

March 12, 2019

H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo
President of the Republic of Ghana
Jubilee House
Accra-Ghana

Your Excellency,

Petition: Guaranteeing the Safety and Security of Manasseh Azure Awuni

On March 7, 2019, investigative journalist, Manasseh Azure Awuni, of the Multimedia Group released an investigative report revealing the existence of a vigilante group, aligned to the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) that has been using the Osu Castle as its operational base and training grounds.

The documentary also revealed that the leader of the said group happens to be your former personal bodyguard. Following the publication of the report, a statement from your government, through the Ministry of Information, subsequently indicated that the said former personal bodyguard of yours, also got an appointment by your government.

The publication of the investigative report by the journalist, came at a time when you have, on a number of occasions within the last one month, personally called for the disbandment of such vigilante groups by both your party and the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

The publication also came at a time you had set up a Commission of Enquiry into the phenomenon of party vigilantism, a phenomenon that has been widely acknowledged as being perhaps, the biggest threat to the stability of Ghana and the country's burgeoning democracy.

In our view, the exposé by the journalist is a professional piece that is of significant national interest. Unfortunately, since the publication of the investigative story, the journalist has received several threats on his life and has since reported the matter to the Police.

As organisations working to promote press freedom across West Africa, we the undersigned organisations, are deeply concerned about the development in general and the safety of the journalist in particular.

Our concern is born out of several factors including the recent murder of Ahmed Hussein-Suale, who was a team member of investigative journalist, Anas Aremeyaw Anas. We are also aware of a number of incidents of press freedom violations both under your government and that of your predecessor in which perpetrators have not been punished, thus, breeding a culture of impunity for crimes against journalists in Ghana.

Threats on journalists for their work have the potential to intimidate and censor them and in fact, deter other journalists from pursuing their rightful journalistic work. Such threats undermine Ghana's generally reputable press freedom and freedom of expression environment.

We are, therefore, appealing to you to personally take interest in this matter and urgently intervene by calling on the appropriate security agencies to take the right and necessary steps for guaranteeing the safety and security of the journalist, Manasseh Azure Awuni.

Yours sincerely,

Signed:

1. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
2. Associação Dos Jornalistas De Cabo Verde (AJOC), Cape Verde
3. International Press Centre (IPC), Nigeria
4. L'Association Guinéenne des éditeurs de la Presse Indépendante (AGEPI) – Guinea
5. Regroupement de la Presse Mauritanienne(RPM), Mauritania
6. L'Observatoire de la Liberté de la Presse, de l'Ethique et de la Déontologie (OLPED), Cote d'Ivoire
7. Gambia Press Union (GPU), The Gambia
8. L'Observatoire de la Déontologie et de l'Ethique dans les Medias (ODEM), Benin
9. Media Reform Co-ordinating Group-Sierra Leone (MRCG-SL), Sierra Leone
10. Sindicato De Jornalistas e Tecnicos De Comunicacao Social Guinea Bissau (SINJOTECS), Guinea Bissau
11. Union des Journalistes Indépendants du Togo (UJIT), Togo
12. National de Presse Norbert Zongo (CNP-NZ), Burkina Faso
13. Centre for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP), Liberia
14. Maison de la Presse du Mali (MP), Mali
15. Observatoire Nigérien Indépendant des Medias (ONIMED), Niger

CC:

The Minister for National Security

The Minister of Interior

The Inspector General of Police

The Chairman, National Media Commission