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MEDIA AND EXPRESSION IN NIGERIA (MEiN)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

This section of the report provides a list of the abbreviations used in this document. Each abbreviation is listed in alphabetical order, followed by its full form.

These are the abbreviations used in this report:

AAAN - Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria

ACTDA - Awka Capital Territory Development Agency

ARCON - Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria

CEMESO - Centre for Media and Society

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

MEiN - Media and Expression in Nigeria

MIPAN - Media Independent Practitioners of Nigeria

NAN - News Agency of Nigeria

NBC - National Broadcasting Commission

NUJ - Nigeria Union of Journalists

OAA - Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria

BACKGROUND

Media and Expression in Nigeria (MEiN) is a monthly report by the Centre 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.

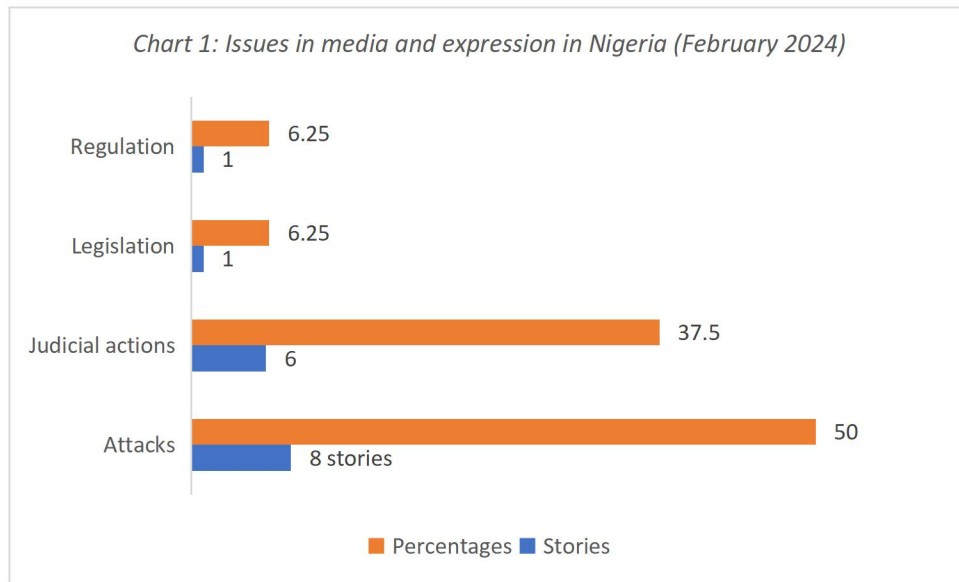
The coding process is done by trained media monitors who follow a coding scheme that defines the categories and sub-categories of each unit of analysis. The coding scheme also specifies the rules and criteria for assigning codes to the data. The coded data is then translated into a spreadsheet for further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



Attacks

According to Chart 1, attacks on the media and other victims constituted eight or 50% of 16 applicable stories making it the most reported issue during the period under review.

Example:

1. On February 6, [Sahara Reporters published an article](#) titled "Kwara Polytechnic Rector Uses Nigeria Police To Detain Journalists For Reporting 'False Claims About School's Financial Status, Opening Of Shoddy, Uncompleted Projects'".

"The rector of Kwara State Polytechnic, Engr. Abdul Jimoh Muhammed has used his influence to get the police to arrest and detain two journalists - Salihu Ayatullahi and Adisa-Jaji Azeez - over an investigative report about how he mismanaged the school's funds," the report said.

"The journalists who work with Informant247 had reported that the rector lied about the financial status of the polytechnic and also inaugurated shabby and uncompleted capital projects to celebrate the school's 29th convocation.

"In the report, which was co-published by SaharaReporters, the journalists exposed the institution's significant revenue surplus, contradicting the rector's claim."

2. "Four Nigerian journalists charged with cybercrime, defamation over fraud investigation," [Premium Times reported](#) on February 9.

"Authorities in Nigeria should immediately drop all charges against journalists Adisa-Jaji Azeez, Salihu Ayatullahi, Salihu Shola Taofeek, and Abdulrahman Taye Damilola, and

allow them to work without fear of arrest, the Committee to Protect Journalists said on Friday," the report said, citing the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

"On Tuesday, police officers arrested Azeez, managing director, and Ayatullahi, editor-in-chief, of the privately owned The Informant247 news website, over reports published on November 10 and February 1 about corruption at Kwara State Polytechnic, Ayatullahi and Taofeek, the outlet's publisher, told CPJ by phone.

"Azeez and Ayatullahi were arrested after responding to a request from the police headquarters in Ilorin, capital of western Nigeria's Kwara State, to come in for questioning, following a complaint from the rector of the polytechnic Abdul Jimoh Mohammed about the outlet's allegation that he was involved in fraud, those sources said."

3. "NUJ Chapel Boss Allegedly Assaults Journalist In Kano," [Solacebase reported](#) on February 10.

"Kano State Correspondent Chapel Chairman of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Malam Aminu Muhammad Garko has allegedly assaulted the state correspondent of Vanguard, Malam Bashir Bello over an issue of assignment," the report said.

"SOLACEBASE gathered that Garko at NUJ Press Centre in Kano on Friday allegedly assaulted Bello and almost strangulated him safe for the Chapel vice chairman Abdullahi Jalaludeen and the Council security that immediately intervened.

"It was gathered that trouble started when Aminu Garko, who is also the Bureau Chief of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Kano met Bashir Bello, a correspondent of Vanguard newspapers and Assistant Secretary of the chapel at an assignment on Thursday."

4. "Journalists Threatened, Assaulted By Suspected Killers In Court," Osun Defender reported on February 11.

"The cameramen from NTA and NSTV as well as several other journalists who were present at the Suleja High Court premises to cover the proceedings on the killing of the late Village Head of Lambata, Alhaji Muhammad Abdulsafur, were assaulted by suspects in the case," the report said.

"The suspects, who were about 15 in number, threatened the journalists and warned them to stop covering their case.

"At the resumed trial of their case, the suspects, who had been granted bail by Justice Aisha Bawa Wodu, warned that drastic action would be taken against the journalists if they continued to report their court appearances.

"The NTA and NSTV journalists who were assaulted were carrying out their duties outside the courtroom when they were pounced upon by the suspects who had left the courtroom.

"It took the intervention of the Court Registrar and the Counsel of the suspects to bring the situation under control.

"Not content with their attack, the suspects made it clear that there would be consequences if the journalists failed to comply with what they had said."

5. "Again, Soludo's ACTDA officials seize Nation, Sun, Vanguard, Thisday newspapers," [The Nation reported](#) on February 17.

"Officials of Governor Chukwuma Soludo's Awka Capital Territory Development Agency (ACTDA) have again seized all the newspapers found with vendors," the report read.

"It was the second time in two days that ACTDA officials would harass vendors in the city and subject them to beating.

"Let us see who owns Anambra, whether it is Tinubu or Soludo. Any newspaper we see in Anambra, we will destroy it,' a heavily built official told the vendors at Aroma.

"You people had the guts to report our activities online. Let us see who owns the land,' he further threatened."

6. "Edo governorship primary: How thugs attacked APC collation centre, beat journalists," [Blueprint reported](#) on February 17.

"Suspected political thugs on Saturday disrupted collation of results of the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship primary election in Edo state," the report said.

"Senator Monday Okpebholo was leading by landslides in results of seven of the eight local government areas released by the party's electoral officials. The officials had announced a break in the exercise to enable it to wait for other officials to turn in their results.

"Afterwards, suspected thugs stormed the Lushville hotel, the venue of the collation centre despite the presence of the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Funsho Adegboye. They (thugs) beat up journalists and electoral officials and drove them out of the venue.

"Television cameras and laptops belonging to journalists were also smashed."

7. "Press freedom under threat: police detained journalist covering raid on Abuja forex traders," [The Guardian reported](#) on February 21.

"The anti-violence crime unit of the Nigerian Police Force has arrested Kasarachi Aniagolu, a journalist with the Abuja-based Whistler Newspaper," the report said.

"In a statement on Wednesday, the management of the newspaper said Miss Aniagolu was arrested while covering a police raid on bureau de change operators in the Wuse Zone 4 area of Abuja.

"The newspaper's management said the journalist, despite identifying herself as a reporter, was assaulted and threatened, adding that her gadgets were also seized by the security operatives.

"The reporter was arrested alongside 95 forex traders and is currently in police custody. The newspaper condemned the disregard for press freedom by the police and demanded the immediate release of its reporter."

8. "Soldiers arrest journalist, activist over planned Delta protest," [The Punch reported](#) on February 24.

"Soldiers from the Nigerian Army 3 Battalion in Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State, in the early hours of Friday, arrested and handcuffed the South-South Bureau Chief of Galaxy Television, Mr Dele Fasan, for recording a planned labour protest in the metropolis against the economic hardship," the report said.

"The soldiers also reportedly whisked away human rights activist, Israel Joe to their nearby military barracks, following a mild, rift between him and other activists including Kelvin Ejumudo, and others.

"Our correspondent gathered that the planned protest was cancelled after critical stakeholders met and discussed the issues on Thursday night.

"The molestation of the television journalist took place at the popular DSC roundabout in Effurun where the soldiers allegedly brutalised and hit him with the butt of their gun. In the ensuing melee, Fasan was reportedly manhandled to the point that his cameraman fled the scene to avert his arrest."

Judicial actions

Six stories, representing 37.5% of the reports, were focused on judicial actions, making the issue the second most reported theme during the period under review.

Example:

1. "After nearly four months in jail, Nigerian journalist freed on bail," [Premium Times reported](#) on February 2.

"The Committee to Protect Journalists welcomes Thursday's release on bail of Nigerian journalist Saint Mienpamo Onitsha and calls for authorities to drop all charges against him and reform the country's laws to ensure journalism is not criminalized," the report read.

"In October 2023, police arrested Onitsha, founder of the privately owned online broadcaster NAIJA Live TV, and charged him with cyberstalking under section 24 of Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act and defamation under the criminal code. The charge sheet cited a September report about tensions in the southern Niger Delta region.

"On December 4, a court in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, heard Onitsha's bail application and on January 25 the court granted him bail with a condition that he provides two sureties—persons willing to take responsibility for any court decisions made if Onitsha fails to meet bail obligations—with a bond of 10 million naira (US\$8,372), according to copies of the court ruling, reviewed by CPJ, and Onitsha's lawyer, Anande Terungwa, who spoke by phone with CPJ.

"The court also ordered the residence of the sureties must be verified by the court registrar and that the sureties must submit documents proving they own a landed property in Abuja, as well as their recent passport photographs, according to those same sources.

"Onitsha's next court date is March 19. If convicted, he faces a 25 million naira (US\$20,930) fine and/or up to 10 years in jail on the cyberstalking charges—as well as potential imprisonment for two years for charges of defamation and the publication of defamatory matter under the Criminal Code Act, according to Terungwa and a copy of the charge sheet reviewed by CPJ."

2. "Journalist demands N50m reward from ex-Senate President over book on tenure in office," [Daily Post reported](#) on February 7.

"A journalist, Cyriacus Njoku, is asking a Federal Capital Territory, FCT, High Court to order a former Senate President, Ken Nnamani, to pay him the sum of N50 million as a reward for authoring a book on his tenure in office," the report read.

"In the suit numbered CV/2269/2023, Njoku, through his lawyer, Julius Mbilitem, alleged that the former Senate President did not reward him for his efforts in writing the book titled, 'The Peoples Lawmaker', despite an agreement to that effect.

"He also claimed that rather than reward him as promised, Nnamani used his work as an inspiration to author another book titled, 'Standing Strong', a personal account of his stewardship as Senate President."

3. On February 7, [Sahara Reporters published an article](#) titled, "Court Grants Bail To Nigerian Journalists Detained For Reporting 'False Claims About Kwara Poly's Financial Status."

"A magistrate court sitting in Ilorin on Wednesday granted bail to The Informant247's Editor-in-chief; Salihu Ayatullahi and Managing Director; Adisa-Jaji Azeez," the report read.

"SaharaReporters reported on Tuesday that the rector of Kwara State Polytechnic, Engr. Abdul Jimoh Muhammed had used his influence to get the police to arrest and detain two journalists in Ilorin over an investigative report about how he mismanaged the school's funds.

"The duo were arraigned before Magistrate Monisola Kamson on Wednesday on the alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, cyberstalking and injurious falsehood contrary to sections 27(1) B, 24(1)(B) of the cybercrime (prohibition and prevention) act, 2015 and section 393 of the penal code."

4. "Journalists barred from covering cleric's alleged fraud case," [The Punch reported](#) on February 8.

"The Chief Magistrate of Yaba Magistrate Court, Adeola Olatubosun, on Wednesday, barred journalists from covering the arraignment of a couple, Pastors Azuka and Mary Ohez, accused of N33,829,30m fraud," the report read.

"Azuka and his wife, Mary, were accused of allegedly aiding to defraud a company, Climax Lubricant Industries, of the amount stated above.

"They were alleged to have committed the offence by aiding the fraudulent act of one Chijoke Ezekirian through false prophecies.

"They were arraigned on two counts of conspiracy and fraud preferred against them by the police."

5. "Alleged Defamation: Court Acquits Journalists, Chides Police, Kwara Magistrate For Shoddy Trial," [Solacebase reported on February 23](#).

"A Kwara State High Court, sitting as an appellate court in Ilorin, has discharged and acquitted two journalists convicted for publishing a defamatory article against a rice factory, faulting the police and trial magistrate's ruling," the report read.

"In February 2023, a magistrate's court convicted Alfred Olufemi, an investigative reporter and Gidado Shuaib, editor of Abuja-based News Digest, over a report against Hillcrest Agro-Allied Industries Limited.

"The report published in News Digest in 2018 detailed how the company's staff members smoke Indian hemp freely within its premises, violating relevant laws and health regulations.

"In his verdict, the trial magistrate, AS Muhammad, found the journalists guilty of criminal conspiracy and defamation. He then sentenced the journalists to two months imprisonment with an option of fine.

"But the journalists immediately appealed the judgement at the state high court, where a three-man panel reviewed the trial judgement."

Legislation

One story or 6.25% of the reports was dedicated to legislation, the chart in focus also shows.

Example:

1. "Cyberbullying: Reps To Strengthen Defamation Legislation, Says Abbas," [Channels Television reported](#) on February 8.

"The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, says the green chamber will strengthen legislation against defamation, character assassination and cyberbullying," the report read.

"He made this known on Thursday at a press conference on pressing national issues held at Conference Room 301, the National Assembly, Abuja.

"Abbas said the intention of the legislation is not to stifle free speech but to protect the dignity of individuals and institutions against cyber-attacks.

"The Speaker said Nigerians must be wary of slander against officials of government, stressing that unscrupulous persons have, of late, launched campaigns of calumny against top government officials.

"Abbas cited his predecessor and current Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila, as one of the many victims of cyberbullying, defamation and character assassination.

"The Speaker said cyberbullying is punishable, according to Section 375 of the Criminal Code Act, and Section 24 of the Cybercrime Prohibition and Prevention Act (2015)."

Regulation

Regulation also received 6.25% (1 story) of the coverage during the period under review.

Example:

1. "ARCON mandates ad bodies to provide N1bn insurance cover for members," [BusinessDay reported](#) on February 7.

"The Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) has rolled out some guidelines to sanitise the industry. These include a mandate to all advertising sectoral bodies to provide N1 billion indemnity professional insurance cover for their members," the report read.

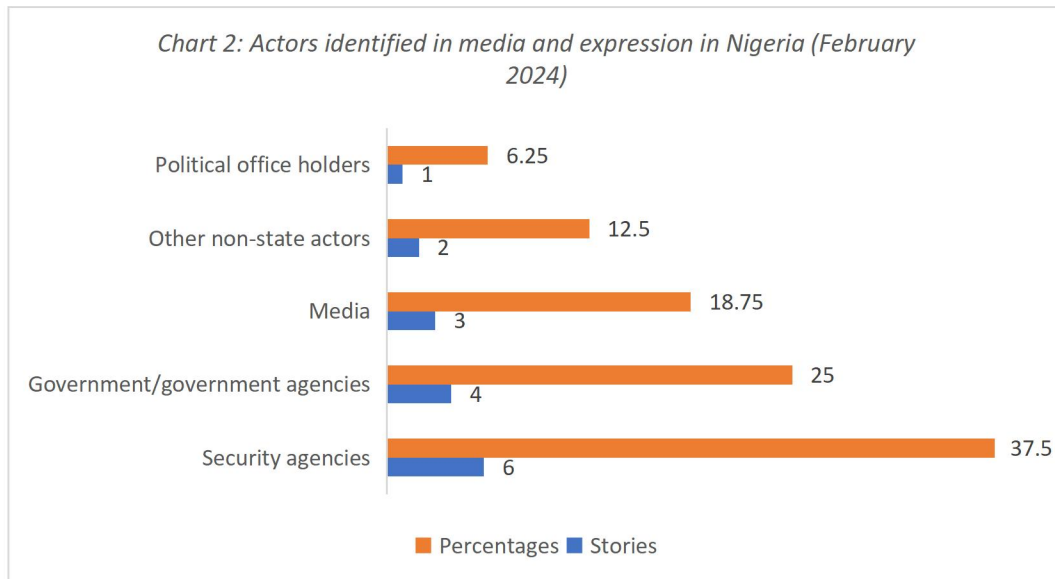
"Indemnity is a type of insurance or contractual agreement between two parties in which one party agrees to pay for potential losses or damage caused by another party.

“The sectoral groups include Experiential Marketers of Nigeria (EXMAN), the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN), Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (OAA) and Media Independent Practitioners of Nigeria (MIPAN).

“Issuing the guidelines on Tuesday in Lagos while speaking with journalists, Lekan Fadolapo, the director-general of ARCON, said the insurance policy covers professional indemnity for members of their associations as part of the corporate licence requirements.”

ACTORS

This section concerns the personalities and groups who were prominent in the relevant stories tracked in February 2024. 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.



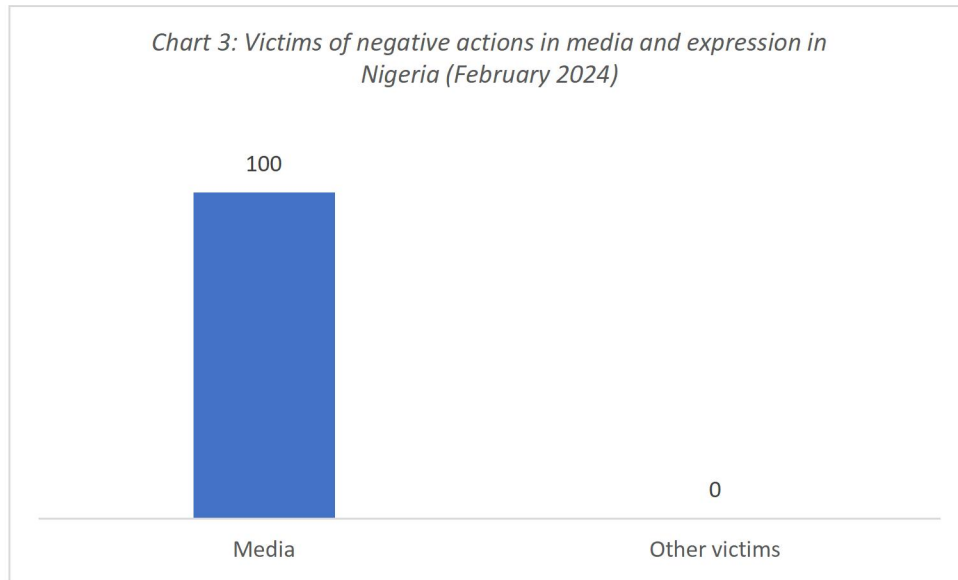
According to Chart 2, security agencies were the most prominent actors as they were featured in six or 37.5% of 16 applicable reports. Government/government agencies received 25% (4 stories) of the coverage. The Media and other non-state actors received 18.75% (3 stories) and 12.5% (2 stories) of the coverage respectively. Political office holders were the least featured as they accounted for 6.25% (1 story) of the 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
- kidnapping/abduction



The media was the only victim identified in this section, featuring in, as Chart 3 shows, 100% of 13 applicable reports.

CONCLUSION

The MEiN analyses for February 2024 showed that the predominant themes in news stories were focused on attacks and judicial actions. Among these, attacks stood out as the most prominent, constituting 50% of the thematic focus areas. Security agencies played a significant role, featuring in 37.5% of the reports. Unfortunately, they were often portrayed as the primary threats to press freedom.

The media emerged as the sole victims of these incidents. However, the impact extended beyond journalists and media organisations. Caught in the crossfire, other individuals also suffered. These attacks cast a dark shadow over press freedom, endangering those who work tirelessly to inform the public.

To address this critical issue, stakeholders must take decisive action. Initiating or reinforcing protective measures is imperative to safeguard the media from harm. Additionally, dialogue with security agencies is essential. Rather than attacking the media, these agencies should actively protect them from violent non-state actors who are also responsible for some of the attacks.

Furthermore, the regulatory, legislative, and judicial spaces must continue to foster conversations. These discussions should aim to promote accurate, fair and just lawmaking, trials

and rulings. By doing so, we can expand—not shrink—the civil and media spaces in Nigeria, ensuring a vibrant, informed and free society.

MEiN is published

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