



Joint Stakeholder Submission to the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Republic of Liberia

For the 50th Session of the UPR Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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About the Submitting Organisations

Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) is one of two centres established under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communications Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative, which was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID). CIPESA focuses on decision-making that facilitates the use of ICT in support of good governance, human rights and livelihoods.

CIPESA's establishment in 2004 was in response to the findings of the Louder Voices Report for DfID, which cited the lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT related issues and processes as a key barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy making in Africa. As such, our work responds to shortage of information, resources and actors consistently working at the nexus of technology, human rights and society

West Africa ICT Action Network (WAICTANET)

Founded in 2007, [WAICTANET](#) is a multi-stakeholder platform of civil society, academia, and technology experts based in West Africa, working to promote open, inclusive, and rights-based digital governance in the sub-region. WAICTANET supports local and regional initiatives on freedom of expression online, data protection, digital inclusion, and ICT policy development. It plays an active role in regional and global internet governance processes and has worked with partners to amplify voices from West Africa in international policy debates.

Introduction

Liberia underwent its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in 2020. The report of the working group on the UPR emphasized the need for Liberia to review and progressively address its human rights record, attending to the pertinent issues of discrepancies in the law.¹ The working group also emphasized the need to address discriminatory practices and to harmonize domestic laws with the regional and international human rights instruments, including inter alia, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). During the review, Liberia received 218 recommendations.² Of these, only 2 were directly related to digital rights and freedoms. To wit, 103.141: Take all steps to repeal the Penal Law of 1978 and decriminalize free speech (Sierra Leone); and 103.142: Uphold the international human rights standards on press freedom to protect journalists, both online and offline (Maldives). This report assesses Liberia's progress since the last UPR cycle, highlighting both achievements and persisting gaps in digital rights. It presents recommendations that could potentially improve the state of digital rights, promote press freedom, enhance and strengthen the digital civic space, and improve Liberia's human rights record.

Updates Since the Previous Review

1. Liberia has initiated efforts to address challenges and opportunities within its digital landscape. Civil society organisations have been able to advocate for comprehensive data protection laws and safeguards against digital surveillance. The Liberia Media Empowerment Project developed draft legislation aimed at providing a legal framework for the collection, processing, storage, and protection of personal data in Liberia.³ Over 50 stakeholders in Monrovia validated this draft legislation in January 2025.⁴
2. Deliberate efforts have been made to enhance the capacity of the national human rights institution - the Independent National Human Rights Commission.⁵ There have been similar steps in creating reforms in post-conflict settings.⁶

¹ Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Thirty-sixth session: Compilation on Liberia, A/HRC/WG.6/36/LBR/2, <https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020-05/liberia.pdf>

² Human Rights Council, "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review-Liberia," Forty-sixth session, A/HRC/46/6, https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-04/a_hrc_46_6_e.pdf

³ Siaway T Miapue, 'Liberia: Stakeholders Validate Personal Data Protection and Privacy Draft Legislation, Push for Legislative Action' (FrontPageAfrica, 20 December 2024) <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-stakeholders-validate-personal-data-protection-and-privacy-draft-legislation-push-for-legislative-action/>

⁴ Blamo N Toe, 'Stakeholders Endorse Draft Legislation for Personal Data Privacy and Protection' (The Liberian Investigator, 20 December 2024) <https://liberianinvestigator.com/news/stakeholders-endorse-draft-legislation-for-personal-data-privacy-and-protection/>

⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia – Addendum (8 March 2021) UN Doc A/HRC/46/6/Add.1.

⁶ Our Presence in Liberia' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/liberia/our-presence>

3. Several legislative reforms were designed to align domestic law with international human rights standards.⁷ These include updates to criminal legislation and constitutional reforms that aimed at repealing outdated provisions to enhance accountability.⁸ Analysts from Human Rights Watch and academic journals on African legal reform have noted these efforts as crucial for improving transparency, judicial independence, and strengthening Liberia's commitment to an open and rights-respecting digital civic space. [The Kamara Abdullah Kamara Act on Press Freedom](#) marks a significant milestone in Liberia's commitment to media independence by decriminalising defamation and fostering a more enabling environment for journalism.⁹
4. In 2024, the Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR), supported by Internews, introduced the Liberia Community Radio Sustainability Bill to the National Legislature. This bill aims to provide financial and policy support for community radio stations, ensuring their viability and independence. It has undergone its first reading and is under review by the Joint Committee on Information, Broadcast, Culture, and Tourism, and the Judiciary.¹⁰ Additionally, discussions are ongoing to establish an independent public broadcasting service¹¹ and adopt data protection principles aimed at enhancing media pluralism and reducing state control. However, limited financial and institutional capacity has hindered progress. Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act remains inconsistent, with many public bodies failing to appoint information officers or respond to requests.¹²
5. Since its last UPR, Liberia has taken initial steps to strengthen data protection and privacy in the digital space. The National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy (2019–2024)¹³ specifically Section 5.15.1, outlines key principles for the lawful processing of personal data. These include fair and lawful processing, purpose specification, data minimisation, accuracy, storage limitation, appropriate security safeguards, consumer notification, and protection from unauthorised access. It also emphasizes the need for transparency in data collection and special protections for children.

⁷ Michlyne Nyenegahn Williams, 'The Practice of International Law in Liberia' (2025) 16(1) *Beijing Law Review* 273.

⁸ International Development Law Organization, 'Annual Report 2022' (2022)

https://www.idlo.int/sites/default/files/2024/publications/documents/idlo_report_13_digital.pdf

⁹ Reporters Without Borders, *2021 World Press Freedom Index: Liberia* (RSF, 2021) <https://rsf.org/en/liberia>

¹⁰ Jefferson Massah, 'A New Dawn for Liberian Community Radio as a Sustainability Bill is Introduced in National Legislature' (Internews, 15 August 2024) <https://internews.org/story/a-new-dawn-for-liberian-community-radio-as-a-sustainability-bill-is-introduced-in-national-legislature/>

¹¹ Peter Quaqua, 'The Need to Transform LBS into Public Service Broadcaster Is Ever Present' (FrontPageAfrica, 14 September 2017) <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/opinion/the-need-to-transform-lbs-into-public-service-broadcaster-is-ever-present/>

¹² H Matthew Turry, 'FOI Commission Urges Gov't to Prioritize FOI Law - Hodges Wants Public Entities Appoint Public Information Officers' (Analyst Liberia, 3 October 2024) <https://analystliberiaonline.com/foi-commission-urges-govt-to-prioritize-foi-law-hodges-wants-public-entities-appoint-public-information-officers/>

¹³ Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, 'Liberia Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy (2019-2024)' (April 2024) <https://www.digitaldevelopment.org/library/liberia-information-and-communications-technology-ict-policy-2019-2024>

Additionally, the Telecommunications Act 2007¹⁴ mandates service providers to implement data security measures aligned with the sensitivity of customer information and communications, signaling a policy-level commitment to protecting personal data. More recently, Liberia has been reviewing its internet regulation framework to enhance online privacy and uphold freedom of expression. In December 2024, stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector validated draft legislation on personal data protection and privacy, marking a significant milestone toward developing a comprehensive legal framework.¹⁵ These efforts align with recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy (2020, 2021), which emphasize the need for enforceable data protection laws and independent oversight to safeguard digital rights.¹⁶

6. Concerning children's protection online and in response to Article 43 of the African Charter On The Rights and Welfare Of The Child, Liberia has taken some steps to address child protection in online spaces. In its initial report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the country noted taking steps under the Children's Law that protects their rights to; expression (Article 7), assembly and association (Article 8), privacy (Article 10), the protection of children against child abuse and torture including against sexual abuse and exploitation including prostitution and pornography (Article 16), and the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 27).¹⁷
7. Liberia has made strides in gender equality and non-discrimination by repealing laws that previously restricted women's rights in nationality, property ownership, and political participation, aligning with international standards on digital inclusion. Liberia's National Human Rights Action Plan (2019-2014) now includes targeted policies for vulnerable groups such as children, persons with disabilities, and rural communities, ensuring improved access to education, healthcare, and employment. These policies increasingly recognise the importance of digital inclusion as a means of enabling equal access to services, information, and opportunities.

Freedom of Expression and Opinion

8. Despite the progressive steps on the promotion of freedom of expression, concerns remain regarding the continued existence of other restrictive laws, particularly Section 11.12 of the Penal Code on sedition and false news, which can still be used to suppress dissent. Media practitioners continue to face threats, intimidation, economic constraints, and threats of arbitrary arrests, which hinder full journalistic independence. Intimidation, arrests, detentions, and assaults on journalists by the Liberian police continue to curtail the space

¹⁴ 'Liberia: Telecommunications Act' (2007) WTO Doc

WT/ACC/LBR/15/Leg/38 https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/lbr_e/wtacclbr15_leg_38.pdf

¹⁵ Siaway T Miapue, 'Liberia: Stakeholders Validate Personal Data Protection and Privacy Draft Legislation, Push for Legislative Action' (FrontPageAfrica, 20 December 2024) <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-stakeholders-validate-personal-data-protection-and-privacy-draft-legislation-push-for-legislative-action/>

¹⁶ Joseph A. Cannataci, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy' (25 February 2021) UN Doc A/HRC/46/37 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4637-artificial-intelligence-and-privacy-and-childrens-privacy>

¹⁷ Government of Liberia's Initial Report to The African Committee of Experts on The Rights and Welfare Of The Child, <https://www.acerwc.africa/sites/default/files/2022-06/Liberia-Initial-Report.pdf>

for expression and other online freedoms. Other atrocities against journalistic independence in Liberia include but are not limited to: Harassment of Daily Observer Journalists in January 2025,¹⁸ threats against OK FM journalists in December 2024,¹⁹ and shooting threats such as against Emmanuel Kollie, a state-owned broadcasting system reporter, and Amos Korzawu, a Fortune TV reporter while they covered a political rally in 2022,²⁰ and firebombing of a Journalist's vehicle in December 2024,²¹ among others. Such restrictive measures and actions have raised concerns from various stakeholders, including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ),²² CIVICUS,²³ and other civil society organisations, calling upon the government to make reforms, including the implementation of protective mechanisms to safeguard journalists from harassment and violence.²⁴

9. Liberia also has reported cases of the killing of journalists. In the period preceding the third cycle review, Tyrone Brown, a radio and TV journalist, was found dead in Monrovia under suspicious circumstances.²⁵ Later in 2020, Zenu Miller, a broadcast journalist, died after an alleged assault by members of the presidential guard Executive Protection Service (EPS).²⁶ To date, there have been no conclusive investigations from the government, which has only offered an apology following his demise.²⁷ These developments show the multiple risks and threats journalists are exposed to while in the course of their duty.

Freedom of Information and Censorship of Content

10. The prevailing environment of harassment, intimidation, and persecution of journalists and other online activists due to critical reporting has promoted a culture of self-censorship.²⁸ Legal sanctions and the threat of financial loss, such as reduced revenue from government

¹⁸ International Federation of Journalists, 'Liberia: Daily Observer journalists harassed by police' (16 January 2025) <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/africa/article/liberia-daily-observer-journalists-harassed-by-police/>

¹⁹ News Public Trust, 'Creeping Threat to Press Freedom in Liberia: PUL Slams Threats on Journalist and Media' (16 December 2024) <https://newspublictrust.com/creeping-threat-to-press-freedom-in-liberia-pul-slams-threats-on-journalist-and-media>

²⁰ Liberia 2022 Human Rights Report, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/415610_LIBERIA-2022-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

²¹ Oracle News Daily, 'Liberia Journalist Union Calls Out Authorities As Unknown Assailants Firebomb Journalist's Vehicle While EPS Agent Strangles Neck' (19 December 2024) <https://oraclenewsdaily.com/2024/12/19/liberia-as-unknown-assailants-firebomb-journalists-vehicle-while-eps-agent-strangles-neck/>

²² Committee to Protect Journalists, 'Liberian law enforcement officers arrest, beat journalist Kesselee Sumo' (29 March 2024) <https://cpj.org/2024/03/liberian-law-enforcement-officers-arrest-beat-journalist-kesselee-sumo/>

²³ Civicus Monitor, 'Radio journalist detained, assaulted' (29 March 2024) <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/radio-journalist-detained-assaulted/>

²⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists, 'Attacks on the Press' (CPJ, 2023) <https://cpj.org/reports/>

²⁵ Radio and TV Journalist killed in Liberia - IFJ: April 20, 2018. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/radio-and-tv-journalist-killed-in-liberia>

²⁶ Liberian Journalist Dead 3 Weeks after Assault by Presidential Guards - Media Foundation For West Africa, February 21, 2022 <https://mfwa.org/liberian-journalist-dead-3-weeks-after-assault-by-presidential-guards/>

²⁷ Alfred Kollie, "Despite Gov't Apology, PUL Firm On Urgent Probe Into Claim Of EPS Brutality Against Journalist Miller," News Public Trust, February 27, 2020, <https://newspublictrust.com/despite-govt-apology-pul-firm-on-urgent-probe-into-claim-of-eps-brutality-against-journalist-miller>

²⁸ Liberia 2022 Human Rights Report, supra.

advertising, also undermine the independence of media houses.²⁹ It is also a common practice for journalists to be offered transport refunds to cover events, which corrupts their transparent and objective reporting.³⁰ The Press Bureau of the Honorable House of Representatives has been accused of censoring media coverage of some House representatives, Yekeh Kolubah and Musa Hassan Bility, an allegation it denies.³¹ Such actions, whether perceived or real, point to a broader concern that government roles in media oversight must remain legitimate and not extend into undue control that stifles press freedom or restricts critical reporting.

11. In addition to these challenges, access to public information remains a significant concern. While Liberia passed the Freedom of Information Act in 2010, making it one of the first West African countries to do so, implementation remains weak.³² The law guarantees the right of every person to access public documents and obliges public bodies to proactively disclose information.³³ However, compliance with proactive disclosure provisions is limited, and many government institutions either delay or ignore requests for information, citing bureaucratic hurdles or national security concerns without justification.³⁴
12. The Independent Information Commission (IIC), which is mandated to oversee the enforcement of the FOI law, remains under-resourced and lacks sufficient authority to compel public agencies to release information.³⁵ Consequently, citizens and journalists often face prolonged delays or denials when seeking critical data, especially in politically sensitive or corruption-related cases.³⁶ The gap between legal guarantees and practical implementation weakens transparency and reinforces a culture where information is hoarded rather than shared.
13. To safeguard both freedom of expression and access to information, the state must uphold its legal obligations under the FOI Act, strengthen the capacity and independence of oversight bodies, and refrain from practices that suppress critical voices in the media.
14. While the government of Liberia has never implemented a total internet shutdown, in 2019, it ordered a social media shutdown of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and

²⁹ Reporters Without Borders, '2023 World Press Freedom Index' (RSF, 2023) <https://rsf.org/en/index>

³⁰ Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding, 'Media Ethics in Liberia: Challenges and Recommendations' (CEMESP, 2022)

³¹ Francis G. Boayue, "Liberia: House Press Bureau Denies Allegations of Censorship by Social Media Platform," FPA, February 18, 2025, <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-house-press-bureau-denies-allegations-of-censorship-by-social-media-platform/>

³² The Freedom of Information Act, 2010 (Liberia) <https://www.rti-rating.org/wp-content/uploads/Liberia.pdf>

³³ *ibid*, Part III, ss 2–5

³⁴ Carter Center, 'A Decade of FOI in Liberia: Progress and Challenges' (2020) <https://www.cartercenter.org>

³⁵ Independent Information Commission, 'Annual Report 2022' (IIC, 2023). https://www.infocom.sc/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ANNUAL-REPORT-2023_v2.pdf

³⁶ 'Liberia: CEMESP and Partners Hold FOI Roundtable with Journalists and Government Information Officers' FrontPage Africa (Monrovia, 25 May 2021) <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-cemesp-and-partners-hold-foi-roundtable-with-journalists-and-government-information-officers/>

Twitter.³⁷ Since then, there have been reports of continued and calculated efforts by the government to limit access to the internet and censor online content.³⁸ This has also been accompanied by threats of potential imposition of civil defamation suits against online content creators.³⁹ These actions interfere with rights and freedoms related to speech by instilling fear in journalists, bloggers, and other online content creators.

15. The ACHPR's 2023 Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy calls on states, including Liberia, to repeal restrictive laws that limit free expression and to avoid internet shutdowns that obstruct access to information and democratic participation.⁴⁰ The declaration also emphasizes the importance of transparent and accountable online content moderation. In Liberia, however, content moderation is largely outsourced to international platforms like Meta, which often operate without meaningful local engagement. For example, during Liberia's 2023 general elections, Meta failed to establish localised content review protocols, leading to insufficient moderation of election-related misinformation and hate speech.⁴¹ This gap highlights the urgent need for national frameworks that ensure content moderation processes are inclusive, rights-respecting, and responsive to local contexts.

Right to Equal Access and Digital Inclusion

16. There has been increased internet adoption in Liberia. According to the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA), as of 2022, the country recorded 4.4 million mobile subscribers, representing a penetration rate of 84%.⁴² At the same time, nearly half of Liberia's population (46%) subscribed to internet services.⁴³ Despite its small population, these penetration figures indicate stark digital divides, with rural and marginalised populations lacking adequate internet access, digital literacy, and affordable connectivity.
17. Furthermore, existing barriers to freedom of expression highlighted above undermine equitable participation. While steps have been taken to decriminalize certain speech-related offenses, criminal defamation laws and vague sedition provisions remain in place, posing particular risks to journalists, women, and activists engaging in online advocacy or

³⁷ Maame Akua Amoah Twum, "AD483: Liberians want a free media – within limits – and unrestricted access to social media," Dispatch, October 20, 2021, https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ad483-liberians_want_free_media-within_limits-afrobarometer_dispatch-20oct21.pdf; NetBlocks, 'Liberia blocks social media to quell Monrovia anti-corruption protests' (7 June 2019)<https://netblocks.org/reports/liberia-blocks-social-media-to-quell-monrovia-anti-corruption-protests-RyjozX8g>

³⁸ Liberia 2022 Human Rights Report, supra.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 'Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy' (2 May 2023) <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2023-05-04/joint-declaration-media-freedom-and-democracy>

⁴¹ Mozilla Foundation, Global Elections Casebook: Liberia Case Study – Elections and Platform Responsibility(2023) <https://foundation.mozilla.org/en/research/library/global-elections-casebook/liberia-case-study/>

⁴² Liberia Telecommunications Authority, Mobile Voice and Internet Statistics 2022 <https://lta.siliconvalleylr.com/industry-statistics-2/>

⁴³ Ibid.

criticism of public officials. These restrictions disproportionately affect marginalized voices in digital spaces, limiting their ability to engage in public discourse.

Data Protection and Privacy

18. Liberia does not have a specific data protection law; however, the right to privacy is safeguarded under the 1986 Constitution.⁴⁴ Article 16 provides that "no person shall be subjected to interference with his privacy of person, family, home or correspondence except by order of a court of competent jurisdiction."⁴⁵ While there is no comprehensive data protection legislation, the 1978 Penal Code criminalizes certain privacy violations. Section 19.1 penalises unauthorized surveillance, including trespassing for eavesdropping, installing or using surveillance devices in private places without consent, and intercepting private communications.⁴⁶ In addition, sectoral laws such as the Electronic Transactions Law (2002)⁴⁷ and the Telecommunications Act (2007)⁴⁸ contain limited provisions concerning the confidentiality of electronic records and protection of consumer information. Nonetheless, Liberia lacks a dedicated data protection authority, and current laws fall short of providing comprehensive protections in line with modern digital data processing and privacy challenges.

This puts personal data, which is collected by government authorities and private institutions and business establishments that collect and process personal data, at stake due to breaches without legal recourse.⁴⁹ The absence of a dedicated data protection authority further compounds the challenge of weak or no comparable data protection standards, and with no institutional mechanism to oversee compliance, investigate breaches, or provide redress and remedies to victims of data breaches. Similarly, while Liberia has signed the ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection,⁵⁰ it has neither signed nor ratified the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention).⁵¹ The undertaking to establish national data protection authorities and enact comprehensive data protection laws under the Malabo convention is currently hanging in the balance since the country does not feel obligated to take action.

⁴⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986), art 16. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/lbr129839.pdf>

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Penal Law of Liberia (1978), s 19.1; see also 'What Does the Law Say About Recording Private Phone Conversations?' *FrontPage Africa* (Monrovia, 5 July 2016) <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/2016news/liberia-in-wake-of-bong-supt-saga-what-does-the-law-says-about-recording-private-phone-conversations/>

⁴⁷ Electronic Transactions Law (2002), Liberia https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/lbr_e/wtacclbr15_leg_18.pdf.

⁴⁸ Telecommunications Act (2007), Liberia; https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/lbr_e/wtacclbr15_leg_38.pdf.

⁴⁹ Fredrick Gaye, "Liberia struggles to enforce privacy and data protection laws," *The Liberian Investigator*, February 13, 2025, <https://liberianinvestigator.com/commentary/liberia-struggles-to-enforce-privacy-and-data-protection-laws/>

⁵⁰ ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection, <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2013/mar/ecowas-dp-act.pdf>

⁵¹ African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, "Status List,"

[https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/29560-sl-
AFRICAN_UNION_CONVENTION_ON_CYBER_SECURITY_AND_PERSONAL_DATA_PROTECTION.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/29560-sl-
AFRICAN_UNION_CONVENTION_ON_CYBER_SECURITY_AND_PERSONAL_DATA_PROTECTION.pdf)

Recommendations

The digital rights situation in Liberia requires the government to take appropriate actions to address the gaps that adversely affect the digital civic space, including internet freedoms, freedom of expression, access to information, and other online freedoms, including:

19. Repeal all restrictive laws and provisions that criminalise speech and undermine freedom of expression, including Section 11.11 of the Penal Law, which penalizes individuals for publicly accusing the President of misconduct, even if true, suppressing legitimate criticism, Section 11.12 on sedition criminalizes acts deemed as incitement against the government, broadly interpreted to stifle dissent, and Section 11.14 on criminal malevolence targets statements that could harm the reputation of public officials, deterring investigative journalism and public accountability.
20. Expedite the enactment of a specific law on data protection to safeguard and protect personal data. The law should establish an independent Data Protection Commission, regulate data collection and storage, and provide remedies for privacy violations, aligning with international best practices.
21. Amend the Freedom of Information Act to strengthen enforcement and ensure greater accessibility to public information. The law should include clear, enforceable penalties for public officials who unjustifiably deny access to information, and establish mechanisms for timely, proactive disclosure by government bodies.
22. Codify legal safeguards for internet freedom by explicitly protecting online expression within the provisions of the Telecommunications Act 2007, and also fast-track the enactment of the draft Cybercrime Act 2021.⁵²
23. Enact a law and guidelines to provide for a clear prohibition on network disruptions and social media shutdowns, including required, court-sanctioned circumstances that meet strict necessity and proportionality tests.
24. Ratify and domesticate the Malabo Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection as a means to show commitment to cyber security and personal data protection.
25. Empower Human Rights Institutions, including the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), by among others increasing human and financial resources to enhance and facilitate its role to promote and protect human rights.
26. Design and implement programmes that aim to enhance the capacities of Judicial officers and law enforcement officers on online rights and internet freedoms.

⁵² Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, 'Cybercrime Act, 2021' (Republic of Liberia, 2021) <https://mopt.gov.lr/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Final-Version-Cyber-Crime-Act-MOPT.pdf>

27. Establish a Media Sustainability Fund to provide financial support for independent media, reducing economic pressures. This should go along with the Introduction of transparent rules for government advertising to prevent financial coercion. Strengthen the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) by formally consulting it on media laws and involving it in training security forces on press freedom standards.
28. Establish clear legal protocols for government content removal requests, ensuring transparency and due process.
29. Implement strict protocols preventing the arbitrary arrest or harassment of journalists for their work. Security forces should be trained on press freedoms.
30. Establish a rapid response system within the Liberia National Police, where journalists can report threats and violence against them, and receive protection, ensuring legal guarantees translate into real-world safety.
31. Comprehensively investigate and prosecute all cases of abuse and killing of journalists to ensure that justice is served.
32. Take all appropriate steps, including extension of physical infrastructure in rural communities to extend the internet and bridge the internet access inclusion gaps among its populace.
33. Enact a specific law on the protection of children's privacy, protection against online violence, exploitation, sex predation, grooming and abuse, and pornography to ensure their safety online.

Conclusion

Liberia's UPR submission reflects a nation making strides in human rights reforms while still facing significant challenges in its digital civic space. The repeal of criminal libel laws and the enactment of the FOI law have strengthened press freedom, yet persistent issues like journalist harassment, censorship, weak privacy protections, and outdated laws threaten these gains.⁵³ Urgent reforms are needed to align legislation with international human rights commitments, strengthen institutions for fair enforcement, and implement policies that enhance access and transparency. The Liberian government must act swiftly to translate UPR recommendations into concrete measures, ensuring journalists work without fear, citizens express themselves freely online, and personal data is safeguarded. This is critical for democratic governance and sustainable development. With political will and collaboration between government, civil society, and international partners, Liberia can consolidate its reforms before the next UPR cycle, setting a regional example of a free, open, and rights-respecting digital space.

⁵³ Access Now and MFWA, Liberia UPR Submission (Access Now, October 2019) <https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Liberia-UPR-Submission-Access-Now-and-MFWA.pdf> accessed 17 March 2025.