



Mapping Threats to the Media in Eswatini

Zoom seminar synopsis

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE WEBINAR

Intelwatch convened a regional webinar to present and discuss the findings of its report, *Mapping Threats to the Media in Eswatini*. The discussion formed part of Intelwatch's wider Southern African research project examining the legal, political, economic, technological, and physical threats confronting journalists and media institutions across the region. Following previous seminars focusing on Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho, the Eswatini webinar represented the sixth in the series, with Namibia scheduled to conclude the regional project. The purpose of the initiative was not only to present research findings but also to facilitate dialogue between journalists, academics, editors, media advocates, and civil society on the realities confronting independent journalism and to identify practical solutions for strengthening media freedom throughout Southern Africa.

Opening the discussion, Intelwatch's Advocacy and Capacity Director Owen Gagare, explained that the seven country reports were produced by researchers with extensive experience in journalism and academia who were commissioned to examine the different forms of pressure affecting media practitioners in each of the countries. In Eswatini, the report was authored by journalism lecturer and investigative journalist Magnificent Mndebele together with another researcher who requested anonymity. Gagare noted that while each country experiences its own unique political and institutional realities, common patterns continue to emerge throughout Southern Africa. Governments, political elites, business interests and powerful institutions increasingly employ legislation, regulatory systems, economic pressure, strategic litigation, digital surveillance and intimidation to constrain independent journalism. However, the precise manifestation of these threats differs considerably from country to country. For example whereas journalists in Mozambique have increasingly faced lethal violence, those in Zimbabwe frequently confront arbitrary arrests, while other countries experience greater economic or regulatory pressure. The Eswatini discussion therefore sought to identify the country's distinctive media environment while situating it within these broader regional trends.

Panellists of the discussion included:

1. **Magnificent Mndebele** - co-author of the report
2. **Melisa Msweli** - Journalist
3. **Zwelethu Dlamini** - Managing Director Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism
4. **Dr Henri-Count Evans** - Senior Journalism Lecturer at Eswatini University

5. Jabu Matsebula - Eswatini Editors Forum

REPORT FINDINGS PRESENTATION

Magnificent Mndebele opened his presentation by explaining that the report sought to move beyond isolated incidents of attacks on journalists and instead map the structural environment within which journalism operates in Eswatini. Rather than focusing solely on physical violence, the research examined the broader ecosystem of legal restrictions, institutional practices, political interference, economic pressures and technological developments that collectively shape the country's media landscape. The findings demonstrated that journalists face interconnected threats operating simultaneously through legislation, state institutions, judicial processes, ownership structures and emerging digital governance frameworks. These pressures combine to produce an environment in which independent journalism is constrained long before stories reach publication.

Regulatory and Legal Threats

One of the report's central findings was that Eswatini possesses an extensive body of legislation that restricts freedom of expression and media freedom despite constitutional guarantees protecting these rights. Mndebele explained that the researchers identified approximately thirty-three separate laws which, individually and collectively, impose significant constraints upon journalists and media organisations. Given the breadth of this legislative framework, the report concentrated on those statutes considered most problematic for media freedom.

The report highlighted the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1938 as one of the country's most restrictive legal instruments. Although enacted during the colonial period, the Act continues to shape the contemporary media environment by shielding the monarchy and members of the Royal Family from public scrutiny. According to Mndebele, the legislation effectively limits robust public discussion concerning the monarchy by criminalising criticism and creating a protected sphere largely insulated from journalistic investigation. This legal protection extends beyond individual reputations and establishes institutional barriers preventing the media from holding one of the country's most powerful institutions accountable.

The report further noted that the Act contains extraordinary procedural provisions which significantly weaken judicial independence. Under Section 7, individuals accused of violating

the legislation may be subjected to a special tribunal established by the Prime Minister in consultation with the King. Decisions reached by such tribunals are effectively final and cannot easily be challenged through ordinary judicial processes. Mndebele argued that this arrangement undermines fundamental principles of due process and creates a legal mechanism capable of intimidating journalists investigating politically sensitive subjects involving the monarchy or state institutions.

Attention was also given to Eswatini's Computer Crime and Cybercrime Act of 2022. While recognising the legitimate need for cybercrime legislation, the report argued that several provisions risk expanding state control over digital journalism. Mndebele expressed particular concern regarding provisions criminalising online activities that may be interpreted as causing political instability or harming the country's economy. Although framed as cybersecurity measures, such provisions contain vague language capable of broad interpretation, thereby increasing opportunities for authorities to prosecute journalists covering politically contentious issues or reporting on matters deemed damaging to national interests.

Beyond these statutes, the report identified numerous additional laws - including the Official Secrets Act, Suppression of Terrorism Act, and Prescribed Publications legislation - which collectively reinforce an increasingly restrictive legal environment. Although each statute serves different purposes, together they establish overlapping mechanisms through which investigative reporting, critical commentary and access to public information may be constrained. Mndebele argued that many of these laws remain fundamentally inconsistent with constitutional protections guaranteeing freedom of expression, illustrating the gap between formal constitutional rights and their practical implementation within Eswatini's legal framework.

Political and Institutional Threats

Moving beyond the legislative framework, Mndebele argued that the political environment in Eswatini presents equally significant obstacles to independent journalism. The report found that political actors, influential business figures, and senior public officials increasingly rely on the legal system itself as a mechanism of intimidation rather than accountability. Instead of responding publicly to critical reporting, powerful individuals frequently resort to costly civil litigation against journalists and media organisations. These lawsuits often seek substantial financial damages that exceed the economic capacity of many media houses, creating a chilling effect that discourages investigative reporting long before cases reach judgment. The report

therefore argues that strategic litigation has become one of the most effective contemporary instruments used to suppress critical journalism in Eswatini.

Mndebele observed that many of the case studies examined during the research demonstrated a pattern in which courts have historically ruled against media organisations. Although he acknowledged a recent judgment involving the *Eswatini Observer* and journalist Abraham Magagula in which the court ruled in favour of the media, he described this as an exception rather than the norm. Such outcomes remain uncommon, reinforcing the perception among journalists that litigation carries considerable financial and professional risks regardless of the public interest value of their reporting.

The report highlighted several examples illustrating how civil litigation has become a strategic weapon against media institutions. One notable case involved the *Times of Eswatini*, which was ordered to pay damages exceeding half a million rand in a defamation matter involving the current Minister of Labour. According to the report, awards of this magnitude have significant consequences beyond the individual case, as they send a clear signal to journalists and editors that pursuing investigations into politically influential figures may expose both themselves and their employers to crippling financial liability. Even where litigation ultimately fails, the legal costs associated with defending such cases consume scarce financial resources and divert attention away from journalism itself.

The report also examined growing pressure directed towards online publications, which have increasingly become important spaces for investigative journalism in Eswatini. Mndebele explained that while authorities have found it more difficult to regulate digital media through traditional licensing mechanisms, legal action has become a preferred alternative. The report referenced ongoing lawsuits involving *The Swazi Bridge*, including one judgment requiring the publication to pay approximately R350,000 in damages and another claim seeking R50 million in compensation. The sheer scale of such claims illustrates how litigation may threaten the very survival of independent media organisations, irrespective of the eventual outcome of court proceedings. The report therefore characterised these lawsuits as strategic efforts to discourage investigative reporting by imposing overwhelming financial uncertainty upon media outlets.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that legal intimidation in Eswatini extends well beyond criminal prosecution. Rather than relying solely upon restrictive legislation, influential actors increasingly employ ordinary civil processes to punish critical reporting. This creates an environment in which journalists must weigh the public interest against potentially

catastrophic financial consequences, encouraging self-censorship even where stories are factually accurate and thoroughly investigated.

Editorial Independence and Media Ownership

Another significant theme emerging from the report concerned the vulnerability of editorial independence within Eswatini's media sector. Mndebele emphasised that external censorship is only one aspect of the country's media environment. Equally important are the internal pressures experienced within news organisations themselves, particularly where ownership structures intersect with political and economic power.

Drawing on interviews conducted during the research, Mndebele discussed concerns regarding editorial interference within media organisations whose ownership structures maintain close relationships with influential political institutions. Particular attention was given to the *Eswatini Observer*, whose ownership has frequently been associated with entities linked to the Royal Family. While representatives of the publication rejected suggestions that ownership directly dictates editorial decisions, the report argued that structural relationships between ownership and political authority inevitably create incentives for caution when reporting on sensitive subjects involving the monarchy or government.

Rather than suggesting that journalists are routinely instructed not to publish particular stories, the report adopts a broader political economy perspective. Mndebele argued that editorial independence is often constrained indirectly through economic dependence and institutional relationships. Editors working within organisations closely connected to centres of political power may avoid pursuing controversial stories, not necessarily because they receive explicit instructions, but because institutional survival depends upon maintaining favourable relationships with powerful actors. This form of structural self-censorship is considerably more difficult to identify than overt censorship, yet may ultimately prove more pervasive because it becomes embedded within editorial decision-making itself.

The report therefore concludes that ownership concentration, political proximity and institutional dependence collectively undermine editorial autonomy across sections of Eswatini's media landscape. These pressures do not always manifest through direct intervention but instead shape newsroom culture, influencing decisions regarding which stories receive prominence, which investigations proceed, and which subjects remain effectively beyond public scrutiny.

Economic Pressures on Independent Journalism

Alongside legal and political threats, the report identified economic vulnerability as one of the most significant structural challenges facing journalism in Eswatini. Media organisations operate within a relatively small advertising market, making them highly dependent upon limited revenue streams and exposing them to financial pressure from both state and private actors.

Although economic challenges affect media industries globally, the report argued that in Eswatini financial dependence carries distinct political implications. Where government institutions or politically connected businesses represent major sources of advertising revenue, media organisations may hesitate to publish reporting likely to damage these relationships. Economic dependence therefore functions as an indirect mechanism of control, reducing the need for overt censorship while nevertheless influencing editorial priorities.

For smaller independent publications, these pressures are compounded by the costs associated with defending legal proceedings and sustaining investigative journalism. Investigative reporting requires considerable financial investment, yet many organisations operate with extremely limited resources. When combined with the possibility of expensive litigation, declining advertising revenue and broader economic uncertainty, these structural pressures make sustained investigative journalism increasingly difficult to maintain.

The report argues that economic insecurity should therefore be understood not merely as a commercial challenge but as a media freedom issue. Financial fragility increases vulnerability to political influence, weakens editorial independence and reduces the capacity of news organisations to fulfil their democratic watchdog function. In this respect, economic pressure complements legal and political restrictions, producing an environment in which independent journalism becomes progressively more difficult to sustain.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Following the presentation of the report, panellists reflected on the findings and explored how the documented threats manifest in the day-to-day realities of journalism in Eswatini. While acknowledging that the legal framework presents significant obstacles to media freedom, participants argued that the country's media environment is shaped by a broader culture of political caution, institutional dependence and growing digital vulnerability. Throughout the discussion, speakers repeatedly emphasised that the various threats identified in the report

should not be viewed in isolation. Rather, restrictive legislation, judicial intimidation, economic pressure, surveillance concerns and editorial interference reinforce one another, creating an ecosystem that discourages critical reporting even in the absence of overt censorship.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was that many journalists no longer require direct instructions from political authorities to avoid certain subjects. Years of restrictive laws, litigation and institutional pressure have produced an environment in which self-censorship increasingly becomes an internalised professional survival strategy. Participants argued that this gradual normalisation of caution may ultimately prove more damaging than explicit censorship because it quietly narrows public debate without attracting widespread attention.

Digital Technologies, Cybersecurity and Emerging Forms of Surveillance

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the growing importance of digital technologies and cybersecurity within Eswatini's media environment. Panellists recognised that digital platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for journalists to publish investigations, communicate securely with sources and reach audiences beyond traditional media channels. At the same time, however, these technologies have introduced new forms of vulnerability that existing legal and institutional safeguards have struggled to address.

Participants expressed concern that cybersecurity legislation, while presented as necessary for combating cybercrime, increasingly contains provisions capable of restricting legitimate journalistic activity. Vague offences relating to online communications, information sharing and digital publication risk expanding the state's capacity to monitor, investigate or prosecute journalists carrying out work in the public interest. Several speakers argued that legislation intended to address cybercrime must distinguish clearly between criminal activity and investigative journalism if it is not to undermine democratic accountability.

The discussion also highlighted the increasing reliance of journalists on encrypted messaging applications, cloud storage, social media and other digital communication platforms. While these technologies have become indispensable for investigative reporting, they simultaneously expose journalists to surveillance, hacking, online harassment and unauthorised access to sensitive information. Participants stressed that digital security should no longer be regarded as a specialised concern affecting only investigative reporters. Instead, cybersecurity has become an essential component of journalistic practice across the profession, requiring both institutional support and continuous training.

Speakers further observed that digital threats extend beyond surveillance by the state. Journalists increasingly encounter coordinated online harassment campaigns, impersonation, disinformation and cyberbullying designed to undermine their credibility and discourage further reporting. These forms of digital intimidation frequently operate outside formal legal processes yet can be equally effective in silencing critical voices.

The Experiences of Women Journalists

One of the most important contributions to the discussion came from reflections on the experiences of women journalists working within Eswatini's media environment. The report had identified gendered forms of harassment as an increasingly significant component of the country's media threat landscape, and panellists expanded upon these findings by discussing the disproportionate abuse directed towards women working in journalism.

Participants noted that women journalists are often subjected to forms of intimidation that differ markedly from those experienced by their male colleagues. Online attacks frequently target their appearance, gender, personal relationships and perceived morality rather than engaging with their reporting. Such harassment commonly includes misogynistic insults, coordinated social media abuse, character assassination and attempts to undermine professional credibility through gender-based stereotypes.

Melisa Msweli's participation provided an important practical perspective on these realities. Having experienced cyberbullying and targeted online abuse herself, her presence underscored that digital harassment is not an abstract concern but an increasingly common occupational hazard confronting women journalists throughout the region. Participants observed that the psychological consequences of sustained online abuse often extend well beyond individual incidents, contributing to anxiety, professional isolation and self-censorship. In many cases, journalists become reluctant to report on politically sensitive subjects simply to avoid becoming the focus of coordinated harassment campaigns.

The discussion therefore emphasised that media freedom initiatives should incorporate gender-sensitive approaches to journalist safety. Protecting journalists requires more than legal reform alone; it also necessitates recognising the distinct challenges faced by women working in increasingly hostile digital environments. Participants argued that newsroom policies, psychological support mechanisms and digital security training should explicitly address gender-based online violence as part of broader journalist protection strategies.

Investigative Journalism Under Pressure

The webinar also explored the particular difficulties confronting investigative journalism in Eswatini. Participants observed that investigative reporting occupies a uniquely vulnerable position because it often involves exposing corruption, abuse of authority and misconduct by politically or economically influential actors. Consequently, investigative journalists experience many of the legal, financial and institutional pressures discussed throughout the report with greater intensity than other media practitioners.

Panellists argued that investigative journalism depends fundamentally upon public confidence, confidential sources and editorial independence. However, each of these foundations is increasingly threatened. Restrictive legislation discourages whistleblowers from sharing information, litigation increases the financial risks associated with publication, while political and commercial pressures influence editorial decision-making regarding controversial investigations.

Participants further noted that investigative journalism requires considerable financial investment, including lengthy research, travel, verification and legal review. For media organisations already operating within constrained economic environments, sustaining such work has become increasingly difficult. Independent investigative outlets therefore face the dual challenge of limited financial resources and heightened legal exposure.

Despite these obstacles, speakers emphasised that investigative journalism remains indispensable for democratic accountability. The discussion concluded that strengthening investigative reporting requires legal reform, institutional independence, improved digital security, sustainable funding models and stronger regional collaboration among journalists facing similar challenges across Southern Africa.

Media Institutions and Collective Responsibility

Another important theme emerging from the discussion concerned the responsibility of media institutions themselves. Participants argued that protecting media freedom cannot depend solely upon individual journalists demonstrating courage in hostile environments. Editors, publishers, journalism associations and media organisations all possess responsibilities for creating conditions that enable independent reporting.

The Eswatini Editors Forum was highlighted as one institution seeking to strengthen professional solidarity and advocate for improved protections for journalists. Participants

suggested that stronger collaboration between media organisations would reduce the isolation frequently experienced by journalists facing litigation, harassment or political intimidation. Collective responses also make it more difficult for powerful actors to target individual journalists or publications without attracting wider scrutiny.

The discussion further recognised that civil society organisations, academic institutions and regional media freedom organisations possess important roles in supporting journalists through research, advocacy, legal assistance and public awareness initiatives. Rather than viewing media freedom solely as a professional concern affecting journalists, participants argued that independent journalism forms an essential component of democratic governance and therefore requires support from society more broadly.

The panel repeatedly returned to the idea that threats against journalists ultimately become threats against the public's right to receive information. When investigative reporting is discouraged, editorial independence compromised or journalists intimidated into silence, citizens lose access to the information necessary for meaningful democratic participation. The protection of journalists should therefore be understood not merely as safeguarding a profession but as protecting the broader public interest and strengthening democratic accountability itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR REFORM

Although the webinar presented a sobering assessment of the challenges confronting media freedom in Eswatini, the discussion was equally forward-looking. Rather than limiting themselves to documenting existing threats, participants devoted considerable attention to identifying reforms capable of strengthening the country's media environment. Across the discussion, a broad consensus emerged that meaningful progress would require legal reform, stronger institutions, improved digital resilience, enhanced professional solidarity and sustained engagement between journalists, civil society and policymakers.

A primary recommendation concerned the urgent review of legislation affecting freedom of expression. Participants argued that numerous statutes inherited from both the colonial and post-independence periods remain fundamentally incompatible with constitutional protections guaranteeing freedom of expression and media freedom. Laws such as the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act, provisions of the Official Secrets Act, the Suppression of Terrorism

Act and elements of more recent cybercrime legislation were repeatedly identified as requiring substantial amendment or repeal. Reform, participants argued, should seek to strike an appropriate balance between legitimate state interests and the protection of journalism conducted in the public interest.

The discussion further highlighted the importance of ensuring that future digital governance legislation incorporates explicit safeguards for journalism. While acknowledging the necessity of combating cybercrime, participants stressed that cybersecurity frameworks should not unintentionally criminalise investigative reporting, confidential communication with sources or the dissemination of information serving the public interest. Legal definitions should therefore be sufficiently precise to prevent overly broad interpretation by enforcement authorities.

Strengthening judicial independence also emerged as an important priority. Speakers expressed concern that strategic litigation has increasingly become an instrument through which politically and economically influential individuals discourage investigative journalism. Participants suggested that courts should carefully consider the broader implications of exceptionally large damages awards against media organisations, recognising that disproportionate financial penalties may undermine media pluralism and discourage reporting on matters of significant public importance. Legal accountability remains essential, they argued, but civil litigation should not become an indirect mechanism for suppressing legitimate journalism.

Economic sustainability was likewise identified as an essential component of media freedom. The panel noted that financially vulnerable media organisations are considerably more susceptible to political and commercial influence. Participants therefore encouraged greater investment in independent journalism, more diversified revenue models and stronger institutional support for investigative reporting. Sustainable media organisations, they argued, are better positioned to resist external pressure and maintain editorial independence.

Several speakers also emphasised the growing importance of digital security. As journalism increasingly depends upon online communication, cloud-based information storage and digital publishing platforms, news organisations must strengthen their capacity to protect journalists, confidential sources and sensitive information. Participants advocated expanded training in cybersecurity, secure communications, digital risk assessment and online safety as essential components of modern journalistic practice.

The webinar additionally highlighted the need for stronger professional solidarity across Eswatini's media sector. Journalists, editors, media organisations and civil society institutions were encouraged to collaborate more closely when responding to legal intimidation, harassment or attacks against individual reporters. Participants argued that coordinated institutional responses reduce the isolation frequently experienced by journalists facing pressure while simultaneously strengthening advocacy efforts for broader legal and policy reform.

Recognising the particular vulnerabilities faced by women journalists, the discussion also called for gender-sensitive protection mechanisms. News organisations were encouraged to adopt policies addressing online harassment, provide access to psychological support where necessary and ensure that women journalists receive adequate institutional backing when subjected to coordinated digital abuse. Participants argued that protecting women journalists requires acknowledging the distinct forms of intimidation they experience and incorporating these realities into broader media safety strategies.

The Broader Meaning of the Report

Throughout the webinar, speakers consistently emphasised that the findings of the report extend beyond journalism itself. While the research focuses specifically on threats confronting media practitioners, participants argued that these pressures ultimately affect society as a whole. Restrictions on journalism reduce the public's access to reliable information, weaken democratic accountability and diminish opportunities for informed public participation.

The discussion repeatedly demonstrated that threats to media freedom rarely occur through a single mechanism. Rather, legislation, economic pressure, litigation, ownership structures, surveillance technologies and political influence interact to produce an environment in which journalists increasingly regulate their own behaviour. This gradual narrowing of public discourse may occur without widespread arrests or overt censorship, making it considerably more difficult to identify and challenge.

Participants also stressed that independent journalism serves as a cornerstone of democratic governance by exposing corruption, facilitating informed public debate and ensuring accountability among political and economic elites. Consequently, weakening journalism has implications extending well beyond the profession itself. When journalists cannot investigate freely, citizens lose access to information necessary for making informed political decisions, while public institutions become less accountable to those they serve.

The Eswatini report therefore presents a picture of a media environment under sustained pressure from multiple interconnected sources. Legal restrictions constrain reporting on politically sensitive issues; strategic litigation increases financial risks; economic dependence influences editorial decision-making; ownership structures complicate editorial independence; and emerging digital technologies create new opportunities for surveillance and harassment. Collectively, these factors create an ecosystem that discourages robust public-interest journalism while narrowing democratic space.

Despite these challenges, the webinar also highlighted encouraging developments. Continued advocacy by journalists, media organisations, academic institutions and civil society demonstrates that significant resistance to these pressures already exists. The willingness of practitioners to openly discuss these challenges, document them systematically and engage collaboratively in identifying solutions reflects an ongoing commitment to strengthening media freedom within Eswatini and throughout the Southern African region.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The webinar concluded by reinforcing the central message emerging from both the report and the panel discussion: media freedom in Eswatini faces complex and evolving challenges that cannot be understood solely through isolated incidents of censorship or attacks on journalists. Instead, the report demonstrates that contemporary threats increasingly operate through interconnected legal, political, economic and technological systems that collectively shape the conditions under which journalism is practised.

Participants agreed that while constitutional guarantees provide an important foundation for freedom of expression, meaningful protection ultimately depends upon institutions capable of safeguarding those rights in practice. This requires reforming restrictive legislation, strengthening judicial and regulatory independence, protecting editorial autonomy, improving the economic sustainability of independent media and equipping journalists to navigate increasingly complex digital security challenges.

The discussion also underscored that responsibility for protecting media freedom extends beyond journalists themselves. Governments, courts, regulators, media owners, civil society organisations, academic institutions and citizens all possess roles in creating an environment in which independent journalism can flourish. Sustained collaboration between these actors will be essential if the structural challenges identified throughout the report are to be effectively addressed.

Importantly, the webinar was framed not simply as an academic exercise but as an opportunity to develop partnerships and identify interventions capable of improving media freedom in Eswatini. Gagare emphasised that understanding threats alone would be insufficient unless stakeholders also considered ongoing advocacy efforts, institutional reforms and opportunities for collaboration between journalists, civil society organisations and regional partners. Intelwatch therefore positioned the discussion as both a diagnosis of the country's media environment and a platform for identifying practical responses capable of strengthening democratic accountability and protecting journalists working under increasingly difficult conditions.

Ultimately, the webinar served both as a comprehensive diagnosis of the pressures confronting Eswatini's media landscape and as a call for continued engagement, reform and regional solidarity. By documenting the country's evolving threat environment while facilitating dialogue among journalists, researchers and media advocates, the discussion reaffirmed that protecting media freedom is inseparable from protecting democratic governance itself. Independent journalism remains fundamental to transparency, accountability and informed public participation, and strengthening the conditions under which journalists operate will remain essential for safeguarding these broader democratic values.

The *Mapping Threats to the Media in Eswatini* report therefore represents more than a catalogue of risks facing journalists. It provides a detailed assessment of the structural conditions shaping the country's information environment while offering an evidence-based foundation upon which future advocacy, legal reform and institutional strengthening can be built. Like the broader regional series of which it forms a part, the webinar concluded that defending media freedom ultimately requires sustained cooperation between journalists, civil society, policymakers and international partners committed to preserving the public's right to seek, receive and impart information without fear or undue interference.