

NUSOJ

Ururka Qaranka Suxufiyiinta Soomaaliyeed
National Union of Somali Journalists

STATE OF THE MEDIA

TRAIL OF VIOLENCE: SOMALI JOURNALISTS BEAR THE BRUNT OF IMPUNITY



MEDIA FREEDOM REPORT IN 2021



TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	5
UNENDING KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS	7
UNLAWFUL ARRESTS OF JOURNALISTS	8
VIOLENT ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS	11
MEDIA HOUSES ATTACKED	12
PENAL CODE: MOST OPPRESSIVE LEGAL REGIME	13
MOTIVES FOR CONTINUED ATTACKS	14
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS	15
RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION	17

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Special thanks to leadership and head of the regional branches, and all our staff who tirelessly worked to put together this report.



STATE OF THE MEDIA REPORT

The production of the State of the Media report has been a flagship activity of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) for eleven years in order to highlight the plight of journalists and report on the media freedom situation in light of the human rights situation in the country.

It is a national review mechanism to monitor, document and report the trends of media freedom and freedom of expression against the nationally and internationally acceptable standards.

NUSOJ'S FLAGSHIP REPORT IS PRESENTING HIGHLIGHTS OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND NEWS MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

This report particularly focuses on the suffering, insecurity and difficulties journalists face on a day-to-day basis while doing their journalistic work. It documents the cases where journalists' rights have been violated by state and

nonstate actors as well as exposing those who impede on media freedom. It also shows attacks on news media organisations countrywide.

The State of the Media Report is built on information gathered, documented, verified and analysed from January to December 2021.

NATIONAL UNION OF SOMALI JOURNALISTS (NUSOJ)

SOMALIA'S VOICE OF JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALISM

WHAT WE WANT

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), through its tireless work to **ENSURE** media freedom, **PROMOTE** ethical standards in media and **DEFEND** the rights, interests and needs of the journalists, envisages a country where:

The media, access to information and inalienable principles of **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ARE PROTECTED** and promoted;

The media industry enjoys better working conditions where the safety and **SECURITY OF JOURNALISTS** are prioritised;

HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS amongst journalists for ethical and quality journalism is not only defended and promoted but considered **AS THE NORM**;

Patriarchy and gender-based violence are eliminated in favour of **GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY**;

The role and **IMPACT OF QUALITY JOURNALISM** in societal development is understood, enhanced and appreciated.

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OVERVIEW

Media freedom continues to be stifled in Somalia through public and brutal means. This year marks another grim year, in which journalists and news media organization have endured excessive levels of abuses, and deliberate denial of freedom of expression and access to information for the journalists and citizens alike.

The “Trail of Violence: Somali Journalists Bear the Brunt of Impunity”, aptly captures the State of the Media Report for 2021, and serves to highlight the perilous working conditions for journalists, particularly the sustained attacks against journalists and media houses that have become a permanent feature of the media landscape in the country. It also elucidates how violence and brutal attacks against journalists have been weaponized, by both state and non-state actors to muzzle media freedom and gag freedom of expression in Somalia.

During the course of 2021, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) documented two cases of killings of journalists in Mogadishu and Galkayo, and 63 cases of physical attacks, harassment, unlawful arrests, detentions, torture, cyberbullying and threats directed at journalists. Media houses were also targeted with 4 cases reported. At the same time, a number of female journalists were also attacked and harassed, highlighting the pervasive extent of gender-based violence in the country.

In addition to the killings and arbitrary arrests, violent attacks against journalists remain a stain on Somalia’s human rights record and a hindrance against its efforts towards substantive democracy. In 2021, a total of 13 cases of violent attacks were documented, four of which involved female journalists.



The abuse and violence experienced by women journalists unfortunately feeds into a broader culture of gender inequality and gender-based violence in Somalia and significantly impacts the personal, emotional and professional trajectory of female journalists. In 2021, NUSOJ documented 16 cases of gender-based violence against female journalists.

The 34 journalists arrested across all regions in Somalia in 2021 were all male and work for the privately-owned broadcast media. However, the situation in Puntland stands out as the regional administration persecuted and tried a journalist in military court in the absence of lawyers, family members and colleagues. Although the journalist eventually received a presidential pardon, the case remains a shocking reminder of the extent that authorities would go to suppress the voice of independent journalists.

All the cases reported by NUSOJ have been monitored, verified and filed in accordance

with international best practices on documenting and reporting media freedom cases, which demands that only cases of attacks on journalists that happen while undertaking their professional work or targeting/attacks on journalists because of what the journalists and/or media houses reported, should be documented and recognized as media freedom case.

And while the attacks against journalists can be attributed to the militant group Al-Shabaab, state and local governments are also, ironically, responsible for the violation of human rights against journalists. NUSOJ has documented evidence of intimidation and harassment of journalists in Mogadishu, Somaliland and in all the five Federal Member States (FMSs) of Southwest, Jubbaland, Hirshabelle, Puntland and Galmudug. Arrests are usually brief and arbitrary, intended to serve as warning shots to journalists to cease their critical and independent reporting on government activities and officials.

Security agencies and particularly the police are the leading perpetrators of attacks against journalists, meaning that those who are meant to protect are in fact, inflicting and exposing media professionals to harm and injury. In addition to attacks against individual journalists, attacks against media houses are brazen attempts to destabilise an institution and a sector at large, and deny the public their right to know. The collective result of attacks against media houses is an increasing reluctance to independently cover political events or report stories that put authorities in bad light. This leads to further entrenchment of a culture of suppression and silence.

The biggest barrier to justice for journalists in Somalia is the pervasive climate of impunity

that exists, meaning those responsible for violations against journalists do so knowing they will not be held to account for their actions. Impunity is possible, in large part, because of the continued use of the Penal Code to arrest journalists. The Penal Code contains a number of vague offences that unjustly curb media freedom and right to freedom of expression. Most worryingly, the provision relating to “abusive exercise of a profession” is routinely used to detain and arrest journalists. This legislation

is incompatible with the Provisional Constitution of Somalia which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, opinion and speech, including media freedom.

In addition to the culture of impunity, the practice of perpetrators making secret deals with media houses in order not to give publicity

to cases of attacks against journalists, and/or to settle such matters out of public lime-light make accountability and the realisation for justice for victims even more elusive.

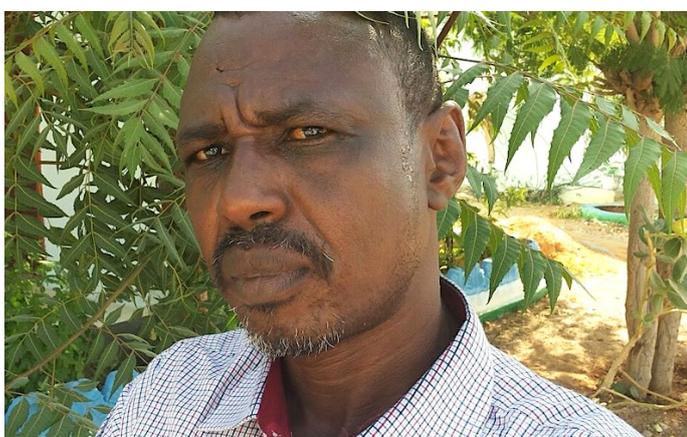
Journalists in Somalia continue to risk their lives to bring reports, stories and the truth to the general public. They operate within an extremely dangerous environment designed by archaic legislations that stifle freedom of expression and allow militant groups, power-hungry political elites, public officials and security officers to reign fear on journalists and the citizens with impunity. Despite this, the bravery and courage of many journalists remain inspirational, and efforts to bring their plight into the open and work towards media freedom aligned to international standards must not stop.

IN ADDITION TO THE KILLINGS AND ARBITRARY ARRESTS, VIOLENT ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS REMAIN A STAIN ON SOMALIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

*Written by: Omar Faruk Osman,
NUSOJ Secretary General*

UNENDING KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS

Once again, 2021 emerged as a year that saw journalists paying the ultimate price for their reporting and for taking a courageous stance against organised crime. And yet again, Mogadishu and Galkayo - in the northern section controlled by Puntland - continue to stand out as the deadliest places in the country for journalists. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the two reported killings of journalists in 2021.



Jamal Farah Adan

On 1 March 2021, veteran freelance journalist Jamal Farah Adan, 56, was attacked by two armed men while at a shop owned by his family in Galkayo's Siinay neighbourhood. The assailants shot him twice in the head and once in the neck, and he was pronounced dead at the Galkayo Medical Center. Although Puntland police reached the crime scene immediately following the incident, the suspected killers had already escaped. Adan, who worked with several media houses in Puntland, was widely known for criticising Al-Shabaab and its operation in Mudug through radio programmes.

Al-Shabaab reportedly vowed several times to make him pay for his “negative reporting”.



Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled

In an equally tragic incident, prominent journalist and director of Radio Mogadishu, Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled, 42, fondly known by his moniker “Africa”, was killed in a targeted suicide bomb attack in Mogadishu on 20 November 2021. A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest grabbed the window of the vehicle in which Guled was traveling and blew up himself. Guled was killed instantly and another prominent journalist, Sharmarke Mohamed Warsame, director of Somali National Television (SNTV) who was with Guled at the time, seriously injured. Guled had produced numerous radio and television programs, including the popular “GUNGAAR”, which advocated against violent extremism by Al-Shabaab. Guled boldly called on the authorities to investigate activities of Al-Shabaab and bring leadership to book. He also conducted revealing interviews with Al-Shabaab captives in detention.

Following are the **cases of killed journalists in 2021:**

Date	Name	M/F	Work Station	Place	State / Region	Perpetrator
01 March 2021	Jamal Farah Adan	M	Freelance	Galkayo	Puntland	Al-Shabaab
20 November 2021	Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled	M	Radio Mogadishu	Mogadishu	Mogadishu / Benadir	Al-Shabaab

UNLAWFUL ARRESTS OF JOURNALISTS

In 2021, tactics to intimidate and harass journalists continued in Mogadishu, Somaliland and all five (5) Federal Member States (FMSs) of Southwest, Jubbaland, Hirshabelle, Puntland and Galmudug. The arrests, which are mostly arbitrary and brief, are commonly employed as a method of retaliation for journalists' unearthing and revealing stories that garner significant public interest. However, the climate of impunity that exists in Somalia means those ordering, triggering or executing the unlawful arrests of journalists do so knowing they will not be held accountable for their actions.

The 34 journalists arrested were all male and work for privately-owned broadcast media. Journalists working for the news media organisations controlled by the Federal Government, Somaliland and FMSs, were not arrested because of their nature of "soft" reporting.

Somaliland took the unenviable top spot for journalists' arrests in 2021. Twelve journalists were arrested by Somaliland authorities, including five in Borama and four in Las Anod in a city claimed both Somaliland and Puntland. The conflict in this region makes reporting on the unfolding events a target as Somaliland police is largely hostile to critical or independent reporting. For the first time for several years, only one journalist in Hargeisa and Erigavo were arrested.

Second to Somaliland was Southwest State where seven journalists were arrested in one day. This occurred after the reporters attempted to cover the arrival at Baidoa Airport of a presidential candidate not favoured by the regional administration. Although the journalists were swiftly released, it was clear that the administration was not allowing media space for unfavoured politicians.

Galmudug arrested five journalists in 2021 largely for reporting on topics that place authorities in an unfavourable light. Journalists escape this fate only if they follow the line of state officials and report in a bias, uncritical manner.



In similar vein, Puntland arrested four journalists arbitrarily in 2021, displaying a well-worn apathy of journalists placed in police detention. Puntland, however, came under review this year as the only FMS across Somalia which persecuted and tried a journalist in military court. In March 2021, journalist Kilwe Adan Farah was sentenced to three years in jail by the Military High Court of Puntland without single shred of evidence. This followed a sham trial without lawyers, family members and colleagues where trumped charges were brought against Kilwe under Somalia's outdated Penal Code. Although, Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni pardoned Kilwe later on in the month, the arrest, continued detention, spurious charges and military trial created national shock and

outcry. It revealed the extent that Puntland authorities would go to intimate a journalist and suppress the voice of independent journalists.

In Mogadishu or Benadir region three journalists were briefly arrested, and

no journalist was taken to court in the capital city. Two journalists were arrested in Hirshabelle, while one journalist was briefly arrested in Jubbaland.

Below are the incidents of journalists arrested in 2021:

Date	Name	M/F	Work Station	Place	State / Region	Perpetrator	Status
05 January 2021	Abdihakim Mohamed Ali	M	Freelance Journalist	Erigavo	Somaliland	Police	Released on 17 January 2021
11 January 2021	Mohamed Abdi Mohamed	M	Radio Daljir	Bossasso	Puntland	Puntland Maritime Police Force	Briefly arrested
16 January 2021	Hussain Ateyeh Gafane	M	Universal TV	Borama	Somaliland	Police	Released on 19 January 2021 without charges
16 January 2021	Abdilaahi Dahir Waes	M	SAAB TV	Borama	Somaliland	Police	Released on 19 January 2021 without charges
16 January 2021	Ahmed Diriye Eltire	M	SBC TV	Borama	Somaliland	Police	Released on 19 January 2021 without charges
16 January 2021	Shuayb Mohamed Kahin	M	Bulsho TV	Borama	Somaliland	Police	Released on 19 January 2021 without charges
29 January 2021	Iraad Adan Ali	M	Radio Olol	Abudwaq	Galmudug	Police	Released on 30 January 2021 without charges
22 February 2021	Ahmed Botan Arab	M	Freelance Journalist	Bossasso	Puntland	Police	Released on 24 February 2021 without charges
25 February 2021	Abdifatah Muse	M	STN TV	Garowe	Puntland	Police	Briefly arrested
16 March 2021	Mustaf Abdirahman Mohamed	M	Eryal TV	Borama	Somaliland	Police	Briefly arrested
13 April 2021	Adan Abdi Idle	M	Freelance Journalist	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Police	Released on 29 April 2021 without charges
23 May 2021	Hassan Mohamed Gosar	M	Radio Hii-raanweyn	Beledweyne	Hirshabelle	Police	12 hours detention
04 June 2021	Hussein Abdi Jimale	M	RTN TV	Beledweyne	Hirshabelle	Police	Four hours of detention
11 June 2021	Ameyd Hassan Mohamed	M	Radio Star	Guri'ed	Galmudug	Police	Released on 15 June without charges
22 August 2021	Abdifatah Mohamed Abdullahi	M	SOMNEW TV	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Briefly arrested

22 August 2021	Salad Mohamed Kheyre		SOMNEW TV	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Briefly arrested
05 September 2021	Bashir Mohamud Weheliye		Goobjoog Media	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Briefly arrested, dragged on the street
26 September 2021	Mohamed Abdi Omar		SBC	Gabiley	Somaliland	Police	Released after 4 days of detention
29 September 2021	Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow		Freelance Journalist	Dhusamareb	Galmudug	Police	Briefly arrested
02 October 2021	Mowlid Ismail Digid		Halbeeg Media	Las Anod	Somaliland	Police	Released on 4 October 2021 without charges
04 October 2021	Hashim Omar Hassan		Five TV	Adaado	Galmudug	Police	Released on 7 October without charges
10 October 2021	Mohamed Abdullahi Said		Radio Hayaan	Galkayo	Galmudug	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Abdullahi Adan Nur		SAAB TV	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Mukhtar Sheikh Adan Dalmar		Warsan Radio	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Farah Hussein Haji		Freelance Journalist	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Abdirashid Ahmed Ibrahim		Shabelle TV	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Hassan Ali Daud		Goobjoog Media	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Qasim Mohamed Ahmed		HornCable TV	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
28 October 2021	Mohamed Deq Seerjito		Freelance Journalist	Baidoa	Southwest	Police	Briefly arrested
02 November 2021	Abshir Gure Abdi		Al-Xikma Radio	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Police	Briefly arrested
26 November 2021	Mohamud Abdirisak Osman		Radio Daljir	Qardho	Puntland	Police	Released after 5 days of detention
26 December 2021	Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi		Holhol Media	Las Anod	Somaliland	Police	Released on 3 January 2022 without charges
30 December 2021	Abdi-Khadar Farah Abshir		Universal TV	Las Anod	Somaliland	Police	Released on 3 January 2022 without charges
30 December 2021	Hamza Abdirahman Ahmed		Freelance Journalist	Las Anod	Somaliland	Police	Released on 3 January 2022 without charges

VIOLENT ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

The brutalities and the violent attacks meted against journalists in 2021 have been severe. In addition to torture and beatings, journalists have had their equipment removed from their possession and confiscated. In 2021, a total of 13 cases of violent attacks were documented, four of which involved female journalists. With attacks reported against six journalists, Benadir region was found to be the most dangerous state with regards to violent attacks, followed by Jubbaland where three journalists were wounded and brutalised. Both Puntland and Somaliland saw two cases of journalists violently attacked.



Security agencies and particularly the police are the leading perpetrators of attacks against journalists. It remains clear that journalists continue to operate in places of extreme physical danger and that they remain vulnerable at the hands of security forces who are meant to protect them. Further insult to injury is added when it becomes clear that journalists who suffer violent attacks may never see justice; such attacks are perpetrated with gross impunity in Somalia. This contributes to Somalia's negative media freedom record and without sustained advocacy, the status quo is unlikely to change.

Below are the incidents of violent attacks on journalists in 2021:

Date	Name	M/F	Work Station	Place	State / Region	Perpetrator	Status
20 February 2021	Hodo Mohamed Nur Garays	F	Horyal TV	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Police	Brutally beaten and tortured
04 March 2021	Mahad Hassan Abdi	M	Shabelle TV	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Tortured and confiscated equipment
20 March 2021	Sharma'arke Abdinur Weheliye	M	Goobjoog	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Wounded him at the stomach with bullets
24 March 2021	Abdiisak Sheekh Ismail	M	Radio Gedo	Baladhawo	Jubbaland	Security Forces	Wounded after bullets fired at him
05 May 2021	Ahmed Abdirahman Mohamed	M	Radio Galkayo	Galkayo	Puntland	Paramilitary forces	Beaten with rifle butt
10 May 2021	Abdirahman Abdillahi Mohamud	M	Freelance Journalist	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Secret Services	Tortured
16 May 2021	Fardawsa Mohamud Sahal	F	Radio Kulmiye	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Tortured
05 September 2021	Guled Abdi Salad	M	Universal TV	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Violently assaulted
07 November 2021	Abdikarim Ali Adan	M	Goobjoog	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police	Assaulted and equipment confiscated

20 November 2021	Sharma'arke Mohamed Warsame	Ⓜ	SNTV	Mogadishu	Benadir	Al-Shabaab	Severely wounded in suicide attack
28 November 2021	Habibo Abdi Ibrahim	ⓕ	SBC	Qardho	Puntland	Police	Raided and ransacked journalist' office
15 December 2021	Idle Mohamed Adan	Ⓜ	Universal TV & Waamo Radio	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Police	Violently attacked and fired live bullets
21 December 2021	Zamzam Abdikarim Moallim	ⓕ	Universal TV	Baladhawo	Jubbaland	Security forces	Violently assaulted, equipment destroyed

MEDIA HOUSES ATTACKED



In addition to individual journalists targeted in 2021, news media organisations deemed independent or critical to the administration have also faced similar retaliation. Incidents include confiscation of equipment, shutdown of operations, and destruction of property, all which contribute to depriving the public from the

right to know. Four (4) cases of attacks against media houses were recorded in 2021.

The collective result of such attacks is that several media houses have since been reluctant to cover political events or press releases that denounce the authorities, leading to an even more endemic culture of censorship, suppression and silence. In addition to restrictive legislation, other repressive tactics are employed such as putting pressure on the media house to subdue or remove the journalists in question, resulting in the media house remaining in “good books” with the authorities.

Following are cases of news media organised attacked in 2021:

Date	Name of News Media	Place	State / Region	Perpetrator
02 January 2021	Radio Barawe	Barawe	Southwest	Ministry of Information
25 February 2021	Somali Television Network (STN) - Puntland Office	Garowe	Puntland	Police
27 April 2021	Mustaqbal Media	Mogadishu	Benadir	Police
01 November 2021	Radio Daljir	Garowe	Puntland	Ministry of Interior

PENAL CODE: MOST OPPRESSIVE LEGAL REGIME



Somalia's 1962 Penal Code came into force in April 1964 and is still current law despite being incompatible with the Provisional Constitution of Somalia, in particular Article 18. The Penal Code contains a number of offences that unjustly curb media freedom and right to freedom of expression while Article 18 guarantees the right to freedom of expression, opinion and speech, including media freedom.

The Penal Code criminalizes free expression and media freedom under many vaguely worded provisions on publication of false news; promoting sectarianism; anti-national activity; publication or circulation of false exaggerated news capable of disturbing public order; and news capable of disturbing public or private tranquillity.

The legislation also criminalises defamation; offending the honour or prestige of the head of state; insult to public officers; insult to political, administrative or judicial body; false accusation; and false evidence and offence against authorities. All these provisions are very vague and are therefore susceptible to an excessively wide interpretation by both authorities

and those subject to the law. Journalists in particular are often victims against the provision in Penal Code relating to “abusive exercise of a profession”.

While there are different media laws in Mogadishu, Puntland and Somaliland, they are all equally incompatible with the provisional Constitution and international human rights laws and standards. However, the states are all united in using the Penal Code to persecute journalists.

NUSOJ considers the afore-mentioned provisions in the Penal Code as amounting to serious violations of the right to freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information as guaranteed under the Provisional Constitution of Somalia, international human rights law and regional legal standards.

Therefore, repealing all the provisions of the Penal Code that violate the media freedom and freedom of expression standards is urgently needed, so as to align the Penal Code with the international standards for creating a safe and enabling legal environment for journalists.

MOTIVES FOR CONTINUED ATTACKS



Several factors contribute to the continuation of the attacks against journalists and news media organisations in the country with Somalia's pervasive culture of impunity one of the most pressing. Impunity for crimes against journalists has factually become the order of the day. Despite the several reported incidents of violations against journalists, punishment of culprits has been very rare, if at all.

This flourishing culture of impunity for crimes against journalists only emboldens perpetrators and encourages others to abuse journalists at the least opportunity. Many reported crimes are neither investigated nor prosecuted. Instead, mere rhetoric and empty pronouncement by the

politicians, that offer little to the families and colleagues of the victims have become the norm.

Authorities, especially the police who act on political orders, often perpetuate violations against journalists, and therefore, it is hardly expected that they would publicly take a strong position against abuses on journalists. Not even petitions from advocates have succeeded in moving political leaders of the country to openly condemn acts of violence or violations committed against journalists.

Compounding this is the seemingly dwindling public support for journalists due to complaints of poor standards, partisanship among journalists, corruption, and among others. Some members of the public see journalists as "wrongdoers" because of the vilification and demonising acts of authorities or politicians, thus putting journalists in indefensible positions. Support from the general public is crucial for combating continued crimes against journalists.

SUPPORT FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS CRUCIAL FOR COMBATING THE FLOURISHING CULTURE OF IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

There is also a growing practice where journalists or the management of the concerned media houses who have been attacked secretly make deals and negotiate compensation from their attackers.

This makes accountability and advocacy for justice even harder and sets the stage for continuation of the abuses against journalists.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

Discussions with female journalists reveal that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women journalists, continue to negatively impact on their lives and professional development. Some have been forced to leave the journalism profession, while others have adopted negative coping mechanisms in response to the growing problem of SGBV. NUSOJ's gender analysis reveals that SGBV is a contributory factor in the worsening media freedom in the country.

These attacks result in women journalists choosing not to pursue important political and security news stories, and generally feeling inferior to their male colleagues. Furthermore, several of these

cases were not reported by the survivors and their colleagues because of the stigma associated with GBV as well as the fear of backlash by the perpetrator and/or the media organisation.

During 2021, NUSOJ documented 16 cases of women working in journalism who came forward and spoke confidentially of personal incidences of sexual harassment or GBV. Upon their request their names will not be disclosed in this report.

A female journalist in Mogadishu working for a privately-owned TV station reported that an aspiring politician who had previously granted her interviews, asked on

one occasion to speak to her alone. Once the cameraman had left, the politician began to sexually assault her. Her shouting alerted the bodyguards of the politician and the perpetrator escaped. However, the politician immediately contacted the manager of the media house and asked for the matter to be handled quietly.



Shockingly, both men agreed to deal with the matter without involving the female journalist.

A male Puntland MP invited a female journalist to his house under the pretext that he could provide information for a lead story. After talking to the journalist, the MP began to sexually harass the female journalist by touching her inappropriately, an unwelcome act which made the journalist to move away and create physical distance between herself and the MP, to which the MP remarked that, "Caadi iska dhig" which translates into English as "make yourself normal".



Secondary victimisation ensued when she reported to the police and the officer in charge stated, “what is matter with you? every woman is made for a man”. Encountering such sexist attitudes within the criminal justice system succeeded in demoralising the female journalist even further and eventually led to her abandoning the case.

In Beledweyne, a female reporter was attacked by three men armed with pistols. They were reportedly sent by an official of the local authority attempting to prevent the journalist from reporting on the official in perceived “bad light”. The armed men intended to force her into a car but she resisted and shouted for help from passers-by, prompting the attackers to flee from the scene. However, attackers

later contacted her and sternly warned her that: “next time, you should be prepared to come back to your home raped or else, shut your long mouth”.

Two female journalists left their media houses after they experienced inappropriate and unwanted sexual contact by their managers. In addition, three women journalists were subjected to sexual harassment through unwanted sexual comments, advances and invitations. Four female journalists endured online abuses through their Facebook messenger chat by individuals who, irritated by their journalism activities, engaged in name-calling and threatening messages.

RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The right to access to information is a fundamental human right that enables citizens to make informed decisions and effectively participate in the governance process, while holding duty bearers accountable. A robust access to information regime not only safeguards against abuse by public officials but also permits the public to play a role in shaping the policies of the state.

The Somalia's provisional constitution under article 32, explicitly stipulates that "Every person has the right of access to information held by the state" and, that the "Federal Parliament shall enact a law to ensure the right of access to information".

However, there is no national Access to Information Policy and the Access to Information Law that provide a framework for the actualisation of the right to access information. Thus, this situation is an indication of political unwillingness to facilitate citizens' access to information held by public authorities. NUSOJ has observed several incidents where journalists have been denied access to information held by government institutions, including minutes of government meetings, contracts, and communications in government's possession, in direct contravention of the principle of open governance and transparency.

The lack of an access to information law in Somalia further makes it difficult for journalists to perform their professional duties as public watch dogs. Somali authorities both at the federal and state levels act with high levels of secrecy by disallowing access to public information, this in turn encourages corruption, abuse

of public office, mismanagement of public funds and ultimately denies the people the rights to know.

Somalia urgently needs to enact Access to Information Law as enshrined in the provisional constitution of Somalia and protected under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights as well as other international human rights laws and standards, including the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, which urges States, including Somalia, to ensure



the respect, protection and fulfilment of access to information rights as it is crucial and indispensable for the free development of the human person, the creation and nurturing of democratic societies and for enabling the exercise of other rights.

The exercise of this right is fundamental to a functional governance system. Independently provable information increases transparency, supports locally-driven accountability measures, ensures citizens' right to know and helps fight corruption and misinformation. NUSOJ strongly believes that access to information allows Somalis to exercise other crucial rights such as the right to development, the right to a safe and healthy environment (especially in this era of Covid-19 pandemic) and the right to make informed choices.

STATE OF THE MEDIA

TRAIL OF VIOLENCE: SOMALI JOURNALISTS BEAR THE BRUNT OF IMPUNITY MEDIA FREEDOM REPORT IN 2021

 STATE / REGION	TYPE OF MEDIA FREEDOM VIOLATION						TOTAL INCIDENTS	PERCENTAGE
	JOURNALISTS KILLED	ARRESTED JOURNALISTS	JOURNALISTS VIOLENTLY ATTACKED	MEDIA HOUSES ATTACKED	GBV AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS			
BENADIR (MOGADISHU)	1	3	6	1	3	14	20%	
SOMALILAND	0	12	2	0	2	16	23%	
PUNTLAND	1	4	2	2	3	12	17%	
SOUTHWEST	0	7	0	1	0	8	12%	
HIRSHABELLE	0	2	0	0	1	3	4%	
JUBBALAND	0	1	3	0	4	8	12%	
GALMUDUG	0	5	0	0	3	8	12%	
Total attacks	2	34	13	4	16	69	100%	

PS: All the documented cases are recorded and recognised as media freedom cases because a journalist is attacked due to his/her journalistic work or media house attacked due its media activity.

WHAT WE DO

National Union of Somali Journalists [NUSOJ] is renowned for its indefatigable voice in the defence of journalists and journalism in Somalia. It fervently agitates for media freedom, the rights of journalists, workers' rights, improved working conditions, women's empowerment and total emancipation, while pushing for a realisation of decent work and greater social justice for all in Somalia.

In order to help bring about these changes NUSOJ systematically monitors and conducts investigations into violations of media freedom and the human rights of journalists. It provides accurate, prompt and impartial information concerning attacks on journalists. These include killings, arrests, death threats and harassments, as well as acts of aggression against media organizations. The organization generates and rallies national and global communities of media freedom defenders to take effective action against media freedom violations.

As a reputable and credible expert on media freedom in Somalia, NUSOJ provides a constant stream of information to the local media, foreign press, local authorities, members of the international community, inter-governmental organizations and development partners, including the United Nations. NUSOJ urges them to take action where and when necessary. NUSOJ organizes national solidarity actions with victimized journalists and their families as well as other media professionals at risk. This is important to us as we believe in clearly articulating our position on issues of concern, not only to our members but also to all concerned groups who are interested or involved in what journalists stand for.

As part of the union's commitment to promote and maintain high standards in media and journalism, NUSOJ strengthens the professional competence and ethical standards of both new and established journalists. This is often done through convening workshops, seminars, roundtables and constructive debates within the profession. This over the years has been successful in reinforcing the professional standards of journalists, promoting and entrenching the freedom of expression and access to information, while also enhancing the safety and security of media professionals. They constitute the key ingredients in improving the conditions for democratisation, peace building, social justice and social and economic development in Somalia.

As a union that represents both female and male journalists, and one that holds gender equality as a central tenet to development, democracy and peace-building, NUSOJ is implementing a long-term union-wide, advocacy campaign to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and the empowerment of women. Understanding the interconnection between the private and public space, our advocacy efforts to combat sexism, discrimination and harassment have straddled the workplace, the field and the household. NUSOJ continuously and unapologetically calls for more comprehensive & progressive legislation related to GBV as well as democratic laws and policies to inform a human rights agenda.

NUSOJ is an active member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and a founding member of the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ). NUSOJ is also a member of the Journalists' Federation of Eastern Africa (JOFEA). Nationally, NUSOJ is a full affiliate of the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU), and is the Somali partner organisation of Reporters without Borders (RSF).



Ururka Qaranka Suxufiyiinta Soomaaliyeed
National Union of Somali Journalists

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