

**MINISTRY OF STATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS
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Debunking PUL Vice President's Fictitious Lies...

By: The Department of Public Affairs – Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs

Any journalist who lacks the elementary appreciation of truth-telling constitutes a professional and ethical casualty in the noble trade. But times have changed. Liberia is no longer forcing journalists into exile for reporting critically about the obtaining situation in the country. There is today a free, critical and buoyant media landscape than ever before.

This is crucially all the reason why the likes of Jallah Grayfield, Vice President of the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) needs to be reminded of the "sanctity of the profession" and must be called upon to refrain from spreading scandalous misinformation to the effect that: "Liberian journalists are subject of hate, intimidation and harassment by government" while addressing an ACP gathering of journalists in Kigali, Rwanda.

Sadly, Jallah Grayfield mounted a platform in a country – where historically the abuse and flagrant misuse of the media (Radio Kigali) resorted to sending thousands of Rwandese to the early graves. Those who fail to allow history to become their guide – perish so soon. Our young compatriot – Grayfield might not like the administration, but that does not give him the audacity to maliciously spread falsehood as though Liberia is walloping in tyranny. Only in Liberia journalists feel obligated to badmouth their own country when in the midst of strangers in order to be comically recognized.

It is a shame that Liberia and Liberian institutions noted for making better representation at regional and international fora would fall below the bar at the level of the Press union of Liberia by nominating a national embarrassment after all.

Although an analysis of the media prism in Liberia does not compel anyone to shield the action probable excesses or inactions on the government, but shamelessly painting a complete misrepresentation of one's country to be seen or appear to be viewed as a so-called critical voice when in fact – Jallah Grayfield is a quasi-mouthpiece of the ALP leader – Benoni Urey, suggests diabolical intent and purposes.

If journalists, in their line of duty become guilty of ethical transgressions and professional misconduct – should that be blamed on the government or officials of the state? No! A responsible and professional journalist – will endeavor to explore all sides to every angle and insistently seek the truth.

Jallah Grayfield has ignorantly attributed the existence of “anti-media freedom laws and bigger law suits to intimidate members of the media to beat them into silence” as the works of people in government. This is absolutely nonsense! In the name of heralding falsehood – turns a blind eye to current discussions between stakeholders in the media (Internews) and the government through the Ministry of Information to repeal draconian laws that have been on the books.

This government is among the very few African nations to sign unto the Table Mountain Agreement let alone dozens of accolades the President has won for demonstrating an unwavering commitment to press freedom and free speech. Today, as Jallah Grayfield has failed to share at a conference on sharing best practices – not one Liberian journalist is in prison.

The media as watchdog of our society – cannot be above the law and must be prepared to be held accountable for blatantly violating the law. If the media become set up as businesses – they ought to meet whatever the obligation – be it taxation. To insinuate that: “Government is hiding behind tax invasion in Liberia to shut down critical radio stations with a threat to shut down sixteen others” – is utterly frivolous. For once – Jallah Grayfield should be asking himself why has the Press Union of Liberia considered imperative ‘a revision of the PUL Code of Conduct’ when the same Grayfield who carelessly named ‘threat, intimidation, and harassment’ – has of late come to his senses that: “One of the surest ways of addressing ethical transgressions in the media and insuring responsible journalism in Liberia” would be through a strong a robust Code of Conduct.

We indeed take solace in the note of caution to participants from Mr. Andrew Mold of the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s office in Kigali, cautioned the media heads from the three regions to be careful because freedom of the press and rights come with responsibility.