Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law

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Keynote thoughts
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[Protocol]
My name is Nnenna. I come from the Internet. I am here to seek the meeting point of media, justice and the rule of law. After Namibia, Senegal, Mozambique and Tunisia, it is a happy occasion to have Press Freedom Day commemorated here in Accra, Ghana. In Africa.

My name is Nnenna. I come from the Internet. I work with the organisation founded by and on the principles set forth by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the world wide web. At the World Wide Web Foundation, we work with all stakeholder to keep the web a beneficial, open and safe space for everyone. With the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), we consistently seek good practices to make broadband connectivity affordable.

For the past few years that I have been on the Board of Pen+Bytes, a Media organisation that works for the enhancement of governance through citizen participation. If you have followed the trend on Twitter, PenPlusBytes team are doing a great work on this event. I am also an Advisory Council member of European Digital Rights - EDRi, I have had the hard life of juggling multiple worlds, as a woman, we naturally multitask - the digital and the journalistic. Being trained in journalistic writing and running my own blog since 12 years have not made the task any easier.

It has been a challenge, a rewarding challenge
Whether we prefer to see ourselves as Digital or analogue, Irrespective of whether our medium is an online platform or paper, Whether we are sharing by physical hand-over or by clicking a button, I can say one thing: that the people from the Internet and people from the press share the same basic principles.

We want

- **Freedom**
- **Independence**
- **Safety**
- **Plurality and diversity**
- **Gender balance and social justice**

- **Freedom** of information, of knowledge and of disseminating the benefits of information and knowledge.
- **Independence** from political, religious, traditional, societal or corporate pressure
- **Safety** to go about our daily work and live freely as law-abiding citizens. Journalists should be able to go out in the morning and come back home to their families in the evening. In less than 1 hour of a ceremony, we have had to pause twice to honour the memories of journalists killed.
- **Plurality and diversity** especially as we now live in a global village
• Gender balance and social justice so we leave no one behind.

We share fundamentals and we also share potential opportunities. The web has opened up journalism to new writers, editors and outlets. And the potential audience for journalism has grown as more people become connected, consuming more media than ever before. In 1991, at the time UNESCO was hosting African journalists in Windhoek, the internet was still a guess to many. But, ladies, and gentlemen, for the first time in human history, by the end of this very year, 50% of the world will be online.


Great opportunities.
- Opportunities to connect more
- Opportunities to disseminate
- Opportunities to do more

But this window of opportunity could close if we do not fight to keep information flowing and the web free and open for the next 50%. Traditional media, new media, online platforms and digital rights face the same threats.
We face Government crackdown on free expression, and increasingly draconian laws shrinking civic space in Malaysia, in Myanmar and not too far from here.

We all face the threat of Fake/false news driven in part by the advertising incentive to write clickbait. It is only when information is credible and reliable that papers and platforms will only truly empower people.

We are also challenged by the unreached and unconnected populations who become increasingly marginalised and unable to exercise their right to access information and hold the powers to be accountable.

Ladies and gentlemen

Our basics are right. Our opportunities are great but our threats are also real. However we should not allow our fears to overcome us.

- Governments must help guarantee access to information for everyone. This means strong government open data, in conformity with the International Open Data Charter, Freedom Of Information (FOI) laws, and affordable internet access are key. Ghana is being waited upon. Early last year, the President made us a promise. One year on, we are still awaiting the law.
• Governments must stop internet shutdowns - shutting down the internet is sledgehammer censorship of all public debate and journalism at once. When you shut down the Internet, you tell us that you are not a government to be trusted. You scare away investment and investor, and you mobilize us citizens, to vote against you. It is time to move beyond Military Democracy.

• Social media and search platforms must be designed to better enable and encourage quality journalism to flourish, changing the way the ad-based model incentivise clickbait and fake news.

• To the judiciary, the most important work of the judiciary is building trust in the justice system. We have laws. Offline laws are mostly sufficient for deviant behaviour online. Rights offline are valid online, laws offline are valid online.

• To UNESCO, 27 years after Windhoek. And 29 years after the world wide web... and 50% of the global population online. Maybe this is the time to add the world wide web, this common good of outstanding global value, on the list world heritage.

Ladies and gentlemen, for the three days that we are gathered in Ghana, let us strive to move beyond our fears. Let us deconstruct the walls that exist between men and women, older
and younger, traditional and digital, platform and paper, offline and online.

**With the stones from these walls, we can build bridges.**

And speaking about bridges

Abdullai Kamara, from Liberia, was one such person who built bridges. He was a journalist, a true one, and also a web citizen. For a long time, he was the President of the Press Union of Liberia and at the same time the Convener and Focal Point of the UN Internet Governance Forum in Liberia. On the 17th of April, he died of stroke.

**So if you permit, I want to pause at this time, to pay homage to Abdullai Kamara. Homage to a journalist, a press man, a web citizen, a friend.**

But he was not alone. There are several others here, in this room, across Africa, Accra, Barcelona, Beijing, Bogota, Damascus, Moscow, New Delhi, San Francisco, Sydney ..

Men and women across the world..

Facing the threats
Breaking the walls
Building bridges
Crossing those bridges
Encouraging others to the same…
To stand up for Freedom
To uphold Independence
To promote Safety
To encourage Plurality, diversity, and gender balance

To these..
And many more.
To the Abdullai Kamaras of this world..
And to you

Thank you