Certain contents are popular and draw visitors to some particular sites. A large number of [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)’s visitors go to the sport section, while [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)’s media section attracted most of its visitors.

The research illustrates that although users are generally loyal to a single printed newspaper, the Internet gives them the opportunity to use other news websites.

**Groups Protest New Media Censorship Laws, Ask Govts to Respect Human Rights**

Free expression and human rights experts are asking governments around the world to respect human rights in the fight against terrorism as they express concern over media and terrorism laws being enacted by various governments.

Speaking at a series of events held last month to mark the first 10 years of the International Press Institute’s (IPI’s) headquarters in Vienna, Austria, the experts expressed concern that the measures adopted by different countries were resulting in the violation of human rights and media freedom.

At a luncheon held in the Hotel Intercontinental in Vienna on November 21, Freimut Duve, the Free Media Representative for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), warned that States should not use terrorism as an excuse to impose restrictive measures that limit press freedom.

In particular, he said, governments should not punish journalists over their articles and stories in the media.
Later that evening, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, told delegates at the Palais Pallavicini that human rights remained important at a time when the rights appear to have been set aside to address terrorism around the world.

Vieira de Mello said: “While we all recognise the duty of States to protect themselves and their people, if necessary through exceptional measures, in some cases, such measures can result in a denial of the most fundamental human rights.”

Besides, he said, this denial can “lead to a negation of the very principles we work so hard for, such as open societies with access to full freedom of expression…”

Vieira de Mello then called on States to “consider the human rights implications of any steps they take in response to this threat; that human rights be at the centre of such a response, particularly freedom of information.”

To ignore fundamental human rights, he warned, is “to give comfort to less open forms of government.”

Speaking at another luncheon at the Intercontinental on November 22, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Peter Schieder, reinforced the message on terrorism, saying: “censorship serves the cause of terrorism.”

He stressed: “We must preserve and defend the values that the terrorists serve to destroy.”

IPI’s Director, Mr. Johann P. Fritz, echoed the views of the speakers saying “the best defence against the violence of terrorism is an open form of government that ensures the free flow of information. We have to maintain freedom of the media as a means of distinguishing democracy from terrorism. Should we fail to do so, we risk turning back the clock to the days when much of the world’s media was suppressed by a number of governments around the globe.”

One country where new censorship laws have been promulgated is Pakistan, where President Pervez Musharraf approved three new media laws - the Press Council Ordinance, Registration Ordinance and Defamation Ordinance.

ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, in London has warned will result in significant self-censorship amongst the country’s press because they are “clearly aimed at controlling the media” and serve to undermine Pakistan’s process of democratic transition.

Under the Press Council Ordinance, the government will establish a regulatory council made up largely of government appointees. The council will be responsible for enforcing an Ethical Code of Practice that, according to ARTICLE 19, contains some “extremely vague obligations”

The Registration Ordinance will force all newspaper and news agency publishers, owners and printers to register with a central agency, while the Defamation Ordinance provides for jail terms of up to three months and fines of at least 50,000 Rupees (approximately US$850) for defamation.

In Hong Kong, a proposed national security law is also stirring up international apprehension over its impact on free expression. Nineteen members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) issued a joint appeal last month urging Hong Kong authorities to scrap repressive provisions and release the draft legislation for public comment.

The group led by the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), in the appeal, expressed “profound concern” that provisions in Article 23 gave excessive weight to national security at the expense of civil liberties, particularly press freedom and freedom of expression.

Article 23 of the proposed law gives the Secretary for Security extensive powers to proscribe local and foreign political organisations. In addition, provisions on sedition and seditious publications provide for up to seven years jail terms for those who publish information inciting others to “commit treason, secession or subversion” or “endangering the stability of China and Hong Kong.” However, the definition of “sedition” or a “seditious publication” is so broad that Hong Kong’s university librarians say much of what is on their library shelves could be deemed seditious.

The group also expressed concern that the Hong Kong government is delaying the release of the draft legislation to the public until February 2003, only five months to the scheduled enactment of Article 23.
HKJA said the government had only published a consultation document that is vague on details. Seven other journalists’ organisations, including the World Press Freedom Committee, Southeast Asian Press Alliance and Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, have sent separate letters to the Hong Kong government expressing concerns over Article 23.

Three free-expression groups, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CFMR), ARTICLE 19 and FORUM-ASIA have criticised proposed anti-terrorism bills recently introduced into the Philippine Congress saying the proposed bills would unduly restrict freedom of expression. They would also give authorities wide-ranging powers to intercept and monitor individuals’ telephone conversations and e-mail communications.

The three bills define terrorism in an extremely wide and vague manner and leave them open to abuse. The bills’ definitions cover not only acts of terrorism but also threats of terrorist action. ARTICLE 19 said the bills could be used to suppress government critics who have been deemed “troublesome” or “unpopular.”

The Senate Bill 1980, one of the bills, imposes a six-month prison sentences for anyone convicted of revealing information gathered in terrorism-related cases while House Bills 3802 and 4980 would impose a chilling effect on free expression and press freedom by giving authorities powers to monitor individuals’ telephone conversations and e-mail communications.

The groups have called on Philippine Congress members to ensure that any anti-terrorism laws being adopted should be in line with the Philippine constitution and with international standards on freedom of expression.

Radio Conference Fixed for July 2003

A conference which will discuss all aspects of radio, including its historical, cultural, and institutional developments will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States from July 28 to 31, 2003.

Entitled “Radio Conference: A Transnational Forum”, the conference will bring together scholars, practitioners, and students of radio to share ideas and perspectives on radio’s cultural role in an increasingly global media context.

Topics to be discussed at the conference include: “Broadcasting versus narrowcasting”, “Radio’s invisible public(s)”, “Radio and nation”, “Radio activism and grassroots radio”, “National and transnational radio histories”, and “New audio technologies: web radio, digital broadcasting, satellite radio”.

Other topics are: “Radio and music Audio forms, styles and genres”, “Centers and margins in broadcasting”, “Radio archives and preservation of the audio past”, “Negotiations of identity: race, gender, class”, “Transnational audio flows and influences”, “Cultural policy and radio”, “Industry consolidation, fragmentation, and innovation”, and “Radio and national cultures”.

The conference is jointly sponsored by the Radio Studies Network of Great Britain and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The conference planning board is co-chaired by Tim Wall of the University of Central England, Birmingham, and Michele Hilmes of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, while other members are James Baughman from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kathy Newman of the Carnegie Mellon University, Jason Loviglio of the University of Maryland in Baltimore County, and David Goodman of the University of Melbourne.

Nigeria’s Teledensity Rises by 140% in One Year

The liberalisation of Nigeria’s telecommunications industry has resulted in a revolution in the sector over the last one year as its teledensity rose by 140 per cent.

According to Dr. Kunle Bello, Executive Director in charge of Special Services at the Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), the teledensity revolution was made possible...
through the efforts of the Global System for Mobile Telecommunications (GSM) service providers MTN and Econet as well as the Private Telecommunications Operators (PTOs).

Speaking in Geneva, Switzerland, at the Nigerian Economic Development Forum, he said in the first year alone, between August 2001 and August this year, about 750,000 GSM lines were rolled out in major cities in the country by the two operators, which surpassed the target of 100,000 lines per licensee at the end of the first year set by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

The development, Mr. Bello said, increased the previously insignificant teledensity for mobile telephones from 0.033 for the existing analogue cellular mobile network to 0.783, an increase of 2,272.7 per cent.

PTOs providing fixed wired and wireless landlines and analogue mobile phones especially in the metropolitan cities are also expanding both their reach and services as part of efforts to get advantage over competitors in the sector. PTOs which hitherto carried voice but could not carry fax and data through their networks are now doing that and at the same time customising their services to suit subscribers needs. They are also expanding the areas of coverage of their services.

At the forefront of rendering extra and customized services are such PTOs as Multilinks Telecommunications Limited, Reliance Telecommunications Limited (Reltel), XPT Links Limited and Disc Communications Limited (Discom) all with their bases and/or head office in Lagos.

Reltel integrates Internet with its fixed wireless services, a service which before now was not available with fixed wireless lines, which could not carry fax and data traffic. Its fixed wireless lines now carry data. Subscribers can now browse the Internet with their lines. According to Mr. Rakesh Kaul, Reltel’s Marketing Director: “All the subscriber needs to do is buy a 1,000 minute of Internet usage which is valid for one month and the subscriber will start enjoying this facility.”

It recently bagged the Nigerian IT and Telecoms’ ‘Best Telephone Company of the Year’ award for its pioneering efforts in forcing down the cost of telephone connection in Nigeria. The award was given by IT and Telecom Digest magazine. Reltel operates in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Onitsha.

XPT which covers the Ikeja area just recently introduced a variety of telephone connections. There is the dual access phone that allows a subscriber to make phone calls, send and receive fax and browse or access the Internet simultaneously. These services are available in its 4-line phone which combine four telephone numbers in one box. For subscriber to this service, he/she has straight access to the Internet without an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or even a modem for his/her computer. An XPT phones subscriber can also make international calls with his XPT account from any other telephone line.

Another of its services is the links account, which helps subscribers to monitor their phone bills. It allows corporate subscribers to allocate unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) to employees in order to cut down telephone bills and prevent unauthorised users.

XPT phone have the added advantage of the ability to also be powered by solar energy.

The pioneer PTO, Multi-Links also in November announced the introduction of high-speed data and Internet services on its network. It said it was also migrating from the Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) to Code Division Multiple Access Technology (CDMA) called CDMA 2000IX said to be a full grown digital technology.

According to its Executive Director, Chief Ezekiel Fatoye, the CDMA 2000IX “will enable us (Multi-Links) to provide fax, data and secure Internet access in addition to high quality voice.”

It currently operates in Lagos and Port Harcourt.
World Information Summit Urged To Tackle Free Expression, Press Freedom

Civil society participants at two conferences organized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have stressed that freedom of expression must be central to discussions at the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in the face of its omission from the summit’s agenda.

The first conference took place in Toronto, Canada, on October 25, while the second conference was held in Paris, France, on November 15 and 16. Both conferences attracted more than 150 civil society representatives who stressed the importance of upholding the principle of free expression in any debate about the Internet’s role in the Information Society.

The WSIS, scheduled to take place in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunisia in 2005, has so far left freedom of expression out of its agenda.

In a statement supporting participants at the Paris conference, UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura said it was crucial that free expression be “given its rightful place on the agenda at the (summit),” adding that “restricting the debate about cyberspace to a discussion of technical questions cannot serve the interests of the vast majority of the world’s citizenry to whom the Internet holds the promise of more freedom, empowerment and development.”

In the Toronto conference organised by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the participants urged the Canadian government and other states to give due consideration to freedom of expression and to ensure that it is not be forgotten during the WSIS preparatory process.

The International Press Institute (IPI), the Inter American Press Association (IAPA), the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) have also issued a statement urging summit organizers to designate as a basic concern the preservation and extension of a free flow of news and information in cyberspace.

The organisations issued the statement on November 21 at a meeting in Vienna of the Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organisations, saying: “We call on delegates and others involved in the Summit process to reject any proposal aimed at restricting news content or media operations and support inclusion of a clear statement of unqualified support for press freedom on the Internet.”

Putin Vetoes Media Censorship Law

Russian President Vladimir Putin has vetoed proposed amendments by Russia’s parliament to two laws that, if signed, would pose a “grave danger” to press freedom in the country.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said “amendments to the Law on the Struggle with Terrorism and the Law on Mass Media, proposed by Russia’s parliament, called for greater restrictions on the media’s ability to report in times of crisis, particularly on military actions in Chechnya.”

They had also suggested expanding the Media Ministry’s powers to censor or shut down media outlets. Massive outcry from Russian media groups and international organisations followed the proposed legislation. They issued a statement which urged Putin to veto the proposed amendments.

Putin has asked Russia’s parliament to establish a commission to have the two laws re-examined.

MRA Relocates

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) wishes to inform the general public that it has moved from its former office at:

44, Alhaja Kofoworola Crescent
Off Obafemi Awolowo Way
Ikeja, Lagos.

to a new office at:

10, Agboola Aina Street
Off Amore Street, off Toyin Street
Ikeja, Lagos

Our post office box remains:
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

Our telephone numbers also remain:
234-1-4936033, 234-1-4936034, 234-1-4819162
Fax: 234-1-4930831

E-mail: mra@mediarightsagenda.org
Web site: http://www.internews.org/mra

Liberian Situation is Exaggerated, Says Broadcasting Boss

Liberia has been in the news for over a decade now without let. But for occasional incidents such as brilliance in the field of soccer by its well-known citizen George Opong Weah, the country's long stay in the limelight is for the wrong reasons; violations of human rights, war, killing and maiming of its citizens by the government of President Charles Taylor, a former warlord.

Members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the larger international community and human rights groups the world over have been seeking ways of offering a helping hand to the impoverished and war weary citizens.

Even as news, supported by clear evidence, daily come out of the country indicating an escalation in repression of citizens, especially opposition figures and groups, as well as assault on human rights and press freedom, senior journalist and Director General of state funded Liberia Broadcasting System, Mr. Blidie Elliot, insists things are well.

Mr. Elliot spoke with Osaro Odemwingie in Accra, Ghana. Excerpts:

Of recent, worrying information kept coming out of Liberia, that the media is facing huge repression. As someone that is on the ground, could you gave me the true situation of what is happening there?

When you say huge repression, I wouldn't put it in such a way. As the case in most societies around the world, there will be problems with the media and other strata of the society. In Liberia at the moment, you must understand the context in which we speak. We are in a state of war, there is a whole range of international sanctions on Liberia. For the last three years, insurgent groups have been raiding the countryside in active combat with forces of the government; all these in the face of arms embargo, travels restrictions and a whole regime of United Nations sanctions. Life is desperate in Liberia, the state of the economy is very poor and security situation is very tense. So there have been cases of broadcast institutions which are being shut down, there have been cases of newspapers which are being temporarily closed down, and there have been cases of journalists called for questioning as I suppose is the case in other countries, even in countries which are not in a state of war. But I would not term this massive repression. In fact, I would say that people who know the Liberian situation and who know the degree of repression faced by the Liberian media prior to the elections in my country in 1997, would say there has in fact been a great deal of freedom given to the media as perhaps indicated by the numbers of newspapers, the number of practicing journalists, the number of radio and television stations. There is a general air of being able to speak out.
Yes there have been individual incidents when journalists have run foul of government's authority and maybe in these cases perhaps security officials, police officials have perhaps gone or approached the matter in a manner that was not media friendly, or perhaps in a manner that was not necessarily in line with judicial practices, but these I would assume are few cases. At the moment in Liberia, as many persons around the world who watch Liberia would be aware there is a case of a journalist by name Hassan Bility, this has been an issue over the last month or so when Mr. Bility was arrested by the government in connection with his connection to the on-going rebel incursions into Liberia. There were charges of his being involved in aiding and abetting the illegal military activities of these rebel groups. Now the issue whether or not he has been given due process is the question media organisations in Liberia and I'm sure all over the world and other human rights organisations people should approach. What should be remembered is that he was not arrested and detained as a result of his activities as a journalist. The government claimed to have arrested him as a result of his activities as part of subversive military operations planned against the security of the state.

*It is interesting that you put up this defence for the government. Talking about Bility I understand that a court has ordered that he should be released, but the government has refused to heed that order. There is the case of the entire staff of New Democrat which had to run out of Liberia to seek asylum in Ghana as a result of repression by the Liberian authorities, and then the recent arrest of Bobby Tapson and Sheriff Adams of The News. I also want to take your mind back to the incident of a newspaper that reported the purchase of some helicopters by the government for a huge amount of money when the workers had not been paid and they were taken into detention. Now do these "few, isolated" cases not worry you as a journalist? That one, there is what clearly appears to be government unwilling to even allow due process and second, a climate of fear is being created that journalists who report the truth are taken into detention?*

No, what worries me sometimes is what I would call over zealousness of the security personnel in approaching issues of this sort and sometimes the lack of attention of the government operatives responsible for these activities in being aware of their responsibility that everyone under the law should be given due process. You mentioned the cases of journalists and newspapers being shut down over reports, in my own opinion and in the opinion of many persons, these things should not be happening, and when they do happen, perhaps as a result of security personnel or people who should control security personnel acting in an overzealous manner, acting because of ignorance.

If a government in the middle of a war makes a purchase of helicopters or purchase parts for helicopters in its war activities and the government considers reporting of that fact to be a breach of national security, in other words, giving information to enemy forces, which it considers a breach of national security, even in that event, okay, certain due process of the law should prevail in how you handle these issues. And to avoid these things happening in the future certain clear principles should be laid down of what can and cannot be published during the time of emergency or during the time of conflict, during the time of war and once these things are not in the books, then there is the room given for security personnel and others to abuse what should be a proper system. And I would say that many of these things are not on the books, that the body of Liberian law needs another look. So once this mechanism has not been set up in Liberia these things will continue to prevail. So I think the thrust here, the impetus here should be on making sure the proper guidance are there for journalists or for anyone else in the country to know that during certain period of time, this would be against the national interest to do so and as we've been saying perhaps it should not be left to government to decide what is national security, perhaps it should be left to an independent commission of media to determine what is national security.
Granted that the repression of journalists and media organizations is due to over zealousness of the security personnel, has there been an instance when government absolved itself and laid the blame on over zealousness on the part of the security personnel and apologised?

Yes there have been cases. But then you say absolving the government, it is not possible because the security personnel are members of government forces, I mean they are in government. There has been a lot of debate in Liberia about the need for government to be a lot more forceful and more public in reprimanding officers who go beyond their bounds and this has been an issue that has been very high. But you know when you consider all these in the context of a country at war, where bullets are flying few miles outside of the capital city, the niceties of respect for certain provisions of human rights or the law sometimes get blurred. And this is not an excuse and this should not happen. But when we realise that the majority of our security forces in Liberia are not as educated or as trained as you would like, then you will find more and more of these instances.

There is concerted action from higher levels of government to correct mistakes or incidents of over zealousness or lack of proper consideration of the law as they occur. But in Liberia, the incidents you mentioned, you mentioned 3 or 4 incidents over a four year period.

There is a thinking in Liberia right now that the blowing up of these incidents out of proportion to their significance is because certain advocacy groups, human rights groups derive their income, their livelihood from their ability to report and magnify these to their international sponsors. That if you are media rights watch group or a human rights watch people in Liberia or any particular country and you cannot over a period of time report incidents that the government has violated somebody's right or the government has done this or that, then your funding, your support is not continued. And so it is bread and butter game.

What is the procedure for operating a media outlet? Do you have to obtain a license? Is there a supervisory organ?

In Liberia there is no media regulatory body; there is no media regulatory commission for broadcasting or the press in general. What we have in Liberia is a very strong Press Union of Liberia. It is a very strong advocacy group for journalists and they are very strong and very vocal in their aims to protect journalists' interest and all of this. There is a very vibrant private media environment in Liberia. Several independent newspapers are in the market.

The process of licensing, after some years of debate and talk during elections in Liberia in 1997 there has been a joint accreditation procedure with the Press Union of Liberia and the Ministry of Information. So in other words, the Ministry of Information cannot unilaterally say ‘I will not give Mr. X accreditation to open his paper or Mr. Y’. So once a person can satisfy other business registration procedure and processes, his accreditation to operate newspaper is joint procedure of the Press Union of Liberia and the Ministry of Information.

Regarding broadcasting institutions, they apply to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication for a frequency. I think they are required to pay a certain fee which I think is annually to renew their license for that frequency on the spectrum. They are also required to get a permit I believe from the Ministry of Information and Press Union joint body to move ahead.

The individual broadcaster and journalists are also expected to be members of the Press Union of Liberia, expected to be, because there is no law that says they must be. So the Press Union of Liberia accredits its own members, accredits its own journalists so journalists do not go to Ministry of Information for accreditation as journalists.

Now there is a need for media regulatory body or media regulatory commission which can be independent. That is not in the laws. Perhaps this it is something we should be pushing for in other to put a little bit of distance between the government control through the Ministry of Information, whatever control there is, and the press itself. So there is a need for local legislation regarding the media in Liberia, but at the moment the processes of acquiring accreditation to operate or frequency to broadcast are very open, subject to review.
As head of a publicly funded media organization, to what extent can you run your organisation independent of censorship from the government even though you have acknowledged that there is a war situation which serves as an excuse for some form of censorship?

No. Surprisingly, there is little or no censorship. I mean the ministry of information does not call me up or call my editors up to say 'don't carry this story or that story'. There is expectation that your doorkeepers; editors and the management, would exercise the necessary degree of consciousness of reports or news or information that may be against the public interest and that is the role of an editor. An editor should know that if I publish, this building is gonna get burnt down, this group of people is gonna get hurt or this is gonna happen or there is gonna be a riot. So it is incumbent upon your gatekeepers; your editors, your producers and all of us in public service, to be able to report in the public interest.

Now having said that, as I mentioned earlier, there is no independent media broadcast regulatory authority, we rely on board of directors to give policy guidelines but even with the peculiar situation in Liberia the situation is open to the extent that we are not prohibited in anyway, whether it is a written document or informally, from carrying the views and the news of all sectors of the society. We run direct live program from opposition politicians and people of all persuasions into news. Our only objective at Liberia Broadcasting System is to make sure that those things are objective, that we are broadcasting the truth. So the public broadcaster sees himself steering a middle role between all these conflicting news and events as they happen. It is a difficult thing but this is what we try to do.

**Latin American Media Faces More Attacks**

Latin America remains a hostile place to practice journalism, according to a report by Journalists Against Corruption (Periodistas Frente a la Corrupcion, PFC), which confirmed an earlier report by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

PFC’s report confirmed that attacks against journalists in Latin America have risen in the last year, mostly due to the media’s reporting on official corruption. It said from January to October this year, five journalists were murdered while 112 journalists and media outlets suffered death threats, violence or other attacks, due mainly to their investigations into corruption. PFC recorded 114 attacks in 2001.

Another way of censoring journalists reporting on corruption came through the courts, the group noted. It identified Panama where, for example, 90 of the country’s 200 working journalists face defamation suits with almost half of them filed by government officials implicated in corruption.

**Nigeria’s Oldest Newspaper Reverts to Public Ownership**

Daily Times of Nigeria PLC (DTN), publishers of Daily Times newspapers, Financial Times, and other now defunct titles such as Headlines and Lagos Weekend went public on November 4 with the public offer for sale of 60 percent Federal Government shares of the company. The shares are being sold through public offer and offer of subscription. The exercise marked the beginning of the Federal Government divestment from the conglomerate after 26 years ownership of controlling shares in the company.

The process leading to the Federal Government divestment of its majority shareholding from the conglomerate began on October 24 when the Bureau of Public Enterprise and the Board of Directors met and approved the sale by public offer of 1.9 billion shares to the public and existing shareholders. This comprises 146.4 million ordinary shares of 50 kobo at N1.25 each and an offer for subscription to existing shareholders of 944 million ordinary shares of 50 kobo at N1.25 each.
By this offer, DTN hopes to raise the needed money to revive the conglomerate and return it to its former position as the nation’s number one newspaper.

The Managing Director, Dr. Onukaba Adinoyi-Ojo, promised to upgrade the facilities of the media house when it is fully bought up by the public and money is made available, with improved staff salaries, commercialised digital library, new printing press, more vehicles, computers and trained staff with the ultimate goal of making Daily Times the preferred newspaper inside and outside Nigeria.

According to DTN Chairman, Dr. Yemi Farounbi: “The present board of directors and management of the company are certain that the only path to the restoration of the past glory of the company is the total and complete divestment by the government from the company.” Daily Times, he said began to witness decline as a result of the unfortunate takeover of majority shares by the government. He thereafter expressed the optimism that with the privatisation, Daily Times will gradually climb up to the top of the ladder. The BPE said the privatisation of DTN was meant to refocus it into becoming financially viable with the intention of investing proceeds from the offer in the acquisition of modern infrastructure that would enable it compete effectively in the industry.

Dr. Babatunde Jose under whose Chairmanship DTN’s controlling shares were acquired by government, expressed delight over its return to private investors saying that he had always been against its takeover by government and had also consistently called on government to hands off the company. In his excitement, he christened October 24, the day of the completion of the board meeting which resolved to take the company’s shares to the public, a “day of thanksgiving” because of that decision.

DTN’s journey to the stock exchange began in 1999 when the present board was constituted to midwive the restructuring of the conglomerate prior to its privatisation.

DTN was incorporated in 1925 and it commenced publication in June 1926 as a private holding. The Federal Government acquired 60 percent shareholding in 1975 through NICON Insurance Corporation. DTN’s fortune began to witness serious downturn during the General Abacha regime -from 1993, when it no longer had an independent voice. It lost its diversity of editorial opinion because it was forced to become a government ‘propaganda machine’ and so it lost its appeal and readership.

**Editor Dies From Gunshot Wounds**

Ram Chander Chaterpatti, 52, the editor of an Indian newspaper died on 23 November from wounds he sustained when was shot four times outside his home on October 24 by an unidentified man reported to be part of the Dera Sacha Sauda sect.

The shooting is suspected to be in response to articles Chaterpatti wrote for the daily Poora Sach (The Whole Truth) about the sect’s illegal activities, including an alleged sex scandal. He had been threatened in the past for reporting on the sect’s activities.

Chaterpatti is the third journalist killed in India this year.

**African Leaders Propose Convention On Corruption**

Last month, Media Rights Monitor carried the first part of a draft proposed convention to combat corruption in the African continent. Below is the conclusion of the draft.

4. State Parties shall co-operate among themselves, where possible, in providing any available technical assistance in drawing up programmes, codes of ethics or organizing, where necessary and for the benefit of their personnel, joint training courses involving one or several states in the area of combating corruption and related offences.

5. The provisions of this Article shall not affect the obligations under any other bilateral or multilateral treaty which governs, in whole or in part, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.
6. Nothing in this Article shall prevent State Parties from according one another more favourable forms of mutual legal assistance allowed under their respective domestic law.

**Article 19**

**International Cooperation**

In the spirit of international cooperation, State Parties shall:

1. Collaborate with countries of origin of multi-nationals to criminalise and punish the practice of secret commissions and other forms of corrupt practices during international trade transactions.

2. Foster regional, continental and international cooperation to prevent corrupt practices in international trade transactions.

3. Encourage all countries to take legislative measures to prevent corrupt public officials from enjoying ill-acquired assets by freezing their foreign accounts and facilitating the repatriation of stolen or illegally acquired monies to the countries of origin.

4. Work closely with international, regional and sub-regional financial organizations to eradicate corruption in development aid and cooperation programmes by defining strict regulations for eligibility and good governance of candidates within the general framework of their development policy.

5. Cooperate in conformity with relevant international instruments on international cooperation on criminal matters for purposes of investigations and procedures in offences within the jurisdiction of this Convention.

**Article 20**

**National Authorities**

1. For the purposes of cooperation and mutual legal assistance provided under this Convention, each State Party shall communicate to the Chairperson of the Commission at the time of signing or depositing its instrument of ratification, the designation of a national authority or agency in application of offences established under Article 4 (1) of this Convention.

2. The national authorities or agencies shall be responsible for making and receiving the requests for assistance and cooperation referred to in this Convention.

3. The national authorities or agencies shall communicate with each other directly for the purposes of this Convention.

4. The national authorities or agencies shall be allowed the necessary independence and autonomy, to be able to carry out their duties effectively.

1. State Parties undertake to adopt necessary measures to ensure that national authorities or agencies are specialized in combating corruption and related offences by, among others, ensuring that the staff are trained and motivated to effectively carry out their duties.

**Article 21**

**Relationship with other Agreements**

Subject to the provisions of Article 4 paragraph 2, this Convention shall in respect to those State Parties to which it applies, supersede the provisions of any treaty or bilateral agreement governing corruption and related offences between any two or more State Parties.

**Article 22**

**Follow up Mechanism**

1. There shall be an Advisory Board on Corruption within the African Union.

2. The Board shall comprise 11 members elected by the Executive Council from among a list of experts of the highest integrity, impartiality, and recognized competence in matters relating to preventing and combating corruption and related offences, proposed by the State Parties. In the election of the members of the board, the Executive Council shall ensure adequate gender representation, and equitable geographical representation.

3. The members of the Board shall serve in their personal capacity.

4. Members of the Board shall be appointed for a period of two years, renewable once.

5. The functions of the Board shall be to:
a. promote and encourage adoption and application of anti-corruption measures on the continent;
b. collect and document information on the nature and scope of corruption and related offences in Africa;
c. develop methodologies for analyzing the nature and extent of corruption in Africa, and disseminate information and sensitize the public on the negative effects of corruption and related offences;
d. advise governments on how to deal with the scourge of corruption and related offences in their domestic jurisdictions;
e. collect information and analyze the conduct and behaviour of multi-national corporations operating in Africa and disseminate such information to national authorities designated under Article 18 (1) hereof;
f. develop and promote the adoption of harmonized codes of conduct of public officials;
g. build partnerships with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, African civil society, governmental. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to facilitate dialogue in the fight against corruption and related offences;
h. submit a report to the Executive Council on a regular basis on the progress made by each State Party in complying with the provisions of this Convention;
i. perform any other task relating to corruption and related offences that may be assigned to it by the policy organs of the African Union.

1. The Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure.
2. States Parties shall communicate to the Board within a year after the coming into force of the instrument, on the progress made in the implementation of this Convention. Thereafter, each State Party, through their relevant procedures, shall ensure that the national anti-corruption authorities or agencies report to the Board at least once a year before the ordinary sessions of the policy organs of the AU.

**FINAL CLAUSES**

**Article 23**

**Signature, ratification, accession and Entry into Force**

1. The present Convention shall be open for signature, ratification or accession by the Member States of the African Union.
2. The Convention shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the date of the deposit of the 15th instrument of ratification or accession.
3. For each State Party ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the date of the deposit of the fifteenth Instrument of Ratification, the Convention shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the date of the deposit by that State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

**Article 24**

**Reservations**

1. Any State Party may, at the time of adoption, signature, ratification or accession, make reservation to this Convention provided that each reservation concerns one or more specific provisions and is not incompatible with the object and purposes of this Convention.
2. Any State Party which has made any reservation shall withdraw it as soon as circumstances permit. Such withdrawal shall be made by notification to the Chairperson of the Commission.

**Article 25**

**Amendment**

1. This Convention may be amended if any State Party makes a written request to the Chairperson of the Commission.
2. The Chairperson of the Commission shall circulate the proposed amendments to all State Parties. The proposed amendments shall not be considered by the State Parties until a period of six (6) months from the date of circulation of the amendment has elapsed.

3. The amendments shall enter into force when approved by a two-thirds majority of the Member States of the AU.

**Article 26**

**Denunciation**

1. Any state Party may denounce the present Convention by sending notification to the Chairperson of the Commission. This denunciation shall take effect six (6) months following the date of receipt of notification by the Chairperson of the Commission.

2. After denunciation, cooperation shall continue between State Parties and the State Party that has withdrawn on all requests for assistance or extradition made before the effective date of withdrawal.

**Article 27**

**Depository**

1. The Chairperson of the Commission shall be the depository of this Convention and the amendments thereto.

2. The Chairperson of the Commission shall inform all State Parties of the signatures, ratifications, accessions, entry into force, requests for amendments submitted by States and approvals thereof and denunciations.

3. Upon entry into force of this Convention, the Chairperson of the Commission shall register it with the Secretary General of the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Article 28**

**Authentic Texts**

The original of this Convention, of which the Arabic, English, French and Portuguese texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF WE**, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, or our duly authorized representatives have adopted this Convention.

**ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN NOVEMBER 2002**

*Governor Accuses, Threatens Journalists*

Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State on November 8 accused journalists of biased reporting and threatened to declare *persona non grata* any of them in the state who writes ‘negative reports’ especially on the ethno-religious crises that have hit the state since September 2001.

Governor Dariye gave the warning at Government House, in Jos while addressing a Presidential Committee on Peace and Reconciliation for crises torn Local Government Areas in the state.

He accused the journalists in the state of bias in their style of reporting the crises and threatened that government would no longer fold its hand and allow anybody to fuel the crises through biased reporting. He told the journalists that: “As journalists, the ethics of your profession dictate that you report the truth and nothing but the truth. Anything short of this is satanic and has nothing to do with journalism.”

He likened the role of journalists to that of clerics on whose reports many people in the society base their judgments comparing newspapers to the Bible and Quran. For this reason, he said, “Journalists are expected to consider what would be the consequences of their reports before putting pen on paper.”
Aviation Journalists Banned from PRO’s Office

The Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA)’s head of Public Relations, Mr. Ben Boom Goong, has banned all aviation journalists from entering his office for any official reason. Reports said Mr. Ben Boom had insisted that journalists under the aegis of League of Airport and Aviation Correspondents (LAAC) must apologise to him for calling him to order over alleged gross professional misconduct.

A face-off had ensued between the organisation and the LAAC. The aviation journalists claimed that NAMA, through its Public Relations department published an advert which it credited to the group. The advert, published in the Daily Times on Saturday on November 2, stated that Aviation journalists congratulated the Aviation Minister, Dr. Kema Chikwe on an honorary award conferred on her by the Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA).

LAAC accused the advertisers of mischief for hiding under its name to publish the advert, when obviously the advert emanated from the Public Relations Department of NAMA. It therefore dissociated itself from the advert claiming that it had damaging effects on their professional integrity because it is false, malicious and fraudulent.

Muslim Youths Burn ThisDay Newspapers, Office Building

Hundreds of Muslim youths in Kaduna on November 20, protested against an article which the Muslims considered blasphemous of prophet Mohammed in the November 16 edition of This Day, The Saturday Newspaper.

The rampaging youths stormed the newspapers and magazines distribution centres and impounded the Thisday supply for the day and burnt them. They also proceeded to the This Day sales office, where they removed all unsold copies kept in the office and set them on fire. Thereafter, about 50 of them in three buses invaded the paper’s regional office located at 17, Attahiru Road in Kaduna and set the building ablaze.

The Kano State House of Assembly also on November 22 passed a resolution banning the sale and distribution of Thisday newspaper in the state. Announcing the resolution, the Speaker said the House would not fold its arms and allow individuals, groups or organisations to cast aspersion on Islam and its prophet. An Islamic cleric in the state, Ustaz Mohammed Ibn Usman in his sermon also accused the ‘South-Western’ press of unfavourably attacking Islamic values.

The Zamfara State government and some Muslim leaders on November 25 passed a fatwa (death sentence) on the writer of the article, the editor, and publisher and labeled Thisday newspaper an enemy of Islam.

The state’s acting governor, Alhaji Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi, addressing a rally in Gusau directed that Miss Isioma Daniel who wrote the article, should be beheaded as a matter of religious duty. He added that he was touch with the state governor, Alhaji Ahmed Sani, who was performing the lesser hajj in Saudi Arabia and that the governor acceded to the directive that spilling the blood of Isioma would be lawful.

National Pilot Newspaper Bombed

Explosive devices blew up the premises of National Pilot newspaper owned by Dr. Bukola Saraki, son of the prominent Kwara State politician Dr. Olusola Saraki. The newspaper is located at No. 38 Stadium Road, Ilorin in Kwara State.

The blast left the twin-block bungalow in ruins with the electronic equipment and office furniture blown apart and five persons injured.

Some of the injured include the paper’s Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Malam Mudashiru Adewuyi; the Secretary to the Managing Director simply identified as Mohammed; another Secretary identified as Anafi; a maintenance man called Paul and a cleaner known as Alhaji. They were all taken to the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital where Adewuyi and Anafi are said to be in critical condition.
Mr. Yomi Olabanji, the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director of the media house narrated that: “I was in my office at about 12.55pm working … when I heard a deafening explosion continually. The thing came from the rooftop just reechoing like that. Somebody could have flung them on the roof and ran away.”

The publisher of the newspaper, Dr. Saraki alleged that the government of Governor Mohammed Lawal of the state was behind the incident. According to him, the incident could be regarded as terrorism as *National Pilot* is the state’s No.1 selling newspaper.

*Thisday Newspaper Editor Arrested*

Mr. Simon Kolawole, the editor of *Thisday, The Saturday Newspaper*, was on November 22 invited for “a chat” by men of the State Security Service (SSS) and detained. He was invited and detained in connection with an article on the Miss World Beauty Pageant which was considered blasphemous to Islam and its prophet. The publication made Muslim youths in Kaduna to take to the streets destroying property and killing innocent citizens. The crises spread to other parts of the North including Abuja.

Mr. Kolawole was taken to unknown destination and held incommunicado when he reported. Miss Isioma Daniel, the Style Editor who wrote the story, was also asked to report at the SSS office in Abuja.

When Simon was released three days later, he was asked to be reporting to the Lagos office of the SSS.

*Security Agents Arrest Vendors*

A detachment of policemen led by a deputy superintendent, Isaiah Umeh, on November 23 stormed some newspaper stands in Port Harcourt and seized copies of the day’s newspapers and arrested some vendors.

As early as 7am, about 20 policemen in an unmarked white bus swooped on the Rumuokoro Roundabout in the city where vendors usually meet to take delivery and distribute their daily supply of the papers. They seized all copies of the newspapers they set their eyes on and arrested those vendors who dared to challenge them. The vendors’ pleas that the policemen return their seized wares went unheeded.

One of the vendors, Mr. Ignatius Okpo said he lost three parcels of his newspapers to the policemen. Those arrested were taken to an unknown destination. The action was suspected to be part of efforts to clear the road on which some of the Miss World Beauty Pageant were to take to Port Harcourt.

And in Borno State, men of the State Security Service (SSS) on November 26 arrested about six vendors in Maiduguri, the Borno State Capital, and took them to their headquarters where they were interrogated for three hours for allegedly selling magazines considered to be anti-sharia.

Narrating his ordeal, Mr. Sunday Uchegbue of the Vendors Association of Nigeria said the SSS men who began their operations at about 6am arrested him at the Maiduguri General Post Office at about 11.00am. He said they were arrested for displaying and selling alleged obscene photographs which should not be sold in a state like Borno because it is a Sharia State.

*Policemen Invade Media Houses, Arrest Journalists*

Men of the Nigeria Police special squad from the Force Headquarters, Abuja, on November 28 raided three media houses and arrested 13 journalists, comprising publishers and reporters of local newspapers in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The journalists include Mrs. Grace Ofi, Executive Editor of *Independent Monitor* newspaper; Solomon Parakom; Abiye Amakiri; Tio Nimengoko; Nna Frank-Jack, Stanford Egbule and Loveday Ihua, all of *Independent Monitor* newspaper.
Others are Chief I. A. Samson of *The Beacon* newspaper; Ebimo Amungo, publisher and Editor-in-chief of *Angus* newspaper; Kingsley George; David Afonwa, Samuel Owere, and Ibrahim Wabali. The journalists were detained and interrogated at the Rivers State Criminal Investigation Department (CID) office. The interrogation was supervised by Henry Njoku, a deputy superintendent of police from the monitoring unit. The journalists said that they were harassed, intimidated and tortured during their arrest, detention and interrogation by the policemen.

Mr. Minere Amakiri, the publisher of *The Beacon* newspaper said when the police could not find him, they invaded his residence, harassed and assaulted his family, and made away with his personal computer and printing equipment. The invading police officers left with a vow to get him dead or alive. The police officers were also reported to have removed vital documents from the *Independent Monitor*.

All the journalists were later released but ordered to report back to the police in Abuja. Mr. Amungo told journalists that he was arrested at about 9.00am on November 28 by a squad led by Mohammed Yakubu, a Superintendent of Police, and released at 9.00pm after interrogation. According to Amungo, the police said they were acting on a petition sent to the Inspector General by Governor Peter Odili’s lawyer, Chief Afe Babalola, alleging that his client was libeled by the affected newspapers in articles and news stories published sometime in August 2002.

He explained that the story had to do with the allegation by Deputy Speaker of the House Representatives, Chief Chibudom Nwuche, that Governor Odili was plotting to assassinate him.

**RSF Launches Anti-Impunity Website**

The Paris-based free expression organization, Reporters sans frontière (Reporters Without Borders) has launched a new website to assist victims of human rights abuses in initiating legal action against perpetrators.

The website, http://www.damocles.org, was launched by RSF’s legal division, which is responsible for investigating crimes against journalists and challenging impunity.

The Damocles Network’s site features a hotline for victims, a guide on how to file legal actions and an extensive archive of human rights case law. It also contains reports from RSF’s investigative missions to countries such as Brazil, Kazakhstan, Haiti and Ukraine, as well as an interview with Spanish magistrate and Nobel Prize nominee Baltazar Garzón.

**JOURNALISM / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS**

**John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists**

The John S. Knight fellowship for professional journalists is awarded annually to 12 U.S. and up to eight foreign editors, journalists, reporters, photographers, radio and television broadcasters. For non-US journalists to be qualified, they must have a minimum of five years professional experience.

Fellowships include a $50,000 stipend plus a book allowance and tuition. The programme gives outstanding journalists an academic year at Stanford University to broaden and deepen their understanding of economic, historical, philosophical, social issues and trends shaping the nation and world.

Further information and application can be obtained from: Director, Knight Fellowships, Bldg. 120, Room 424, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305?2050; Tel: (650) 723?4937; Fax: (650) 725?6154; E-mail: knightfellow@forsythe.stanford.edu, website: http://knight.stanford.edu. Deadline for submission of completed application forms for international students is March1.
Winners of the 2002 Lorenzo Natali Prize Honoured

A young Ghanaian journalist, Raymond Archer of *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, has won the gold medal for the 2002 edition of the annual Lorenzo Natali Prize, having emerged the overall winner. He topped the list of seven journalists from five regions who were awarded the Lorenzo Natali Prize in Belgium and was also named the winner of the regional prize for Africa.

Raymond Archer clinched the prizes for his report on a deportation scandal that rocked the government of Sweden in *The Ghanaian Chronicle* which led to the resignation of a Swedish government minister. For this achievement he and regional winners from Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America were honoured by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the European Commission at a special prize-giving ceremony held at the International Press Centre, in Brussels, Belgium on November 15. Each prize winner received a trophy and 10,000 Euros (about US$10,055)

The Natali Prize is awarded annually to print and/or online journalists who have demonstrated a striking insight and particular dedication to the reporting of human rights issues within the context of development. IFJ, the world’s largest organisation of journalists, representing 500,000 journalists in more than 100 countries, has been administering it since 1999. The prize, established in 1992, aims to promote quality journalism and to commemorate the dedication of former Vice-President of the European Commission, Lorenzo Natali.

Regional prizes were awarded to winner for Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North Africa and the Middle East as well as commendation to others in the regions. Poul Nielson, Commissioner of the European Union for Development and Humanitarian Aid, presented the Prizes.

CJFE Honours 5 Journalists With Press Freedom Awards

The Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) honoured five journalists with press freedom awards at its International Press Freedom Awards Banquet.

Lira Bayseitova, a Kazakh and former editor-in-chief of opposition newspaper *Respublika 2000*, published an interview with a former Swiss prosecutor who confirmed the existence of several senior Kazakh officials owned Swiss bank accounts, including President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Her daughter, Lira, was arrested on drug charges after the publication of the interview and she later died in police custody.

A visibly moved Bayseitova, standing before a spellbound crowd of more than 500 media professionals and other free-expression advocates, thanked CJFE for recognising her efforts to expose official corruption in her country, saying, of her trip to Canada: “For the first time in six months, I am able to sleep soundly.”

Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) had investigated Bayseitova’s daughter’s drug case and found it “riddled with discrepancies and not very convincing.” Bayseitova appealed to the awards keynote speaker, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham to pressure Kazakh authorities into conducting a thorough independent investigation into the case. He reacted swiftly with an official letter to the Kazakh government.

Three of the awardees, Ahmed Abdisalam Adan, Mohamed Elmi and Ali Shamarke were honoured for the establishment of HornAfrik, the first independent radio network in war-torn Somalia which CJFE calls a “remarkable success story.” Prior to its creation, only warlords who used them as propaganda tools owned radio stations in the country.

Horn Afrik’s journalists have not found it easy operating as they face constant intimidation and threats in a country torn by internecine civil wars and with no protection for press freedom. It created call-in programmes that have become immensely popular across the country, with every one of Somalia’s warlords having appeared on its shows.
"It has long been recognized that a virile, independent and robust media is an indispensable adjunct to sustainable democracy. That, perhaps, is why the framers of our Constitution, in recognition of this fact entrenched freedom of expression and the press in Section 39 of our Constitution."

Hon. Chibudom Nwuche, 2002
Presenting the Nigeria Media Bill at the House of Representatives

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