

Monday, November 2, 2026

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. SAMUEL NARTEY GEORGE (MP), MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATION, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIONS, AT THE PUBLIC FORUM ORGANIZED BY THE MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA ON "ENDING IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS IN GHANA: STRENGTHENING SAFETY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRESS FREEDOM"

GHANA SHIPPERS AUTHORITY, ACCRA.

The Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa;
Representatives of government institutions and law enforcement agencies;
Members of the diplomatic community;
Media owners, editors and journalists;
Representatives of civil society organisations and development partners;
Distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

OPENING: A FREEDOM THAT MUST BE FELT

Today the world marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. I thank the Media Foundation for West Africa for bringing us together. Your work, across our region and over many years, has kept this issue where it belongs: at the centre of our democratic conscience.

Let me begin with one simple test. Can a journalist in Ghana chase a sensitive story, cover a public emergency, question a powerful official, and return home safely? That is the test. Not our speeches. Not our communiqués. That.

Article 21 of our Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression. Chapter Twelve guarantees the media's freedom and independence. These are not decorations. They are obligations. When a journalist is assaulted for doing legitimate work, the journalist is not the only victim. Every citizen loses a little of their right to know.

Let me say this plainly. The media is not the enemy of government because it asks hard questions. A government that hears only praise cannot correct its mistakes. Scrutiny makes us better.

THE STRIDES WE HAVE MADE

Ladies and gentlemen, Ghana is moving in the right direction.

In the 2026 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, Ghana rose to 39th out of 180 countries. We were 52nd in 2025. We were 62nd in 2023. Today we stand fourth in Africa. That is a climb of thirteen places in a single year, with gains across all five indicators.

This did not happen by accident. It reflects a deliberate posture by the Mahama administration: openness over hostility, engagement over intimidation. Under President Mahama, no journalist has been killed for doing their job. No journalist has been driven into exile. No media house has been shut down for daring to speak inconvenient truths to power.

His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama, himself a student of communication, has been clear. In January this year, he declared that assaults on journalists will not be countenanced, and that offending personnel must be dealt with as firmly as possible. He has directed our security services to reorient around a simple truth: the journalist at the scene and the officer at the scene are both performing a public duty.

We have also chosen consultation over decree. When the Ministry developed the proposed Information Integrity Bill to tackle misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, we opened it to the public. In February 2026, we sat with stakeholders and went through it clause by clause. That is how a confident democracy makes laws that touch on expression.

The Ghana Journalists Association has acknowledged these gains. We welcome that. But we will not rest on a ranking.

Because rankings do not heal injuries, justice does.

Despite our progress, journalists continue to report assaults, threats and obstruction, sometimes at the hands of personnel of state institutions. We will not minimise this. We will not allow political loyalty to decide which cases deserve attention.

In January, Class Media Group journalist Samuel Addo was reportedly assaulted at the Kasoa New Market fire scene. The government condemned it. The Fire Service announced an internal inquiry and said it would cooperate with the police. In July, the police opened an investigation into the alleged assault on Graphic journalist Alidu Mahama at Teshie. These responses matter. But let us be honest. An announced investigation is not a completed one. And a completed investigation is not yet justice.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has documented attacks on journalists during this period and has raised concerns about impunity. The Ghana Journalists Association has said the same. We do not receive these reports as an embarrassment. We receive them as part of our work programme.

Accountability has a clear anatomy. Prompt reporting. Impartial investigation. Protected evidence. Regular updates to victims—and, where the evidence warrants it, prosecution and discipline. No uniform, no office, no party card and no private influence should place anyone above the law.

Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Laureate, understood what is at stake. He said:
"A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy."
— Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1993

We intend to keep that lifeblood flowing.

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: TWO SIDES OF ONE COIN

Distinguished guests, I must now speak to the other side of this coin. I do so as a friend of the press.

Press freedom does not mean freedom from accountability. The licence to inform is not a licence to defame. The right to criticise is not a right to fabricate. A microphone is a public trust, not a private weapon.

Albert Camus, Nobel Laureate in Literature and himself a journalist, put it best:
“A free press can, of course, be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom a press will never be anything but bad.”
— Albert Camus, Nobel Prize in Literature, 1957

Freedom is the precondition. It is not the guarantee. Good journalism still has to be chosen, every day, in every newsroom.

We see the consequences when we don't make that choice. Unverified stories that destroy reputations overnight. Ethnic and partisan content that inflames communities. Paid “journalism” that serves the highest bidder. Corrections buried, or never published. Each of these erodes public trust. And when trust in the press collapses, honest journalists pay the price first.

Let me be equally clear on a second point. Professional failure never justifies violence. A bad story is answered with a correction, a right of reply, a complaint to the regulator or a court case. Never with a fist. Never with a gun. Never with a threat.

A CALL TO PEER REGULATION AND PEER SANCTION

So who should hold the press to account? My answer is: the press itself, first and foremost. Government does not want to be the editor of Ghana’s newsrooms. We will not be. The surest way to keep the state out of the newsroom is for the profession to keep its own house in order.

At Independence, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah told the world that the African was ready to fight his own battles, and to show that, in his words:
“After all, the black man is capable of managing his own affairs.”
— Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah, 6 March 1957

I say the same to Ghana's media today. You can manage your own affairs. Prove it.

I therefore urge the Ghana Journalists Association, the National Media Commission, the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association, the Private Newspapers and Online News Publishers Association and all media bodies to do five things:

1. **Enforce your codes of ethics.** A code that is never enforced is merely a brochure.
2. **Sanction your own.** Name the conduct. Publish the outcome. Let peers, not politicians, decide who has brought the profession into disrepute.
3. **Make complaints work.** Every citizen wronged by a story should have a fast, credible and visible route to redress.
4. **Correct errors openly.** Give corrections the same prominence as the original error.
5. **Defend standards across party lines.** Call out unethical conduct whether it favours the government or the opposition.

Strong self-regulation is not a government concession. It is the best defence against government over-regulation. A profession that polices itself earns the right to be left alone.

PRESS FREEDOM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

As Minister responsible for digital technology, I am acutely aware that the battlefield has moved online. The same platforms that let a reporter broadcast live also enable anonymous threats, doxxing, impersonation and coordinated harassment. Women journalists face especially vicious, gendered attacks. Artificial intelligence now makes a fake recording look real, and a lie travels faster than its correction.

Digital safety is therefore press safety.

Our response is balanced. The Information Services Department is working with fact-checkers, including Dubawa, to strengthen information integrity. We are advancing digital signatures and public-key infrastructure so that citizens and journalists can tell a genuine

government statement from a forgery. We are building verification skills, including deepfake detection.

And on the proposed Information Integrity Bill, let me give you this assurance. The fight against disinformation will never become a pretext for silencing dissent, investigative reporting, satire or legitimate criticism. An honest error is not a deliberate lie. Criticism of government is not misinformation. Any final law must be precise, necessary and proportionate, with clear defences and avenues for redress. The answer to harmful speech is not restricting lawful speech.

PRACTICAL PROTECTION FOR JOURNALISTS AND NEWSROOMS

I welcome MFWA's Model Safety of Journalists' Policy. Media owners, adopt it. Risk assessments before dangerous assignments. Emergency contacts. Protocols for protests and security operations. Secure devices. Legal and psychosocial support after an attack.
Safety must not depend on your employer's size. The freelancer, the regional correspondent, the camera operator and the online journalist deserve the same protection as the anchor in Accra.

I also propose a regular multi-stakeholder review, bringing together the Police, the security services, the National Media Commission, the GJA, MFWA and civil society. Its task: track reported attacks, follow the status of investigations, and close the gaps. It will respect the independence of our investigative and judicial institutions. But it will ensure that no case is quietly forgotten.

OUR COMMITMENT

Let me now reaffirm, on behalf of His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama, this administration's unwavering commitment.

We will defend press freedom. We will not shut down media houses for critical reporting. We will not use the law to silence journalists. We will pursue those who attack journalists, whoever they are and whatever uniform they wear. And we will continue to build the digital infrastructure that connects every Ghanaian to credible information.

That is our pledge. Hold us to it.

CONCLUSION: LET ACCOUNTABILITY BE THE MEASURE

Distinguished guests, Ghana's democratic reputation was not handed to us. Journalists, citizens, and institutions built it by insisting on the right to speak, to question, and to know. It must be renewed by action. It cannot be assumed.

So let us leave here with a shared bargain. Government will protect the press. The security agencies will respect the press. And the press will regulate itself, with rigour and with courage.

Freedom and responsibility. Protection and accountability. That is the balance a mature democracy must strike.

A free press is not a favour from government. It is a constitutional guarantee and a public good. No journalist should have to choose between telling the truth and getting home safely.

Let us build a Ghana where press freedom is not only proclaimed, but protected. Where attacks are not merely condemned, but prosecuted. And where accountability is not selective, but certain.

God bless our Homeland Ghana and make her great and strong. I thank you.