

GJANEWS/GS/019

NEWS RELEASE

GJA Condemns Barbaric Attack and Calls For Arrest Of Attackers On UTV

ACCRA, October 8, 2023 (GJA) – The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) calls on the Ghana Police Service to immediately arrest all the hooligans who attacked *United Television (UTV)* last Saturday night and prosecute them promptly.

We are informed that about 30 hooligans attacked the studios of the Accra-based private television station, and although the Police arrested some of them, others managed to escape.

The GJA expects the Police to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators expeditiously just as they exemplarily and commendably executed in the case of the attack on *Dagbon FM* in Tamale in May this year.

The GJA also calls on the government, non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), diplomatic community, international agencies and all well-meaning Ghanaians and people of good conscience to roundly condemn this barbaric act and the masterminds of same.

Attack on UTV

Our investigations suggest that about 30 hooligans invaded the studios of *UTV* on Saturday night, just at the beginning of the ‘United Showbiz’, an entertainment programme, demanding representation on the panel and asking the whereabouts of one of the regular panelists.

Our investigations further indicate that the invasion by the hooligans lasted for about 45 minutes before the arrival of the Police, and about one hour thereafter, before normalcy was restored for the programme to continue.

In the course of the invasion, the hooligans assaulted the Director of Photography and one of the producers of ‘United Showbiz, while the hostess of the programme, other staff of the station and invited guests for the programme were left traumatized.

Furthermore, our investigations suggest that the Acting Greater Accra Regional Youth Organiser of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was in the company of the hooligans some of whom introduced themselves as constituency youth organisers of the NPP.

The GJA finds this act barbaric and medieval, and it is very much consistent with the building blocks in recent times to establish a state of impunity against the media, one that is worse than the infamous ‘Culture of Silence’.

We wish to inform such evil minds, both orchestrators and actors, that the media in Ghana have survived all forms of clampdown in the past, even under dictatorial regimes, and that we shall never be intimidated or silenced by any form of attack.

Regime responses

The GJA has taken notice of the apology rendered by the Director of Communications of the NPP, Richard Ahiagbah, on air when he went to *UTV* to broker peace.

We are also aware of a press statement signed by Richard Ahiagbah in the name of the NPP denouncing the invasion unreservedly and distancing the NPP from the “unacceptable” act, although he admits the perpetrators are sympathisers of the party.

Inasmuch as we welcome the apology, we can only place value on its sanctity, and embrace it beyond rhetoric, if the party sanctions the perpetrators for doing something it did not sanction.

Indeed, the GJA cannot uphold the sanctity of the apology when spokespersons of the NPP, some connected to the communications directorate, had earlier instigated such hooliganism against the television station without being reprimanded.

It is also disturbing and, indeed, unfortunate, for the leadership of the NPP to direct one of its officers to write a letter to *UTV* demanding content reforms in respect of the ‘United Showbiz’, although Article 162(4) of the 1992 Constitution frowns on control and interference by the Government [and any other authority] in the editorial opinion and content of media institutions.

Interestingly, the letter, dated September 19, 2023, was signed by the Director of Finance and Administration, William Yamoah, a rather unusual source of communication with the media in such matters.

The GJA has also taken notice of a press statement issued by the Minister of Information, Kojo Opong Nkrumah, on the happenings at *UTV*, but we are highly disappointed in the Minister for issuing that wobbling statement.

In the second paragraph of the press statement, the Minister tries to justify the barbaric attack by holding that the hooligans entered *UTV* “allegedly without authorization” when he was the very person who reported to, and called in, the Police; in the fourth paragraph, the minister avoids direct condemnation of the hooligans and conveniently makes his condemnation general, and, worst of all, in the last paragraph, the Minister imposes a burden on the media to promote national cohesion, regardless of the incessant attacks against them.

The Minister’s press statement is in sharp contrast to another one issued by the PR Unit of his Ministry on May 4, 2023, in respect of the attack on a radio presenter on *Dagbon FM* in Tamale by a communicator of the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

The Ministry’s May 2023 press statement was very direct: the Ministry described the attack as ASSAULT without any “allegedly” clothing; the Ministry condemned the act, specifically without giving it general direction; the Ministry called for “severe and speedy response from law enforcement agencies” to avoid future recurrence; the Minister had a telephone conversation with victim of assault, and the Minister “offered the support of the Ministry if he will require any”.

Between the two cases – *Dagbon FM* and *UTV*, the Minister of Information and/or the Ministry of Information has or have not been even-handed in addressing the critical issues at stake, and we find that very worrying.

The GJA calls on the media to be bold and never be intimidated by such acts of hooliganism, knowing that we serve the larger interest of the public.

We also wish to urge media practitioners and institutions to act professionally at all times in the discharge of their duties.

END.

[SGD]
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(General Secretary)