

Protect journalists, end insecurity and impunity now”, SERAP, NGE urge Tinubu Govt, governors, others

As the international community marks World Press Freedom Day, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) have called on “the government of President Bola Tinubu, Nigeria's state governors, and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory to urgently ensure press freedom, protect journalists, and bring an end to the escalating insecurity and widespread human rights violations across several parts of northern Nigeria, including Benue, Borno, Kwara, Plateau, and Sokoto states.” The statement followed the conference and interactive session on ‘the Role of the Media in Promoting People's Rights, Accountability, and Access to Justice in the Context of Growing Insecurity in Nigeria’ held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Ikeja. The event was jointly organized by SERAP and NGE to mark World Press Freedom Day. In a joint statement on Sunday, SERAP and NGE emphasized that “protecting journalists and safeguarding information integrity are central drivers of peace, security, and democratic stability.” The groups said: “any credible peace, recovery, or security strategy in Nigeria must integrate support for free, independent, and pluralistic media alongside humanitarian, institutional, and economic responses.” The groups expressed “serious concerns about the scale and persistence of killings, abductions, sexual violence, forced displacement, and destruction of property across several parts of northern Nigeria.” According to the groups, “thousands have

reportedly been killed and millions displaced, with rural communities repeatedly targeted and women and children bearing the brunt of the violence and insecurity.”

The statement, read in part: “these patterns reflect systemic failures to prevent foreseeable harm, protect communities, investigate violations, prosecute perpetrators and their sponsors, and ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims. “Such grave violations constitute serious breaches of Nigeria's obligations under the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Nigeria is a state party.

“The humanitarian consequences remain severe: communities destroyed, livelihoods lost, and victims left without effective remedies. The persistence of impunity continues to erode public trust and weaken democratic governance.” “Nigerian authorities at all levels have binding constitutional and international human rights obligations to protect journalists, and end insecurity and impunity in the country. “The Tinubu administration, state governors, FCT minister and other relevant authorities must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, and remedy human rights violations, including by ensuring justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators and their sponsors. “We note that the UNESCO theme for the

2026 World Press Freedom Day Conference, ‘Shaping a Future of Peace,’ underscores the centrality of a free, independent, and viable media ecosystem to peace, security, and sustainable development. “The erosion of independent journalism and civic information ecosystems directly contributes to governance breakdown.

When journalists are targeted through intimidation, repression, or impunity for attacks, corruption thrives,



accountability declines, and misinformation spreads. “In such environments, information violence often precedes physical violence, deepening insecurity and undermining public trust in state institutions. “Protecting journalists in Nigeria is therefore not a peripheral issue but a core requirement for addressing insecurity and advancing democratic governance. “We recall that Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution mandates the media to hold government accountable, while Section 39 guarantees freedom of expression. “These provisions, alongside international human rights obligations, require Nigerian authorities at all levels not only to refrain from interference but also to actively protect journalists and ensure a safe environment for reporting on insecurity and human rights violations. “Addressing insecurity requires more than reactive responses.

It demands sustained commitment to transparency, accountability, human rights and the rule of law. Embedding these principles into governance and security frameworks is essential to breaking cycles of violence and restoring public confidence. “We therefore call on the Federal Government, state authorities and FCT minister to: guarantee freedom of the press and expression; protect civic space and journalists, and promote victim-centred, ethical reporting; and publicly recognize that killings, abductions, and destruction of property are grave human rights violations that cannot be justified. “The Tinubu administration, state governors and FCT minister must conduct and ensure prompt, thorough and independent investigations into all violations; identify, prosecute perpetrators and their sponsors; and ensure effective remedies for victims, including compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition. “The Tinubu administration, state governors and FCT minister must work collectively to improve transparency in security operations and accountability processes; and fully implement constitutional and international human rights obligations. “We urge Nigerian authorities at all levels to create public reporting systems to track incidents, responses, and accountability and direct all institutions to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the human rights of everyone in the country.

“We urge Nigerian authorities to invite relevant UN Special Rapporteurs and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' Special Rapporteurs to undertake independent fact-finding missions on insecurity and associated human rights violations across several parts of northern Nigeria. “Their findings should inform concrete accountability measures, justice for victims, and structural reforms. “We also call on the National Assembly to exercise its oversight powers under Sections 88 and 89 of the Nigerian Constitution by convening an urgent public hearing on insecurity and attacks on journalists. This should examine the role of security agencies and other state actors and lead to stronger legislative reforms and safeguards for accountability and media freedom. “We further call on the

international community to intensify pressure on Nigerian authorities to take concrete steps to end insecurity and impunity.

This includes prioritizing the protection of people, justice and accountability; safeguarding civic space; and ensuring that media organizations can operate freely without fear of reprisals.” Human rights lawyer Femi Falana, SAN said at the event, “Entire communities are being destroyed in several parts of the north while perpetrators operate with little or no consequences. Impunity is not just a failure of justice—it is a driver of further violence.” According to him, “any government that cannot protect its people—or refuses to hold perpetrators accountable—undermines its own legitimacy. Journalists are not the enemy of the State—they are essential partners in exposing abuse, preventing violence, and strengthening democracy.” “All the participants expressed commitment to work to promote the effective implementation of these recommendations by appropriate Nigerian authorities.”

The interactive session was attended by senior members of the media, civil society groups and other stakeholders. Those who attended the event included: Richard Akinnola, Director, Media Law Centre; Eze Anaba, President, NGE and Editor, Vanguard Newspapers; Sumner Shagari Sambo, Director, News, Arise TV; Dr Iyobosa Uwugiaren, Editor (Abuja), Thisday; Hamza Idris, Editor, Daily Trust; and Dr Olufemi Adekoya, Editor, The Guardian. Others included: Godwin Ukaa, Deputy Director, News, VON; Paulyn Ugbodaga, COO/Consultant, CBI Digital Media Ltd; Joy Anigbogu, Political Editor, Daily Independent; James Oluyombo Tokode, Assistant Editor, The Nation; Ijeoma Popoola, Deputy Director, NAN; and Oluwatosin Odusola, News Editor, Eko FM.” Others included: Zebulon Agomuo, Editor Sunday, Business Day; Emeka Madunagu, Publisher, Metrostar; Garba Alabi Kabir, Editor, The Guardian; Sylvester Ebhodaghe, Publisher, National Daily; Iheanacho Nwosu, Editor, The Sun; Niyi Ojemakinde, COO, Whispers FM/Peak Radio; and Odunewu Oluwasegun Ayo, Editor, National Daily ng. Others who attended the event included: Peter Ekele, Editor in Chief, the Cabal; Charles Kalu, General Manager, Peoples FM; Ime Ufot, Group Executive Director, KAFTAN TV; Korede Ogunbunmi, HoD Journalism, Radio Nigeria; Iyabo Ogunjiyigbe, Sure FM, GM; and Gabriel Akinadewo, MD/Editor in Chief, Freedom Online and Assistant General Secretary, NGE. Others included: Tony Iyare, Fellow, NGE; Ugomma Cokey, Editor, VON; Mustapha Isah, Director of News, Silverbird; Daniel Badru, Assistant Editor, The Guardian; Don Okere, Editor, Daily Independent; and Rose Moses, Editor, News Mart.