

Media Scorecard

**Report of the Print Media Coverage of the
Political Transition Programme.**



June 1999

**...promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom
of expression in Nigeria.**

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PREFACE

This report of the print media coverage of the political transition programme, the sixth and final in the series, was conducted by **Media Rights Agenda** (MRA), a non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. Media Rights Agenda is a member of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG).

The aims are to examine the extent of fairness exhibited by the print media in giving each political party access to air their views.

This is especially important because of the invaluable role the media can play in helping to enthrone and sustain functional democracy, mostly by giving the electorate opportunities to appropriately familiarise themselves with the political process, actors and issues.

This enables citizens make informed choices whenever they enter a polling booth to perform their civic duty.

It examines also how the Government acts to ensure free media access to political news sources and protect the media from harassment.

As was with the February, March, April and May 1999 reports, Media Rights Agenda has in this report, carried out its monitoring exercise on 10 national newspapers and four news feature magazines.

Being the last in the series, the report has reproduced the discussions with respect to the basis of the monitoring exercise, freedom of expression and electoral process, all of which were first published in full in the first publication in the series in January 1999. Abridged versions were being published in subsequent reports.

Also, the report has reproduced in full, the background discussion on the newspapers and magazines monitored for this exercise which were first produced in the February report.

The variables which formed the basis of the analysis in the April and May 1999 reports, have been retained in this report, while a reproduction of earlier variables and justification is also published in this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The project was supervised by **Edetaen Ojo** MRA's Executive Director.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth and final report of the Print Media Monitoring Project of Media Rights Agenda (MRA), a member of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) which is a coalition of human rights, non-governmental and civil society organisations formed in August 1998 for the purpose of developing integrity in the electoral processes by monitoring and reporting on the prosecution of the political programme.

The report is based on the monitoring of selected newspapers to assess their coverage of political issues during the period between May 1 and May 31, 1999.

This report focuses on the coverage of the political programme by 10 major independent and state-owned or controlled national newspapers. Those that are state-owned are *The New Nigerian* and *Daily Times* newspapers. The independent newspapers include *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *National Concord*, *Vanguard*, *The Diet*, *Post Express*, *Champion* and *The Punch* newspapers.

In addition, four weekly news feature magazines, all privately-owned, were monitored. These are *TELL*, *The Source*, *Newswatch* and *The News*.

(a) BASIS OF MONITORING EXERCISE

The legal basis for fair and effective coverage of electoral processes lies in a variety of regional and international human rights instruments, particularly those provisions which protect the rights of people to freely choose their leaders and to receive information. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of a government: This will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures¹

In a nutshell, this simply is Representative Democracy. This is more popularly defined as the government of the people, for the people and by the people, which was coined by a former American President, Abraham Lincoln.

Other international instruments mirror and elaborate upon these rights. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, for example, states that:

Every citizen shall have the right to freely participate in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law²

On its part, the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Government

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1. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21(3)) The Declaration was adopted and proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217 A(III) of December 10, 1998*
 2. *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 13) The Charter was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on June 27, 1981 and entered into force in October 1986*

(ARUSHA 1990), also acknowledges that:

*.....popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in the profits.*³

When citizens enter a polling booth to vote for the candidate of their choice, they are exercising one of their most fundamental rights. This right is guaranteed by a number of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In order to exercise this right fully, citizens must be able to meet, speak with, and listen to representatives, candidates and colleagues about community issues. The rights to assemble and associate freely are also protected by these same international human rights instruments.

Individuals, as potential voters, must be particularly well-informed during an election. Not only do they require information about the various candidates - their qualifications, opinions, voting records, and characters - voters should also be familiar with the contending parties' platforms and policies. It stands to reason that in countries which do not have a long history of democratic elections, voters will need information about what the election is for and how to vote.

Gaining access to information during an election campaign is an extension of the right of citizens to be well-informed and hold and express opinions about their governments' activities generally. These rights to information and free expression are also guaranteed by international instruments. For instance, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*⁴

To this end, the African Charter for Popular Participation mandated the national and regional media to

*...make every effort to fight for and defend their freedom at all cost, and make special effort to champion the cause of popular participation and publicize activities and programmes thereof and generally provide access for the dissemination of information and education programme on popular participation.*⁵

Even in stable democracies, there may be limitations on these rights. But these are carefully conceived to protect democracy, not undermine it. Specifically, any restriction must be provided by law, relate to one of a small number of exceptions set out in the instrument guaranteeing the right and be necessary in a democratic society.

Indeed, in certain instances limitations on these rights have been approved to maintain public order, protect privacy or bar communications that would promote religious, racial or national hatred.

3. *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (ARUSHA 1990) (Article 11).*

4. *Ibid (Article 19)*

To strengthen the rights to freedom of expression and information at the local level, the rights have been laid out in various regional human rights agreements. For instance, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights sets forth the principle that:

*Every individual shall have the right to receive information, ... [and] to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.*⁶

The Inter-American Convention on Human Rights guarantees the rights of individuals to freedom of thought and expression. Similarly, the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees that:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of expression... [including] freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.*⁷

Indeed, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria amply guarantees this right also. It says:

*Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference.*⁸

It is upon this sturdy foundation that the right to be informed and to hold and impart opinions during an election campaign is built.

(b) FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

In order for a democracy to function, citizens must be able to make informed choices through the ballot box. To do this, they must have access to accurate and full information about the candidates, parties and issues. It is the duty of the government to ensure that an environment exists where facts, opinions and ideas can flow freely, where all sides of an argument can be heard and where debate is robust.

Government should also create an environment where the privately owned media can express a wide variety of opinions about issues, parties and candidates. At the same time, state-owned or publicly funded media must remain unbiased when collecting and disseminating information about the election.

During an election campaign, there are three sectors of the society whose rights to information and free expression must be specially protected. These are: potential voters, the news media and the various political forces.

The point is, therefore, made that incontestable as these acknowledgements are, an essential part of any functioning democracy is the mass media; pluralistic and unrestrained. What is implied is that functional democracy is best enhanced when all contesting view-points are being fairly and equitably

5. *Quoted in Popular Participation In Development : Training Manual (1998) Human Rights Committee Justice, Development & Peace Commission - Ijebu Ode, Ogun State*

6. *Op cit (Article 9)*

7. *European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10). The instrument, also known as the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, was signed by contracting states of the council of Europe on November 4, 1950. It entered into force on September 3, 1953*

8. *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 39(1)*

communicated so that the people may make informed choices.

Secondly, apart from providing a vehicle for widely expressing contrasting and conflicting views, the media helps to moderate such views and present them with appropriate decorum for palatable consumption. Therefore, what the electorate gets is not the raw and rough and, sometimes, unguarded utterances of politicians and others involved in the political process, but considerably refined, polished and non-combustible views.

Thirdly, the media also monitors elections. In addition to reporting on the various processes and final results, the media investigates allegations of abuse, conducts pre-election polls, and establishes mechanisms for quickly projecting and announcing election results.

Fourthly, the mass media provides an avenue for the governed to hold the government accountable and then, if they wish, change it. Simply put, therefore, media scrutiny is indispensable in achieving genuine participatory democracy.⁹

By this same fact, it goes without saying that any authority, be it the government or interest group, that can manipulate the mass media, will ultimately manipulate such an exercise as an election.

Nigeria has at just undergone a political transition process which ushered in civilian democratic government after a decade and half of continuous military rule, and two failed attempts at transiting.

Determined to get it right this time, emotions were decidedly high. At issue were:

Firstly, whether the military was sincerely disposed to going back to their barracks and facing their constitutionally assigned role of territorial defence.

Secondly, whether the military had and did intend to foist its favoured candidates on the people.

Thirdly, the question was, anxious and suspicious as Nigerians were, was the press mature enough to be above board? would it give each political party free, equal and unhindered access to air their views, not minding the roles such parties / individuals might have played in previous dispensations?

This was the main focus of the Print Media Monitoring Project of Media Right Agenda.

(c) OBJECTIVES OF EXERCISE

As in the previous reports under this project, the objectives of this monitoring exercise remain:

1) To monitor the coverage by the print media of political and human rights issues during and until the political transition programme in Nigeria comes to an end, to ascertain:

a. The extent of coverage given to political and human rights issues by state-owned and independent national newspapers and news magazines, in terms of the space devoted to such issues, the kind of issues that are covered, as well as those left out and how comprehensively events relating to them are reported and analysed.

b. The pattern of reporting of events pertaining to government officials on state-owned newspapers such as the prominence given to them, allocation of space to opposition figures to provide different view-points from official positions.

c. The fairness of allocation of news space to various political parties in relation to each other and relative to the space given to government officials in independent and

9. See Article 19: *Election Reporting - A Practical Guide to Media Monitoring*, (1998) pp 1-2

state-owned newspapers and magazines, as well as how these impact on the political process.

d. How much coverage is given to issues and events affecting rural and illiterate populations of the society?

2) To provide a barometer for the print media to measure their performance in reporting on human rights and political issues and undertake adjustments to bring themselves in conformity with international standards of fairness in the coverage of such issues.

3) To publish regular reports which will draw attention to patterns of inequitable reporting, inadequacy of political coverage, and provide a framework upon which a programme of reforms in the newspaper and magazine industries can be embarked upon.

4) To provide a basis upon which the in-coming democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria can undertake comprehensive legal and structural reforms in the regulation of newspapers and magazines in order to enhance the democratic process.

In summary, the project aimed at identifying the ways, manner and amount of coverage the print media gave to the political process and how disposed government was in assisting the media in this regard.

2 GENERAL CONSIDERATION FOR PRINT MEDIA MONITORING

As was the case with previous reports under this project, there are two principal aspects that have been considered under this project. They are:

(a) Government

Considering the anxiety and suspicions of Nigerians regarding the sincerity of the military to relinquish power, analysis is made of governments' actions to determine its impartiality in conducting the political programme. This is specifically in relation to government's actions, or its failures, to ensure the media's right to gather and impart information.

Also considered, is the media's ability to criticise activities or inaction of the government on matters relating to the transition process, to investigate corruption, bias and to operate independently of political pressures. This could be hindered by prior restraints, usually pursuant to laws on publication of materials concerning certain subjects.

Lastly, government's action or in-action with respect to reports of persecution of journalists/publishers, or attacks on the press for performing their legitimate professional duties. In a nutshell, how the government acts to protect the news media's right to gather and impart information and ideas.

This will be considered in terms of the General and Legal Environment.

(b) The Press

In the first three reports published under this project in January, February and March 1999, the

focus on the monitoring exercise and analysis was based on the following:

- (a) How the news media act to provide access to political parties and candidates so that they may effectively communicate with the public during the political transition process.
- (b) How the news media act to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties and candidates in news and information reporting.
- (c) How the news media act to educate the electorate on how and why to vote.

This was acting strictly within the purview and perspective of the objectives of this exercise as stated above.

However, having due regards to these objectives and considering the fact that developments in the political arena have gone beyond electioneering politicking, considerations for monitoring the press was slightly altered, beginning from the April report. The later consideration for the monitoring which formed the basis of the April and May reports, also applies in this report. They include:

- (a) How the news media report on allegations of electoral fraud and generates investigative reports and discourse thereof.
- (b) How the media report on issues of accountability in governance and generate discourse in this regard.
- (c) How the news media perceive and report on loyal opposition.
- (d) How the news media report on issues regarding post-election democratic development and generate discourse in this regard.

3. ASSESSING HOW THE GOVERNMENT ACTS TO ENSURE FREE MEDIA ACCESS TO POLITICAL NEWS SOURCES AND PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT

(a) General Environment

The mass media atmosphere in Nigeria during the month under review enjoyed a breath of fresh air as it did during all the other months of the monitoring exercise. These are the months of December 1998 to April 1999. This is after a seemingly endless suffocating working environment that pervaded the media industry during the regime of the late Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

Upon assumption of office last June, the out-gone Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, sought a cordia relationship with the mass media. Chief among the approaches used was the release of journalists jailed by the late General Sani Abacha regime on charges of being “accessories after the fact of treason”, as well as the general ease in the hostilities directed at the press by the previous government.

This led to healthy atmosphere for journalists in the practice of their profession.

(b) Legal Environment

In spite of the cessation of hostilities, as it were, caution continued to be the watchword for the media until the month of May under review. Journalists and media workers continued to see many landmines along their way. Just as General Abubakar eased the siege on the mass media and opened the prison doors to jailed journalists, he retained until the month under review, the legal framework and structures which made the practice of journalism under General Abacha the darkest period for the Nigerian media. The decrees employed for the arrest and detention of journalists as well as the violation of other media rights remained intact until the end of his regime.

With the benefit of hindsight and past experiences, applying those decrees was discretionary for military heads of state. Exercising that discretion did not require an elaborate plan. Just a change of mood by the head of state over a comment, question or remark, could have triggered off a rash of arrests and detentions in a few days. It was no wonder therefore that no matter the proclaimed humane intentions of the General Abubakar's regime, the press did not entirely let down its guards.

Indeed, indications that the press truly needed to be watchful was given in December 1998, when it was reported that a decree which bars live debate among political parties candidates, was on the way. According to *The Punch* newspaper in its issue of December 23, 1998, this indication was given by the Director General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Professor Elo Amucheazi.

Besides, the then Minister for Information, Chief John Nwodo Jnr., was reported to have indicated in that same month, that government was in the process of making libel a criminal offence.

Since the disclosures, government did not react to deny them. It was not, therefore, taking pessimism to an absurd level that Nigerians were suspicious of General Abubakar throughout the transition period until the month under review, when he handed over to an elected civilian government.

For the press, it also indicated that they actually needed a long spoon to dine with General Abubakar, late General Abacha's number three man, and especially with the continued presence of military officers who were fingered to have aided late General Sani Abacha in his war on the press.

A major legislation which threatens media freedoms in the coverage or criticism of the political transition programme, was the Transition to Civil Rule (Political Programme) Decree No. 1 of 1996.

Although, a creation of the regime of the late General Abacha, the decree remained in force until handing over day on May 29, available for use at the government's discretion.

The decree stipulates a punishment of five years imprisonment for any person who organises, plans, encourages, aids, cooperates or conspires with any other person to undermine, prevent or in any way do any act to forestall or prejudice the realisation of the political programme; "or any person who does or attempts to do any act to counsel, persuade, encourage, organise, mobilize, pressurize or threaten another person to join with him or with any other person or persons to misrepresent, accuse or distort the details, implications or purports of any item of the political programme".

The sweeping nature of the provisions, provided a wide latitude for the government or its officials to apply the decree in censoring media criticisms of the transition programme.

Another decree which directly threatened media freedom with regard to the transition programme

is the Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree No. 35 of 1993.

Promulgated by the government of General Ibrahim Babangida, the decree provided for the proscription, seizure and confiscation of any publication which, in the opinion of the head of state, was likely to:

- “(a) disrupt the process of democracy and peaceful transition to civil rule having regard to its contents; or
- (b) hinder or prevent the progress and process of the grassroots democracy as established by the transition to civil rule programme; or
- (c) disturb the peace and public order of Nigeria”

The decree ousts the jurisdiction of the courts to inquire into any question whether any of the fundamental rights provisions in the 1979 Constitution or the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights have been violated by an order made pursuant to the provisions of the decree. It remained in force until May 29, when the military handed power to a democratically elected civilian government.

Other decrees which did not specifically restrict media access to political stories but restricted media freedoms generally, included:

1. The State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 2 of 1984 (as amended), which allowed for the indefinite and incommunicado detention, without charge or trial, of any person perceived to threaten the security of the state;
2. The Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 107 of 1993, which suspends a person’s constitutional rights to compensation or public apology if he were found to have been unlawfully arrested or detained;
3. The Federal Military (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No.12 of 1994, which prohibits legal challenges to any military decree or to any action which violates the human rights provisions of the Constitution;
4. The Treason and Other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree No. 1 of 1986, under which five journalists were tried and convicted on charges of being “accessories after the fact to treason” in the 1995 and 1997 alleged coup plots;
5. Treason and Treasonable Offences Decree No. 29 of 1993, which provided for a sentence of death to be imposed upon any person who utters any word, displays anything, or publishes any material which the military interprets as capable of breaking up Nigeria;
6. The Nigerian Press Council Decree No. 85 of 1992. Although touted as an avenue for those who feel maligned by the press to seek redress, its independence is compromised by the fact that the President has power to appoint the Chairman of the Council based on the recommendation of the Minister of Information. The presence in the Council of representatives of government controlled media such as the News Agency of Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority, and by the fact that it is government funded, all point to the likely possibility of lack of independence. All these facts were reinforced by the fact that the Council did not move to assert its authority when extra-legal measures were adopted by the government to repress the media.

7. The Newspapers Decree No. 43 of 1993 provides an equally grave threat to media freedom in Nigeria, especially during the political transition programme. This Decree provides for the establishment of a Newspaper Registration Board within the Ministry of Information. It requires that all newspapers are registered annually with the Board, which will then issue a licence to operate to registered newspapers and other publications. The cost of registration is extremely high. Newspapers have to pay a pre-registration deposit of N250,000 and a non-refundable fee of N100,000 annually. Failure by the proprietor, publisher or printer to ensure that the newspaper is registered will lead to the closing down of the newspaper and criminal prosecution of the proprietor, publisher or printer. If convicted, they can be fined N250,000 or imprisoned for up to seven years or both. The Board may refuse to licence a newspaper if it is not satisfied with its “performance” during the previous year. But the Board is not obliged to give reasons for its refusal to register a newspaper. Although the former Minister of Information announced recently that the Board had been disbanded, he was silent on the status of the enabling Decree.

Beyond these, there are lots of other repressive laws which gravely restrict media freedoms. They include the Newspapers Ordinance Act of 1917, and the respective states newspaper laws regulating the printing of newspapers in the various states, as well as others which have their origin in the colonial period like the Sedition Offences Act (1909), the Official Secret Act of 1962, Defamation Act of 1961, and Defamatory and Offensive Publication Act of 1966.

Others are the Printing Presses (Regulation) Act of 1958 which gives the government unspecified powers to close down any printing press, the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1961, the Obscene Publication Act of 1962; and the National Economic Intelligence Committee (Establishment) Decree of 1994.

All the above considered, the only valid inference possible is that the government did not provide an enabling legal environment for unfettered media coverage of the transition process. The only reason why the press still performed as they did in spite of this obvious lapse, is because they have become all too familiar with working under an insecure atmosphere.

4 ASSESSING THE PRINT MEDIA AS IT GENERATES AND REPORTS ON ALLEGATION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD, ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNANCE, LOYAL OPPOSITION AND POST-ELECTION DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT.

The monitoring of daily press reports being the essence of this project, there is obviously new information in this respect to report. However, the limitations set at the beginning of the exercise remain relevant and merit a reproduction hereunder. Similarly, having regard to the explanation made above with respect to General Consideration for Print Media Monitoring (Press), the variables upon

which the monitoring exercise were based in the April and May 1999 report remain valid. They are also reproduced hereunder.

(a) Limitations

The period to be covered by the entire project remains six months from December 1998, to May 1999. The justification being that the period was expected to witness much political engineering as it covers the critical period of the political transition programme. However, this report covers monitoring activities during the month of May 1999. This is the sixth month of the project and the sixth and final report in the series.

(b) Variables

The variables and issues that will form the focus of the monitoring exercise will include:

(1) Stories on Allegations of Electoral Fraud

Considered here are how the various print media monitored reported on and treated allegations of electoral fraud by politicians and parties. The questions addressed include whether such allegations of electoral fraud were treated lightly or seen as serious issues capable of undermining the credibility of the transition process and hence deserving proper scrutiny. Or whether such allegations of electoral fraud, though seen as having serious implications on the political transition programme, were down-played because they are also capable of providing an excuse for ambitious military officers to use as a pretext to truncate the transition programme.

(2) Stories on Accountability in Governance

Considered here are how the various print media monitored and treated pronouncements on accountability in governance by politicians and political parties.

The questions addressed include whether the newspapers and magazines monitored reported such pronouncements with deserving seriousness or with skepticism. Either because of the antecedents of the politicians or parties making such comments or as a result of a lingering doubt, due to the seeming incredulous nature of Nigerians owing to the mind boggling allegations and proven cases of corruption in government. Also considered are publications by the press on ensuring accountability in governance.

(3) Stories on Loyal Opposition

Treated here are cases of how the press reported comments of opposition parties and politicians in the political arena. Knowing that an essential bench mark of democratic evolution is how well checks and balances are provided by various bodies and institutions, including the minority parties, the question to be addressed is how does the press treat opposing views by opposition parties and politicians?

Does the treatment connote one of a constitutional right on the part of the party(ies) or politician(s) taking opposing stance or one of a spoiler?

(4) Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development

Considered here are reports which aim directly to strengthen or weaken post-election democratic development or, indirectly, publications by the press which emanate from the activities of government and political parties with respect to strengthening the development of democratic institutions.

For example, how did the press react to and report on cases of legal recourse by candidates and parties, which lost elections? Knowing that due legal process and the rule of law are an integral part of democracy, did the press see and report these as a basic test of democracy or did it perceive and report such issues as capable of weakening the democratic process?

How is the press reporting and generating publications with respect to how the government is preparing for the success of the in-coming civilian administration? This is viewed both in terms of training of personnel that will work with the civilians and giving legal backing to the various stages of the transition process already concluded as well as the promulgation of the Constitution which is to govern the envisaged civilian democracy.

(5) Others

These consist of all other publications having political reference which, however, could not be grouped under the aforementioned variables.

(6) Total Number of Stories

This shall simply be all the above added together.

In addition to all the above, the total print space available to newspapers and magazines monitored during the period and the fraction devoted to a given variable and political issues in general shall be determined.

The newspapers monitored for this exercise were:

1. *The Guardian*
2. *This Day*
3. *The Punch*
4. *Daily Times*
5. *Vanguard*
6. *Daily Champion*
7. *The Post Express*
8. *National Concord*
9. *The New Nigerian*
10. *The Diet*

The following news magazines were equally monitored:

1. *TELL*
2. *The News*

3. *The Source*
4. *Newswatch*

5 ABOUT THE NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES MONITORED

A detailed background discussion of the newspapers and magazines monitored, in terms of their ownership structure, as well as economic and political ideology and philosophical persuasion, was published in the February 1999 report. The aim was to provide readers with some insight into why a newspaper or magazine may have decided to report on the transition programme the way it did as Media Rights Agenda believes such factors sometimes influence the way and manner the press reports. This being the final report in the series, it is considered necessary to reproduce the background discussion on the newspapers and magazines monitored here.

But it should be noted that being privately owned, the ownership structure of most of the newspapers and all four magazines monitored, is not known for certain. What is known are all set forth below.

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(1) *Daily Times*

Established on June 1, 1926, the paper grew in leaps and bounds and by the 1970s, it had become a conglomerate that rivaled almost any multinational corporation in the country. It was professionally run and managed, and it came close to being regarded as an oracle. Such that on any national issues, Nigerians waited breathlessly for what *Daily Times* had to say.

In 1975, the General Murtala Mohammed administration took control of *Daily Times* when it acquired 60 percent interest in DTN, leaving the remaining to private investors. By the Daily Times of Nigeria Limited (Transfer of Certain Shares) Decree No. 101 of 1979, the Government established a legal basis for its control of the newspaper.

The Federal Government's 60 percent was assigned to the Federal Government-owned National Insurance Corporation of Nigerian (NICON). NICON is accountable to the Finance Ministry and *Daily Times* to the Ministry of Information. With this came conflict and official meddling that effectively stunted the papers' editorial vibrancy and independence.

Except for the new men at the saddle, who are trying all that they could to salvage the establishment, *Daily Times*, in the recent past, was hardly distinguishable from a bulletin desk in an information ministry.

At a point, it was not unusual for the newspaper to get to the newsstand late because stories had to be vetted before publication. No less than two chief executives of the newspaper have confessed, after leaving office, that some editorials were faxed from the ministry of information to be published.

(2) *New Nigerian*

The New Nigerian newspaper was established in 1977 by the government of the then Northern Region. The purpose of it was to counter the “negative” press focus from the Western press. It was not surprising that the paper’s editorial bent was unapologetically Northern in bias.

Till this day, the government has, ironically, not made a great success of obliterating that bias. If anything, every successive government has not only used this to its advantage, but straightened its capacity to operate within this framework in that direction. Though its fortunes continue to dwindle due to its narrow readership base, making it difficult for it to even pay salaries, the Federal Government has continued to sustain it with subventions.

Unless its ownership structure is deregulated to include liberal minded individuals and its focus radically changed, its fortunes will continue to dip.

However, as things stand now, the paper is not expected to harbour any sympathy for political interests different from the feudal oligarchy.

(3) *National Concord*

In 1980, the late Chief Moshood Abiola, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist, who had his fingers in virtually every sectors of the economy, veered into an entirely new terrain. He founded the Concord Press of Nigeria Limited. He had a few years before then taken to partisan politics.

Many believed that the establishment of the *National Concord* newspaper was to further his political ambition. And true to prediction, the newspaper began to devote a tremendous amount of space to reporting Abiola’s political activities and interests. This led to a fall in the fortune of the newspaper which showed tremendous promise at inception.

When, however, he quit politics because of his unsavoury experience in the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to which he belonged, a remarkable change in focus and enthusiasm was noticed in *Concord* newspaper.

A major contractor to the military, he felt obliged to safeguard his investment and military contacts by ensuring that his newspaper exhibited self-censorship. But where that was not adhered to, he had no hesitation in stamping his foot to ensure that much. Thus, when his newspaper was closed down by the Federal Government in 1992, he was forthcoming with apologies to the military for the offending publication. This did not go down well with some of his editors. This led to parting of ways between him and some of his editors.

His re-entry into politics at the beginning of 1993, also saw a renewed focus on politics by *Concord* newspaper. Although its reports on politics prior the June 12 election was seen as fair, a partisan and deeply tainted flavour came into play after the annulment of the election.

Since the death of Chief Abiola, however, ownership of the paper has been uncertain. Some analysts contend that with the Conspiracy theory attached to his death, the newspaper will be hard put to be fair to the government and the Northern Oligarchy fingered in the conspiracy theory.

But others are of the opinion that the new owners of the newspaper being largely apolitical and eager to shy away from a fight, will most likely steer the newspaper off such a confrontational course. Hence, they contend, that attempt at fair play will be the hallmark of the new *National Concord*.

(4) *Daily Champion*

Daily Champion came on the news stand on October 1, 1988. It is owned by Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, a multi-millionaire businessman, football club proprietor and philanthropist. His publishing interests also include *National Post* newspaper based in Owerri, Imo State.

He went into active politics almost at the same time *Daily Champion* hit the news stand, seemingly following in the foot steps of late Chief Moshood Abiola, who established the *National Concord* newspaper.

He assembled a team of tested hands to form *Daily Champion* to give it a sound managerial foundation. Although he paid them well, he remained the sole shareholder.

Al though Prince Henry Odukomaiya, the points man and brain behind Champion Newspapers Limited went by the title, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, it was not a secret that it was a classic case of Esau's hand and Jacob's voice that prevailed. It was not surprising that on few occasions, that the management wanted to assert its independence, the consequences were fatal as they came.

When in 1990 the premises of the newspaper was sealed off for several weeks following an editorial calling for the release of some detainees and a journalist, the publisher took additional measures to contain the management.

He is known to be a big time contractor to the military and eager to sustain that relationship without offending the powers that be. His will was tested yet again in early 1993. His newspaper had published a story on the foreign bank accounts of some military officers which the government frowned at. Chief Iwuanyanwu summarily sent Chief Odukomaiya on an indefinite suspension and re-deployed the then editor.

Soon after that, he had no qualms in calling on Chief Abiola to forget his June 12 mandate and embracing the General Abacha Administration.

He was very active in the United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP), one of Abacha's five parties. But in the twilight of that administration, he lost favour with the government.

He has routinely used his paper to further his political, social and economic interests.

(5) *The Guardian*

Established in 1983 by Mr. Alex Ibru of the well known Ibru family of Agbara-Otor, Delta State.

A Business Economics graduate of the Trent Polytechnic in Britain, he has interest in hospitality (Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Federal Palace Hotel), Banking, Oil and Publishing.

Although a businessman who is largely apolitical, he was a trustee of the then ruling National Party of Nigeria, (NPN) during the Second Republic.

At the inception of General Abacha's administration in November 1993, Mr. Ibru was appointed Internal Affairs Minister and a member of the 11- man Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), the highest ruling organ of the government.

He left the government in February 1995, after a highly publicised disagreement with the military government which expected him to use his influence to censor *The Guardian*, but were miffed

to find that the contrary was the case.

The paper, which was tagged the flagship of the Nigerian print media since inception, has fought many battles for press and other freedoms.

In 1984, the paper was fined and two of its journalists jailed one year each for allegedly contravening the Public Officers (Protection against false accusation) Decree No 4 of 1984, which took retroactive effect and punished it of an alleged false accusation against a public officer following the publication of ambassadorial appointments of the government in advance of a formal announcement.

In 1991, *The Guardian* was shut for two weeks by the military government. Again in August 1994, the newspaper was proscribed for 11 months by the military government of General Abacha until reprieve came in July 1995.

On December 16 of same year, arsonists attempted to raze Rutam House premises of *The Guardian*. On Friday, February 21, 1996, its publisher was shot and wounded by unknown gunmen in the traffic when he was returning home from his office at the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos.

He had since been out of the country and only returned unannounced following the death of General Abacha.

When *The Guardian* was closed in 1994, it was widely reported that the government considered it a pro-NADECO paper. But the press also had it that the publisher was anti-NADECO. There appears to exist a curious and uncommon relationship between the publisher and the managers of *The Guardian* that is far from the “who-pays-the-piper-calls-the-tune” theory. Thus, the will and way of the paper is at the dictate of the managers who, incidentally, are largely from the southern part of the country but with decidedly moderate temperament.

(6) *The Punch*

The Punch newspaper was founded in 1977 by late Chief James Olubunmi Aboderin. It promised at inception to maintain a non-partisan stand on all issues and be people oriented in approach. It was not surprising that the newspaper rose steadily both in prestige and fortune to become the second highest selling newspaper after the government owned *Daily Times* which stood at the number one spot.

Along the line, it recorded a few but no major clashes with government. However, it was engulfed in a management crisis in 1982 which threatened the existence of the newspaper.

But just when it seemed to be on the way to recovery, its publisher, died in 1984. And because of the fact that ownership was concentrated in one hand, the death further threw back the newspaper into crisis. All these led to dwindling fortunes for the organization.

The Punch's most widely acknowledged brush with security operations was the closure it suffered alongside some other newspapers in 1994 as a fall out of the June 12 election crisis.

However, it steadily rose again to become the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria over and above the number two position it previously occupied according to a survey published last year by Research and Marketing Limited.

In its editorial orientation, the newspaper has not been able to stay impartial. Analysts contend

that the newspaper has especially since 1993, when the June 12 issue began, become rabidly pro-south.

While some say this is understandable, others insist it is only proper that a newspaper maintain impartiality at all time.

But one thing on which all are agreed is that *The Punch* has kept faith with its mass appeal orientation.

(7) *The Post Express*

The Post Express newspaper made its debut on the newsstand on July 2 1996. It was founded by a team of seasoned journalists and newspaper managers some of whom left *The Guardian* in the wake of a management crisis a few years earlier.

They include Dr. Stanley Macebuh, Dr. Chidi Amuta, Professor. Yemi Ogunbiyi, Dr. Fred Onyeoziri and Professor Obaro Ikime. The coming of *The Post Express* was heralded by much publicity and expectations because of the calibre of its publishers/founding team.

It claimed no link with any political, cultural, ideological or ethnic group and promised accurate and fair reports as well as reasoned and informed comments.

The newspaper started with the general expectation that it would upstage *The Guardian* since two of its founding directors were part of *The Guardian's* original team and were expected would bring to bear the same Midas Touch.

The management's first news papering revolutionary step was the simultaneous printing of *The Post Express* in Lagos, Port-Harcourt and Abuja.

But beyond that and the fact that it was first newspaper in Nigeria to host a web site, it has not been able to take over the market.

It has, however, managed to retain an independent posture and remained accurate and fair in its news reports and comments. It is likely to sustain this credibility in its reports on the political process.

(8) *Vanguard*

Vanguard was established in 1985 by a seasoned professional journalist, Mr. Sam Amuka-Pemu. Amuka-Pemu, a rather private, unassuming and liberal minded man, was a pioneer staff of *The Punch* where he later rose to become the editor and maintained one of the most popular columns in the history of Nigerian journalism where he wrote under the Pen name of "SadSam".

Vanguard, not surprisingly, has from inception been managed by a succession of liberal minded administrators and editors and the paper itself has a mass appeal directed predominantly at women readers. Perhaps this explains why the newspaper has had a relatively crisis-free operation since its inception, apart from the usual attacks on its journalists like most others.

Neither its publisher, managers or editors are known to harbour any political interest although Amuka-Pemu has had a close relationship with successive leaders in the country. This, perhaps accounts for why the newspaper has maintained a middle-of-the-road approach to political reporting, a tradition which will likely continue through out this transition to civil rule period.

(9) *The Diet*

The Diet newspaper was founded in 1997 by Mr James Ibori, an Urhobo man from Delta State. A graduate of Economics and Statistics from the University of Benin, he is a late starter in politics. He won the January 9, 1999 governorship election in his home state, Delta, on the ticket of the People Democratic Party (PDP) and is presently the Governor of the State.

Hitherto not a well known name in political cycles, he came to public attention during the General Sanni Abacha administration as one of General Abacha's prominent supporters urging him to transform into civilian president.

The Diet, when it came out on the newsstand in 1997, was feared to be a pro-establishment. Such fears, however, have proved to be unfounded when it took positions critical of government on many serious issues.

Before the year ran out, *The Diet* editor, Niran Malaolu, was arrested and detained by security agents and later tried and convicted by a special military tribunal on charges of concealment of treason.

Since General Abacha is dead, there are fears that the publisher who is actively involved in politics and is holding an elective position, might use the paper for political battles and self-promotion.

(10) *This Day*

This Day made its debut on the newsstand on January 12, 1995, as a weekly newspaper. Two months later, precisely on March 20, it started as a daily newspaper.

This Day is published by Nduka Obaigbena, a young but innovative and vibrant journalist, who occupies the position of Editor-in-Chief and Chairman. He is assisted by a team of young professional journalists.

His first outing in publishing was *This Week* magazine which lasted for a few years and folded up. But the brief period the magazine was on, it made tremendous impact in its high editorial and production quality.

Since coming on the newsstand, the newspaper has jolted the somewhat lethargic atmosphere noticeable in the industry. It has brought about innovations that has consistently won it various prizes at media merit award ceremonies around the country.

This Day is decidedly Business and Economic oriented. But the publisher being a politician who can be said to be on recess in this transition period, is likely to use his newspaper to promote his political interest when the politician is ready.

Perhaps this may explain the fact that the newspaper has played safe on matters which may signal a different relationship with the authorities.

(b) MAGAZINES

(1) *Newswatch*

Established in 1984, by four respected journalists, Dele Giwa (late), Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed, the publication was a novel addition to Nigeria print media being the only news feature magazine in existence at the time.

On October 19, 1986, the shocking news of the murder through a panel bomb of its founding Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Dele Giwa hit the nation. This was attributed to some stories the magazine had published in the recent weeks preceding the bombing and some others that it was working on.

The magazine was to suffer a six months closure the following year over its cover story on the report of the Political Bureau.

Since then the general impression is that it has allowed such intimidation and lure of money to becloud its focus leading to sharp reduction in readership and fall in fortunes.

This view was re-enforced by the allegation of public relation jobs for General Abacha by some of its chief executives, by an Abacha- for- President campaigner. This was hotly denied by the executives.

But none of its chief executives is known to harbour any political ambition.

(2) *TELL*

TELL, a Lagos based news feature magazine, was founded in 1991. It has as its editor-in-chief - Nosa Igiebor; deputy editor-in-chief - Dele Omotunde; managing editor - Onome Osifo-Whiskey; and executive editors are Dare Babarinsa and Kolawole Ilori.

They are all the founding editors. The financiers and directors are not publicly known. Investigations reveal that this is a deliberate attempt to shield the financiers from people who may want to put pressure on such directors to prevail on the editors in the event that the magazine focuses on them. It is also believed to be a way of shielding them from official reprisals during the regime of the late General Abacha.

Several things set these journalists apart from the typical publishers. They are all young, professional and practising journalists who have variously won acclaim in the profession.

Their driving spirit is not necessarily monetary, but a desire to crusade for a better society no matter whose ox is gored.

They have met with all manner of harassment ranging from detention, closure of office, seizure of materials and publications, libel suits and death threats.

None of its chief executives is known to have any political ambition, but they do have an abiding sentiment for a redress of the nation to favour the south which they believe is marginalised.

At the beginning, their print-run ran into 100,000 copies and above weekly. But today, it has witnessed a reduction in sales figures. This is not necessarily because it is losing respect, but due to the economic down-turn that the country has found itself.

(3) *The News*

Established in 1993 by a team of young, men made up of Mr Bayo Onanuga, Sani Kabir, Idowu Obasa, Dapo Olorunyomi, Babafemi Ojudu, Kunle Ajibade and Seye Kehinde, like *TELL* magazine editors, several things set them apart from the typical publishers. They are all young, professional and practising journalists.

Prior to their coming out, with *The News* magazine, some of them had brushes with state security operatives and major disagreement over editorial censorship with their previous employers.

Their driving spirit also like that of the *TELL* magazine, is not necessarily monetary, but a desire to crusade for a better society no matter whose ox is gored.

Not surprisingly, the impression seems to tilt in the direction of an agenda for a Northern bashing.

They have met with all manners of harassment ranging from detention, conviction, closure of office, seizure of materials and publications, libel suits and death threats.

In 1993, barely seven months on the news stand, they suffered their first closure and had to go underground, coming out with a new title: *Tempo*.

None of its chief executives is known to have any political ambition. But its Managing Editor, Babafemi Ojudu, served as Chairman of the Inauguration Committee of the Lagos State Governor, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, after his election as Governor.

(4) *The Source*

The Source magazine came on the newsstand in March 31, 1997. It is often described as springing from the ashes of the defunct, *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM), which was published by Chris Anyanwu, who last year regained her freedom from a prison sentence imposed by the 1995 coup tribunal headed by General Patrick Aziza.

The reason for this is that its editor-in-chief, Comfort Obi, and other notable members of the editorial board are former TSM staff.

Some of its other journalists have variously won awards in the course of their journalism practice.

They too are piqued by the abysmal degradation that is affecting the society due to wanton corruption by leaders. And they have joined the crusade for a better society. Like *TELL* and *The News* magazines, its directors and financiers are not publicly known.

Young as the magazine is, it has had its fair share of official harassment. The last of which was in December 1998 when State Security operatives invaded its corporate headquarters in search of the original manuscript of a coup convict's confession that the magazine published a week earlier.

6. PRESENTATION OF RESULT FOR MAY 1999

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) *Vanguard*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	2	1
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	6	3
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	17	11
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	253	117
5.	Others	253	103
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	531	235

Other relevant formation

Technical Details

Full page = 10.5 inches x 13.5 inches = 141 inches Sq.

Total number of pages published by *Vanguard* for the month of May 1999 were 1,232.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999 were 235, i.e. 19 %

(ii) *Post Express*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	10	3
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	6	2
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	11	4
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	188	64
5.	Others	282	146
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	497	219

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full page - 13.2 inches x 10.4 inches = 137 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *Post Express* for the month of May 1999, were 968

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 219, i.e. 22.6 %

(iii) *National Concord*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	3	1
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	3	1
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	5	2
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	227	95

5.	Others	165	85
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	403	184

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 13.2 inches x 10 inches = 132 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *National Concord* for the month of May 1999, were 912.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999 were, 184 i.e. 20%

(iv) *The Punch*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	21	4
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	20	3
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	18	3
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	278	112
5.	Others	195	94
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	532	216

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.4 inches x 13.2 inches = 137sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *The Punch* for the month of May 1999, were 1,264.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 216, i.e. 17 %

(v) *This Day*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	4	1
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	3	1
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	19	5
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	300	122
5.	Others	265	120
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	591	249

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.5 inches x 14.3 inches = 151 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *This Day* for the month of May 1999, were 1,210

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 249, i.e. 20.5 %

(vi) *New Nigerian*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	7	2
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	1	0.2
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	4	1
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	162	61
5.	Others	131	49
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	305	113

Other relevant information*Technical Details*

Full - page 102 inches x 15.5 inches = 158 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *New Nigerian* for the month of May 1999, were 584.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 113, i.e. 19.4 %

(vii) *The Guardian*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	3	0.3
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	4	1
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	12	3
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	399	235
5.	Others	170	74
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	588	313

Other relevant information*Technical Details*

Full - page 10 inches x 14.5 inches = 145 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *The Guardian* for the month of May 1999, were 1,920.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 313, i.e. 16.3 %

(viii) *The Diet*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	2	0.16
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	6	2
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	6	2
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	146	58
5.	Others	126	72
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	286	134

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.4 inches x 14.8 inches = 154 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *The Diet* for the month of May 1999, were 736.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 134, i.e. 18.2 %

(ix) Daily Champion

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	8	2
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	6	2
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	11	3
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	210	93
5.	Others	142	72
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	377	172

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.5 inches x 13.5 inches = 142 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *Daily Champion* for the month of May 1999, were 1.160.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 172, i.e. 14.8 %

(x) Daily Times

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	13	3
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	6	2
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	10	3
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	196	57
5.	Others	139	74
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	364	139

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10 inches x 12 inches = 120 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *Daily Times* for the month of May 1999, were 760.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 139, i.e. 18.3 %

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) *Newswatch*

Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1. Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	1	1
2. Stories on Accountability in Governance	1	2
3. Stories on Loyal Opposition	0	0
4. Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	8	22
5. Others	27	16
6. Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	37	41

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *Newswatch* for the month of May 1999, were 252.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 41, i.e. 16.3 %

(ii) *The News*

Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1. Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	0	0
2. Stories on Accountability in Governance	1	0.05
3. Stories on Loyal Opposition	1	1
4. Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	9	3
5. Others	35	11
6. Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	46	15

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *The News* for the month of May 1999, were 208.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 15, i.e. 7.2 %

(iii) *TELL*

Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1. Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	0	0
2. Stories on Accountability in Governance	0	0
3. Stories on Loyal Opposition	0	0
4. Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	6	5
5. Others	129	41
6. Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	135	46

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *TELL* for the month of May 1999, were 208.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 46, i.e. 22.1 %

(iv) *The Source*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Accusations of Electoral Fraud	0	0
2.	Stories on Accountability in Governance	1	4
3.	Stories on Loyal Opposition	0	0
4.	Stories on Post-Election Democratic Development	3	3
5.	Others	15	21
6.	Total Nos. of Pol. Stories/Pages	19	28

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 sq. inches.

The total number of pages published by *The Source* for the month of May 1999, were 144.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of May 1999, were 28, i.e. 19.4 %

Formula:

$$\text{No. of Pages} = \frac{\text{Total space in sq. inches.}}{\text{1 page in inches sq. (141 sq. inches.)}}$$

7 TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF DATA

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED MAGAZINE FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE							
Newswatch	1	1	0	8	27	37	41
The News	0	1	1	9	35	46	15
TELL	0	0	0	6	129	135	46
The Source	0	1	0	3	15	19	28

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED NEWSPAPERS FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE							
The Punch	21	20	18	278	195	532	216
Daily Times	13	6	10	196	139	364	139
New Nigerian	7	1	4	162	131	305	113
National Concord	3	3	5	227	165	403	184
Daily Champion	8	6	11	210	142	377	172
The Guardian	3	4	12	399	170	588	313
The Diet	2	6	6	146	126	286	134
This Day	4	3	19	300	265	591	249
Vanguard	2	6	17	253	253	531	235
Post Express	10	6	11	188	282	497	219
VARIABLES	ELECTORAL FRAUD	ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNANCE	LOYAL OPPOSITION	POST ELECTION DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT	OTHERS	TOTAL NOS STORIES	TOTAL NOS PAGES

8 INTERPRETATION

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) *Vanguard*

During the month under review, *Vanguard* published a total of 1,232 pages. Of these, 235 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 531 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were two, spread across one page; Accountability in Governance, six, in three pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, 17, in 11 pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 253, in 117 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 253, all in a total of 103 pages.

(ii) *Post Express*

During the month under review, *Post Express* published a total of 968 pages. Of these, 219 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 497 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were 10, spread across three pages; Accountability in Governance, six, in two pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, 11, in four pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 188, in 64 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 282, all in a total of 146 pages.

(iii) *National Concord*

During the month under review, *National Concord* published a total of 912 pages. Of these, 184 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 403 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were three, spread across one page; Accountability in Governance, three, in one page; reports on Loyal Opposition, five, in two pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 227, in 95 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 165, all in a total of 85 pages.

(iv) *The Punch*

During the month under review, *The Punch* published a total of 1,264 pages. Of these, 216 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 532 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were 21, spread across four pages; Accountability in Governance, 20, in three pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, 18, in three pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 278, in 112 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 195, all in a total of 94 pages.

(v) *This Day*

During the month under review, *This Day* published a total of 1,210 pages. Of these, 249 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 591 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were four, spread across one page; Accountability in Governance, three, in one page; reports on Loyal Opposition, 19, in five pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 300, in 122 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 265, all in a total of 120 pages.

(vi) *New Nigerian*

During the month under review, *New Nigerian* published a total of 584 pages. Of these, 113 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 305 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were seven, spread across two pages; Accountability in Governance, one, in one-fifth of a page; reports on Loyal Opposition, four, in one page; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 162, in 61 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 131, all in a total of 49 pages.

(vii) *The Guardian*

During the month under review, *The Guardian* published a total of 1,920 pages. Of these, 313 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 588 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were three, spread across three-tenth of a page; Accountability in Governance, four, in one page; reports on Loyal Opposition, 12, in three pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 399, in 235 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 170, all in a total of 74 pages.

(viii) *The Diet*

During the month under review, *The Diet* published a total of 736 pages. Of these, 134 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 286 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were two, spread across one-sixth of a page; Accountability in Governance, six, in two pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, six, in two pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 146, in 58 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 126, all in a total of 72 pages.

(ix) *Daily Champion*

During the month under review, *Daily Champion* published a total of 1,160 pages. Of these, 172 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 377 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were eight, spread across two

pages; Accountability in Governance, six, in two pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, 11, in three pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 210, in 93 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 142, all in a total of 72 pages.

(x) *Daily Times*

During the month under review, *Daily Times* published a total of 760 pages. Of these, 139 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 364 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were 13, spread across three pages; Accountability in Governance, six, in two pages; reports on Loyal Opposition, ten, in three pages; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were 196 in 57 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 139, all in a total of 74 pages.

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) *Newswatch*

During the month under review, *Newswatch* published a total of 252 pages. Of these, 41 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 37 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud was one, spread across one page; Accountability in Governance, one in two pages, Loyal Opposition, was nil; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were eight, in 22 pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 27, all in a total of 16 pages.

(ii) *The News*

During the month under review, *The News* published a total of 208 pages. Of these, 15 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 46 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were nil; Accountability in Governance, one, in one-fifth of a page; reports on Loyal Opposition, one, in one page; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were nine, in three pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 35, all in a total of 11 pages.

(iii) *TELL*

During the month under review, *TELL* published a total of 208 pages. Of these, 46 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 135 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud, Accountability in Governance and Loyal Opposition, were nil; while those relating to Post-election Democratic Development were six, in five pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 129, all in a total of 41 pages.

(iv) *The Source*

During the month under review, *The Source* published a total of 144 pages. Of these, 28 pages were devoted to political issues. This was made up of 19 publications.

Stories/publications relating to Accusations of Electoral Fraud were nil; Accountability in Governance, one, in four pages; reports on Loyal Opposition was nil; while there were three reports relating to Post-election Democratic Development, spread across three pages.

Other political stories which, however, could not be grouped under any of the above-considered variables, were 15, all in a total of 21 pages.

7 ANALYSIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) ANALYSIS

(a) GOVERNMENT

(i) General Environment

After a careful study of the above data, several significant inferences can be made.

First, in relation to how the government acts to ensure that the news media gather and impart information and ideas, it is noted that during the month under review a general air of press freedom which characterised previous months under this monitoring exercise continued to prevail. This is considered in relation to the absence of any physical attempt by the government to stop the press from performing its function.

However, it needs be noted that several journalists in several state government-owned and the two Federal Government-owned newspapers having suffered excessive interference in their day-to-day management by government, were unable to make an impact in the market or break even. They were subjected to one form of hardship or the other by the refusal of appropriate authorities to release their statutory grant to procure necessary inputs and pay staff salaries. Some media organisations such as *Daily Times*, *New Nigerian* and *The Pioneer* are in default of salaries payment of up to ten months as at the month under review.

(ii) Legal Environment

Although, as earlier concluded, there was a generally free media environment during the month under review as was the case with previous months, the same cannot be said of the legal environment under which the press operated during the transition programme covered by this monitoring exercise, beginning from December 1998 to May 1999.

Specifically, four of these were noted in the March report and re-iterated in the April 1999 report. They are worth repeating here.

Firstly, the government did not deem it fit to give specific legal protection to journalists in the general performance of their professional duties or with regard to the coverage of the political transition programme. There remained until the end of this monitoring exercise a lack of legal or institutional framework by which journalists or other members of the public can have access to information as of right about the political process.

Conversely, the existence of several restrictive press laws has served as a limiting factor for journalists against publishing information, which were not confirmed by official sources.

Secondly, the fact that various legislation, including decrees and edicts, which restrict press freedom still exist, remained the major contradiction of the Head of State's promise to respect the right to freedom of expression, including press freedom.

Although none of these repressive press laws were known to have been put to use by the government throughout the period of this monitoring exercise including the month under review, the fact of their existence resulted for many journalists in a situation where they had to consciously censor themselves.

Thirdly, there is the Minister of Information, Chief John Nwodo Jnr.'s, announcement in December last year that the government was working on making libel a criminal offence, which was confirmed by his office upon enquiry by Media Rights Agenda. This is no doubt a call to further self-censorship. Although it was yet to be implemented, journalists are bound to be overly wary of what they publish henceforth. This is so because experience has shown that such decree, when passed usually takes retroactive effect. Besides, there was an inherent morbid fear that politicians who wished to divert press attention from themselves, would have a field day charging journalists and publishers with criminal libel.

Fourthly, the imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on newspapers and magazines effected through the 1999 budget, Media Rights Agenda believes, incapacitated the operations of media houses during the month under review. Indeed, some print media houses had to upwardly adjust their prices to reflect the new reality. Among them were *The Guardian*, *Post Express*, *This Day* and *The Punch* newspapers.

Although none of these increases were specifically attributed to the VAT regime, the common denominator was "increasing production cost".

It is pertinent to note here that in February, 1999 Media Rights Agenda, wrote to the out-gone minister of information seeking an interview to, among other things, clarify some development in the industry which MRA deemed capable of harm-stringing the press in the effective performance of its functions. Among these issues, are the Value Added Tax (VAT) placed on newspapers and magazines, the proposal by government to make libel a criminal offence, and the ban on a live television debate scheduled to have taken place between the then presidential candidate of PDP, now the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo and Chief Olu Falae, AD/APP alliance presidential candidate in the February 27, 1999 presidential election.

The other is the status of Decree No. 43 of 1993 which established the Newspapers Registration

Board and which the then minister of information, Chief John Nwodo Jnr., had announced in December 1998 that government had disbanded.

While declining MRA's request for an interview, the minister through his legal adviser, Otunba (Mrs.) O. Adebajo in a letter dated 20th April 1999, sought to make clarifications on the issues. The following are excerpt from the letter:

* *The issue of Value Added Tax (VAT) on Newspapers and magazines is basically a fiscal policy decision within the purview of the duties of the Honourable Minister of Finance. It is therefore suggested that this matter be appropriately directed to him.*

* *On the proposal to make libel a criminal offence, this issue is not meant to victimise any person or group of persons rather it is aimed at unifying the existing regime of laws. Libel as a criminal offence has been in existence under the Penal Code therefore it is not an innovation in this country. It is considered appropriate to provide for similar provision under the Criminal Code.*

* *There is no decision to ban live Presidential debate, the only exception is the restriction provided for under the Electoral laws which prohibits campaign 24 hours to election time.*

* *You will recall that a one day seminar was organized by this Ministry with both the Public and Private Media Practitioners to identify any laws and regulations inhibiting press freedom. Consequent to this seminar, a resolution for the abrogation of Newspapers Registration Board was made. I can assure you that the process for the repeal of Decree No. 43 of 1993 which established NRB is on course.*

MRA fears that it is most likely that all work, if any, being carried out in the area of the former minister's optimism would come to a halt. This will obviously require another process of addressing the issue a new, and thus a misplaced enthusiasm.

It is also note worthy to point out that the 1999 Constitution released during the month under review; and which forms the basis of government for the present civilian democratic government, does not have any specific protection for the media.

Known as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, the document, signed by the former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar on May 5, 1999, came into force on May 29. The new Constitution is modelled after the 1979 Constitution, which was used during the democratic dispensation in the Second Republic and by subsequent military governments which carried out some modifications in the document.

The provisions relating to the media in the new Constitution are a rehash of those in the 1979 Constitution. They simply impose duties and responsibilities on the media without granting the much touted Fourth Estate of the Realm any right or privilege beyond the general right to freedom of expression guaranteed every person in Nigeria.

Also, the operation of government-owned and controlled newspapers remained a major source of concern. The existence of government-subsidized newspapers violates the principle of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Although, federal and states governments are clearly entitled to publicise information about health, access to government services, legislation pending or enacted, or court decisions, it is inappropriate to use public funds to publicise the statements and opinions of government departments, ministers or officials which has been the hallmark of state-owned or controlled newspapers in Nigeria. These already have extensive access to the media by virtue of their positions in public eye.

The access of government-owned newspapers to government subsidies derived from public funds undermines the competitive nature of the media industry. A retention of this practice and its carry-over to the democratic dispensation will place the ruling party at an unfair advantage. This is so because it would be in a position to use public funds to promote the party as well as its members, officials and activities to the detriment of the other parties or opposition politicians and other dissenting voices in the country.

The practice ought to be abolished now.

(b) The Press

On the part of the press, as it relates to how it reports activities around the four main variables, or generate publications in these respects, the observations from this report are set out below:

Firstly, it should be noted that, generally, the downward trend noticed in media focus on political news and issues during the last two months has reversed most significantly. The data shows an increase in the devotion of print spaces to political issues by all the newspapers and magazines monitored, except the *New Nigerian*. The increase in space allocation to political issues by some of the newspapers monitored is by as much as over 300 per cent.

For example, *The Guardian* which devoted 92 pages to political issues in the month of April 1999, increased up to 313 pages during the month under review.

National Concord on its part, during the month under review, devoted 184 pages to political issues as against a total of 48 pages during the month of April 1999. The same goes for *Post Express*, which in April 1999 devoted 83 pages to political issues as against 219 pages during the month under review. These indicate increases of over 250 per cent for *Post Express* and over 300 per cent for *The Guardian* and *National Concord*.

The newspaper that had the least pages devoted to political issues during the month under review is *New Nigerian* with 103 pages. But this is almost as high as the highest number of pages devoted to political issues during the month of April in which *This Day* topped with 136 pages. Even at that, the percentage increase for *New Nigeria* is almost 90 over its April performance.

Meanwhile, the data in respect of the magazines which indicated a general decline in space allocation to political issues in April showed mild increases during the month under review. But none of the magazines monitored recorded up to 10 per cent increases in space allocation. *The News* had a decline in page allocation to political issues. It recorded 15 pages during the month under review down from 41 pages it recorded in April.

For example *Newswatch* showed 12 per cent increase in the number of pages allocated to political issues during the month of May 1999. It recorded 41 pages allocated to political issues up

from its April 1999 allocation of 36 pages. The same trend was noticed with respect to *The Source*, and *TELL*.

From its 26 pages allocated to political issues in April 1999, *The Source* allocated a total of 28 pages to political issues during the month under review. *TELL* allocated 46 pages to political issues in May as against 43 pages in April.

Meanwhile, for a proper and easier appreciation of the analyses relating to how the press reports activities around the variables and comments on those reports with respect to fair and objective reporting, this report set these out one after the other hereunder:

a. How the Media Report on Allegations of Electoral Fraud and Generate Investigative Reports Thereof

The data indicate that for the second month running there was a substantial reduction in the print media reports on allegations of electoral fraud. The Guardian led in April with 44 mentions but during the month under review, *The Punch* led with 21 mentions, followed by *Daily Times* with 13 mentions. *Post Express* followed with 10 mentions as against eight mentions in April. It is the only newspaper which recorded an increase in this area during the month under review. Coming at the rear was *The Diet* and *Vanguard* with two mentions each. They only marginally fell below *The Guardian* and *National Concord* with three mentions each.

The magazines recorded only one mention by *Newswatch*. Others had none.

This continued reduction in attention given to allegations of electoral fraud is quite understandable given the resolution of the petition by Chief Falae, presidential candidates of APP / AD alliance and Chief Egolom an interested politician who also filed a case in court alleging electoral fraud during the presidential election held on February 27, 1999.

Still, as noted in the April and May 1999 reports, there was also no publication in any of either the newspapers or magazines monitored which was generated from an independent, painstaking investigation to authenticate or verify the allegations of electoral fraud. Rather, all the publications during the month under review were reports of pronouncements, comments or claims by politicians.

b. Reports on Accountability in Governance

Like the previous month, the data here does not indicate a single pattern of relationship in media focus on this variable by the newspapers monitored. Five of the newspapers monitored showed marked decreases in their focus on this variable, the other five showed mild increases. But there, however, is a general decline in media focus.

Meanwhile *The Punch* led on publications on loyal opposition with 20 mentions, followed by *Daily Times*, *Daily Champion*, *Vanguard* and *Post Express* all with six mentions each.

At the rear is *New Nigerian* with one mention, *National Concord* had three mentions and *The Guardian* four mentions.

In the magazine category, *Newswatch*, *The News* and *The Source* had one mention each while *TELL* had none.

As was noted in the April and May reports, this trend seem to be easily explained by the fact that discussion of accountability in governance was then an abstract concept since the civilians were yet to assume office.

c. Reports on Loyal Opposition

The data indicate that reports on this variable by the various newspapers and magazines monitored continued to be on the low side. However, there was a general increase in the mention given to this variable. While some of the newspapers monitored showed marked increased in their mentions, others showed decreases.

This Day led here with 19 mentions followed closely by *The Punch*, with 18 mentions and *Vanguard* with 17 mentions.

The Guardian, *Daily Champion* and *Daily Times* had 12, 11 and 10 mentions respectively. At the bottom in this regard is *New Nigerian* with four mentions and only slightly topped by *National Concord* with five mentions and *The Diet* six mentions.

For the magazines, only *The News* had one mention, others had none.

d. Reports on Post-Election Democratic Development

The data show that not only is this the most mentioned of all of the four main variables by both the newspapers and magazines monitored, there was a general and substantial increase in the focus during the month under review compared to the previous month's data.

The Guardian led here with 399 mentions followed by *This Day* with 300 mentions. *The Punch* stands at the third position with 278 mentions. Coming at the rear is *The Diet* with 146 mentions. In addition, *New Nigerian* had 162 mentions while *Post Express* had 188 mentions.

In the magazine category, *The News* led with nine mentions, followed by *Newswatch* with eight mentions. *TELL* had six mentions and *The Source* three mentions.

e. Reports on Other Stake-Holder Groups

The data show that the press continued to accord high focus to this variable. During the month under review there was a marked increase in the focus on this variable compared to the previous month.

Post Express, led with 282 mentions, followed by *This Day* with 265 mentions. This is followed by *Vanguard* with 253 mentions. Coming at the rear is *The Diet* with 126 mentions. *New Nigerian* had 131 mentions, while *Daily Times* had 139 mentions. Others are: *National Concord* ' 165; *The Guardian*, 170; and *The Punch*, 195 mentions respectively.

In the magazine category, *TELL* led with 129 mentions, followed by *The News* with 35 mentions. *Newswatch* recorded 27 mentions and *The Source*, 15 mentions to make the rear.

FAIR AND OBJECTIVE REPORTING

It is noted that there was no report in any of the newspapers and magazines monitored during the month under review considered unfair and lacking in objectivity.

In fact, most publications, chiefly those relating to post-election democratic development, are noted to have stood out in their content and timeliness.

Among those are the various editorials setting an agenda for the civilian government and commenting on how to ensure an enduring democracy. While some of the newspapers and magazines monitored wrote more than one editorial on the issues, taking them from different perspectives, some devoted full pages to it at a go.

A common trend was discernable in the editorials. After taking a synopsis of the various social, political, economic and religious problems afflicting the country, and acknowledging the enthusiasm of the president to tackle this project, they would suggest great circumspection on its part and call on this sympathetic attunement of the civil populace.

Media Rights Agenda considers such editorials very encouraging.

(ii) Conclusion

Media Rights Agenda affirms that although there was a substantially free media environment during the month under review, although the government indirectly hindered the capacity of the print media to impart information in two ways during the month under review. Firstly, is in respect of the VAT regime over newspapers and magazines provided for in the 1999 budget. The payment of VAT by newspapers and magazines has shot-up production cost for the various print media.

Secondly, the interference in the management of government-owned media establishments and non-release of grants by the government to these media organisation to procure inputs and off-set workers salaries, which in some cases have accumulated to upward of nine months, greatly affected the performances of journalists and media houses in question, during the month under review.

Media Rights Agenda notes also that there was a fair and objective coverage of the political programme during the month of May 1999 by the newspapers and magazines monitored.

However, Media Rights Agenda is concerned about the continued decline in the attention accorded issues of accountability in governance, while it notes and commends the press for the substantial increase and timely discussions on issues in post-election democratic development.

While the low reports on accountability in governance were easily explained away in the April and May reports, Media Rights Agenda considers less than commendable, the continued low focus on this variable at this crucial time in the transition to civil rule process, when elected representatives have just assumed offices.

Error Margin

We admit an error margin of plus or minus five in data collection.

(iii) Recommendations

Following the above conclusions and observations, it is recommended that:

- ◆ Although the transition to civil rule programme has been concluded with the handing over of power to an elected civilian government, it is recommended that government should create a conducive legal environment for media coverage of the civilian government by

repealing all laws and decrees which inhibit the capacity of the media to report freely. This is particularly important because apart from helping to ensure the entronement of democracy, the media is needed for its sustainance. In particular, the Government should review its VAT on newspapers and magazines policy and drop its reported plans to make libel a criminal offence.

- ◆ The Government should relinquish its ownership and control of newspapers to truly secure thier independence. This practice of Government ownership of newspapers and magazines should immediately abolished as it would bestow an unfair advantage on the ruling party in a multi-party democracy. Such practices also place such media organisations at an unfair advantage over their privately-owned counterparts which do not have access to public funds in a competitive media environment.
- ◆ The press should henceforth shore-up their focus on investigative reporting and setting an agenda with regards to:
 - issues bothering on accountability and transparency in governance
 - issues on loyal opposition ; and
 - issues on post-election democratic development.



Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. MRA's Aims and Objectives are:

- a. to promote respect and recognition for press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- b. to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- c. to promote the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and
- d. to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalist's right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information.

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