

Academics in Support of Chernoh Alpha M. Bah, PhD

Since early 2022, Dr. Chernoh Alpha M. Bah, then a PhD candidate in history at Northwestern University and now a Postdoctoral Fellow, has been subjected to persistent personal attacks and threats from members of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party and from people claiming to speak on behalf of the Sierra Leonean president and government.

These attacks have stemmed from articles Dr. Bah has written or co-authored for *Africanist Press*, an online newspaper (africanistpress.com) focusing primarily on African political and economic issues, especially in Sierra Leone. He has also been interviewed about his investigative reports on KPFA radio and elsewhere, and his research has been covered by the BBC, Radio France Internationale, Deutsche Welle, and other outlets.^[1] The Committee to Protect Journalists and other NGOs have detailed Bah's situation and called for Sierra Leonean authorities to denounce the escalating rhetoric.^[2] The attacks—which have included death threats—have had a profound effect on Dr. Bah's ability to continue his academic research. Dr. Bah's PhD focused on the history of prison labor and public health in Sierra Leone from the time of British occupation through the end of the twentieth century. Not only have the attacks on Dr. Bah absorbed a tremendous amount of his time, but also they have prevented him from returning to Sierra Leone to carry out additional archival and oral history research that is necessary for him to revise his work.

His experiences constitute a clear assault on journalistic freedom. They also go to the heart of principles of academic freedom. Dr. Bah is both a scholar and an investigative journalist. He needs to be able to carry out his postdoctoral research in his home country without hindrance.

We, the undersigned, call on the government of Sierra Leone and other political leaders in the country to extend all reasonable guarantees of safety from harm that could result from Dr. Bah's pursuit of his research.

^[1]KPFA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8Y6fEJaaDw>

RFI: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220108235443/https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20210311-first-lady-at-centre-of-graft-allegations-rocking-sierra-leone-presidency-julius-maada-bio>

BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w172x1gz74lkr2j>

DW: <https://www.dw.com/en/africalink-on-air-23-february-2021/audio-56665628>

^[2]<https://cpj.org/2022/05/sierra-leone-publisher-chernoh-alpha-bah-threatened-with-death-charges-of-treason/>

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