

Ghanaian police beat, arrest journalist Malik Sullemana

Authorities in Ghana should hold to account the police officers responsible for beating journalist Malik Sullemana, ensure a thorough investigation into their actions, and protect the safety of the press during interactions with police, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.



Police officers are seen in Ghana's capital, Accra, on March 28, 2018. Several officers were recently suspended in Accra after allegedly assaulting reporters from the local Ghanaian Times. Credit: CPJ/Francis Kokoroko/Reuters.

Sullemana, a court reporter and investigative journalist with the state-owned *Ghanaian Times* newspaper, was beaten by police officers in Accra and then arrested following a traffic incident in the morning of March 14, the journalist told CPJ. Sullemana said he was beaten again at the police station before being permitted to leave and seek medical attention later that day.

Sullemana and his colleagues who were also at the scene, reporters Salifu Abdul Rahman and Raissa Sambou Ebu, told CPJ that while they do not think they were targeted for their profession during the initial traffic incident, they believe the officers treated them more harshly because they were journalists.

The incident came nearly one year after journalist Latif Iddrisu was attacked by officers in an Accra police station in the course of reporting, as [CPJ reported](#) at the time.

"There is absolutely no reason for police in Ghana to have assaulted journalist Malik Sullemana, and those involved should be held accountable," Angela Quintal, CPJ Africa Program Coordinator, said from New York. "This attack, and at least one

other like it, indicate that some police officers in Ghana not only disregard journalist safety but are actively hostile and violent to the media, which is unacceptable."

According to Sullemana, the altercation began when a police officer on a motorcycle collided with the *Ghanaian Times*-branded car that Sullemana, Rahman, Ebu, and their driver were riding in at the time. The officer fled the scene, and the *Times* staffers followed him and confronted him, Sullemana said.

The *Times* staffers began arguing with the officer, and the argument escalated after several other officers arrived and noticed Sullemana filming them, Rahman told CPJ.

Sullemana told CPJ that officers punched him in the face during the argument, searched him, and then arrested him. Rahman told CPJ that he witnessed officers "beat [Sullemana] up" before handcuffing him and pushing him into a police vehicle.

Ebu told CPJ that she was also struck by police officers during the altercation. She was hit in the stomach; she told CPJ that she was recovering from a cesarean birth three months earlier, and had to be rushed to the hospital, where her condition soon stabilised.

Sullemana told CPJ that during the ride to the station, a senior officer said that journalists, "write negative stuff about [the police]."

When they arrived at the station, Sullemana said the same officer told him they would "teach you a lesson" and did not intervene as other officers proceeded to kick, punch, and insult him, resulting in blood clotting in his left eye, bruises on his left arm, and swelling in his left leg.

On March 18, Sullemana gave an official statement to the police about the incident, he told CPJ.

On March 20, three of the police officers involved in the incident were suspended pending an investigation, according to a [statement](#) from the Ghana police on social media and Ghanaian police spokesperson David Eklun, who spoke with CPJ over WhatsApp. Eklun told CPJ the suspension would last for a maximum of three months.

According to the statement, the officers involved in the roadside incident are being investigated by regional authorities for the "alleged assault of journalists from *Ghanaian Times*."

The Police Professional and Standard Bureau has opened a separate investigation into the conduct of the officers who were on duty at the police station when Sullemana was assaulted there, according to the statement and Eklun.

When Sullemana gave his official statement, he was informed that an investigation had been opened alleging that he assaulted a police officer, the journalist told CPJ. Eklun told CPJ on March 20 that he "cannot tell at this stage" if any of the *Ghanaian Times* journalists are under investigation.