



Ururka Qaranka Suxufiyiinta Soomaaliyeed
National Union of Somali Journalists



JOINT STATEMENT

36th Session of UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland

Item 10: Interactive Dialogue on Human Rights Situation in Somalia

Delivered by: Mr Omar Faruk Osman, Secretary-General of the
National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)

Mr. President,

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its Somalia affiliate, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), would like to thank the various mandates of the Special Procedures for their continued engagement to highlight abuses of human rights in Somalia.

IFJ and NUSOJ are gravely concerned by the continued attacks on journalists, freedom of expression and freedom of association, which has recently deteriorated significantly. Somalia has become the theatre of the gravest possible patterns of human and trade union rights' violations.

Since the last report of the Independent Expert on Human Rights Situation in Somalia to the Human Rights Council, 21 journalists have been arrested, detained for different periods on spurious charges and released; two journalists were killed in central Somalia, 10 journalists were wounded while three media houses were closed down. Attempts to manipulate and suppress independent media deepened, while the stigmatisation of critical journalists intensified.

The Federal Government and federal member states have a duty to stop these attacks and bring impunity to an end. The deep-rooted culture of impunity remains a major factor that fuels abuses. Authorities, including those in Somaliland, have been using an old penal code of Somalia, to prosecute journalists through their criminal justice system and harshly punish them as a tool to silence independent media and critical journalists.

Despite the recent change of the country's leadership, the abuses perpetrated by the previous regime continued with impunity. There are no dissuasive sanctions imposed on those engaging in or masterminding human rights' violations, and there is no access to effective remedies. On the contrary, individuals who had acted to undermine trade unions and harass their legitimate leaders were promoted and given senior posts.

On 13 July, the Somalia's council of ministers passed a new media law described by organisations of journalists and medias as draconian in its restriction of media freedoms. This legislation seeks to set standards for journalism and police the ethical code of conduct for journalists, registering and licensing journalists, sets bar for the recognition of journalists and entrance to journalism profession, creates a media regulatory body which is not independent but selected, nominated and appointed by the government, and imposes exorbitant fines on journalists by creating new torts to be used by courts to prosecute them.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) supervisory mechanisms have investigated and found serious and systematic violations of the right to freedom of association committed by the Federal Government (Ministry of Information) against the National Union of Somali Journalists and the national trade union federation. The ILO made specific recommendations which the government is failing to comply with, despite legal advice from its State Attorney General to implement them.

Furthermore, the government has been targeting NUSOJ, arresting its vice-president, Abdi Adan Guled, also editor of the leading independent newspaper in Mogadishu, who was arrested in October 2016. In an abuse of the country's criminal justice system by agents of the Ministry of Information, the Office of Attorney General summoned the NUSOJ leadership in May 2017, accusing them of holding commemorative event on World Press Freedom Day without the approval of the ministry of information, and for issuing a statement criticising the Minister of Information.

Despite ratifying all the major ILO core conventions, the government of Somalia has continually failed to implement the recommendations of the ILO supervisory mechanisms. This pattern of non-compliance, coupled with the seriousness of the human rights violations, should compel the UN Human Rights Council to take further steps.

We therefore call on the UN Human Rights Council to act urgently to stop the human rights crisis that the country started to descend to by holding Somalia accountable for both, its widespread human rights abuses, and its contempt of the UN human rights mechanisms such as the ILO.

I thank you, Mr President.