THE STATE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN SOMALIA

Jan 2018 - Sep 2020
INTRODUCTION

Somalia has one of the world’s longstanding conflicts since 1991. Somaliland, which is a region in the north, broke away from the rest of the country and claimed independence in 1991. The rest of the country is divided into five regional states (Puntland, Jubbaland, Galmudug, South West State and Hirshabelle) - each one struggling to be autonomous from the federal government in Mogadishu.

Decades of conflict, coupled with drought, famine and constant emergence of armed groups, have left the country suffering one of the world’s worst humanitarian and human rights crises.

The country is one of the most dangerous places for journalists to work. During the past three years, Somali government security forces and officials, authorities in regional states and the armed group Al-Shabaab have suppressed media freedom and restricted journalists and freedom expression.

Since 2018 at least eight journalists have been killed in south central Somalia and Puntland in the northeast. Four of the journalists were killed in 2018, two in 2019 and two in 2020. Another journalist survived – albeit with serious injuries – an attempt on his life after a bomb attached to his car was remotely detonated in December 2018.

The Somali authorities -whether in the federal level or the regional states- have continuously failed to investigate cases of killings or attacks on journalists, media outlets and critics. For the fifth year in a row, Somalia tops the Committee to Protect Journalists’ (CPJ) Global Impunity Index on countries where those who kill journalists escape prosecution.

In the last three years, journalists across the country have been attacked, beaten and arbitrarily arrested by Somalia security forces; including police, the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and other government officials. Most journalists were attacked while on duty covering stories at national events, at blast sites covering the aftermath of the attacks by the militant group Al-Shabaab, during anti-government demonstrations and while going through security checkpoints in Mogadishu. The authorities have also raided and temporarily closed media outlets to prevent or discourage coverage of news events or to extort money from media owners or as retaliation for critical reportage.

In addition to the ongoing violence against journalists, authorities in Somalia have imposed a draconian media law that restricts freedom of expression, censors journalists and provides harsh punishment for journalists over critical reporting.
This report covers violations against the press and the freedom of expression including murders, attempted murders, physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, detentions and imprisonments, harassment and intimidation of journalists and other critics, and restrictions on access to information from January 2018 to September 2020. The report is based on interviews with local journalists, media directors, and documentations collected by the Somali Journalists Syndicate from 2019 to 2020 and analysis of a range of documents from some international human rights organizations.

2018 IN BRIEF

In 2018 four journalists were murdered and two sustained injuries. 34 journalists were detained in various locations in the country. Authorities closed down four media houses due to their critical reportage.

Murdered

- On July 26, 2018, a police officer shot and killed Abdirizak Kasim Iman, a cameraperson for SBS TV, a privately-owned television station in Mogadishu. The journalist’s family filed a case at the local military court, which later sentenced the officer in absentia but he was not arrested.

- On September 18, 2018, Abdirizak Said Osman, of Radio Voice of Peace (Codka Nabadda) was stabbed to death in Galkayo, a town in the central Somalia region of Mudug. According to his colleagues, Osman was attacked as he left the radio station. Osman’s death had followed his reporting for Voice of Peace about the security situation in the region.

- On October 27, 2018, radio journalist, Abdullahi Mire Hashi was gunned down by gunmen in the town of Elisha Bihaya, about 17 km from the capital Mogadishu. The journalist who was working at the privately owned religious station called Darul Sunnah was shot dead moments after he left the station to his home.

- On December 22, 2018, a car bomb detonated on the road in Mogadishu, killed Universal TV journalist and senior producer Awil Dahir Salad. He was driving for work that Saturday morning when a suicide car bomber detonated on the road and killed several other people including Salad’s driver and two security guards.

Physical Attacks

- On June 28, 2018, a gunman shot and injured Farhiyo Mire, a female journalist with the state-owned media in Mogadishu. The journalist was hospitalized and despite media reports that the police detained the attacker, there has not been any follow-up since then.
On December 4, 2018, TV journalist Ismail Sheikh Khalifa was critically wounded when a bomb planted in his car exploded in Mogadishu. He was leaving the TV studio where he hosted a weekly show, when the bomb was detonated remotely. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Despite surviving he is still on medication till this day.

Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions and Imprisonments

- On January 12, 2018, police in Galmudug’s Galkayo arrested radio journalist Hanad Abdi Farah in Galkayo after he reported on a protest in the city. He was detained for three days and later freed without charge.

- On January 15, 2018, police in Berbera arrested and charged two online journalists: Ahmed Said and Abdirahman Mohamed with publication of false news and defamation. They were sentenced to seven months in jail.
On January 17, 2018, Somaliland authorities arrested three TV journalists in Las Anod town of Sool region after authorities said their reportage on a local football match was critical to Somaliland. Hamze Darwish (Kalsan TV), Mohamed Bidhanshe (SBS TV) and Mowlid Ismail (Somnews TV) were detained at the police station in Las Anod and freed without charge days after.

On February 8, 2018, security forces in Kismayo arrested Somali Cable TV journalist, Sabir Abdukadir Nur for a TV report deemed critical to the Jubbaland State authorities. He was released days later without charge.

On February 17, 2018, Somaliland police arrested Universal TV director Mohamed Abi Digale in Hargeisa over spreading propaganda against Somaliland. He was released days later without charge.

On March 13, 2018, Somaliland police detained Burco News website journalist Mohamed Ali Bakeri for publication of an alleged false news. He was freed days later without charge.

On April 4, 2018, armed officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) blocked and briefly detained 15 journalists from local and international media who were covering proceedings at the Mogadishu Parliament. The journalists were held incommunicado outside the parliament as they were trying to interview lawmakers. They were later freed but were not able to cover the news.

On April 19, 2018, Somaliland officials at the Hargeisa Airport arrested Universal TV journalist Najib Abdiweli Abdi after the journalist visited Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, which Somaliland claims to have broken away. The Abdi was freed a day later without charge.

On April 20, 2018, police in Hargeisa, Somaliland raided the home of Yusuf Mohamed Hassan, an editor of the Somaliland Sun website and subsequently arrested him over the website’s coverage of the construction of a presidential palace.

On June 18, 2018, journalist Mohamed Adan Dirir, who worked for the Horseed News website was released from jail on presidential pardon after spending nine months in a jail in Somaliland on charges of criminal defamation and publishing false news.

On June 25, 2018, Galmudug police arrested Ahmed Khalif Gedi, a reporter with RTN TV in Galkayo after he covered an increase of illegal roadblocks in the city. He was released without charge days after.

On July 9, 2018, officers from Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) acted on an orders of the Governor of Hiiraan Region and arrested Radio Voice of Hiiraan journalist Abdishakur Mohamed.
Hassan for his critical reporting. He was released days later without charge.

- On July 9, 2018, NISA arrested Voice of America radio correspondent, Abdiwahid Moalim Isaq in Galkayo town over a news report on a fight between local communities and militants near Galkayo town. He was released days later without charge.

- On July 28, 2018, Somali military officers detained Ismail Yusuf Abukar, a journalist who works for the local Radio Wanla-weyn in Lower Shabelle region of Somalia. He was released a day after without charge.

- On September 22, 2018, authorities in central Somali region of Galmudug arrested journalist Mohamed Abdiwali Tohow after he reported that Al-Shabaab militants were controlling part of Galmudug region. He was subsequently sentenced to six months in jail on September 30, but was released a day after on pardon.

- On November 20, 2018, Somali police officers arrested Nur Ismail Sheikh, an editor for the privately owned website, Shaaciye, who had been critical of Abdirahman Omar Osman, ex-mayor of Mogadishu and governor of the Banadir Region. He was released without charge after spending more than ten days in jail.

- On December 13, 2018, Somaliland police in Bur’o arrested Goobjoog Media Group’s correspondent in Bur’o, Hassan Handulle over a Facebook post deemed critical to the authorities in Somaliland. He was held seven days in jail before he was released.

**Closure of media outlets and confiscation of equipment**

- On May 9, 2018, Puntland authorities ordered the closure of Horseed Media, a local radio station in Bosaso town for spreading news reports critical to the authorities.

- On May 29, 2018, Somaliland authorities banned two privately owned TV stations: SBS TV and Somnews from operating in Somaliland. A statement from Somaliland Ministry of Information said the two TV stations were broadcasting propaganda against Somaliland and incitement in breach of the ethical journalism.

- On October 3, 2018, armed men raided Radio Adado, an independent local radio in Adado town of Galmudug region. The gunmen confiscated the radio transmitter and other equipment forcing the radio to remain shuttered.
2019 IN BRIEF

The year 2019 ended as multiple actors in Somalia continued to target journalists and media practitioners through physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, death threats, and obstruction of access to information. Two journalists were killed during the year in a hotel attack while three others were injured with gunshots making the year one of the least number of journalists’ deaths in the country. Instead, authorities continued to order arbitrary arrests and suspensions of media outlets based on perceived criticisms of the state. They also blocked independent news websites and introduced an anti-press bill. Eighty-one cases of assault on journalists were recorded. Police arrested 53 journalists across the country. The equipment of 27 journalists were confiscated by police; seven media houses shuttered and two news websites blocked.

Murdered

On July 12, 2019, SBC TV reporter, Mohamed Omar Sahal and Hodan Naleyeh, TV journalist and founder of Integration TV were killed when the Madina Hotel (also known as Cas-casey) in Kismayo was attacked. Al-Shabaab militant group claimed the responsibility of the attack.

Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions and Imprisonments

- On January 2, 2019, Security forces in Beledweyne arrested SBC TV reporter, Abdinur Osman Adan who was conducting interviews with displaced people who accused local officials of misappropriating relief aid meant for them. He was released on January 4, 2019 without charge.

- On March 10, 2019, Somaliland police arrested three TV journalists: Said Nuh Kibar (Horyaal24 TV), Mohamed Abdi Omar Watin (freelancer) and Jafar Awil (Eryal TV) in Gabiley town, about 57KM from Hargeisa, Somaliland. The arrest came a day after the journalists were harassed by a police officer who fired live bullets against the journalists while they were on assignment. After several court appearances over allegations of obstructing police, the Gabiley District Court on April 2, 2019, sentenced journalist Kibar to one year in jail. Awil was also sentenced to six months. Omar on the other hand was released. Both Kibar and Awil were, however released after each of them paid USD200 cash in exchange of their jail sentences.

- On March 19, 2019, Somali National Army (SNA) in Beledweyne arrested SAAB TV journalist Abdishakur Mohamed Hassan following a report featuring increased illegal roadblocks by the armed forces and clan
militias. The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) held the journalist until March 21, 2019 when he was freed without charge.

- On April 17, 2019, Somaliland police arrested freelance journalist Abdimalik Muse Oldon from his home. On July 8, 2019 Marodi Jeh Regional Court handed down a three and half years jail term to Oldon after he was charged with defamation, spreading false allegations against Somaliland and calling the Somaliland leadership a dictatorship state in a Facebook post. The Court of Appeals also ruled in favour of the Regional Court on September 29, 2019 sending a chilling message to journalists in Somaliland. He was freed on presidential pardon on June 6, 2020.

- On May 14, 2019, Somali government security forces briefly detained and seized the equipment of five reporters and cameramen: Said Yusuf Warsame (EPA Photographer); Feisal Omar (Reuters photojournalist); Mohamed Osman Gurey (Al Jazeera TV freelance photographer); Farah Abdi Warsame (Associated Press photographer); Mohamed Abdulkadir Jirow (Radio Kulmiye videographer). The journalists were covering a car bomb blast at the Wardhigley District Commissioner’s Offices.

- On May 20, 2019, Somaliland police in Erigavo arrested Badda Cas TV reporter, Said Muse Farah after interviewing members of the internally displaced people who complained about diversion of food aid. The arrest was, according to the journalist, ordered by the Governor of Sanag, Mohamed Ahmed Aalin (Tinbaro). Journalist Farah was released after 24 hours in police custody without charge.

- On May 22, 2019, Somali Police briefly detained journalists Abdullahi Hussein Anshur and Mohamed Abdulkadir Jirow who were on assignment to cover a bomb blast.

- On May 24, 2019, Jubbaland security forces arrested SBC TV reporter Mohamed Omar Sahal at Kismayo General Hospital on May 24, 2019 where he interviewed family members of an 8-years-old girl, whose mutilated body was found dumped outside the city and was brought to the hospital. He was freed on the same day without charge.

- On May 28, 2019, Somali police arrested Goobjoog Media reporter Ali Adan Mumin in Mogadishu for reporting news of bombings in Mogadishu and being too critical to the government. Police issued a letter ordering the journalist to appear at the Criminal Investigations Department where he was arrested upon arrival. He was released on May 31 2019, after a regional court judge dismissed the charges.

- On June 15, 2019, Police in Mogadishu arrested Shabelle TV reporter, Mohamud Abdinasir Sofeysane and his cameraman Mohamed Amin Tafare as they were recording interviews and street footage for a TV
piece in Mogadishu’s Hawlwadaag district. Both were released the next day without charges.

- On July 14, 2019, Puntland police arrested freelance journalist Mohamed Said Yusuf over an interview he conducted with a critic of the Puntland government. He was released on July 29, 2019, after a regional court in Garowe quashed the charges against him.

- On July 22, 2019, Puntland police arrested journalist Omar Said Abdirahman at gunpoint from a restaurant in Bosaso. He was detained at the Central Police Station for more than 48 hours before he was released without charge on July 24.

- On July 23, 2019, Somali police briefly arrested Radio Shabelle journalists Abdullahi Osman Adani and Hassan Wali in Mogadishu. The journalists were accused of contributing to an online article that accused police of extorting bribes from citizens. The journalists were released later that day without charges.

- On July 24, 2019, Somali police briefly detained Somali Cable TV reporter, Suleiman Ahmed Rage and cameraman Abdirahman Omar in Mogadishu while the journalists were covering the impact of a deadly car bombing on the previous day. The journalists said they were barred from recording footage and were held near a police checkpoint before being released an hour later.

- On July 30, 2019, Somaliland police arrested four Eryal TV journalists: Badri Kosar, (Deputy Director), Abdirahman Abdillahi (Head of News), Aidarus Mohamed Abdi (reporter) and Kamal Khalif Abdi (cameraman) during a raid on Grand Hadi hotel in Hargeisa where journalists were interviewing individuals who complained about an alleged corruption-marred government employment campaign. Abdirahman Abdillahi, Aidarus Mohamed Abdi and Kamal Khalif Abdi were released that afternoon without charge, while Badri Kosar was set free the morning of July 31, 2019 without charge.

- On August 10, 2019, NISA officers detained journalist Mohamed Abdiwali Tohow, after he posted on his Facebook page, an article about the Somali National Army’s unusual military deployment into Dhusamareb town ahead of local elections in Galmudug. He was released the same day without charge.

- On August 22, 2019, Puntland police assaulted and briefly arrested Burhan Mohamed Abdi, of state-owned Puntland TV and Abdiweli Jama Cagarane, of SBC TV. Both were released in the same day without charge.
• On September 6, 2019, Somaliland police arrested Horyaal24 TV director; Mohamed Osman Mire in Hargeisa after the TV broadcast a documentary alleging an increase of drug (khat) use within Somaliland women. He was released on bail on September 16, 2019.

• On September 10, 2019, Somaliland authorities arrested journalists Abdiqani Abdillahi Ahmed and Abdirisaq Goud Nur following a series of articles on published by their online news website, Hadhwanaag, that alleged Somaliland’s Central Bank Governor, Ali Ibrahim Jama of stealing public funds. Another journalist Abdirahman Sheikh Hassan was arrested on the night of September 19, 2019. The three journalists were all released on a bail on September 23, 2019.

• On September 16, 2019, journalists Nuh Mohamed Abdi and Shafi’I Abdi Jama were arrested in Bur’o town in Somaliland as they were recording footage in the city centre. Both journalists were released the following day on September 17, 2019 without charges.

• On October 14, 2019, Somali police officers in Jowhar town, Hirshabelle State arbitrarily detained freelance TV journalist and member of Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), Abdiaziz Hassan Moalim for covering a violent public protest in Jowhar. The journalist was released the following day without charge.

• On October 17, 2019, Puntland police arrested Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed, the director of Radio Daljir, over reports of a prisoner who died in police custody after an alleged torture. He appeared at the Nugal Regional Court on Monday October 21, 2019 and was released on October 22, 2019 after he was forced to discredit Radio Daljir’s news reports on the death of the prisoner.

• On November 19, 2019, Universal TV reporter, Abdinasir Guray Me’ad was arrested in Gabiley following his Facebook post criticizing Gabiley District Court for sentencing some young men on alleged robbery charges without presenting adequate evidence. The journalist was released on November 20, 2019.

• On December 9, 2019, Somaliland police officers in Las’ Anod detained Horn Cable TV reporter, Abdirahman Ahmed Olol after the journalist live-streamed a police raid on a newly opened hotel in Las’Anod. Earlier in that day, Somaliland police stopped journalists from covering the inauguration event of the hotel and confiscated equipment from seven journalists including journalist Olol.

• On December 19, 2019, police officers in Jowhar, in the Hirshabelle State of Somalia briefly arrested seven journalists working at City FM after the radio station published a news story about the Hirshabelle State
The seven journalists: Mahad Muse Mahdi, Sakariye Osman Abdi, Hussein Abdi Farey, Mohamud Ali Omar, Abdinasir Ahmed, Abukar Ali Adow and Nur Mohamed Moalim were later released from detention without charge.

- On December 29, 2019, armed police officers in Jowhar briefly detained Radio Jowhar journalist Abdiqani Sheikh Mohamed following a news report about growing insecurity in Jowhar. The police freed the journalist an hour and a half later after the management of the radio accepted to broadcast an apology and retract the news story as conditions for the release of the journalist.

- On November 18, 2019, Somaliland police arrested Horn Cable TV’s editor-in-chief, Abdikadir Saleban Asayr (Coday) for interviewing Sultan Wabar, a “separatist anti-Somaliland clan elder” and broadcasting safety complaint against Egal International Airport. On 12 January 2020, editor Coday was freed after paying six million Somaliland shilling (US$700) in exchange for a one year prison term and a fine handed down to him by the Marodi Jeh Regional Court.

Physical Attacks, Confiscation Of Equipment, Harassment And Threats

- On February 18, 2019, Somali police handcuffed, beat up two freelance journalists, Said Warsame Sabriye (Qarafan) and Abdullahi Omar Abdi, in Mogadishu and prevented them from covering a story about the closure of roads by the police. Despite the Somali authorities pledging actions to be taken, there were no credible investigations carried out.

- On February 18, 2019, about 15 journalists from local radio and TV stations were prevented from reporting from an event where Somali Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khaire was inaugurating the construction of roads.

- On May 14, 2019, Somali security forces confiscated the equipment of journalists and detained five reporters and cameramen after they went to Warta Nabadda (formerly Wardhigley) District Headquarters to cover car bomb blast.

- On May 16, 2019, Somaliland police in Las Anod shot and injured Abdirahman Keyse Tungub, a correspondent of Bulsho TV. The police followed the journalist who was with friends and violently attacked him as they tried to arrest him.

- On May 22, 2019, Somali Police shot at, beat up and briefly detained Radio Kulmiye journalists: Abdullahi Hussein Anshur (a news reporter) and cameraman Mohamed Abdulkadir Jirow while they were filming the scene of a car bomb in Mogadishu. The police shot two bullets at
Abdullahi Hussein Anshur and three bullets at cameraman Jirow. Jirow sustained bruises from the beating.

- On May 26, 2019, Somali security forces in Mogadishu beat, punched and kicked journalist Abdulkadir Ahmed Mohamed who works for Radio Voice of Banadir Regional Administration. The journalist was reporting from the 59th Anniversary of Somali Independence Day when presidential guards punched, kicked and beat him. Officials from the office of the President promised that the guards who committed the brutal act will be arrested but that pledge remains unfulfilled till today.

- On June 9, 2019, Somali military soldiers threatened to kill, harassed and shot at Radio Kulmiye journalist, Hussein Abdulle Mohamed, who was heading to work in Mogadishu. No reasons were given by the military for their attack on the journalist.

- On June 15, 2019, Somali police assaulted, fired live ammunition at five journalists, Jama Nur Ahmed (Al-Jazeera Arabic’s correspondent), Mohamed Abdihakim Ismail (Al-Jazeera English), Feisal Omar (Reuters Photojournalist), Abdirazak Hussein Farah (AFP Videographer) and Sadaq Mohamed Mohamud (Anadolu cameraman) and denied them access while they were trying to cover a deadly car bombing near the Parliament Building in Mogadishu.

- On July 1, 2019, an official at the Somali Prime Minister’s office physically assaulted and threatened Abdulaziz Billow Ali, the Mogadishu-based correspondent for the China Global Television Network (CGTN) and his cameraman Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed. Uniformed personnel were used to eject both the journalist and the cameraman from the facility while gathering public views on Somali Independence Day.

- On July 13, 2019, Jubbaland security forces broke the camera of freelance journalist Ahmed Isak Abdulle and physically assaulted him together with three journalists at the funeral of colleague journalists: Mohamed Omar Sahal and Hodan Naleyeh who were killed in Kismayo hotel attack on July 12, 2019. The Police accused the journalists of filming the nearby funeral site of government officials who were also killed in the hotel attack.

- On August 14, 2019, SAAB TV reporter Abdishakur Mohamed Hassan was physically assaulted while on assignment to cover regional security meeting. The journalist sustained a busted upper lip after a Hirshabelle Member of Parliament in Beledweyne punched him.

- On October 1, 2019, a gunman shot and injured Kalsan TV journalist Hussein Hassan Adde. The journalist broke his right thigh and was taken
to Hargeisa hospital for treatment. Despite sources claiming the reason of the attack was not related to his journalism work, there was no proper investigation conducted by authorities.

![Hussein Hassan Adde shot and injured 1 October 2019](image)

- On October 19, 2019, Somali Federal Parliament (People’s House) temporarily denied access to the independent media and journalists during ongoing parliamentary debates. The officials at the Parliament described the move due to limited space at the Parliament’s offices in Mogadishu.

- On October 27, 2019, Somali police arrested five journalists, confiscated and damaged cameras and other journalistic equipment while they were covering public transporters’ protest in Mogadishu. The journalists – Farhan Mohamed Hussein (Radio Kulmiye reporter), Yonis Duran Ali (Radio Kulmiye camera reporter), Yahye Haji Olad (Radio Kulmiye camera operator), Ahmed Ali Barre (Universal TV reporter) and Ali Adan Mumin (Goobjoog reporter) were taken into custody at Hawlwadaag police station before they were released later during the same day without charge.

- On October 29, 2019, Puntland armed police in Sanaag confiscated equipment of three local journalists in Badhan town in Sanaag while covering a news conference by clan elders in a hotel in Badhan. The journalists – Mohamed Hassan Dhalo (Radio Daljir reporter), Abdiaziz Abdullahi Hassan (Horn Cable TV reporter) and Mohamed Ahmed Agta (SBC journalist) were forced to stop interviews they were conducting.

- On November 4, 2019, Somali police harassed, beat and confiscated the equipment of Al-Jazeera and Reuters journalists who were returning from an assignment at Mogadishu International Airport. Two pick-up trucks with armed police officers stopped the journalists’ car and immediately began harassing, beating and fired several bullets into air.
while pointing guns at the journalists. The journalists’ cameras were later returned without explanation.

- On November 10, 2019, Somaliland police officers confiscated the equipment of two TV journalists in Hargeisa. The officers accompanied by employees from a private business company Deero Group, assaulted and beat up the journalists before seizing the cameras of Ahmed Nur Isse Mohamed Samrawi and Ibrahaim Abdirahman Ibrahim Jokar while they were covering a protest by local traders who complained about unpaid dues against Deero Group in Hargeisa. The equipment were later returned.

- On November 13, 2019, Masked Officers from National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) confiscated phones from three journalists: Abdikarin Isse Adawe (Shabelle TV cameraman), Abdullahi Warsame Roble (Somnews TV reporter), and Mohamed Khadar Moalim Ahmed (Goobjoog Media) in Dhusamareb. The officers questioned and instructed the journalists to inform authorities before covering election related news.

- On December 11, 2019, Somali police in Mogadishu blocked and threatened to shoot a group of 19 journalists from local and international news agencies while they were taking photos and filming SYL Hotel following a terrorist attack the previous night. Officers attached to the Presidential Guards Unit known as “the red beret” chased the reporters in a bid to stop journalists from taking photos and recording footage of the hotel.

- On December 17, 2019, Somali security officers threatened and removed Goobjoog TV journalists Abdullahi Mohamed Omar and Mohamed Hussein Qalinle while they were covering an event. The journalists were informed that they were not allowed to cover the event because their media was critical to the government.

**Suspensions, Raids and Closure Of Media Outlets**

- On February 10, 2019, a regional court in Hargeisa, Somaliland ordered the independent Foore newspaper to suspend publishing for one year and fined its editor-in-chief, Abdirashid Abdiwahaab Ibrahim, three million Somaliland shillings (USD300), following a conviction for publishing “false news” and anti-Somaliland propaganda citing an October 11, 2018, story on the construction of a new presidential palace. After several appeals by the management of Foore, Somaliland Supreme Court on December 25, 2019 overturned the one-year ban and ordered Foore Newspaper to resume publications. The paper resumed its publication early January, 2020.
On March 30, 2019, 10 armed Somali police officers stormed the offices of Universal TV in Mogadishu and started shooting inside the building causing about 12 journalists on duty to panic and halt a live TV show. No one was hurt in the attack. A promised investigation and “appropriate measures” by the director of communication at the office of the President in Somalia, Åbdinur Mohamed Ahmed, did not materialize.

On June 18, 2019, Somaliland police raided two independent TV stations: Eryal TV and Horyaal 24 TV studios in Hargeisa and closed down over accusations that the private TV stations were propagating anti-Somaliland agenda, propaganda against security forces and fueling conflict within the community. Both TV stations were allowed to resume operations on June 30, 2019.

On September 8, 2019, Somaliland police raided and shut down Horyaal24 TV in Hargeisa. The order stemmed from the Somaliland information minister, Mohamed Muse Dirie following a documentary about the increase of drug (khat) addiction within Somaliland women. The TV station resumed operations on October 23, 2019 after the Information Minister revoked the shutdown order.

On September 14, 15 and 16, 2019, Somalia’s Puntland police carried out multiple raids on Radio Daljir offices in the towns of Garowe and Bosaso and briefly shut down the radio on September 16, 2019. The raid followed Radio Daljir report about a prisoner who died in police custody following an alleged torture. The radio returned on air on the same day.

On October 15, 2019, Puntland police from the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) raided the RTN TV station’s office and harassed journalists on duty. They searched the premises as they looked for the television’s reporter Abdiqani Ahmed Mohamed, who filed a vox-pop news report featuring interviews criticizing Puntland State president’s attendance at the controversial inauguration of Jubbaland president.

On December 19, 2019, Somali police in Jowhar raided and closed down City FM and detained seven of its journalists. City FM radio remains closed as the time of writing this report.

On December 29, 2019, Hirshabelle police led by Capt. Mohamed Ali Siyad raided and closed down briefly Radio Jowhar after the radio aired a news report about growing insecurity. The police later detained journalist Abdiqani Sheikh Mohamed who presented the news report on Radio Jowhar. The journalist was released and the radio resumed operation later on the day after the management accepted to broadcast an apology on the radio and retract the news report about the insecurity.
Blockage On Websites and Online Restrictions

- On September 3, 2019, Somaliland’s Hargeisa-based Marodi Jeh Regional Court ordered the blockage of independent news website Hadhwanaag.ca following a request from the police asking the Internet service providers to block the news site. The court document indicated the blockage was a result of articles and series of interviews published by the website, which alleged misuse of public funds by the Governor of the Central Bank of Somaliland, Ali Ibrahim Jama. The order was followed by arrests of three journalists who work at Hadhwanaag.ca. The journalists were released on bail after spending two weeks in jail. The journalists subsequently fled into exile.

- On September 3, 2019, in Puntland State of Somalia, the Minister of Information, Ali Hassan Ahmed ordered Internet companies to block the independent news website Puntlandtimes.com accusing the website of publishing lies.

- In what is suspected to a state-led action, 16 journalists reported in June 2019 that their Facebook sites had been hacked and closed. In all cases, the incidents took place soon after the journalists commented on security issues within the country.

Restrictive Orders

- On September 9, 2019, Somaliland’s Minister of Information, Mohamed Muse Dirie instructed all TV stations operating in Somaliland to prioritize Somaliland related news over other reports about Somalia. Nine heads of the independent private TV stations: Saab TV, Eryal TV, Horn Cable TV, Star TV, Codka Bariga Afrika (CBA), Badda Cas TV, Bulsho TV, SOM News TV and Sahan TV attended the meeting. When the media bosses, at the meeting attempted to challenge the order they were told that they did not have the right to dispute the Minister’s directive.

- On September 22, 2019, Puntland Minister of Information Ali Hassan Ahmed (Sabarey) imposed oppressive measures on the independent media and journalists by instructing journalists and media houses in Puntland to register with the Ministry before October 15, 2019, to be issued with Ministry of Information Identification Cards (ID). The restrictive order was not, however, implemented following local journalists and unions’ outcry.

Journalists Forced Into Exile

By end of 2019, 12 Somali journalists had been forced to flee the country in fear for their lives; fearing imprisonment or death at the hands of Al-Shabaab or
from officials of Somali government and regional states due to their work as journalists.

2020 IN BRIEF

The year 2020 has been another terrible one for the media and the journalists in Somalia. Just in the first five months, two journalists were killed and eight others injured. Some of these violations were committed by state security forces. Authorities have failed to open any credible investigation to ensure that perpetrators are brought to book. As of September, 32 journalists have been arrested. Majority of these arrests were arbitrary detentions conducted by the police. Five media houses were raided and shuttered across the country.

Murdered

- On February 16, 2020, unidentified gunmen shot several bullets on the head and chest of freelance TV and radio journalist, Abdiwali Ali Hassan, while he was walking home in the Hawo Tako neighborhood in Afgoye. The journalist was rushed to the hospital but succumbed to his injuries. The perpetrators were not arrested and no investigation was opened.

- On May 4, 2020, a knife wielding man attacked and stabbed Kalsan TV journalist, Said Yusuf Ali to death in Mogadishu. According to his family and colleagues, the journalist was attacked while standing outside a shop in Mogadishu’s Hodan district. He died on the spot. News reports initially said police arrested the killer but the family says no investigation was launched.

Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions and Imprisonments

- On January 13 2020, Puntland police in Galkayo North briefly detained Said Abdullahi Kulmiye (Said Nadaara), editor and founder of Kasmaal Media, an online news platform for reporting insecurity in Galkayo. He was released on bond on the night of January 13, but was summoned for questioning the following morning by the Mudug Police Commissioner, Jama Mohamed Ahmed.

- On January 15, 2020, Somaliland police in Erigavo arrested Eryal TV journalist Abdirahman Mohamed Hiddig over a Facebook post deemed critical. On the same day Erigavo District Court sentenced Hiddig to 21 months in jail, six million Somaliland Shilling (US$600) fine and US$300 restitution. The journalist was freed after paying the fines and a bond of $300 to the court.
• On February 11, 2020, Somalia’s South West State police in Buur Hakaba town briefly arrested TV journalist Hussein Ali Gesey, a correspondent of Five Somali TV over a Facebook post deemed critical. He was released after spending more than nine hours in detention without charge.

• On February 20, 2020, Radio Hiiraan-Weyn reporter, Mumin Muhumed Biyow was taken into custody by the Somali National Army (SNA) in the town of Bulo-Burte in Hiiraan region as he was going to interview local traditional elders who opposed the controversial appointment of a new district commissioner. The journalist’s equipment including mobile phone, camera and voice recorders were confiscated. He was later released without charges.

• On February 20, 2020, Puntland authorities in Galkayo arrested three journalists: Kasmaal Media editor, Said Abdullahi Kulmiye (known as Said Nadara); SBC TV reporter, Abdiwali Jama Agarane and the director of Radio Voice of Peace (Codka Nabadda) Ahmed Mohamed Ali. The three were covering a protest by the local business community complaining against taxes hike and subsequently led to the closure of businesses in Galkayo. They were released without charges.

• On February 29, 2020, NISA officers arrested editor of Radio Hiigsi, Mohamed Abdiwahab Nuur over a critical editorial article about the conduct of the security forces which was broadcast on Radio Hiigsi and published on its social media platforms. He was released on March 2 without charges. He was, however, re-arrested on March 7, 2020, and has been held incommunicado for five months. On August 3 2020, the journalist was taken to a military court and charged with national treason and being member of the Al-Shabaab terror group. On 5 August 2020, the military court dropped all the charges and freed the journalist.

• On March 15, 2020, police officers summoned and arrested TV journalist Adan Abdullahi Sheekeeye who works for the central Somalia-based Cabudwaaq TV (CW) following a Facebook post that reported the detention of an elder who criticized the state. He was released on a bail on the morning of March 16.

• On March 19, 2020, police officers in Mogadishu’s Bondhere district briefly detained and harassed Somali Cable TV reporter, Abdullahi Farah Nur and his cameraman Abdirahman Omar while both were conducting vox-pops on the shortage of masks and gloves in the local markets due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• On March 29, 2020, four Goobjoog Media journalists: Hamdi Mahad Diriyie (TV reporter); Rahmo Hassan Mohamed (TV Reporter); Muno Mohamed Nur (TV Reporter); Mohamed Abduqadir (cameraman); and their driver Abdisalan were detained while they were covering a story on
persons with special needs near the KM4 checkpoint in Mogadishu. The journalists were held at a detention place near the KM4 security checkpoint before they were transferred to the notorious Godka Jila’ow prison, run by the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA). They were released without charge.

- On April 13, 2020, police in Jubbaland briefly arrested Adan Mohamed Salad, a correspondent for the Somali National Television, while he was covering a story about a boat carrying a banned substance. He was held for two hours at the police station before he was released without charge.

- On April 14, 2020, Somali police arrested journalist Abdiaziz Ahmed Gurban a day after he allegedly wrote a Facebook post claiming that “the Somali president had taken away a ventilator” donated to a local hospital which treats COVID-19 patients. He was transferred to the central prison on April 15 and released on bail on April 18, 2020. He was, however, re-summoned late June after the Office of Somali President pressed charges against him. From late June to late July, the prosecutors altered the charges against Gurbie to include new ones, including, spreading “false propaganda” and insulting the “honour of government officials.” On July 29, 2020, the Banadir Regional Court sentenced Gurbie to six months jail term and a fine of five million Somali Shilling (US$200). He was freed after paying the fine and additional US$67 as bond.

- On April 20, 2020, Somali South West State police officers in Baidoa arrested Voice of America journalist, Mukhtar Mohamed Atosh, after he reported the death of a 14-year-old rape victim. He was released on bail on April 23.

- On May 18 2020, police officers in Beledhawo town of Gedo region briefly detained freelance journalist Warsame Haji Farah after they saw him photographing the Beledhawo city market after a gun clash within the Somali police force in Beledhawo that day. The journalist was released without charge the next morning.

- On May 21 2020, Somali police physically assaulted and briefly detained SBC TV journalist, Abdullahi Mohamed Sheikhdon while he was covering a COVID-19 awareness campaign in Mogadishu. The journalist’s attempt to seek legal redress the following day was met with intimidation by police and government officials. He was subsequently taken to the police commissioner’s office to force him to drop his complaint.

- On June 10, 2020, Somali regional authorities in Gedo detained freelance journalist Bishar Ibrahin Adan. The arrest followed an accusation by the Gedo regional administration that the journalist of covering unfavourable
news stories about the regional administration. The journalist was released later that day without charges.

- On June 16, 2020, Somaliland police in Las Anod arrested Somali Cable TV journalist, Khadar Mohamed Tarabi and Khadar Rigah Ahmed, of Universal TV as they were filming a protest by locals. Both journalists were released on June 17, 2020 without charges and on a condition that they would not cover local protests.

- On June 16, 2020, Somaliland police in Erigavo arrested journalist Jabir Said Duale, who covers for the local Horyaal24 TV and was remanded by the Sanag Regional Court on charges related to covering “unlawful” protest in Erigavo. He was freed on June 28 on presidential pardon.

- On August 17, 2020, officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) arrested Omar Ahmed Hilowle, the director of the privately owned independent Radio Kaah in Mogadishu following a raid by the NISA officers at the radio station. The radio director was held at the notorious Godka Jila’ow detention for more than an hour before he was released without charge. Journalists at the radio station said the raid follows station’s coverage on the Mogadishu hotel attack on the day before.

- On August 23, 2020, Somaliland police in Hargeisa arrested journalist Liban Osman Ali who works for the independent Eryal TV, after he interviewed a woman detained and held at the Hargeisa prison without charge for wearing an outfit made of the Somali flag. He was freed without charges after spending six days in the Criminal Investigations Department.

- On August 24, 2020, Hargeisa police arrested Abdiqadir Habane, a reporter with a local news website ‘Wajaale News’ over a story about local businesses he authored about a year and half ago. He was released without charges after spending three days in the Criminal Investigations Department in Hargeisa.

- On August 25, 2020, Somaliland police in Erigavo arrested Said Muse Farah, a reporter with Badda Cas TV, barely three weeks after he covered the local community’s protest against higher water prices in Erigavo. According to the journalist, he was freed on bail on September 3, 2020.

- On September 6, 2020, Nugal Regional Court judge, Abdinur Jama ordered the arrest of two Radio Daljir journalists, Abdiqani Ahmed Mohamed and Khadar Awl after they visited the court complex in Garowe, the capital of Puntland. The journalists were pursuing a follow-up story of murder and rape case that took place in Garowe months earlier. According to the journalists, they were released on September 7,
on a condition that they would be summoned back once the prosecutor prepares their charges.

- On September 7, 2020, Somalian police in Las Anod town detained, Abdidfatih Mohamed Abdi, a journalist with the independent Saab TV, after reporting the destruction of city roads by the recent rains. The Mayor of Las Anod, Abdiaziz Hassan Tarwale, reportedly ordered the arrest. According to the journalist, he was freed on September 8, without charge.

- On September 7, 2020, police in Las Anod arrested Universal TV reporter, Khadar Rigah a week after his coverage of a protest by local business owners against a demolition of business structures and taxes hike by the city administration. The journalist was released on September 12, without charge after spending five days in the Las Anod police cell.

- On September 14, 2020, police in Hargeisa detained freelance journalist, Ilyas Abdi Ali. According to colleagues and journalists in Hargeisa, Ilyas was detained over a Facebook post calling for the release of Abdimanana Yusuf, the owner of Astaan TV, who remains in detention in Hargeisa since July 17, 2020. On September 15, a court in Hargeisa granted the police seven days of remand in custody for journalist Ilyas pending investigation, according to family and colleagues. He was released on September 21, after seven days in jail without charge.

**Physical Attacks, Confiscation Of Equipment, Harassment And Threats**

- On March 14, 2020, plain-clothed officers attached to the Puntland Presidency beat and threatened to shoot journalist Shareco Yasin Shareco, of Horn Cable TV and Puntland State University Radio (PSU Radio) as he was photographing the Conference hall where Puntland’s Consultative Conference was taking place. The officers confiscated and broke the journalist’s camera forcing him to leave the scene. According to Shareco, when he complained to the police station, he was told to wait until the conference ends and his complaints have not been resolved ever since.

- On April 19, 2020, three Shabelle Media journalists were assaulted and beaten by Somali police forces enforcing COVID-19 curfew in Mogadishu. According to Shabelle Media, the three reporters: Abdinasir Abdirahman Mohamud, Abdikariin Isse Adawe and Fadumo Abduqadir Hassan were returning from an assignment when the police attacked them.

- On May 4 2020, a group of Somali police and officials assaulted and injured Shabelle TV female reporter, Safiya Aden Osman and her cameraman Abdulkadir Ga’al while they were covering a protest by a
group of internally displaced women. The Osman was blocked and even forced to *recant* her statement of complaint when she attempted to file a case after the assault. The officers also confiscated the journalists’ equipment including a camera video, which was later returned.

- On May 18, 2020, a cameraman Abdirahman Omar Abdulle of Somali Cable TV *sustained* slight injuries on the left arm after armed NISA officers *raided* the premises of the privately-owned Somali Cable TV in Mogadishu and beat him while on duty. The reason of the attack is unclear and officers responsible were not arrested and no investigation was carried as of today.

- On June 25, 2020, a uniformed Somali police officer shot and *injured* journalist, Abdifatah Abduqadir Sharif (Iqbal) who works for the local Radio Danan in Hodan District in Mogadishu. Sharif was heading home from work on a ‘tuk tuk taxi’ when a bullet shot from behind injured him at the back of his head. It was not immediately clear why the police officer shot the journalist. Officials at the Criminal Investigations Department said they were “trying to identify” the officer who shot the journalist, however, the officer was not arrested and no investigation was launched.

- On August 16, 2020, Mohamed Abdi Hussein Araye, a cameraman with the state-owned SNTV, was critically injured during a *car bomb and gun attack at Elite Hotel* in Mogadishu’s Liido beach where he was on assignment that day. The cameraman was hospitalized due to multiple serious wounds he sustained.
Closure, Raid, Ban on Media outlets Confiscation of Equipment

- On April 20, 2020, South West authorities in Barawe verbally ordered Radio Barawe to cease its broadcast of the Baravanese dialect, a local language widely spoken in Barawe town. The authorities indicated that broadcasting in that language was illegal. The radio station was allowed to resume broadcasting in Barawanese dialect on April 22, 2020.

- On June 25, 2020, armed Somaliland police officers raided and seized the headquarters of the independent privately-owned Star TV in Hargeisa while ordering journalists and other staff members to vacate the premises. The station was shut subsequently. The police did not provide explanations or any court document to justify their actions.

- On June 27, 2020, armed Somaliland police officers stormed the offices of Universal TV in Hargeisa and suspended its live news program on air. The police confiscated mobile phones from the journalists and staff before instructing them to leave the premises. Somaliland’s Minister of Information, Saleban Yusuf Ali (Kore) confirmed that he ordered the closure of the TV station because it had refused to broadcast the nation address by the Somaliland’s president, Muse Bihi Abdi on the 60th Independence anniversary.

- On June 28, 2020, armed officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) took over the independent privately-owned Radio Gedo premises in the town of Dolow in Gedo region and ordered the shutting down of the radio with immediate effect. According to the chief editor of Radio Gedo, Mohamud Abdirashid, the officers instructed the radio management to surrender the station’s keys. The radio station’s management said they were not given any reasons for the closure. The radio station, however, resumed operations after nearly one month.
• On June 29, 2020, Somaliland’s Minister of Information, Saleban Yusuf Ali (Kore) sent a note ordering the local television cable providers to delist both Universal TV and Star TV from their receivers. In his letter, the minister who stated that his ministry had revoked the licenses of the two TV stations had also instructed local business companies to cease advertisement contracts with both outlets.

• On August 10, 2020, Somaliland’s Ministry of Information issued a decree imposing US$1,5000 and US$5000 cash fines on Universal TV and Star TV respectively.

• On August 17, 2020, officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency raided and ordered the closure of the privately owned independent Radio Kaah in Mogadishu. The security officers also detained the radio director. The raid and the shutting down of the radio station followed the station’s coverage on the Mogadishu hotel attack on the day before. The radio station, which was ordered to go off-air for more than 12 hours, was allowed to resume operations on August 18, 2020.

Blockage to Access to Information and Internet Freedom

• On January 10, 2020, journalists from media houses were denied access to cover the local Galmudug State election. Journalists reported that a media officer from Office of Somali Prime Minister was tasked to record footage from the event. The media officer later sent pre-edited clips to the newsrooms.

• On March 10, 2020, three soldiers from Puntland Presidential Guards have denied access RTN TV journalist Abdiqani Ahmed Mohamed as he was covering Puntland President, Said Abdullahi Deni’s the inauguration of a new hotel in the capital of Puntland, Garowe. The officers informed the journalist that they knew him because “he was critical to the state.”

• On March 12, 2020, a Somali Ministry of Health official asked Universal TV to remove an online article about some suspected coronavirus cases. The TV station however refused to comply with the order.

• On March 14 2020, Puntland Presidency guards blocked, beat and threatened to shoot journalist Shareco Yasin Shareco, while the journalist was photographing the Conference hall where Puntland’s Consultative Conference was taking place.

• On March 27, 2020, the Mogadishu-based Anadolu News Agency reporter, Mohamed Dhaysane came under pressure after reporting Somali Government’s announcement to send over 20 doctors to help fight
coronavirus in Italy. According to the journalist, following public backlash, two state officials asked him to retract the news report.

- On March 30, 2020, during a meeting with the local journalists in Hargeisa, Somaliland’s Vice President, Abdirahman Abdullahi Seylici described any journalist who reports any coronavirus case before the government’s confirmation “as a national criminal” in a bid to censor independent media coverage following reports of the first case of the pandemic in Somaliland.

- On April 9, 2020, Somali Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports imposed a ban on Goobjoog Media Group baring accessing football stadiums and covering sports news after the ban was enforced by Somali Football Federation (SFF). The Minister did not cite reasons for the ban.

- On May 18, 2020, a police commander and three officers from Hodan District Police Station stopped Som News TV reporter, Mohamed Abdi Osman and cameraman Abdifatah Mohamed Abdullahi who were on assignment to cover the impact of COVID-19 on the local businesses. The officers told the journalists to stop filming the shops because business owners were not happy with the filming. When the journalists demanded explanation, the officers threatened to shoot should the journalists continue filming. The TV crew consequently abandoned their coverage in fear for their lives.

- On June 5 2020, officials at Somali Federal Parliament issued a decision to bar independent media from covering the Joint Session of the Federal Parliament under the pretext of COVID-19 pandemic despite permitting the state-owned media. The decision was later reversed after local press freedom groups condemned it.

- On July 4, 2020, a police officer slapped and stopped journalist Fu’ad Mohamud Mohamed of the local independent Radio Risaala forcing him to stop filming on the scene of a car bombing in Hamar Jajab District in Mogadishu that day.

- On July 5, 2020, armed police attacked and blocked journalists from the independent local media houses in Mogadishu: Universal TV, Radio Kulmiye, Radio Risaala and Dalsan TV, as they were covering an opposition protest at in Mogadishu. The police confiscated equipment from Universal TV journalists and even threatened with shooting. The equipment was later returned, according to Universal TV’s editor.
• On September 8 2020, Somali federal police at Mogadishu’s Aden Abdulle International Airport prevented two journalists from Somali Cable TV, from covering the return of an opposition politician to the country. According to the journalists, when they enquired why, the police cited instructions from the Ministry of Information. However, the officials at the Ministry of Information denied that they have given such instructions.

• On September 14, 2020, officials at Somalia’s Federal Parliament threatened to prevent several TV stations after their coverage on a heated debate in the Lower House where lawmakers debated a controversial sex bill. The decision was not enforced after press freedom groups protested against it.

Draconian Media Bill Amendment Signed into Law

On July 30 2020, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo signed the country’s Media Law Amendment, which was before the Parliament since early 2019. The Media Law, which will have a chilling, effect on both media houses and journalists failed to incorporate the legal inputs submitted by some journalists associations including Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), Somali Media Association (SOMA) and others.

Worryingly, this law contains problematic and restrictive provisions including several content restrictions that are vaguely worded and can be misused by authorities if interpreted in their broader meanings. These include prohibiting reporting on issues conflicting with “national interest”, “false information”, “incitement to violence and clannism” and “dissemination of propaganda”. These vaguely defined provisions in the media law threaten the right to freedom of expression, as journalists would steer clear of covering stories that could subject them to the application of these provisions by the authorities.

Article 18 of the Media Law makes it mandatory for all local and freelance journalists operating in the country to be registered under a government-run database & subsequently be issued with Identification Cards by the Ministry of Information contravening the Somali Constitution and international conventions including the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which Somalia is a signatory and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) which the country has also ratified.

The Law also enables authorities at both Federal and State level to arbitrarily prosecute journalists, restrict freedom of expression and access to information as it includes legal sanctions. Article 5 of the Law imposes unspecified fines on journalists who contravene the law, failure to which they can be sent for prosecution. This leaves an open possibility for authorities to prosecute journalists in criminal courts.
Regrettably, the Somali Media Law also gives the country’s Ministry of Information a broad mandate to regulate and manipulate media and journalists as authorities could simply bar certain individuals from practicing their journalistic profession.

CONCLUSION

Decades of conflict, coupled with drought, famine and constant emergence of armed groups, have left the Somalia suffering one of the world’s worst humanitarian and human rights crises.

Despite being a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other continental charters, freedom of expression and access to information rights as well as digital rights are not respected.

As the country is preparing for its national election towards the end of 2020. The violations against the journalists and the media in Somalia and lack of investigations into such violations and abuses are growing by the end of the day.

It is critical that Somali government and its regional states as a matter of urgency reverse the deplorable conditions under which journalists work in the country. The government must respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights including the right to freedom of expression and media freedom and ensure that no government or security official seeks to silence journalists or arbitrarily obstruct their access to information.

Authorities should also thoroughly, impartially and effectively investigate the violations and abuses including physical attacks, killings and attempted killings, arbitrary arrests and intimidation of journalists. They must also guarantee the safety of all journalists and other media practitioners.

Specifically, AFEX makes the following recommendations:

To the Somali Government:

- Direct the police, particularly those from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), to end intimidation, obstruction, threats, beatings, arbitrary arrests, harassment or prosecution of journalists and other media practitioners;

- Ensure that police and other relevant agencies thoroughly and effectively investigate all reported cases of attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment of journalists and ensure those suspected to be responsible are brought to justice in fair trials;
• Thoroughly and effectively investigate all reported cases of officials, regardless of rank or position, threatening or harassing journalists and discipline or prosecute those suspected to be responsible for these violations;

• Urgently review the provisions of the media law, the penal code, and all other laws that impede freedom of expression and media freedom and bring the laws in line with Somalia’s constitution and international human rights obligations.

• Direct government officials and security forces to allow journalists and media workers have access to government information including not putting impediments and restrictions on accessing government buildings and interviewing public officials;

• Condemn physical attacks, killings, threats, harassment, obstruction, intimidation and arbitrary arrests of journalists and other media workers;

• Publicly commit ahead of the elections to ensure that authorities and government institutions respect, protect, promote and fulfil the right to freedom of expression, and media freedom before, during and after the elections, including by providing a conducive and safe environment for journalists and other media practitioners to report on sensitive and public interest-related issues, such as security and election related information.

To the African Union (AU):

• Urge the Somali government to commit to the AU’s own principles of democracy and transparency which intrinsically link press freedom, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists;

• Publicly speak out about the importance of freedom of expression and media freedom for Somalia’s peace and state building processes and urge the Somali authorities to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violations against the press and the journalists;

• Urge the Somalia government to direct government officials not to harass or threaten journalists and other media practitioners;

• Urge the Somali government and its officials to respect, protect, promote and fulfil media freedom and the rights of journalists;

• Support local civil society groups, including media freedom advocates and journalists’ unions to carry out systematic monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses of the right to freedom of expression and media freedom throughout the country;
• Support media freedom advocates and journalists’ unions to build the capacity of the journalists so that they continue reporting on matters concerning freedom of expression and human rights;

To United Nations

• Publicly condemn violations against journalists and the media in Somalia and Urge the Somalia government to direct government officials not to harass or threaten journalists and other media practitioners.

• Urge the Somali government and its officials to respect, protect, promote and fulfil media freedom and the rights of journalists and urge the Somali authorities to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violations against the press and the journalists.

• Support local civil society groups, including media freedom advocates and journalists unions to carry out systematic monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses of the right to freedom of expression and media freedom throughout the country.

• Provide support to media freedom advocates and journalists unions in Somalia to build the capacity of the journalists so that they continue reporting on matters concerning freedom of expression and human rights.

• Support initiatives to reform laws and regulatory institutions to bring them into compliance with Somalia’s international human rights obligations including the right to freedom of expression and provide technical support and assistance to such initiatives.

• Support efforts by the Somalia government to train police and other security personnel and court officials on human rights and freedom of expression and media freedom.

• Provide support actions that promote the safety of journalists in Somalia and put pressure on authorities to address the issue of impunity for abuses and attacks against journalists.