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Ref. No. OPS 308/3/26/1386

22nd September, 2026

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON HATE SPEECH, ABUSIVE ONLINE CONTENT AND RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

I write on behalf of H.E. the President of the Republic, John Dramani Mahama, to request that the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) jointly convene a national stakeholder engagement on the growing incidence of hate speech, abusive language and other harmful content on social media and emerging digital platforms.

2. The media environment has changed significantly. Public discourse is increasingly shaped not only by traditional media organisations, which operate within established professional and regulatory frameworks, but also by individual bloggers, content creators, influencers and users of platforms such as TikTok. Many of these actors have substantial audiences and influence but are not necessarily subject to recognised editorial standards or clear accountability mechanisms.
3. This development presents a difficult but important public-policy challenge. While hate speech, threats, incitement and other unlawful conduct must be addressed, legitimate criticism, political commentary, satire and dissent must not be criminalised. The President is particularly concerned that disproportionate arrests over mere criticism or politically charged commentary may be counterproductive, create undeserving martyrs and undermine public confidence in state institutions.
4. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a coherent national roadmap that protects freedom of expression while providing an appropriate and proportionate response to genuinely harmful digital content.
5. Accordingly, the MFWA and GJA are requested to lead a broad, stakeholder-inclusive process, among others:
 - i. the National Media Commission;
 - ii. the Ghana Police Service;
 - iii. relevant religious bodies;
 - iv. civil society organisations;
 - v. traditional media organisations;
 - vi. social media content creators, bloggers and influencers;
 - vii. legal and human-rights experts;
 - viii. representatives of digital platforms, where possible; and
 - ix. relevant state regulatory and security institutions.
6. The engagement should examine the adequacy of the existing legal, regulatory and institutional framework; clarify the distinction between lawful criticism and unlawful speech; propose practical guidelines for law-enforcement agencies; and recommend appropriate policy, legislative, regulatory and non-legislative measures.

7. The process should also consider public education, media and digital literacy, professional and ethical standards for online content creators, accessible complaints and redress mechanisms, and alternatives to arrest and prosecution in cases that do not involve threats, incitement, violence or other clearly criminal conduct.
8. The MFWA and GJA are kindly requested to submit a proposed framework and timetable for stakeholder engagement, together with recommendations arising from the process, for the President's consideration.
9. Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.



CALLISTUS MAHAMA, Ph.D.
SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT

THE PRESIDENT
GHANA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION
ACCRA

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA
ACCRA

Cc: The Hon. Minister
Ministry of the Interior
Accra

The Hon. Minister
Ministry of Communication, Digital
Technology and Innovations
Accra

The Hon. Minister of State
Government Communications
Jubilee House
Accra

The Chairperson
National Media Commission
Accra

The Inspector-General of Police
Ghana Police Service
Ghana Police Headquarters
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