

1 September 2026

Subject: Press freedom concerns in Benin

Your Excellency Mr. Kossi Mbueke Romuald Wadagni,

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent organization that defends the rights of journalists worldwide, to draw your attention to the urgent need to strengthen press freedom in Benin, 100 days after you took office as President of the Republic.

Mr. President, during your [inauguration speech](#) on May 24, 2026, you pledged to uphold the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. This commitment is of critical importance in a country in which media freedom and the public's right to access information have faced severe pressure in recent years.

As you delivered that address, journalist [Comlan Hugues Sossoukpè](#), director of the online media outlet Olofofo Info, and his colleague [Ali Moumouni](#) had already spent 10 months in detention without trial. The serious circumstances surrounding Mr. Sossoukpè's extradition from Côte d'Ivoire to Benin despite his refugee status in Togo, as highlighted [by seven U.N. human rights experts](#), remain a grave stain on Benin's image and human rights record.

Both journalists remain unjustly imprisoned on charges, including the glorification of terrorism and harassment through electronic communications. We urge your administration to take immediate steps toward the unconditional release of Mr. Sossoukpè and Mr. Moumouni, which would send a powerful signal in support of independent journalism.

These charges, brought in retaliation for critical reporting, are not isolated incidents and cast a chilling effect across the entire media profession. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in December 2025, journalist Angela Kpeidja [was sentenced](#) to 12 months in prison merely for asking questions on Facebook about the unfolding coup. Her colleague, Pascal Sègbégnon Mitowadé, faces imprisonment

CHAIR
Jacob Weisberg

CEO
Jodie Ginsberg

VICE CHAIR
Lydia Polgreen THE NEW YORK TIMES

DIRECTORS
Rebecca Blumstein NBC NEWS
Diane Brayton THE NEW YORK TIMES
Gary Briggs
Sally Buzbee REUTERS
Phil Chetwynd AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Susan Chira
Sheila Coronel COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Caoilfhionn Gallagher
DOUGHTY STREET CHAMBERS
Alessandra Galloni REUTERS
Lester Holt NBC NEWS
Roula Khalaf FINANCIAL TIMES
Jonathan Klein GETTY IMAGES
Peter Lattman EMERSON COLLECTIVE
Kati Marton
Michael Massing
Katherine Meeks FOX NEWS
Geraldine Fabrikant Metz THE NEW YORK TIMES
Graciela Mochkofsky
CUNY CRAIG NEWMARK GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
Alan Murray
WSJ LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
Julie Owono
INTERNET SANS FRONTIÈRES and
META OVERSIGHT BOARD
Julie Pace THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
David Remnick THE NEW YORKER
Maria Ressa RAPPLER
Maria Teresa Ronderos
Jacqueline Simmons BLOOMBERG
Roger Widmann
Jon Williams

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Press Freedom Center
P.O. Box 2675
New York, NY 10108
Phone: +1 (212) 465-1004
Fax: +1 (212) 465-9568
info@cpj.org

until 2030 following a [disproportionate sentence](#) for “glorification of a crime against state security, incitement to hatred via the internet, and incitement to rebellion.”

Your Excellency, we also wish to underscore the urgent necessity of ensuring that Benin’s [Digital Code](#) is no longer weaponized against members of the press. Since its enactment, several journalists have expressed to [CPJ](#) their fear of facing criminal charges for harassment through electronic communications. In practice, Article 550 of the Digital Code has functioned as a powerful tool for public officials and influential figures to shield themselves from legitimate journalistic scrutiny. CPJ has documented [several cases](#) of media professionals being prosecuted or convicted under this provision for reporting about public figures or commenting on issues of public interest.

We recall that during Benin’s most recent [Universal Periodic Review](#) at the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2023, several member states recommended that your country reform its digital legislation, and Article 550 in particular, to safeguard press freedom.

Finally, CPJ [remains deeply concerned by the recurring](#) long-term suspensions imposed by the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) against media outlets and individual journalists. Rather than function as an impartial regulatory mechanism, these punitive actions have too often amounted to censorship, stifling critical debate and pluralism across the media landscape.

Mr. President, we look forward to your leadership in defending press freedom and hope to see decisive measures taken to address these pressing concerns, thereby fostering an environment in which Beninese journalists can work safely and freely and without fear of reprisal.

Sincerely,

Angela Quintal

Regional Director, Africa.