



**Pan African Lawyers Union**  
Union Panafricaine des Avocats  
União Pan-Africana dos Advogados  
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## **African Media Lawyers Network (AMLN)**

### **The African Media Lawyers Network unveiled:** **Uniting legal and media in AU Member States**

The Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU) and the Congress of African Journalists (CAJ) in coordination with the UNESCO Liaison Office to AU and UNECA, have formally unveiled the framework of the African Media Lawyers Network (AMLN), following a stakeholders' validation meeting that took place on 31 January 2024.

The AMLN, the first ever continent-wide network of media lawyers, aims at protecting and promoting press freedom, providing legal expertise, and supporting journalists and media houses in advocating for a legal environment that is conducive to independent and responsible journalism in the AU Member States. Through an empowered team of lawyers, the AMLN will lead concerted responses to emerging threats and harassment of journalists as well as providing the necessary legal support, including reviewing media laws and policies. The AMLN will further facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among legal actors, media partners and stakeholders, which can fast-track protecting journalists and promoting press freedom on the Continent.

The validation meeting, held virtually, was attended by over 60 key stakeholders, drawn from media, civil society, lawyers' networks, and other freedom of expression and human rights experts from across the Continent. During the validation meeting, the stakeholders appraised the framework and applauded the initiative as *"a major milestone for the continent in the fight for the safety of journalists"*. They emphasized the significance of continuous training for young journalists and lawyers, the necessity of transparency throughout all layers and processes, and the importance of sustainability so the network can fulfil and keep on fulfilling its potential.

*"This stakeholders' review of the AMLN framework is one of the crucial components in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the issue of impunity in Africa"*, said Sarah Peeters, PALU Program Officer who led in the development of the document.

*"The establishment of the African Media Lawyers Network has benefited from the collaboration and endorsement of key stakeholders in the continent and our global partners. We shall carry on in this wonderful spirit and leave no one behind in our efforts at implementing this significant milestone aimed at providing legal support and protection of journalists in the course of their work in Africa"*, said the CAJ President, Christopher Isiguzo, in his opening remarks during the meeting.



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The AMLN is currently hosted by PALU at its continental offices in Arusha, Tanzania and will be launched during the third Africa Media Convention (AMC), a continental gathering of African and global media stakeholders and partners, in May 2024 in Accra, Ghana.

Prior to its official launch in May 2024, the AMLN, in coordination with African media stakeholders will conduct a capacity building workshop for a select number of journalists and lawyers on media litigation, media defence, media freedom, safety of journalists and access to information in Africa as a first step in promoting and creating an environment wherein freedom of expression can be exercised truly and freely.

The AMLN is an outcome of a series of stakeholder consultations across Africa which culminated in the High-Level International Multi - Stakeholder Conference "Safety of Journalists: Protecting media to protect democracy", on 3-4 November 2022 at Victoria Falls in Zambia. It has received support from other legal experts terming it as the first regional initiative.

*“...a huge congratulation to CAJ and PALU, it is an excellent document and really strong and I would like to mention that it is the first such network in the world and Africa is really leading the way”,* said Toby Mendel, the Executive Director of Centre for Law and Democracy and former Senior Director for Law at ARTICLE 19.

The Conference recommended the establishment of an AMLN as one of the crucial components in the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity to promote and enable a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers online and offline, both in conflict and non-conflict situations.

*“The establishment of the African Media Lawyers Network is timely and a much-needed intervention which will support media in litigation, analysis and raising awareness on repressive laws. I urge all journalists’ associations, unions, civil society, academia, and other development partners to work together to make our media space on the continent conducive for journalists”,* said Dr. Rita Bissoonauth, Director of the UNESCO Addis Ababa Liaison Office to AU and UNECA.

The process of establishing AMLN has been funded by UNESCO’s International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Multi-donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and the Safety of Journalists.

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