



## INDEPENDENT RADIO NETWORK (IRN)

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### Press Statement for Immediate Release

**Pujehun, January 23, 2009: IRN concerned about attacks on member stations:** The Independent Radio Network (IRN) has just concluded its 20<sup>th</sup> general meeting held in Pujehun, and hosted by Radio Wanjei. The deliberations focused on reviewing their media coverage and strategy of the elections, as well as recent attacks on its member stations.

The membership of the Independent Radio Network (IRN) is concerned about the unpleasant incidences that have occurred in Tombo, Pujehun and recently in Kambia.

In Tombo the Manager of the IRN member station Voice of Peninsular Mountains was violently attacked and the radio station shut down for about 2 weeks by disgruntled community members.

On the eve of the recently concluded parliamentary bye elections in Pujehun, Radio Wanjei another member station of IRN was attacked by All Peoples Congress (APC) party stalwarts. The attack on the station caused a temporary closure of the station because of the malicious damage caused to its electrical appliances by Eddie Amara alias Eddie B. A reporter of the same station was also beaten up by an SLPP supporter Osman Kaikai alias Kado

Over the past few days, a reporter of Radio Kolenten, in Kambia was harassed and intimidated and received numerous threatening phone calls. Additionally the youth leader of the APC in Kambia, Soriba Yillah alias Koloto wrote a letter to the Chairman of the radio Board threatening violence on the journalist if he showed up in the station. IRN is also concerned about recent violent attacks on colleagues of other radio stations in Freetown.

IRN categorically condemns these acts of vandalism on radio stations and intimidation of station personnel. IRN believes that in a democratic environment where freedom of expression is enjoyed and where tolerance is role modelled by leaders, the rule of law must be upheld. If members of the public or any political group have an issue with any radio station, they should address it through the proper channels and structures.

IRN views with dismay these disturbing tendencies of members of the public displaying intolerance and thuggery to address their problems at community level over radio stations. It should be emphasized that it is the Independent Media Commission (IMC) that has regulatory powers to determine the closure or establishment of a radio station.

It must be noted however, that all constituent member stations of IRN subscribe to a code of conduct which serves as a guide in the execution of their duties responsibly, and therefore urge them to respect this code at all times. These radio stations are property of the community and not political parties or

individuals and have constituted Boards that oversee their operations. The public and specifically governing authorities should respect that and allow the media to operate in an objective and fair manner.

IRN calls on the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Police in Pujehun and Kambia to speedily and thoroughly investigate these matters and prosecute those responsible for this uncivilized and undemocratic act.

As we enjoy freedom of expression in our beloved country we ask members of the public particularly political party stalwarts to act responsibly and respect the rule of law.

**For more information please contact Ransford Wright, Coordinator Independent Radio Network on 076613313 or 077613313**