



**ADDRESS BY H.E. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE 29TH GHANA JOURNALISTS
ASSOCIATION (GJA) MEDIA AWARDS ON SATURDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER
2025 – MANHYIA PALACE, KUMASI**

**Theme: "Safeguarding Ghana's Future: The Role of the Media in
Promoting Peace, Security and the Fight Against Galamsey."**



Salutations and Introduction

**Your Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene,
Honourable Ministers of State,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
President and Executives of the Ghana Journalists Association,
Distinguished media practitioners, traditional leaders, and fellow
Ghanaians,**

Good evening.

It is with great pride that I stand before you today—not only as President of the Republic but also as a dedicated and proud member of the Ghana Journalists Association. The GJA has, over the years, been more than just a professional organisation; it has served as a crucial pillar in developing our democratic landscape, enhancing accountability, and advocating for those often unheard in our national conversations.

The brave efforts of Ghanaian journalists have guaranteed that our nation remains committed to the ideals of transparency, justice, and truth. Through your vigilance, issues that might have stayed hidden have been exposed; through your dedication, leaders—myself included—are reminded that public office is a trust, not a privilege.

The Media's Constitutional Mandate

The framers of our 1992 Constitution recognised the essential role of the media in democracy. That is why they dedicated an entire chapter—Chapter 12—to the freedom and independence of the press. In doing so, they placed journalism at the centre of our democratic experiment.

The media is not just a bystander in national life; it is an institution of the state, constitutionally protected, whose vitality shapes the quality of our democracy.

If I were to give a brief review to those who wrote the constitution, I would happily state that through your work—the producers, reporters, editors, videographers, anchors, bloggers, and designers—this sacred duty is being carried out with increasing excellence and renewed relevance each year.

You have bridged the gap between the governed and the governors, fostered civic awareness, and held the powerful to account. However, I must also recognise areas of concern: the decline in press freedom rankings, the increasing threats against journalists, and the rising culture of disinformation.

Ghana's Press Freedom Journey: A Caution and a Choice

Ghana's record on press freedom has deteriorated. In 2016 and 2017, we stood tall as a beacon of media independence in Africa—our journalists worked without fear, and public debate thrived. In recent years, that promise has faded.

The 2025 Press Freedom Index—reflecting the conditions of 2024—recorded another decline, signalling that our recovery remains fragile. Ghana faces a defining choice: to accept this gradual slide or to consciously reclaim our place as Africa's torchbearer of media freedom.

My administration has chosen the latter. We are dedicated to restoring the spirit of pre-2017, when freedom of expression, institutional respect, and journalistic safety characterised the Ghanaian democratic experience.

Justice and Protection for Journalists

I recall that during your visit to the Presidency, the GJA urged me to expedite investigations into acts of violence that took place during the 2020 and 2024 elections, causing harm to some of our compatriots, including journalists.

I am pleased to report that the investigations are complete. A total of twenty-one individuals have been identified; four have been arrested and released on bail, five remain on remand, and warrants have been issued for the remaining suspects. The Attorney-General is currently reviewing the report to determine the appropriate legal action and appropriate compensation for victims or their families. Justice will be pursued under the law. The victims deserve closure, and the perpetrators will face the consequences of their actions.

I have also directed the Ministers responsible for Communications and National Security to create a permanent forum for constructive engagement between security agencies and the media—to foster mutual respect and prevent future incidents.

Let me be unequivocal: under my leadership, this government will neither sanction nor tolerate any form of intimidation, interference, or attack on journalists.

Journalistic Ethics and Public Trust

Freedom must be balanced with responsibility. The credibility of journalism depends on integrity, accuracy, and fairness.

Too often, the race to “break the story first” results in unverified publication and damage to reputation. We need to strengthen both internal and cross-media systems for verification and correction. Just as scholars accept peer review, journalists should adopt peer accountability. If one platform misreports, others must correct it.

The integrity of the media must be safeguarded from both external interference and internal decay. When falsehood flourishes, democracy suffers. When sensationalism displaces substance, citizens lose trust.

The Fight Against Disinformation and Digital Abuse

Friends, the need for responsible regulation is real. The same digital tools that democratized information now also enable hate, defamation, impersonation, and cyberbullying.

Therefore, the Cybersecurity Amendment Bill (2025) and the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill currently before Parliament are not meant to restrict free expression but to safeguard citizens and uphold truth in the digital realm.

I recognise that the GJA and civil society have raised legitimate concerns. Let me assure you: these will be addressed transparently and constructively. The aim is to extend the ethical standards of traditional journalism into the digital realm—without infringing on constitutional freedoms.

Freedom of expression does not include the freedom to ruin reputations, threaten lives, or incite violence. As I have often said, the boundary of free speech is speech that endangers peace and human dignity.

Partnership, Capacity Building, and Welfare

My government will continue engaging directly with the media. The interactive session I held on 10th September marked the beginning of a series of regular dialogues between the Presidency and the media fraternity. The next such interaction will take place next year to commemorate the first anniversary of my administration.

We are also reactivating the Media Development Fund after extensive consultation with stakeholders. The Fund will support capacity-building, welfare, investigative journalism, digital literacy, and safety training—ensuring that journalists can work confidently, competently, and securely.

The Fight Against Galamsey and Environmental Stewardship

The theme of tonight's event reminds us that protecting Ghana's future requires a united stand against illegal mining—galamsey. This is not a matter of convenience; it is essential for our survival.

The fight against illegal mining is complex and challenging. Illegal mining has so deeply ingrained itself in the fabric of our society that, despite the obvious damage it causes to our environment, entire communities mobilise and confront security personnel when they arrive to combat illegal mining in their areas.

Only yesterday, I received news of an accident in which some journalists were injured as they retreated from a community mob attack on EPA and security officials.

I wish to notify communities that attack public officials and security personnel performing their lawful duties that firm action will be taken against them.

Yesterday, I instructed the Chief of Staff to contact the journalists who were injured to check on their health and assist with settling any hospital bills incurred.

I can understand that our young people have been deprived of opportunity over the years, but destroying the environment is like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

The government is working hard to stabilise and grow the economy to create a conducive environment for job creation and employment. That is why we are implementing the 24-hour economy initiative, the FEED GHANA Programme, the poultry revitalisation programme, the National Apprenticeship Programme, among many others, which are intended to create opportunities for alternative livelihoods, especially in rural areas.

Additionally, through the Tree for Life Reforestation Programme and the Blue Water Guards Initiative, we are restoring degraded lands and protecting river bodies, while creating thousands of jobs for young people in affected communities. I have asked the finance minister to increase the budget allocation to recruit more youth into forest replanting and Blue River Guards to safeguard our water bodies. These youths will be recruited from communities affected by illegal mining and will receive a monthly stipend of Ghc1,500.

I commend journalists like Erastus Asare Donkor and many others who persist in exposing environmental crimes at great personal risk. Your bravery is patriotic, and your efforts strengthen our moral resolve.

I assure you as your President that I will never give up the fight.

We do have some good news, though. The EPA has begun a pilot reclamation of some mined-out lands under a PPP model. The pilot covers 1000 hectares of land. The reclaimed land will be replanted with fast-growing trees and some economic tree species, such as oil palm.

Governance Reforms and the National Reset Agenda

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our broader Reset Agenda is based on integrity, competence, and accountability.

We are restoring trust in public institutions through reforms that include:

- 🇲🇾 A National Anti-Corruption Framework, integrating procurement and expenditure monitoring.
- 🇲🇾 Civil Service Pay-for-Performance, rewarding merit and productivity.
- 🇲🇾 A reformed Office of the Special Prosecutor with enhanced prosecutorial powers.
- 🇲🇾 Digitisation of judicial processes under the Justice Sector Renewal Programme.
- 🇲🇾 A new law to regulate the divestiture of State assets and require Parliamentary approval for divestments of assets exceeding a specified value.

These are not mere promises—they are essential reforms, focused on restoring the moral and administrative foundations of the Republic.

National Development and the 24-Hour Economy

Our development vision is centred on people, inclusive, and sustainable. Through the 24-Hour Economy (24H+), we are stimulating round-the-clock production and service delivery, creating jobs, supporting industry, and enhancing logistics.

The Big Push Infrastructure Plan is investing GH¢ 13.85 billion in roads, hospitals, and digital infrastructure. The Feed the Industry Programme links agriculture to processing and exports, ensuring value addition and food security.

All these initiatives form part of a larger moral vision—to ensure that Ghana’s development never comes at the cost of its soul or its environment.

Media, Peace, and National Unity

Your Majesty,

As we move toward another election season, the media’s role in preserving peace and cohesion cannot be overstated. Let us shun hate speech, avoid inflammatory rhetoric, and verify before we broadcast.

Freedom of speech is not the right to sow division. The National Dialogue on Peace and Security, which involves media and faith-based leaders, aims to encourage responsible communication and early detection of conflict triggers.

Peace is not the absence of noise—it's the harmony of hearts. The media must serve as the rhythm that sustains that harmony.

Appreciation and Charge to Journalists

Tonight, I salute every journalist who has spoken truth to power, often at significant personal risk. Your integrity strengthens our democracy.

To the young journalists here tonight—remember that journalism is not just a profession; it is a calling. It demands courage, humility, and unwavering dedication to the truth.

To the GJA, thank you for your partnership in nation-building. To our distinguished award winners, congratulations. Your work gives meaning to our democracy and hope to our people.

And to His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, your leadership in promoting peace and unity remains an enduring inspiration. Under your wise guidance, Kumasi continues to symbolise harmony and national pride.

Conclusion: The Moral Imperative of Truth

In conclusion, let us remember the words of Dr Kwame Nkrumah: “The press should be the vigilant watchdog of the people, not the lapdog of the powerful.”

My government will uphold that vigilance. We will safeguard press freedom, protect journalists, and ensure that truth remains the foundation of our governance.

Together—government, media, and citizens—we can build a Ghana that is ethical in governance, honest in speech, peaceful in spirit, and united in purpose.

May the pen always remain mightier than fear.

May truth continue to light our path.

And may God bless our homeland, Ghana, and make her great and strong.

Thank you.