

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2026

Public Lecture & Stakeholder Dialogue

7th May 2026

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COMMUNIQUE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 2026 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY EVENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

Introduction

This communiqué is issued following the keynote address delivered by the keynote speaker in commemoration of the 2026 World Press Freedom Day held at the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC, Accra, Ghana on 4 May 2026. The keynote was titled “Press Freedom and responsibility: Problems of Professionalism in Ghanaian Journalism. It interrogated the paradox of an increasingly free media environment in Ghana alongside growing concerns about declining professional standards. It drew attention to persistent challenges such as weak regulatory enforcement, and ethical lapses within the journalistic field. The speech highlighted the tensions between press freedom and ethical responsibility by media practitioners.

Press Freedom and Responsibility

The presentation explored key issues affecting press freedom in Ghana and emphasized the need for stronger institutional frameworks to balance press freedom with accountability against the backdrop that journalism is the central pillar of democratic governance and national development. The speaker emphasizes that whilst press freedom intrinsically presumes professionalism and

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ethical propriety, the question does not remain whether a journalist is a ‘professional’ but whether they behave or function professionally. To this end, the keynote speaker suggested that the key demand of the Journalistic profession should be the fulfilment of the highest standard of the craft and the delivery of those responsibilities in the most ethical manner.

Effect of Corrupt leadership on Media Professionalism

The speaker condemned the practice of corrupt leadership at all levels and in all sections of the Ghanaian society particularly in the fourth republic which has had a ripple effect on press freedom and ethical journalistic practice in Ghana. In such situations, the leadership of the country cannot pride itself on promoting freedom of expression and of the media. As he mentions: ‘the tormented professionalism of the Ghanaian media is and affliction of the generalized bankruptcy in public life...that frustrates the country’s democratic governance...’

Sources of Media Unprofessionalism

The speaker identified some cases and sources of media unprofessionalism which include party politics which has resulted into the politicization of the Ghanaian media terrain where unbridled incendiary language have made even experts with specialized knowledge in their field of expertise ‘choose to be silent for fear of unwarranted attacks by villainous party “seral callers”, illiterate commentators and mercenary radio or television hosts.’ Compounding the problem of party politics as a source of media unprofessionalism is the issue of media ownership where ‘private monopoly is systematically replacing state monopoly resulting in media

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empire building through owned and operated acquisitions and custodianship.’

Even more worrying, the speaker emphasized, is the partisan control of the NCA which directly accounts for the widespread ownership of radio and television frequencies by well-known political figures or people with partisan interest with little interest in professional journalism. These occurrences inhibit professional journalistic practice in Ghana, he emphasized. Other sources contributing to media unprofessionalism, he noted, are media capture by business interests, ‘mercenary’ and ‘stomach’ journalism.

Regarding the latter, the speaker pointed out that some Ghanaian media personnel benefit from the phenomenon and have earned huge compensations of gifts in exchange of defending the reputation of their clients. Advertising disguised as news and trial by media and presumption of guilt are the other sources of media unprofessionalism espoused by the speaker. Concerning professional and ethical infractions committed by journalists themselves, the speaker identified some lapses which include inaccurate reportage, lack of fairness and balance, false allegations, misrepresentation or impersonation, untruthful statements, failure to verify information among others.

These journalistic infractions, the speaker noted, dominated complaints submitted to the NMC between 2022-2025. Another source of constraint on media professionalism, the speaker indicated, is the ‘near impunity with which traditional authorities around the country interfere with the rights of media and journalists.’ The speaker stated that some chiefs routinely breach the constitutional rights of

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media houses resulting in the closing down of radio stations or suspension of broadcasting on flimsy grounds, imposition of fines on journalists and many more. These attitudes of chiefs to the presumed infractions by journalists tend to portray traditional authorities as institutions above constitutional rule and amount to interference of media independence by such chiefs, the speaker concluded. The speaker also identified Ghanaian languages use in the media as a potential professional challenge. Whilst admitting limited study on the subject, the speaker noted that outside of the GBC where certificates in languages is a requirement for employment, the generality of broadcasters (news readers, presenters and programme hosts) struggle to string sentences together in any Ghanaian language without introducing English phrases or words.

In terms of regulation, the speaker indicated that there is a general regulatory imbalance especially on social media platforms which operate across borders and largely escapes national gatekeeping and regulation where contents produced outside Ghana circulates freely within the Ghanaian information space. The remedy to the regulation issue, he indicated, lies in the eventual passage of the broadcasting law and the need for reforms of the statutory regulatory institutions to strengthen their enforcement and sanctioning powers.

Recommendations

The speaker proposed some useful recommendations to address the issues raised in his presentation. First, he advocates strongly that the broadcasting bill ought to

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be resuscitated, reviewed and passed into law to sanitize broadcast journalism practice in Ghana. Also, the National Broadcaster, GBC must be comprehensively restructured, retooled and repositioned to transform it into a proper, responsive and relevant public service broadcasting institution. Furthermore, measures for clearer and stronger editorial oversight in broadcast and online media to minimize the widespread incidence of unethical breaches need to be instituted. Additionally, individual media houses must strive to institute in-house mechanism for self-regulation and peer accountability. Lastly, Media educational institutions such as the University of Media, Arts and Communication and their partners must occasionally conduct media literacy education for public awareness concerning professional and ethical standards and media accountability.

Closing Comments

Invited guests acknowledged the successful nature of the programme particularly the speech of the keynote speaker which dilated on the interface between press freedom and the challenges of responsible and professional journalism in Ghana. The speaker responded to questions raised by some participants during Q&A and offered useful suggestions for their concerns. There were solidarity messages by partner organizations such as the University of Media, Arts and Communication, Media Foundation for West Africa, the Ghana Journalist Association and UNESCO.

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