



Committee to Protect Journalists

Joint Submission by the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Media Foundation for West Africa, and the Syndicate of Journalists and Media Technicians of Guinea-Bissau

for the 49th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group, January 2025

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau

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Media Foundation for West Africa (“MFWA”): MFWA is a regional independent non-governmental organization with a mission to promote and defend the right to freedom of expression of all persons particularly the media and human rights defenders in West Africa. Program Manager for Digital Rights, Vivian Affoah, +233 302 555327, vivian@mfw.org.

Syndicate of Journalists and Media Technicians of Guinea-Bissau (“SINJOTECS”): SINJOTECS is a socio-professional organization of journalists and media technicians that works to promote freedom of the press and expression, as well as to facilitate the development and practice of professional journalism in Guinea-Bissau. President, Indira Correia Baldé, +245 956 298 153, leocorreialbalde@gmail.com.

Executive summary

1. As organizations promoting freedom of expression and the rule of law, this submission focuses on the Republic of Guinea-Bissau's ("**Guinea-Bissau**") compliance with international human rights obligations related to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press, and on progress made since the last review in 2020.
2. In particular, the concerns raised in this submission relate to:
 - Physical attacks, abduction, harassment, and intimidation of journalists¹
 - Threat or commencement of legal proceedings against journalists
 - Arbitrary detention, imprisonment, travel restrictions, and forced flight of journalists
 - Suspension of broadcasts and broadcast licenses, increase of licensing fees, and forced broadcast of government content.

Human rights instruments referred to in this submission

3. Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau affirms Guinea-Bissau's attachment to the fundamental rights enshrined in international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² Article 51 of Guinea Bissau's Constitution enshrines the freedom of expression and information, affirming that "[a]ll have the right to freely express and spread their thoughts by any means available, as well as to inform, look for information and be informed without any hindering or discrimination" and that "[t]he exercise of [such] right may not be impeded or limited by any type of censorship."³ Article 56 of the Constitution further provides that "[f]reedom of press is assured."⁴ The Constitution of Guinea-Bissau therefore protects the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and press freedom. However, the rights are not unqualified. They are guaranteed as "provided by the law" and "do not negate other rights foreseen by the laws of [Guinea-Bissau]."⁵ Hence, they may be limited to protect other rights.⁶
4. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1948) enshrines the principle of freedom of opinion and expression, noting that "the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Articles 8, 9, 10, and 11 protect the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and the prohibition on arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
5. Guinea-Bissau ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the "**Covenant**") in 2010. The Covenant sets forth the principle in its Article 19 that "[e]veryone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and to "freedom of expression" which includes "freedom to seek, receive and impart information."⁷ Those rights are subject to restriction only as provided

by law and necessary for the respect of rights or reputations of others or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or morals.⁸ Article 9(1) of the Covenant provides that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law. Article 9(2) of the Covenant requires that anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his or her arrest. Article 9(3) of the Covenant provides that: “Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release.”

6. Guinea-Bissau is a member state of the African Union. The Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa (adopted by the African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples’ Rights in 2019) in its Preamble reaffirms “the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and access to information as individual human rights, as cornerstones of democracy and as means of ensuring respect for other human rights.”⁹ It further highlights the “key role of the media and other means of communication in ensuring full respect for the right to freedom of expression, promoting the free flow of information and ideas, assisting individuals in making informed decisions and facilitating and strengthening democracy.”¹⁰ It sets forth general principles including: (1) the importance of the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, (2) non-interference with freedom of opinion, (3) non-discrimination, (4) protection of the rights to freedom of expression and access to information online, and (5) protection of human rights defenders and others.¹¹ The protection and safety of journalists is enshrined in Principles 19 and 20 of the Declaration which affirm that states shall not subject the right to express oneself through the media to “undue legal restrictions”.¹² Rather, states are obligated to “guarantee the safety of journalists” and “take measures to prevent attacks on journalists and other media practitioners, including murder, extra-judicial killing, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, kidnapping, intimidation, threats and unlawful surveillance undertaken by State and non-State actors.”¹³
7. Guinea-Bissau ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (“**the African Charter**”) in 1985. Article 9 of the African Charter protects every individual’s right to receive information and to express and disseminate opinions within the law.¹⁴

Implementation of recommendations from previous review

8. Our commentary on the recommendations supported from the previous Universal Periodic Review (“**UPR**”) cycle are contained in the matrix of relevant recommendations in Appendix 1. None of the recommendations that were supported or noted can be considered “partially

achieved.” All recommendations relevant to freedom of expression and press freedom from the prior cycle are “not implemented.”

Update on situation for freedom of expression since the last review

General observations

9. There are several areas of concern raised in this submission. Threats to freedom of expression and press freedom are occurring on multiple fronts: (i) physical attacks, abduction, harassment, and intimidation of journalists; (ii) threat or commencement of legal proceedings against journalists; (iii) arbitrary detention, imprisonment, travel restrictions, and forced flight of journalists; and (iv) suspension of broadcasts and broadcast licenses, increase of licensing fees, and forced broadcast of government content. All of these factors are limiting the right to freedom of expression and press freedom in Guinea-Bissau. These issues must be simultaneously addressed by the state in order to ensure the aforementioned rights.

Specific issues of concern

10. For each of the themes below, a detailed list of incidents reported between 2020 and October 2024 is contained in Appendix 2.

Physical attacks, abduction, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

11. During the review period, journalists in Guinea-Bissau have faced systematic physical attacks, abductions, harassment, and intimidation by security forces and unidentified armed individuals, primarily targeting those critical of the government.¹⁵ Journalists are subject to physical attacks, including beatings and abuse. Many have been subjected to forced abductions, oftentimes at gunpoint or under gunfire. In addition to physical harm, journalists’ equipment has been confiscated, stolen, or destroyed in the course of the attacks.
12. Of particular concern, several alarming attacks have occurred on the offices of Radio Capital FM. In July 2020, armed men wearing Guinea-Bissau National Guard uniforms attacked and vandalized the offices of Radio Capital FM, destroying broadcasting equipment, including transmitters, mixers, and computers, which forced the station off-air for several months.¹⁶ Another attack took place in February 2022, where men in mixed civilian and military attire again launched an assault on Radio Capital FM, firing guns and destroying equipment.¹⁷ The incident resulted in injuries to four journalists, including Ansumane So, who suffered a fractured arm, Maimuna Bari, who sustained a cervical injury, and Lassana Djassi, who fractured a leg.¹⁸ Despite the presence of police at the scene, no actions were taken to intervene or hold those responsible accountable.

The Ministry of Interior denied any government involvement in the attack.¹⁹ Despite repeated reports to authorities about threats since 2016, no effective action has been taken to protect the station or its staff, which underscores the failure to uphold media freedom and ensure the safety of journalists.²⁰

13. Other alarming incidents include the March 2021 abduction of journalist António Aly Silva, editor of *Ditadura de Consenso*, by four men at gunpoint. Silva was driven to an industrial area, and beaten until he lost consciousness. This attack occurred shortly after Silva published reports critical of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló's activities.²¹ Separately, two bloggers, Kéba Sané and Carlos Sambou, were abducted in October 2020 by armed men believed to be led by Tchernó Bari, head of the president's security force, and physically abused at the presidential palace.²² The bloggers had been openly critical of President Embaló's regime. In another incident on February 8, 2022, political panelist Rui Landim of Radio Capital FM was assaulted by armed men, who fired AK-47s and threw tear gas into his compound, injuring his 15-year-old granddaughter.²³ The attack followed critical remarks Landim made on his show. Marcelino Intupe, a commentator for Radio Bombolom, was also abducted by individuals reportedly led by the head of the president's security force²⁴ Intupe was abducted after making critical remarks on his radio show. The threats against Intupe escalated following his public identification of an attacker, culminating in repeated armed assaults on his home and his eventual flight from the country.²⁵ In each of the above incidents, there was no significant attempt to hold the perpetrators accountable, reflecting a broader culture of impunity regarding violence against journalists in Guinea-Bissau.²⁶
14. Journalists in Guinea-Bissau are frequently forced into hiding due to threats from government-linked individuals. For example, Rádio Galáxia de Pindjiguiti's acting director, Tiano Badjana, went into hiding following an attempted arrest by armed men in police uniforms.²⁷ This occurred after a report aired by the station implicated a government official in drug-related corruption. The absence of protective measures or subsequent investigations into the threats against Badjana highlights the lack of security for journalists.²⁸
15. Government officials have adopted threatening and intimidating rhetoric against the media, publicly insulted journalists, and monitored and/or detained journalists. Radio and television stations have been attacked by armed military and civilian individuals, equipment has been destroyed, and journalists arrested or assaulted. Other journalists experience intimidation and threats from governmental authorities, security officials, and unidentified third parties, with respect to the content of their reporting, particularly in the context of elections or opposition to the ruling government. These incidents, combined with the lack of a supportive environment for independent journalism in Guinea-Bissau, leads many media professionals to self-censor.²⁹

16. For instance, many journalists in Guinea-Bissau have faced verbal harassment from senior officials, contributing to an increasingly hostile environment. During a press conference, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló publicly insulted journalist Ussumane Mané for asking about upcoming elections.³⁰ During this encounter, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló directed a vulgar insult at journalist Ussumane Mané of Radio Sol Mansi after Mané questioned the timing of presidential elections during a press conference.³¹ In January 2024, President Embaló publicly accused journalists Indira Correia Baldé and Fátima Tchumá Camará of being partisan militants.³² Subsequently, both journalists were barred from accessing the presidential palace, further demonstrating the limitations placed on journalists' ability to report freely.³³
17. In addition to legal threats, journalists have faced retaliatory dismissals for refusing to align with government directives. Baducaram Imbenque, a journalist with the state broadcaster, was dismissed from his position after he refused to sign a statement discrediting SINJOTECS, the journalists' union, following its criticism of the state broadcaster's management.³⁴
18. Police violence against journalists covering public events persists. During a teachers' protest in Bissau, journalists Djuma Colubali and Nguoisam Casimiro Monteiro were injured by police—Colubali was physically assaulted, and Monteiro was run over by a police vehicle.³⁵ These incidents reflect ongoing risks to journalists and illustrate the continued lack of accountability for such violence.
19. The restrictions on media coverage and intimidation of journalists have continued in Guinea-Bissau, notably involving attempts to control access to significant political events. On August 13, 2024, police prevented over a dozen journalists from covering the arrival of Braima Camará, the president of the MADEM-G15 party, at Bissau International Airport.³⁶ Reporters, including Aguinaldo Ampa of *O Democrata* and Djariatu Baldé of *Radio Jovem*, were blocked from the VIP reception center and later ordered to leave surrounding areas, demonstrating attempts to limit media access to key political figures.³⁷ Journalists have also been expelled from public events on orders from high-ranking officials. On August 22, 2024, Indira Correia Baldé, president of SINJOTECS, was removed from a public event by order of President Embaló, and threats were made against any government officials who spoke to her or to journalist Fátima Tchumá Camará.³⁸ Such actions reflect escalating restrictions on media freedom and attempts to further isolate critical voices within the press.

Threat or commencement of legal proceedings against journalists

20. Government officials in Guinea-Bissau have continued to use threats of and actual legal proceedings to suppress journalistic freedom. For example, Sabino Santos, a journalist with Radio

Capital FM, faced prosecution in 2020 after a complaint by the Customs Service.³⁹ On another occasion, co-host of the “Tira Teimas” program, Sumba Nansil, and Sabino Santos, host of “Debate Nacional,” were questioned following summons issued on February 9, 2021 and March 5, 2021 respectively. A criminal defamation complaint was also filed against their employer, Radio Capital FM.⁴⁰

21. Journalists in Guinea-Bissau have faced ongoing legal threats and prosecutions aimed at silencing critical reporting. Following Adão Ramalho’s coverage of alleged systematic sexual harassment in the police and armed forces, the Press Secretary of the Minister of Interior, Maquilo Bayo, threatened legal action against him and the director of Bombolom FM, demanding proof of his claims.⁴¹ Despite relying on victim testimonies, no protective measures were implemented for Ramalho.⁴²

Arbitrary detention, imprisonment, travel restrictions, and forced flight of journalists

22. Journalists in Guinea-Bissau continue to face arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and travel restrictions by government officials. Danilson Ferreira, a blogger known to be critical of the government of Guinea-Bissau, was arrested, beaten, and imprisoned by the Judicial Police for a week. Upon his release, Ferreira left the country to take refuge in Lisbon, Portugal.⁴³ In another incident, a trainee journalist, Emerson Gomes, was detained and beaten by a Coast Guard officer after being accused of spreading false news.⁴⁴ Representatives from Radio Capital FM were subject to travel restrictions following questioning by the public prosecutor in connection with a government agency defamation complaint.⁴⁵ Following an abduction and assault, fearing for his safety, Marcelino Intupe, a lawyer and political commentator for Radio Bombolom, fled the country.⁴⁶

Suspension of broadcasts and broadcast licenses, increase of licensing fees, and forced broadcast of government content

23. The government of Guinea-Bissau has repeatedly targeted broadcasting outlets to suppress dissent and control public narratives. Broadcasts have been suspended and outlets have been forced to broadcast government content, under the direction of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. Broadcast license fees have been dramatically increased and broadcast licenses have been suspended.⁴⁷
24. In February-March 2020, soldiers occupied both the Supreme Court and public broadcasting outlets at the direction of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló to facilitate the installation of his new cabinet.⁴⁸ During this period, the state radio and television ceased operations until new directors

were appointed. Soldiers occupied the Supreme Court, public institutions, and public broadcasting outlets to enable the formation of the new cabinet.⁴⁹

25. In another incident, transmission disruptions occurred at RTP África and RDP África, both operated by the Portuguese public broadcaster, four days after the government of Guinea-Bissau warned of “corrective measures” over alleged biased reporting against President Umaro Sissoco Embaló.⁵⁰ While the government attributed the disruptions to weather-related technical issues, claims from sources within the broadcaster and press freedom advocates suggested sabotage, reflecting the state's ongoing efforts to stifle media criticism.⁵¹
26. In December 2023, armed men raided state-owned television and radio stations, compelling technicians to broadcast content, including segments on the dissolution of parliament.⁵² Approximately 30 armed men in military uniforms raided state-owned broadcasters TVGB and Radiodifusão Nacional (RDN), expelling journalists and compelling technicians to broadcast music and later segments on the dissolution of parliament.⁵³
27. Government regulatory actions related to broadcast licenses targeted media independence in Guinea-Bissau. From April 7-13, 2022, the Ministry of Social Communication ordered the closure of 79 radio stations for failing to meet licensing requirements.⁵⁴ Most stations were reopened following negotiations; however, the government invoked broadcasting laws threatening penalties, referencing Article 42 of Guinea-Bissau’s Broadcasting Law.⁵⁵
28. Solidarity actions by the media sector also faced repercussions. Thirty private radio stations in Bissau suspended their broadcasts for 24 hours in July-August 2020 to express solidarity with Radio Capital FM following an attack by armed men.⁵⁶
29. Financial penalties and license revocations were also employed. On October 10, 2022, the government revoked Radio Capital FM's license due to delayed payments and unauthorized broadcasting, despite the station paying substantial license fees in an attempt to comply.⁵⁷ This revocation is part of a broader pattern where regulatory fees are used as a tool of censorship.⁵⁸ Increased regulatory fees in 2022 added further obstacles to media operations. The ratification of N-13/2022 resulted in a surge in fees for commercial licenses, with no corresponding increase in support, complicating financial viability for independent media outlets.⁵⁹ In 2023, the Ministry of Communications suspended broadcasts of Radio Jovem and Radio Sol Mansi over unpaid license fees, using Article 3 of Law No 4/2013 to justify the action.⁶⁰

Recommendations to Guinea Bissau by the submitting organizations

Physical attacks, abduction, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

30. Take measures to end all forms of violence and other ill-treatment inflicted on journalists.
31. Ensure prompt and thorough investigations into the physical attacks and abduction of journalists, and bring all perpetrators, including conspirators, to justice in a fair trial to ensure accountability.
32. Conduct impartial investigations into all reported attacks on journalists in this report.
33. Take measures to end kidnapping, intimidation, and threats to journalists by state and non-state actors.
34. Promptly and effectively investigate threats against and harassment of journalists; and end impunity for perpetrators of intimidation or harassment against journalists.
35. Establish an effective mechanism to protect at-risk journalists, particularly those covering elections and politically sensitive topics. This mechanism should be tailored to address journalists' needs and have the necessary budget and staffing allocations for its full implementation.
36. Establish an independent oversight body tasked with monitoring violence against journalists, ensuring transparent investigations, and holding perpetrators accountable.

Threat or commencement of legal proceedings against journalists

37. Cease the use of criminal defamation and insult charges to prosecute journalists and media outlets.
38. End the use of defamation laws as a vehicle for suppression of political commentary.
39. Cease the arrest and detention of journalists for covering government activities and criticizing the government. Adopt a policy that does not conflate coverage with support.
40. Repeal any law criminalizing disinformation and misinformation.
41. Ensure that allegations of "false news" are handled using a multi-stakeholder approach.
42. Commit to public transparency in government decision-making in all spheres of activity.

Arbitrary detention, imprisonment, travel restrictions, and forced flight of journalists

43. Take measures to end arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists.

44. Cease the practice of detaining journalists without a formal charge or complaint.
45. Ensure that arrests and detentions comply with international human rights law.
46. Conduct an impartial and independent investigation into any allegations of ill-treatment by those detained.
47. Cease the use of travel restrictions as a punitive measure against journalists.

Suspension of broadcasts and broadcast licenses, increase of licensing fees, and forced broadcast of government content.

48. Allow the media to establish independent self-regulatory bodies without interference from government.
49. Ensure that independent and self-regulatory associations are able to operate freely and without interference.
50. Eliminate exorbitant license registration fees for media outlets to operate.
51. End the use of fees as a tool for the censorship of media outlets critical of the government.
52. Cease the deployment of security forces to occupy broadcast outlets, and establish safeguards to prevent the use of force to shut down broadcast outlets.
53. End media shutdowns and forced broadcast manipulation during periods of political unrest.
54. Prohibit the expulsion of journalists from public events.

Annex 1
Matrix of Recommendations from the Previous Cycle
with Comments on Progress

Recommendation ⁶¹	Position ⁶²	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
Theme: Freedom of opinion and expression			
<p>119.77 Safeguard the right to freedom of expression by refraining from interfering in peaceful assemblies and ensuring that cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials are appropriately investigated (Netherlands);</p> <p>Source of position: A/HRC/44/11/1</p>	Supported	<p>Freedom of opinion and expression & access to information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to justice & remedy - Right to peaceful assembly - Prohibition of torture & ill-treatment (including cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) <p>Affected persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law enforcement - police & prison officials 	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>Evidence supports the conclusion that multiple journalists have been subjected to excessive use of force by government officials. The government of Guinea-Bissau has continued to interfere with peaceful assemblies. Instances of excessive force by law enforcement have not been investigated adequately. The submitters are not aware of any steps taken to meaningfully investigate attacks on journalists or bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.</p>
<p>119.78 Create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders, including by providing adequate protection for the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and by taking measures to decriminalize defamation and insult, and placing them within the Civil Code, in accordance with international standards (Ireland);</p> <p>Source of position:</p>	Supported	<p>- Freedom of opinion and expression & access to information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Right to peaceful assembly - Constitutional & legislative framework <p>Affected persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human rights defenders & activists 	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>Guinea-Bissau has continued the use of criminal defamation and other legislation to prosecute journalists and media outlets. Many journalists have been subject to physical attacks, abductions, harassment, intimidation, government persecution, suppression of dissent, and self-censorship, hindering the creation of a safe and enabling</p>

A/HRC/44/1			environment for journalists and press freedom.
Theme: Ratification of & accession to international instruments			
<p>119.1 Accelerate efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Sierra Leone);</p> <p>Source of Position: A/HRC/44/11/1</p>	Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratification of & accession to international instruments - Prohibition of torture & ill-treatment (including cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) - Conditions of detention <p>Affected persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persons deprived of their liberty & detainees 	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>The government of Guinea-Bissau has not accelerated efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Journalists have been subject to ill-treatment while detained or abducted. The submitters are not aware of any steps taken to investigate either instance or bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.</p>
<p>119.2 Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Georgia) (Ghana) (Uruguay);</p> <p>Source of Position: A/HRC/44/11/1</p>	Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratification of & accession to international instruments - Prohibition of torture & ill-treatment (including cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) - Conditions of detention <p>Affected persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persons deprived of their liberty & detainees 	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>The government of Guinea-Bissau has not accelerated efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Journalists have been subject to ill-treatment while detained or abducted. The submitters are not aware of any steps taken to investigate either instance or bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.</p>
119.3 Ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention	Supported	- Ratification of & accession to	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>The government of Guinea-Bissau has not</p>

<p>against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Australia) (Burundi) (Denmark) (Honduras);</p> <p>Source of Position: A/HRC/44/11/1</p>		<p>international instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prohibition of torture & ill-treatment (including cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) - Conditions of detention <p>Affected persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persons deprived of their liberty & detainees 	<p>accelerated efforts to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Journalists have been subject to ill-treatment while detained or abducted. The submitters are not aware of any steps taken to investigate either instance or bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.</p>
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Annex 2

Timeline of Relevant Events

The following incidents were reported between 2020 and the date of this submission in October 2024. More details of these incidents can be found on CPJ, MFWA, and SGT's respective websites.

Physical attacks, abduction, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

2020

- March 12, 2020: Adão Ramalho, a journalist for Radio Capital FM, was attacked by five armed men in Bissau while covering the return of exiled opposition leader Domingos Simões Pereira. The attackers beat him and attempted to force him into an unmarked vehicle, but bystanders intervened, allowing him to escape. Ramalho later identified one of the attackers as Yaya Camara, a member of the presidential guard. Ramalho sustained injuries, requiring a week of medical treatment. The public prosecutor's office is investigating the incident.⁶³
- June 2020: Serifo Camara, an editor at Radio Capital FM, was attacked and robbed by armed men after leaving the station following the 11 p.m. news broadcast. The incident, believed to be retaliation for the station's reporting, was reported to the judicial police. The attack occurred amid ongoing threats against Radio Capital FM due to its critical programming.⁶⁴
- July 26, 2020: Armed men in Guinea-Bissau National Guard uniforms attacked and vandalized the offices of Radio Capital FM, damaging broadcasting equipment, including transmitters, mixers, computers, and microphones, forcing the station to temporarily cease broadcasting. Despite reporting threats to the police, no progress was made in investigating the attack. In response to the assault, 30 private radio stations in Bissau suspended their broadcasts for 24 hours in solidarity with Radio Capital FM.⁶⁵
- August 2020: Danilson Ferreira, a blogger known to be critical of the government of Guinea-Bissau, was arrested, beaten, and imprisoned by the Judicial Police for a week. Upon his release, Ferreira left the country to take refuge in Lisbon, Portugal.⁶⁶
- October 6, 2020: Kéba Sané and Carlos Sambou, two bloggers who had been openly critical of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló's regime, were abducted at night by a group of armed men they claimed to have been led by Tcherno Bari, head of security for President Embaló. The men reported that they were physically abused at the presidential palace. The government denied the allegations and promised to investigate the reported kidnapping. Following this incident, Guinea-Bissau's Human Rights League (LGDH) accused the Interior Ministry of sowing terror and violating the fundamental principles of rule of law and democracy by sending security officers to kidnap, beat, and detain the bloggers.⁶⁷

2021

- March 9, 2021: António Aly Silva, editor of Ditadura de Consenso, was abducted at gunpoint by four men in Bissau. He was driven to an industrial area, threatened with an AK-47, forced to unlock his phone, robbed, and beaten until he lost consciousness. Silva noted the men wore

olive-green military t-shirts under civilian clothing. Prior to the attack, Silva claimed President Umaro Sissoco Embaló had called him to complain about a critical article. Following the attack, a formal inquiry was opened by the public prosecutor, and the police investigated the content from Silva's phone at the president's request. The presidential spokesperson denied any involvement in the abduction.⁶⁸

- July 21, 2021: Emerson Gomes, a presenter at Djan-Djan Community Radio, was assaulted by Coast Guard officer Emitério Nagana in Bubaque. Nagana accused Gomes of spreading false news, punched him in the eye, and continued the attack until bystanders intervened. Gomes sustained injuries, including eye trauma, which required medical treatment, and Nagana was later detained for a week as punishment.⁶⁹
- 2021: Baducaram Imbenque, a journalist with the state broadcaster, was dismissed from his position after he refused to sign a statement to discredit SINJOTECS, Guinea-Bissau's journalists' union. SINJOTECS had previously criticized the management of the state broadcast service for suspending Imbenque, allegedly over his failure to interview President Umaro Sissoco Embaló after a ceremonial match among government institutions.⁷⁰

2022

- February 7, 2022: Men in mixed civilian and military attire attacked Radio Capital FM in Bissau, firing guns and destroying equipment. Four journalists were injured, including Ansumane So whose arm was fractured, and Maimuna Bari who sustained a cervical injury, and Lassana Djassi, who fractured a leg. Administrative assistant Binghate Martins was also beaten. The attack followed a coup attempt and was believed to target the station for its criticism of the government. The Ministry of Interior denied involvement, and police are assessing the damage.⁷¹
- February 8, 2022: Rui Landim, a political panelist at Radio Capital FM was attacked by armed men, appearing to be members of the Rapid Intervention Police Unit (PIR). The assailants fired AK-47 weapons at and threw tear gas into Landim's compound, including into the bedroom of his 15-year-old granddaughter. Landim believed the attack was motivated by remarks on his radio show the previous day and claimed that three hours before the attack he was placed on a blacklist of people to be kidnapped.⁷²
- October 10, 2022: Rádio Galáxia de Pindjiguiti's acting director, Tiano Badjana, went into hiding after armed men in police uniforms arrived at the station seeking to arrest him. When they could not locate him at the station, they proceeded to his home, but his family refused to provide his contact details. The incident followed a news report broadcast by Rádio Galáxia de Pindjiguiti that day, which implicated the Public Order Secretary of State, Augusto Kabi, in the disappearance of drugs seized in a police operation. Although Kabi denied ordering Badjana's arrest, the journalist remained in hiding, fearing for his safety.⁷³
- November 29, 2022: Marcelino Intupe, a lawyer and political commentator for Radio Bombolom, was abducted from his home by a group led by Tchernó Bari, head of the president's security force, along with four men in police uniforms. The abduction occurred after Intupe's commentary on a radio show about a march attended by Bari. When Intupe resisted, Bari and his men physically assaulted him, resulting in a head injury. His wife, who intervened, was also struck.

Intupe was released shortly thereafter when his family followed the attackers and raised the alarm. President Umaro Sissoco Embaló initially condemned the attack but later retracted his statement.⁷⁴

- December 5, 2022: Following a press conference where Marcelino Intupe publicly identified Tchernó Bari as the leader of his November 29 abduction and assault, armed men in two vehicles and a motorcycle attacked his home. They fired gunshots at the property before fleeing the scene.⁷⁵
- December 9, 2022: After the initial abduction and assault in November 2022, armed men once again returned to Marcelino Intupe's home. Fearing for his safety, Intupe fled the country. Following his departure, unidentified men pursued Intupe's wife for over an hour in what appeared to be an attempt to intimidate her and ascertain the identity of the passengers in her vehicle.⁷⁶

2024

- January 2, 2024: President Umaro Sissoco Embaló publicly threatened the media, instructing the interior ministry to create "brigades" to monitor radio broadcasts and detain journalists who "insulted" anyone. He accused journalists of aligning themselves with the opposition and vowed to "end the anarchy" of political commentary on radio.⁷⁷
- January 20, 2024: President Embaló publicly insulted several journalists, including Indira Correia Baldé and Fátima Tchumá Camará, accusing them of being partisan militants. Since then, both journalists have been barred from accessing the presidential palace.⁷⁸
- July 13, 2024: During a press conference, journalist Ussumane Mané of Radio Sol Mansi asked President Umaro Sissoco Embaló about the likelihood of presidential elections amid political tensions following the dissolution of parliament. In response, President Embaló swore at Mané during a news conference, telling him, "Go fuck yourself."⁷⁹
- July 31, 2024: While covering a teachers' protest in Bissau, two journalists—Djuma Colubali of Radio Capital FM and Nguoisam Casimiro Monteiro of Radio Popular—were injured by police. Colubali was physically assaulted, and Monteiro was run over by a police vehicle during the violent crackdown.⁸⁰
- August 13, 2024: Police barred more than a dozen journalists from covering the arrival at Bissau International Airport of Braima Camará, president of the MADEM-G15 party and a key ally of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló who recently withdrew his support. Journalists, including Aguinaldo Ampa of O Democrata newspaper and Djariatu Baldé of Radio Jovem, reported that police blocked about 13 reporters from the VIP reception center, then ordered them to leave both the passenger arrivals area and a roundabout near the airport where they had retreated.⁸¹
- August 22, 2024: Journalist Indira Correia Baldé, president of the journalists' union SINJOTECS, was expelled from a public event involving the handover of public health equipment by order of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. The Health Minister's advisor cited presidential orders for the expulsion. President Embaló also threatened to dismiss any government official who spoke to

Baldé or journalist Fátima Tchumá Camará. This expulsion was part of escalating restrictions on the media.⁸²

Threat or commencement of legal proceedings against journalists

2020

- March 18, 2020: Sabino Santos, a journalist with Radio Capital FM, was prosecuted upon a complaint by the Customs Service. Santos and another radio commentator were accused of criminal defamation following their discussion about a political leader who allegedly was connected to a coup attempt. The case was dismissed two days after its first hearing, after a court found that, given the context in which the remarks were made, they did not constitute a crime.⁸³
- October 2020: Maquilo Bayo, the Press Secretary of the Minister of Interior, threatened legal action against both Radio Capital FM and Bombolom FM journalist, Adão Ramalho, and the director of Bombolom FM. This followed Ramalho's reporting that he had information about systematic sexual harassment of women recruited into the police and armed forces. Bayo demanded that Ramalho provide evidence substantiating this reporting. Ramalho insisted that the report was based on information from victims whose identities could not be disclosed.⁸⁴

2021

- February 9, 2021: Guinea-Bissau's public prosecutor issued a summons to Radio Capital FM for a representative to appear for unspecified questioning. Co-host of the "Tira Teimas" program, Sumba Nansil, and Sabino Santos, host of "Debate Nacional," appeared on behalf of the station. Both journalists were questioned regarding their comments on the state-run National Energy and Water Company (EAGB), which had filed a criminal defamation complaint against the broadcaster.⁸⁵

Arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and travel restrictions on journalists

2020

- August 2020: Danilson Ferreira, a blogger known to be critical to the government of Guinea-Bissau, was arrested, beaten, and imprisoned by the Judicial Police for a week. Upon his release, Ferreira left the country to take refuge in Lisbon, Portugal.⁸⁶

2021

- February 9, 2021: Guinea-Bissau's public prosecutor issued a summons to Radio Capital FM for a representative to appear for unspecified questioning. Co-host of the "Tira Teimas" program, Sumba Nansil, and Sabino Santos, host of "Debate Nacional," appeared on behalf of the station. Both journalists were questioned regarding their comments on the state-run National Energy and Water Company (EAGB), which had filed a criminal defamation complaint against the broadcaster. Nansil and Santos had publicly noted that the station's electrical meter malfunctioned, which disabled its security systems shortly before the station was attacked and

vandalized in July 2020. Both journalists were placed under travel restrictions during the defamation investigation.⁸⁷

- July 21, 2021: Emerson Gomes, a trainee journalist at Djan-Djan Community Radio, was detained by Guinea-Bissau Coast Guard officer Emitério Nagana after being assaulted. Nagana accused Gomes' station of spreading false news and held him at the Coast Guard station until his release four hours later when the chief of operations arrived and apologized. An internal disciplinary inquiry into the incident is ongoing.⁸⁸

2022

- December 9, 2022: Following an abduction and assault, fearing for his safety, Marcelino Intupe, a lawyer and political commentator for Radio Bombolom, fled the country. Following his departure, unidentified men pursued Intupe's wife for over an hour in what appeared to be an attempt to intimidate her and ascertain the identity of the passengers in her vehicle.⁸⁹

Suspension of broadcasts and broadcast licenses, increase of licensing fees, and forced broadcast of government content

2020

- February-March 2020: In late February and early March 2020, at the bequest of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló, soldiers occupied the Supreme Court, other public institutions, and public broadcasting outlets, "in order to enable the formation of the new cabinet." For multiple days, the state radio was silent, and the state television channel showed a blank screen. The troops left after President Embaló's new cabinet had been installed. After the Guinea-Bissau Television (TGB) did not broadcast President Embaló's unofficial inauguration in February, soldiers occupied both TGB and Nacional Broadcast Radio and prevented them from operating until new directors were appointed in March 2020.⁹⁰

2022

- April 7-13, 2022: The Ministry of Social Communication announced the closure of 79 radio stations for failing to meet license requirements by the relevant deadline. The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) and Guinea-Bissau's journalists' union (SINJOTECS) engaged in negotiations with the government. Thereafter, 77 stations were allowed to reopen. The Ministry invoked Article 42 of Guinea-Bissau's Broadcasting Law, threatening imprisonment or fines for unlicensed broadcasting.⁹¹
- October 10, 2022: Radio Capital FM's management sought a meeting with Media Minister Fernando Mendonça to request an exemption from paying license fees due to two attacks on their station. After no response, they contacted General Inspector Mamadu Djaló, who insisted they pay. On October 13, Radio Capital FM paid 1 million CFA francs for four years of fees and requested permission to broadcast. On October 18, the government revoked Radio Capital FM's license for late payment, unauthorized broadcasting in September and October 2022, and failure to report a change of premises. Despite this, the station broadcasted music in September 2022 to attract advertising and resumed programming on Facebook in January 2023

without permission. On August 15, 2023, Secretary of State for Social Communication Muniro Conté restored the station's license.⁹²

- November 18, 2022: The Ministries of Social Communication and Finance announced significant increases in media regulatory fees following the ratification of regulation N-13/2022 for Licensing and Granting of Broadcasting Licenses. Fees for commercial television licenses with national coverage increased by over 7000%, and radio station license fees also saw substantial hikes. The media sector did not receive the budgetary allocation stipulated by the Telecommunication Tax Law, despite increased taxes aimed at improving the national media. These fee increases have raised concerns about the sustainability of media operations in Guinea-Bissau.⁹³

2023

- April 5, 2023: In separate notices to Radio Jovem and Radio Sol Mansi, the Ministry of Communications referenced Article 3 of Law No 4/2013 to back an order to suspend all broadcasts with “immediate effect” over failure to pay license fees for the year 2022. Both broadcasters managed to comply with the order, despite their difficult financial positions in order to avoid being shut down.⁹⁴
- July 13, 2023: RTP África and RDP África, both operated by a Portuguese public broadcaster, experienced transmission disruptions four days after the government of Guinea-Bissau threatened “corrective measures” over alleged biased reporting against President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. The government denied responsibility, attributing the outages to weather-related technical issues, but sources from the broadcaster and a press freedom executive claimed it was an act of sabotage.⁹⁵
- December 4, 2023: Approximately 30 armed men dressed in military uniforms raided state-owned broadcasters TVGB and Radiodifusão Nacional (RDN), ordered the broadcast to stop, and expelled journalists from the premises. The men forced technicians to broadcast music before later playing an unedited segment on the dissolution of parliament. This incident occurred shortly after President Umaro Sissoco Embaló publicly dissolved parliament following an attempted coup. The raids, carried out by men whose faces were covered, were seen as a government strategy to suppress critical voices in the media.⁹⁶

¹ The submitters define “journalists” as people who cover news or comment on public affairs in print, in photographs, on radio, on television, or online. Writers, editors, publishers, producers, technicians, photographers, camera operators, and directors of news organizations are all included. See Committee to Protect Journalists, “Frequently Asked Questions”, available at: <https://cpj.org/about/faq/>.

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³ *Id.*, Article 51.

⁴ *Id.*, Article 56.

⁵ *Id.*, Articles 29, 56.

⁶ *Id.*.

⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 19(1) and 19(2), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

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¹² *Id.* at p. 16, Principle 19(1).

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¹⁶ Media Foundation for West Africa (Oct. 30, 2020), "Guinea Bissau: New Government, Old Repressive Attitude towards the Media", <https://mfwa.org/guinea-bissau-new-government-old-repressive-attitude-towards-the-media/>.

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¹⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Armed men again raid Guinea-Bissau broadcaster Radio Capital FM, destroy equipment," <https://cpj.org/2022/02/armed-men-again-raid-guinea-bissau-broadcaster-radio-capital-fm-destroy-equipment/>.

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²⁰ Media Foundation for West Africa (July 26, 2020), "Guinea Bissau: Radio Capital FM Attacked and Silenced", <https://mfwa.org/radio-capital-attacked-by-armed-men-in-uniform>.

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