

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/liberia-violence-and-intimidation-against-20-10-2011,41255.html>

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Africa - Liberia

Electoral tension

## Violence and intimidation against media in run-up to second-round election

20 October 2011

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Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by a dangerous increase in acts of violence and intimidation against radio and TV stations and newspapers since the first round of Liberia's presidential election on 11 October. Election rivalry has exacerbated tension between the media and the candidates' political parties.

"The situation of the media and journalists has worsened significantly since the first round and various journalists have said they are afraid," Reporters Without Borders said. "The climate of violence must stop so that the second round, scheduled for 8 November, can proceed normally. We urge the authorities to ensure that the media are able to operate properly because they play a crucial role during elections, and we call on the candidates to appeal to their activists and supporters to calm down and to respect the opinions of others."

The press freedom organization added: "We also express our support for the agreement that the police and various political parties signed on 17 October banning acts of intimidation and physical attacks on journalists." The main opposition party, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), refused to sign it, describing it as a "trap."

In one of the latest acts of violence, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the Monrovia headquarters of *Love FM and Love TV*, starting a fire that caused considerable damage and forcing both the radio and the TV station off the air for several hours. Owned by Love Media, Love FM and Love TV are said to support CDC leader Winston Tubman, who is running against President Sirleaf in the second round.

Love Media news director Jallah Griefield said the station had received several threatening text messages about its pro-CDC position. A suspect has been in police custody since 18 October.

Unidentified persons have tried to intimidate several journalists at *Truth FM*, a radio station that opposition parties regard as pro-government. Programme host **Patrick Honnah**, for example, has received several threatening phone calls and text messages.

There were similar incidents during the run-up to the first round. On 12 September, the CDC ordered **Boima J.V. Boima**, a reporter for the *New Democrat* daily, to delete photos he had taken of a man who had been run down by a CDC car during a campaign swing through the north. The driver fled, leaving his victim unconscious in the road.

CDC officials also ordered reporter **Peter Toby** to delete photos showing a man who had been hit over the head with a bottle during the party's primary in Montserrado county. Reporters Without Borders condemns such practices, which are completely unacceptable.

Photo of the Love FM and Love TV premises (Glenna Gordon / AFP)

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