

## Jonathan assures of press freedom

President Goodluck Jonathan on Friday, 25 May 2012, assured members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) that the freedom guaranteed to media practitioners in the discharge of their constitutional responsibility, would not be tempered with by his administration of the freedom of the press as enshrined in the country's constitution.

The president who spoke while declaring open the Fourth Triennial National Delegates' Conference of the NUJ in Abuja also denied media reports that he had sent a list of ministerial nominees to the state security service for screening.

According to the president, the rights granted members of the Fourth Estate of the realm should be discharged with corresponding responsibilities.

President of NUJ, Muhhamed Garuba, introduced the NUJ National Working Committee to president Goodluck Jonathan on his arrival at the opening of the Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ) 4th Triennial National Delegates Conference in Abuja on Friday.

"I am a firm believer in the right and obligation of the media as enshrined in our constitution. I assure you all today that under my leadership, journalists in our country will continue to fully enjoy their constitutional rights and freedom of expression.

"I am also fully convinced that the imperative of sustaining and nurturing our democracy required the existence of the very professional and practitioners of the mass media.

"My administration is very conscious of the vital role that the mass media has to play in engendering support for our transformation agenda and is therefore committed to properly enhance the practice.

"It was in this regard that led to our enactment of the FOI Law to further enhance the ability of our dear practitioners to discharge their duties.

"My administration will have nothing to do with those who try to curtail or abuse the right of the mass media" the president noted.

He advised journalists to ensure that their accounts of events is fair, balanced and accurate, saying that they should be wary of manipulations by politicians and selfish people with sectional motives to the detriment of collective national interest.

The president enjoined media practitioners to go the mile to cross check their facts and ensure that only the truth is published.

While condemning the recent attacks on media houses by suspected terrorists, the president commended Nigerian journalists for remaining resolute despite the attacks.

He urged media practitioners to continue to foster peace, religious tolerance and harmony in the country.

The president of the NUJ, Shehu Garba, called on the federal government and security agencies to address the current security challenges in the country in order to provide a more conducive atmosphere for journalists to carry out their duties.

He said the union, under his leadership, had set up a committee to sanitise the profession and rid the society of quacks.

While commending the National Assembly for passing the Freedom of Information Act, the NUJ president called on all stakeholders to continue to work towards a better remuneration for journalists

Minister of information, Labaran Maku commended the constructive role the media have been in the present administration.

He however expressed concern of the way some sections of the media have been reporting the security challenges in the country.

While admitting that journalists are expected to perform their roles with patriotism, he stressed that terrorists should not be given platforms to propagate their evil agenda.

He warned that terrorists won't spare the media, saying that the incidents of bombing started several years back with the media.

Also, minister of the federal capital territory, Bala Muhammed described media freedom as universal freedom.

Muhammed said without informed citizenry, the country would be in the grip of those he described as dubious individuals.

The president of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, Gbenga Adefaye, who spoke at the occasion however disagreed with the minister of information, Labaran Maku saying that what terrorists should be denied is "licence".

"On terrorism, we will not deny freedom but we will deny them licence. Freedom is a bigger burden on the media. To defeat this, the government need to take more people into confidence, let's collectively work together but it will not work for us all if we continue to draw the line. It is important to build confidence and close gaps" he said.

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