

Police should protect journalists in Africa

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has recommended training for police and other security forces that is focused on protecting the safety of journalists, as part of efforts to prevent violent extremism (PVE) and countering violent extremism (CVE).



Image by 123RF

The MFWA also called for accountability, particularly prosecutions, for crimes against journalists in order to enable journalists to feel safe about reporting on sensitive topics, including violent extremism.

These recommendations were part of the [MFWA's submission](#) to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in line with the UN organ's compilation of best practices and lessons on how upholding human rights can contribute to PVE and CVE.

The submission expressed great concern that police and other security forces regularly violate the right to freedom of expression, especially press freedom rights. The persistence of crimes against journalists, impunity and acts of censorship prevents—even precludes—the media from performing its duty as a provider of information.

For example, in Nigeria last year, the military attacked the media for reporting on the role of international assistance in Nigeria's CVE strategy against Boko Haram. The attack led to widespread self-censorship among the media with regard to reportage on the anti-Boko Haram war.

The MFWA made five major recommendations to the OHCHR:

- PVE and CVE strategists should understand the promotion of freedom of expression, including press freedom, as more than just a tool of PVE and CVE programming and efforts.
- Police and other security forces must receive human rights training, particularly on the need to respect and protect freedom of expression, including press freedom, and the safety of journalists.
- States should take steps to end impunity for crimes against journalists and the media generally. The lack of accountability, particularly prosecutions, for crimes against journalists creates a culture of impunity, facilitates future attacks and pushes journalists to self-censor on a range of topics, including violent extremism.
- States should build the capacity of journalists and the media to report on issues related to violent extremism, which entails creating an enabling environment for the media to perform its functions.
- The media must behave with increased professionalism, which will facilitate its ability to support and educate the public on PVE and CVE programming and efforts.

Click here for the [full submission by the MFWA](#). OHCHR's Compilation Report is a collection of best practices on how to combat violent extremism as part of the [UN High Commissioner's Action Plan](#) on the issue.

Source: mfwa.org.

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