

2.6. Journalists and media workers

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Nigeria’s media landscape is described as ‘rich and diverse’,511 including both traditional and digital platforms.512 In the 2025 World Press Freedom Index,513 Nigeria ranked 122nd out of 180 countries (where 1 represents the highest level of press freedom and 180 the lowest), a ten-place decline from the previous year. Governmental interference in the news media remains ‘significant’, taking the form of pressure, harassment of journalists and outlets, and, in some cases, censorship. Despite the large number of media organisations, few are financially stable. Salary delays make journalists vulnerable to corruption, while politicians, businesses, and advertisers influence editorial content.514

The Nigerian Constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression and the press under Section 39.515 Certain laws - such as the provision on defamation in the Penal Code516 and the 2015 Cybercrime Act – have, however, been used to obstruct the work of journalists.517 In February 2024, the 2015 Cybercrime Act was amended to narrow the definition of cyberstalking under Section 24,518 a provision said to be frequently used to arrest journalists.519 Although such amendment was defined as a ‘timid attempt to promote press freedom’, the legislation has continued to endanger investigative journalism,520 as it retains heavy penalties521 and vague wording.522 According to the Nigeria Human Rights Commission, Section 24 in its current form has been applied arbitrarily against individuals for publishing or disseminating content on digital platforms.523 From February 2024 to September 2024, Reporters Sans Frontières (RFS) reported that at least eight journalists were arrested, prosecuted, or detained under Nigeria’s 2015 Cybercrimes Act since the amendment.524

In 2024, authorities, citing national security concerns,525 have intensified a crackdown on journalists and critical voices.526 A local NGO - as reported by media sources – found that in 2024, security agencies, including the military and intelligence services were responsible for more attacks on journalists than any other actors. Between January and October 2024, 69 incidents targeting journalists were documented, and law enforcement or security agencies were accountable for 45 % of them.527

The International press Institute (IPI) reported that the highest number of incidents occurred to journalists covering the 10-day #EndBadGovernance protests in August 2024.528 (For more information on these protests see 2.7. Protesters). Various sources documented arrests and physical attacks against journalists during the protests.529 Media workers have been targeted by both law enforcement officers and unidentified assailants.530 On 1 August 2024, hoodlums attacked a ChannelsTV vehicle carrying around 11 journalists covering the protest in Kano.531

In Abuja, despite wearing a press jacket, a Premium Times journalist was approached by police officers, who seized his phone, hit him on the head with a gun, and threw him into a police van, from which he was eventually released.532 In Maiduguri, nine journalists working for Radio Ndarason Internationale, including its programme director and editor-in-chief, were arrested at the radio station after 'reporting on the current protests throughout the country',533 and were released later the same day.534 Between 31 July and 3 August 2024, at least 31 journalists were attacked across the country.535

Frequent arrests under the 2015 Cybercrimes Act for online activities have led to growing self-censorship.536 Security agencies 'intimidated journalists, including editors and media owners', 537 particularly in response to coverage perceived as critical of the government.538 For instance, in September 2024, Haruna Mohammed Salisu and Yawale Adamu, journalists for the WikkiTimes, faced charges of criminal defamation, injurious falsehood and mischief over a report alleging that a federal lawmaker and a businessman conspired to divert public funds.539 Daniel Ojukwu, a journalist with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism who reported on corruption implicating senior Nigerian officials, was abducted by the Intelligence Response Team of the Inspector General of Police on 1 May 2024. Police only confirmed his detention on 3 May 2025, when he was accused of violating the 2015 Cybercrimes Act; he was released on 10 May 2024. 540 In September 2024, four journalists, editors, and publishers –Olurotimi Olawale, Precious Eze Chukwunonso, Rowland Olonishuwa, and Seun Odunlami– were arrested and later charged with violating sections 24(1)(b) and 27 of the 2015 Cybercrimes Act in connection with reports they had published concerning alleged fraud involving the Chief Executive Officer of Guaranty Trust Bank.541 The police forced the journalist to take down the reports from their various platforms.542 In March 2025, police arrested and detained for three hours two journalists on the order of Kano's State's information commissioner after they published an article accusing him of abusing his power.543

Sources reported a lack of mechanisms to protect journalists544 and a 'culture of impunity',545 with authorities 'rarely' investigating violations of press freedom.546

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