



MEiN

Media and Expression in Nigeria

March 2023



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

This section of the report provides a list of the abbreviations used throughout the document. The purpose of this page is to provide clarity and ease of understanding for the reader. Each abbreviation is listed in alphabetical order, followed by its full form.

These are the abbreviations used in this report:

ARCON - Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria

CSO - Civil Society Organisation

FCT - Federal Capital Territory

IMS - Institute for Media and Society

INEC - Independent National Electoral Commission

LGA - Local Government Area

MEIN - Media and Expression in Nigeria

MRA - Media Rights Agenda

NBC - National Broadcasting Commission

NCC - Nigerian Communications Commission

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NSCDC - Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

NUJ - Nigeria Union of Journalists

PVC - Permanent Voter Card

SERAP - Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project

UN - United Nations

BACKGROUND

Media and Expression in Nigeria (MEiN) is a monthly report by the Institute for Media and Society. The report focuses on the developments that affect freedom of the media and expression in the country. This initiative involves monitoring the editorial content of various media sources and the actions of pertinent stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

This combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The data is coded by media monitors using a content analysis method that assigns codes to the units of analysis categorised under the following headings:

- **Issues:** the topics or themes that relate to MEiN during the period in review. The topics include various types of attacks on the media and other victims, regulation of the media space, and other related themes.
- **Actors:** the individuals or groups that are involved in or influence the issues. These actors include the government and its agencies, journalists and the media in general, as well as politicians and political parties.
- **Victims:** the individuals or groups that suffer harm or loss as a result of the issues or actions of the actors, and could be any of the individuals or groups identified under actors.

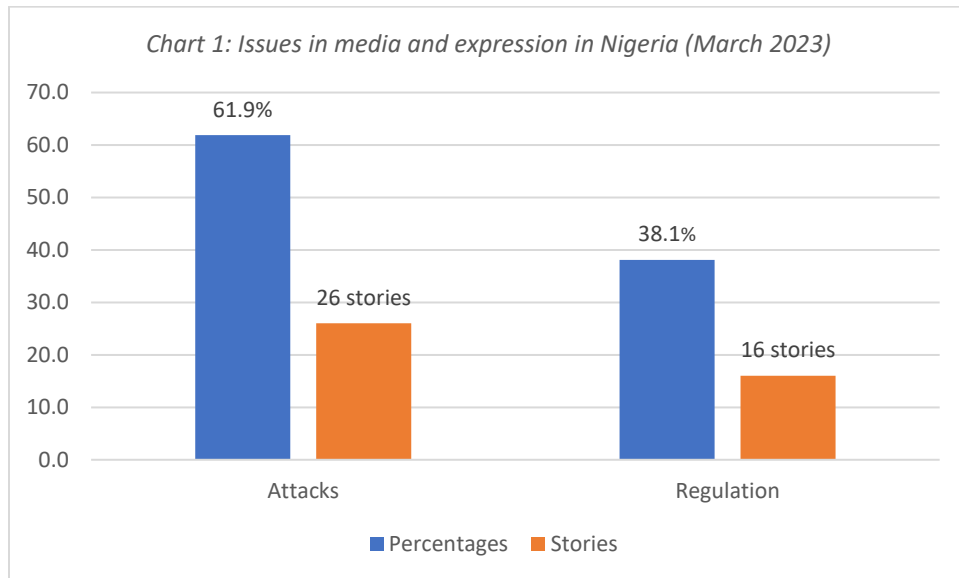
The coding process is done by trained media monitors who follow a coding scheme that defines the categories and sub-categories of each unit of analysis. The coding scheme also specifies the rules and criteria for assigning codes to the data. The coded data is then translated into a spreadsheet for further analysis.

The analysis of the data employs description and visualization techniques such as graphs, charts and tables to present the results clearly and concisely.

The research also employs a qualitative method that complements the quantitative method by highlighting some of the contents driving the data trends.

ISSUES

These were the topics that dominated the contents tracked during the period in review.



Attacks

Chart 1 shows the distribution of 42 stories across different topics related to media and expression in Nigeria in March 2023. Twenty-six of these stories concerned attacks on the media and other victims, and represented 61.9% of the distribution.

Examples:

1. "Thugs chase journalists, INEC officers with axes in Abeokuta," [PM Nigeria reported](#) on March 18, the day the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted the 2023 governorship and state assembly elections. The report represented an instance in which an attack on the media was the focus of attention during the period in review.

"Political thugs have disrupted the electoral process in Ward 13 polling Unit 22, Itori Odo, Abeokuta South area of the state Abeokuta," the report continued.

"Journalists and electoral officers who were subject of the attackers had to scamper for safety.

"An unarmed NSCDC officer attempted to rescue the two ballot boxes but was overpowered by the thugs who snatched the boxes and destroyed them immediately.

"Trouble started when an agent of the All Progressive Congress (APC) agent challenged journalists for taking pictures at the unit."

2. "Cross River: Party official shot dead in Ogoja as soldiers detain journalists," [Daily Post reported](#) on March 18 in another instance representing the nature of attacks cited above.

"Some journalists with Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, media cards and branded vehicles are being detained in a Bakassi community where they were travelling to cover the election," the report said.

"One of the journalists, Ubong Umoh of Sparkling FM Calabar, said they and other journalists were detained by armed military men.

"He said after a lengthy explanation, the military men still said they should have left as early as 5 a.m. He said the military men claimed that they had orders from above to block the road.

3. The Independent's March 11 [report](#), "2023 Polls: Journalist Raises Alarm Over Threats To Life," offers another example.

The report said: "A member of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Niger state Council and state correspondent of Al-Jazeera Newspapers, Mr Samson Isah Alfa has raised alarm over threats to his life after the discovery of a facility suspected to have been used for the rigging of the Presidential and National Assembly election in the state."

4. "Ogun Police rescue kidnapped journalist in Lagos," The [Punch reported](#) on March 13

"Operatives of Ogun State Police Command have rescued a journalist, Oduneye Olusegun, whom some gunmen kidnapped at the Mobalufon area of Ijebu Ode," the report said.

"The journalist was kidnapped on Thursday and was rescued on Saturday, three days after, in Lagos.

"The Police Public Relations Officer in the State, SP Abimbola Oyeyemi, disclosed this in a statement on Monday.

"Oyeyemi said the abductors called the victim's wife through his phone the following morning and demanded N30 million as ransom."

5. "Hoodlums attack journalist in Taraba," Daily Post reported on March 9.

"A journalist, Mohammed Usamat Suleman, was attacked by hoodlums in Jalingo, the Taraba State capital, around 8 p.m. on Wednesday," [the story](#) read.

"He told DAILY POST that he was on his way home when the hoodlums attacked him in a commercial tricycle he boarded.

"The Shimo FM staff is receiving treatment in the emergency ward of the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Jalingo. He said the hoodlums, who brandished weapons like guns and cutlasses, demanded he produced a particular midget."

6. "Elections: Umahi orders arrest of fake observers, Journalists," [Blueprint reported](#) on March 18. The directive could have incited zealous security operatives to attack real journalists or citizens who were documenting the electoral process.

"Governor David Umahi of Ebonyi state Friday ordered the arrest of any fake observer or journalists found loitering in polling units and other election zones during Saturday's election," the report read.

"The Governor gave the order during statewide broadcast and press conference preparatory to the polls.

"Umahi maintained that after a joint empirical analysis of the events of the last election, he has absolved security agencies of any wrongdoing, adding that most of the lapses experienced were not attributable to them. He commended them for their preparations so far toward ensuring a hitch-free election come Saturday."

7. "Governorship Election: Thugs harass Pulse Journalists in Ikeja," [Pulse NG reported](#) on March 18.

"Journalists of Pulse Nigeria covering the ongoing governorship and state house of assembly elections in Ikeja areas of Lagos state were harassed by thugs," the report said.

"Pulse Senior News Reporter Ima Elijah acting on a tip by an eye witness who disclosed that vote buying was ongoing in the Anifowoshe area in, Ikeja swiftly led the Pulse media team to the polling unit to verify the facts.

"Upon arriving at the polling unit, she alongside the Pulse media team was harassed by a group of thugs who insisted that the voting process in the area should not be captured live or recorded."

8. "Nigeria Decides 2023: NSCDC Officials Attack Journalist in Nasarawa, Photos Emerge," [Legit NG reported](#) on March 18.

"The journalist who works for Breeze FM, a radio station in the state capital, was attacked after taking pictures of a polling unit in Lafia," the report said.

9. "Armed Thugs Invade Odoakpu, attack journalist, scattered ballot boxes, cart away phones," [Business Day reported](#) on March 18.

“Some suspected armed thugs have invaded Metu Memorial Primary school in Odoakpu in Anambra, scattered ballot boxes, carted away phones of the electorate,” the report said.

“Odoakpu, Onitsha South LGA of Anambra state is one of the venues used for the House of Assembly election in the state.

“A voter, Chibuzor Ekene... said ‘all of a sudden, some bad boys moved in with tricycle, otherwise called Keke, they attacked many polling centres at Metu Memorial School in Odoakpu ward 7 Onitsha.’”

Regulation

Sixteen stories, or 38.1% of the distribution, were focused on regulation.

Examples:

1. “NCC not regulating social media – spokesperson,” [The Ideal reported](#) on March 28, representing an instance in which regulation was the thematic focus of a story.

“The Nigerian Communications Commission has said it is not involved in the regulation of social media,” the article read.

“This is as the NCC said it would continue to consult stakeholders on issues affecting telecommunication service deployments and developments, in line with its culture of inclusiveness, collaboration and partnership, as predicated on its strategic focus.”

2. “Election coverage: NBC issues ‘last warning’ to broadcast stations, threatens to revoke licences,” [TheCable reported](#) on March 10.

“The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has threatened to shut down broadcast stations whose activities are capable of undermining peaceful co-existence,” the report said.

“Ekanem Antia, NBC spokesperson, on Friday, said Balarabe Ilela, NBC director-general, spoke at a meeting with broadcast stations on the coverage of the February 25 elections.”

3. “NBC Sanctions 25 Stations For Contravening Broadcast Code During Presidential Poll,” [The Guardian reported](#) on March 16.

“National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has sanctioned 25 stations and issued final warnings to 16 others for violating provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code during the February 25, 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections,” the report said.

“Consequently, the regulator charged broadcasters on professionalism during this weekend’s governorship and legislative polls.

"It reminded broadcast stations that political campaigns and jingles must stop tomorrow, while only results announced by an authorised electoral officer must be aired."

4. "Election Coverage: SERAP Wants Court To Stop President Buhari, Others From Shutting Down Broadcast Stations," ThisDay reported on March 19.

"The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has filed a lawsuit against President Muhammadu Buhari and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for the arbitrary use of the NBC Act and broadcasting code to sanction and threaten to revoke the licences of broadcast stations in the country and shut them down over their legitimate coverage of the 2023 general elections," [the report](#) said.

"Joined in the suit as Defendant was the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed.

"The NBC had last week reportedly sanctioned 25 broadcast stations and issued 'final warnings' to 16 others for allegedly violating provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code during the February 25, 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections."

5. "Media Rights Group Seeks Clarification on Purported New Powers Granted NBC," ThisDay reported on March 23.

"The Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has asked the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) through an application made pursuant to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011 to provide it with details of the independence reportedly granted by President Muhammadu Buhari to the commission in the exercise of its regulatory functions," the report said.

"A statement released by the MRA quoted the NBC's Director General, Mallam Balarabe Ilesah, as having announced at a media briefing in Abuja on February 9, 2023, that the president had approved the independence of the commission from any political interference in the exercise of its functions, particularly concerning the issuance and withdrawal of broadcasting licences."

6. On March 26, the Guardian published an [opinion article](#) by MRA lawyer Monday Arunsi titled, "How much independence did President Buhari grant NBC?"

"It is expedient for the NBC to provide MRA with a copy of the communication from the President through which the approval of the independence of the NBC was conveyed to the Commission," the author wrote.

7. "Media Complaints Commission For Inauguration April," Leadership reported on March 27.

“The nine-man National Media Complaints Commission, which was constituted last month by the Nigerian Press Organisation is set to mediate disputes between media practitioners and the society whenever one party feels injured by the other,” the report said.

“The commission, expected to be inaugurated next month, has Emeka Izeze, a former managing director of the Guardian Newspaper as chairman and has representatives from the academia, the bar, civil society and the media.”

8. On March 29, Vanguard published a column by Okoh Aihe titled, “For Telecoms, the taste of half bread”.

“...under the Buhari administration, the telecommunications sector has witnessed a plunge in fortunes. The regulator of the industry has fallen from its apogee of importance to some low-level struggle for existence and relevance,” the author [wrote](#).

9. “Stakeholders decry drafting process of creative industry bill,” [Voice of Nigeria reported](#) on March 6.

The report continued: “A cross-section of stakeholders in the creative industry have frowned at the drafting of the Creative Industry Development Bill (CIDB) without their input.”

“The stakeholders expressed their grievances during a consultative meeting of the creative industry stakeholders with Col. Felix Alaita, Senior Special Assistant to the President (Country Risk Assessment and Evaluation), the initiator of the bill, at the Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, Lagos, on Sunday.

“They said that though the content of the bill was such that would spur growth in the industry, the stakeholders ought to be involved in each stage of the drafting process.”

10. “Election coverage: SERAP gives Buhari 48 hours to withdraw threat to shut down broadcast stations,” [Vanguard reported](#) on March 12.

“Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has urged President Muhammadu Buhari to instruct Mr Lai Mohammed, Minister of Information and Culture, and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to urgently withdraw the ‘last warning’ and threat to revoke the licenses of broadcast stations and shut them down over their coverage of elections and post-election matters,” the report said.

“NBC had last week threatened to revoke the licenses of broadcast stations and shut them down if they continue to allow unpatriotic individuals on their platforms to

make utterances that are subversive, hateful, inciting, and negative conversations, particularly in the post-2023 presidential election period.”

ACTORS

This section concerns the personalities and groups who were prominent in the relevant discourses tracked in March 2023. It also concerns the actors identified as the major instigators or perpetrators of attacks against the media and (or) citizens’ right to freedom of expression.

Table 1: Actors identified in media and expression in Nigeria (March 2023)

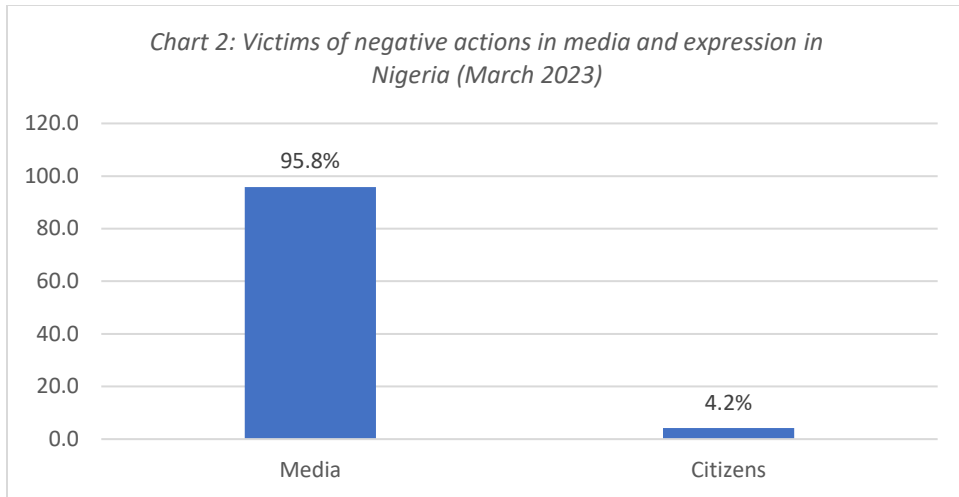
Actors	Percentages	Stories
Other government agencies	38.8	31
Other non-state actors	20	16
Interest groups	18.8	15
Politicians/political parties	6.3	5
Media	6.3	5
Security agencies	5	4
Foreign actors	2.5	2
Citizens	2.5	2
Total	100	80

According to Table 1, security agencies were the actors identified in four stories, representing five per cent of 80 applicable reports. Other government agencies were more prominent, featuring in 31 or 38.8% of the reports coded during the period in review. Other non-state actors were featured in 16 stories, representing 20% of the reports, while citizens were the least featured, appearing in two reports or 2.5% of the total. Also, foreign actors were featured in two stories. Interest groups were featured in 15 reports or 18.8% of the total while politicians/political parties were the actors identified in five reports, representing 6.3% of the stories. Also, the media were featured in five reports.

VICTIMS

These were the individuals or groups that suffered harm or loss as a result of the issues or actions of the actors. The stories tracked for this section involved, but are not limited to, the following form of ‘negative actions’:

- arrests
- threats
- detention
- censorship
- assault



The media (85.8%; 23 in 24 applicable reports) were the biggest victims identified in this section, Chart 2 shows. Citizens were the victims identified in one report, representing 4.2% of the total.

CONCLUSION

MEiN analysis for the period under review showed that attacks on the media and other victims were the most prevalent theme, accounting for 61.9% of the stories. Regulation also got significant coverage, representing 38.1% of the stories. Government agencies and non-state actors were the most featured actors identified in this research, while the media was the most affected by negative actions.

