

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/liberia-editor-s-30-day-release-is-totally-10-10-2013,45189.html>

---

Africa - Liberia

Compassionate grounds

## Editor's 30-day release is "totally unsatisfactory"

10 October 2013

---

Reporters Without Borders calls for *Frontpage Africa* editor **Rodney Sieh**'s definitive release and the reopening of his newspaper after a court freed him yesterday on "compassionate grounds" for a period of 30 days beginning on 8 October.

Jailed on 21 August for being unable to pay former agriculture minister Chris Toe 1.6 million dollars (1.2 million euros) in libel damages, Sieh is forbidden to travel abroad and must notify the authorities if he leaves the capital, Monrovia, during this temporary period of release.

"Sieh's temporary release is totally unsatisfactory," Reporters Without Borders said. "This half-measure allows the Liberian government to save face with respect to all the pressure it has been under for several months from Liberian and international human rights NGOs, but it does not address the underlying problem, the illegitimacy of Sieh's detention in the first place.

"This case underlines the importance of completing the decriminalization of defamation by setting a ceiling on damage awards. Sieh was jailed for being unable to pay the excessive damages ordered in this case. Such a disproportionate amount helps to intimidate the media and obstruct freedom of information."

---

### 17.09.2013 - Journalist Rodney Sieh sent back to prison after hospitalization

Reporters Without Borders is outraged by the re-admission to Monrovia central prison today of the journalist **Rodney Sieh**, after 22 days in the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital.

"The harassment of this journalist by the Liberian legal system is totally underserved and we call for his immediate release," the press freedom organization said.

"Rodney Sieh was only carrying out his job as a journalist. We call once again on the government to take action to decriminalise media offences, in particular to stop imposing disproportionate fines on journalists in order to intimidate them, since the media play an important role in the fight against corruption."

Sieh was imprisoned on 20 August for refusing to pay a fine of nearly 1.6 million dollars in libel damages in a case brought by the former agriculture minister, **Chris Toe**.

Since then, Toe has told the media he would drop the case if the journalist apologised publicly.

Sieh's lawyers say their client will not consider such an apology since the articles that appeared in his newspaper *Frontpage Africa* were based on extracts of official reports by the General Auditing Commission, the country's anti-corruption body.

Photo: The editor of the daily *Frontpage Africa*, Rodney Sieh (Ken Harper/SI Newhouse School of Public Communications).

---

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 47 kb)
-