

# **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOMALIA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY ON P/CVE: A MEDIA PERSPECTIVE**

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## **A CASE STUDY REPORT**

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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>NUSOJ</b>	National Union of Somali Journalists
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>ATMIS</b>	Africa Union Transition Mission in Somalia
<b>LAS</b>	League of Arab States
<b>CEWARN</b>	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
<b>CEWERUs</b>	Conflict Early Warning and Response Units
<b>CVE</b>	Countering Violent Extremism
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>ECCAS</b>	Economic Community of Central African States
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IGAD</b>	Inter Governmental Authority on Development
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>PESTEL</b>	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental And Legal
<b>SADC</b>	South African Development Corporation
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
<b>P/CVE</b>	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
<b>TOT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>VE</b>	Violent Extremism

# Foreword

This study comes in response to an acknowledgement by the Federal Government of Somalia and its Federal Member States (FMS) that the authorities need to take a more constructive attitude towards the media and media practitioners. In the recent past, we have witnessed attempts to undermine the ability and readiness of journalists to play their role – protected by the Constitution – as watchdogs of society. In addition, we have seen a gradual erosion of the media's potential to mitigate the threats posed by radical interpretations of religion and culture as well as hatred and ignorance.

In view of the current situation in Somalia, the Federal Government must view the media as a strategic partner rather than an adversary. It is only through a powerful and trust-based symbiosis between government and media that an effective action-oriented P/CVE strategy can be delivered. And this imperative will assume greater significance as the Federal Government works to align Somalia's counterterrorism strategy with its six-pillar national programme.

As Baroness Margaret Thatcher once stated, media provides terrorists with the oxygen of publicity. It is also through the media that extremists seek to spread narratives and ideology that distort Islamic doctrine and subvert cultural harmony. Consequently, any strategy, especially one developed by the Government, should not fail to prioritize the role of the media in P/CVE. Indeed, serious consideration should be given to the active involvement of the media in devising and drafting such a strategy since journalists are uniquely placed to ensure that communication priorities are firmly rooted in media practice.

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) has an exceptional track record in leading media-based interventions aimed at building a peaceful and stable Somalia where journalists and other media workers can pursue their professional activities without fear of violence or repression. In a country where, over the last 15 years, 80 journalists have lost their lives mainly in terrorist attacks, NUSOJ is a tireless advocate

for journalists' safety and continues to campaign against the culture of impunity that is associated with crimes against journalists. Its programmes empower media professionals to cooperate with stakeholders from government and civil society in order to counter and degrade extremist propaganda, thereby weakening the ability of militant groups to indoctrinate vulnerable communities and attract new recruits.

**It is important to note that this study is the first of its kind in Somalia.**

For this, I would like to express my gratitude to the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for its financial support and to our partners from the IGAD Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (ICEPCVE) and the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) for our highly productive cooperation in this intervention that ensures P/CVE efforts can benefit from rigorous research and analysis.

I sincerely believe that this study will play an important role not only in providing the National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism with new perspectives but also in influencing the way in which the Federal Government and the FMS engage with journalists and news media organisations in their combined efforts to counter violent extremism.

**OMAR FARUK OSMAN**

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# Abstract

This report draws on the views and insights of the professional media community to present a critique of the National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that was finalised and released in September 2016.



**In its existing form, the strategy does not recognise media as a key actor and change agent in P/CVE initiatives. However, a review of the strategy – which is long overdue – must explore and unlock the media’s potential to galvanize and deepen these efforts, particularly as the Government’s 2022 draft counterterrorism strategy includes a focus on strategic communication messaging as a key tool for combating extremist ideology.**



## **The critique embraces four crucial lines of enquiry:**

1. The dominant themes associated with radicalisation and violent extremism;
2. The drivers of and motivating factors for radicalisation;
3. Vulnerable groups and individuals; and
4. The main reasons for their vulnerabilities.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first provides the terms of reference for this report. It specifically describes the assignment, its scope and constraints as well as the selected methodology. The second section offers an analysis of the strategy from a media perspective and in relation to the four lines of enquiry. Section 3 comprises a critical evaluation of the strategy based on perceived gaps and shortcomings while Section 4 draws evidenced-based conclusions and makes clear recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the strategy.

This research and analysis was conducted by Dr James Oranga, from the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nairobi.

## 1.1. Description of the Assignment

This assignment was undertaken by the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) with a view to analysing and identifying the existing gaps in the Federal Government's National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism from a media perspective.

## 1.2. Terms of Reference

The assignment was guided by four specific objectives which can be summarised as follows:

- I. To establish the dominant radicalisation themes
- II. To identify the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism
- III. To identify the vulnerable groups and individuals
- IV. To determine the reasons for prevailing vulnerabilities

## 1.3. Scope and Limitations of the Assignment

The assignment was limited to the Federal Republic of Somalia although some recommendations are also relevant for other countries where P/CVE efforts are conducted in collaboration with the Somali authorities and with other bodies that are crucial to P/CVE efforts in Eastern Africa such as IGAD, the national Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Units (CEWERUs), the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) and the African Union (AU), including ATMIS (formerly AMISOM). The primary reference document was the National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism for the Federal Republic of Somalia that was finalised and adopted in September 2016. This is the contemporary strategic blueprint for P/CVE efforts in Somalia. While some sections

of the strategy require further clarification, the assignment was limited to desk research and did not, therefore, present the opportunity for seeking answers to specific questions.

## 1.4. Methodology

As noted above, the research was desk-based. The consultant conducted a systematic page-by-page review of the National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, cataloguing and analysing references to the four key subject areas. To enable a deeper understanding of media culture and reporting norms in the Somali landscape, the consultant also reviewed sample media reports to test assumptions made in the strategy. Based on the findings of the report, the consultant made six recommendations for reinforcing the central role of media in P/CVE efforts in Somalia.

## 1.5. Situational Context

Media freedom is enshrined in the Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia as a key pillar for the democratisation of society. Since the authorities began to take resolute steps to restore normalcy in 2012 following the civil war of the 1990s and the collapse of central government, the media landscape in Somalia has followed an upward trajectory. Today, country boasts more than 100 media outlets, multiple blogs and a growing cadre of independent journalists.

But these positive developments have been challenged by the situation on the ground where systematic actions initiated by the Government and terrorist groups have served not only to diminish the role of journalists in nation-building but also to undermine the capacity of the media to play a constructive and consistent role in P/CVE efforts. Systematic reports by independent bodies including the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Reporters without

Borders (RSF) have pointed to a pattern of arbitrary arrests, harassment and intimidation of independently minded journalists. One report by the International Press Institute found that media practitioners in Somalia were “living in perpetual fear” fuelled by the mounting death toll of journalists targeted by violent extremist groups.

It is perhaps as a result of this contempt for a robust media environment that the current National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism has excluded the media as a major stakeholder in this endeavour.

## 1.6. The Media's Pivotal Role in P/CVE

Given their current reach in Somalia, media organisations have unique potential for ensuring that messages intended to persuade, advise, inform, warn and de-radicalise reach a broad cross-section of the population. Media are a trusted source of information that can both influence local communities and act as counterbalance to the narratives peddled by extremist groups.

The media can ensure that information is tailored to the preferences, tastes, likes and dislikes of local audiences. It can determine accessibility patterns and entry points for reaching specific target groups, thereby maximising intended outcomes and optimising the creation and roll-out of the P/CVE agenda. These are all powerful reasons for incorporating media actors into the National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

“  
**At the same time, the Government continues to issue directives that are ostensibly aimed at curbing terrorist activities but that also have a dampening effect on press freedom.**  
”

## 2.1. Dominant Themes Related to Radicalisation and Extremism

The strategic pillars outlined in the strategy and the sample reports reviewed by the consultant suggest that there seven dominant themes in media coverage and government-level analysis of violent extremism and radicalisation. These include efforts to mobilise recruits for or against Al Shabaab and Islamic State Somalia. Whereas Al Shabaab and Islamic State Somalia mobilise their own forces in order to wreak havoc against their targets, it is recognised that Government forces as well as relatively benign militia groups such as Ma Awisley which has now been assimilated into the Community Defence Forces (CDF) also seek to recruit fighters to combat Al Shabaab.

### Other common themes include:

- Incidents of violent attacks targeting individual figures, groups and institutions and their devastating aftermath.
- Al Shabaab events such as graduation ceremonies that are used to issue threats and warnings to the authorities or to other target groups and that are also designed to showcase the militants' power and capacity for destruction.
- Military operations against Al Shabaab and other Government actions aimed at eliminating the extremist group.
- Measures undertaken by the authorities to prevent and counter violent extremism.

## 2.2. Drivers of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

The strategy identifies “push” and “pull” factors for radicalisation and violent extremism in Somalia. They are explained as follows (page 9):

“Push factors” are structural conditions — such as underdevelopment, lack of access to education or employment, and/or social marginalisation —

that in themselves, or most likely in combination with other factors, can fuel grievances that make individuals receptive to violent extremism. These grievances may be felt on behalf of communities with whom individuals share a cultural, ideological, religious, or ethnic bond(s), even if they are at a physical distance. The second sets of factors are so-called “pull factors.” These factors are classified as more immediate incentives that make violent extremist ideas or groups appealing— including the attraction of charismatic individuals, powerful strategic communications and compelling messaging, financial or other material benefits, or the social status that some group members feel they achieve as being part of a terrorist or militant group.

## 2.3. Vulnerable Groups and Individuals

Unlike the factors that are considered to be drivers of violent extremism and radicalisation, the strategy does not specifically characterise “vulnerable” groups. However, from the list of the push and pull factors, it is possible to establish the groups that are most affected. They include:

1. People living in poverty
2. The unemployed
3. People with little or no education
4. Socially marginalised groups
5. Politically and economically marginalised groups
6. Groups with charismatic leaders or opinion leaders
7. Passive groups that have access to powerful messaging platforms
8. Groups or individuals seeking revenge
9. Groups or individuals seeking to improve their status

## 2.4. Key Reasons for Vulnerabilities

The perceived reasons for the vulnerability of each of these groups is summarised in the table below:



#	Vulnerable Groups/ Individuals	Reasons for Vulnerability
1.	People living in poverty	Need for financial stability
2.	The unemployed	Need for financial stability and social relevance
3.	People with little or no education	Inability to interpret or recognise manipulated narratives used for radicalisation
4.	Socially marginalised groups	Feelings of discrimination that can foment hatred and a desire to retaliate
5.	Politically and economically marginalised groups	Feelings that rights have been violated and opportunities have been denied prompting hatred and a desire to retaliate
6.	Groups with charismatic leaders or opinion leaders	Leaders take advantage of their power and influence to mislead their followers
7.	Passive groups that have access to powerful messaging platforms	Members of this group are easily swayed due to their inability to think or reason critically when messages are disseminated through popular media platforms
8.	Groups or individuals seeking revenge	These individuals may target groups that they believe have wronged them
9.	Groups or individuals seeking to improve their status	These individuals are motivated by a desire to gain recognition or glory as a result of destructive actions

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGY FROM A MEDIA PERSPECTIVE

## 3.1. On Dominant Themes Related to Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

A more robust analysis of media coverage is needed to dissect the dominant themes related to violent extremism and to identify the problems associated with radicalisation and violent extremism that the strategy attempts to address. This analysis can draw on readily available secondary data that can be used as reference material and empirical evidence for future strategies. The media reports reviewed by the consultant show a marked preference for the inverted pyramid format for news reporting. Popular with media outlets worldwide, this format focuses on the six key determinants of any given event: what happened, when, where, why and how it happened and who was involved.

However, editors should make a concerted effort to popularise other formats for reporting on incidents of radicalisation and violent extremism – for example, the Hour Glass Format and the Dramatic Unity Structure. The former emphasises the two most important aspects of a story by placing them at the beginning and the end of a news report. The former puts greater emphasis on the human-interest angle. Both approaches also encourage journalists to reserve space for a discussion of the “so what?” element of the story which offers analytical interpretations of events and their wider implications. Such interpretations are of greater interest to the architects of P/CVE strategies.

## 3.2. On the Drivers of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

The strategy provides only a generalised outline of the drivers of radicalisation. It is thought that media should be more specific when reporting on this topic in order to contribute to a better understanding of the forces at play. There could,

for example, be a more in-depth interpretation of the push factors and the reasons for their prevalence in Somalia. Why is there a lack of access to education and employment in the country? Can the reasons be attributed to shortcomings in the Government’s performance? The answers to such questions would provide greater insight into the underlying drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism, thereby enabling stakeholders to devise holistic solutions, including those recommended by the media in its role as a watchdog of democracy. Shared ideological motivations should also be identified. For example, which ideologies bear the greater burden of responsibility for radicalisation? Only then will it be possible to formulate counter measures that target these ideologies in an effective way. Simply put, there is a growing need for specialist interpretation rather than broad generalisations relating to push and pull factors.

## 3.3. On Vulnerable Groups and the Reasons for Vulnerabilities

The strategy fails to provide a breakdown of vulnerable groups and, therefore, the reader is obliged to extrapolate them from the reasons provided for radicalisation. However, since it is incumbent on the media to interpret these issues on behalf of their audiences, it is vital to identify the key groups that are currently active in the Federal Republic of Somalia. For example, a systematic formula is needed to establish how many people in the country are unemployed or are living in poverty and what proportion of the population is, therefore, vulnerable to radicalisation on this basis. The same principle should be applied to assess the number of people with low levels of education.

Equally, it is important to understand which regions of the country have the greatest concentration of vulnerable groups; which associations or registered groups they belong to;

and, if possible, to determine their demographic and psychographic identities. This will ensure that counter narratives, particularly those involving the media, can be better targeted. Similarly, while the strategy does not provide specific reasons for each area of vulnerability, the media has a duty to record their specific manifestations in Somalia.

### 3.4. On the Structure of the Strategy

The strategy has a number of structural shortcomings that should potentially be corrected in future drafts, particularly since the Government has indicated that the strategy will be reviewed in its recently launched six-pillar work programme for 2022-2026. There are basic pagination errors: the cover page and the table of contents are included in the page count while it is normal practice for Page 1 of an official document to be the first page of the introduction or background. The page labelled “Annexes” has no content although there are several sections in the document that would benefit from a supporting annex.

Furthermore, the document would enjoy greater credibility if a picture of the President and a list of authors were incorporated in the Foreword. In general, more images should be used throughout the strategy – especially those illustrating P/CVE actions. There are also no footnotes or annotations indicating the sources of information used to compile the document. This will be problematic for media seeking to reference the strategy and authenticate the information contained therein.

### 3.5. On the Contents of the Strategy

The strategy could be enriched by including a body of additional information. Some of the terminology associated with P/CVE needs to be clarified. For example, “Extreme Violence” should be distinguished from “Violent Extremism”. Terms such as Radicalism, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, De-radicalisation and Disengagement should be properly defined.

It would also be worth adding a SWOT and PESTEL analysis of the P/CVE landscape in

Somalia, thereby underscoring the main threats and opportunities inherent in the operating environment as well as the context in which counter-terrorism measures and counter-narratives should be formulated.

There is a clear need to include SMART objectives as well as action-based outcomes. It is often (wrongfully) assumed that objectives and outcomes are synonymous, however, in this case, the objectives are not SMART. For example, the ambition to “strengthen research” is too general and hard to measure. It should be replaced by specific actions to achieve this goal and augmented by a statement of what the research is intended to accomplish in the wider context of P/CVE efforts.

The grouping of the push and pull factors that act as drivers of terrorism should be reorganised to reflect socio-political, economic, ideological, religious, geo-political, technological and communicative considerations, thereby highlighting their unique attributes. Each group also lacks examples that are specific to Somalia.

Lastly, the presentation of the mechanisms and approaches needed to combat P/CVE is very general. It would be helpful if each approach were to be paired with the threat that it seeks to mitigate, thereby demonstrating that each specific challenge has a specific counter measure. For example, if poverty among young people in a given locality were identified as a threat, it would be useful to detail the mechanisms that are considered to be most effective in dealing with this particular situation. Simply outlining the threats, then listing the solutions in a separate section makes it difficult to cross-reference the two variables. It also makes it harder for journalists to draw informed conclusions.

It is worth emphasising that the content of the strategy and the way in which the content is presented are critical for media analysis and interpretation. When information is either missing or is presented in a way that is open to misinterpretation, there is a far greater risk of inaccuracies in media coverage and framing.

### 3.6. On Strategic Communication and the Role of Media in P/CVE

In this section, the strategy is anchored in generalised rather than specific terms. While it recognises the significance of strategic communication in P/CVE efforts, the strategy stops short of acknowledging that all efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism are actualised or in some way facilitated by communication.

In this regard, the section on strategic communication and the role of media should map specific actors in P/CVE efforts and describe the strategic communication techniques that these actors should employ in order to achieve their goals. The table below offers an overview of the information that should be presented in this section:

**Besides, extremist groups rely on the publicity afforded by media and, therefore, any effective counterbalance to extremist rhetoric or propaganda must be media-based.**

#	ACTORS	SPECIFICATIONS	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS
1.	Educational and academic actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Schools</li> <li>* Colleges</li> <li>* Polytechnics</li> <li>* Universities</li> <li>* Adult education centres</li> <li>* Vocational training centres</li> <li>* Educational unions/ associations/clubs</li> <li>* Teachers</li> <li>* Trainers</li> <li>* Mentors</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct CVE awareness campaigns during formal lessons and extra curricula activities such as sports and music festivals.</li> <li>2. Make use of the peace clubs and other clubs that already exist in schools and colleges.</li> <li>3. Circulate literature that offers insight into the warning signs that students are being radicalised in learning centres.</li> <li>4. Incorporate CVE programmes into the curricula of learning institutions.</li> </ol>
2.	Religious actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Mosques</li> <li>* Islamic schools</li> <li>* Other religious institutions</li> <li>* Sheikhs</li> <li>* Imams</li> <li>* Religious organisations</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organise Training of Trainers workshops to help sheikhs/imams better understand CVE.</li> <li>2. Provide information on CVE during sermons at madrasas.</li> <li>3. Involve Islamic organisations and respected opinion leaders in CVE campaigns.</li> <li>4. Distribute literature on the warning signs of radicalisation in mosques and madrasas.</li> </ol>
3.	State / Government actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Government ministries</li> <li>* Federal Member States</li> <li>* Government agencies</li> <li>* Security agencies</li> <li>* Intelligence agencies</li> <li>* Prisons/correctional facilities</li> <li>* Politicians</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use state media to convey counter narratives.</li> <li>2. Distribute literature on the warning signs of radicalisation in Government services and correctional facilities.</li> <li>3. Share information on P/CVE across state agencies.</li> </ol>

<b>4.</b>	Development partners	Civil society NGOs UN AU IGAD EAC LAS ECOWAS ECCAS SADC EU Governments Diplomatic missions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share information and ideas from different areas of P/CVE.</li> <li>2. Sponsor rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.</li> <li>3. Popularise P/CVE efforts.</li> </ol>
<b>5.</b>	Crucial neighbours	Djibouti Kenya Ethiopia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sharing information and ideas from different areas in PCVE.</li> <li>2. Using national media networks to communicate P/CVE information.</li> </ol>
<b>6.</b>	Mass Media	Broadcast media Social media Alternative media Traditional media Print media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Train media owners, editors, producers, reporters on CVE.</li> <li>2. Identify, mentor and commission specific journalists to work hand-in-hand with P/CVE experts and stakeholders in reporting CVE issues.</li> <li>3. Encourage newspaper columnists or online commentators to publish stories on CVE.</li> <li>4. Use high-profile journalists to discuss CVE-related matters.</li> <li>5. Produce special programmes such as magazine shows and documentaries on CVE.</li> </ol>

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above in the Situational Context, the fact that the current national strategy does not promote the media as a key factor in P/CVE efforts undermines its potential to fulfil this role. There is, therefore, a pressing need to give the media centre stage in the P/CVE strategy (which is soon to be reviewed) and to articulate the advantages that effective media participation brings to the fight against violent extremism in Somalia.

It should be recognised that, if the strategy does not prioritise the constructive and continuous involvement of media agencies as well as sustained messaging through the media, then there is a significant risk that attempts to counter violent extremism will fail to achieve their declared goals.

It should also be noted that, in the given situation, any strategic communication strategy will be incomplete without media involvement since it is only through mainstream media that strategic messaging can reach a mass audience, thereby establishing and developing a credible P/CVE agenda. The absence of media participation will limit the strategy's power to persuade and motivate citizens to take action against violent extremism and, consequently, the impact of any communication campaign is likely to be severely blunted.

While the strategy is essentially informative and easy to understand, its structure and content should be adjusted in order to make it more accessible to stakeholders (such as media practitioners) who wish to use it as a point of reference. Of the gaps and shortcomings identified through this assignment, the most prominent is the strategy's failure to prioritise media as a crucial tool for implementing strategic communication plans. This shortcoming must be addressed when drafting future strategies.

When it comes to drafting a new strategy, it may also be useful for the Federal Government

of Somalia to access the experience of other countries which face similar challenges. On occasion, common approaches to problems that are shared across a region may yield more productive results even if the available resources are limited. With regard to the media's contribution to P/CVE, the following suggestions should be considered in addition to the general approaches outlined in the strategy:

## I) Encouraging a Developmental Approach

Media practitioners should embrace reporting techniques that promote constructive social change as a means of preventing or countering violent extremism. As well as informing and educating, stories should be designed not just to set the agenda but also to further develop the agenda by seeding P/CVE issues; appropriately framing their causes, consequences and realistic solutions; clarifying misconceptions and correcting falsehoods that are used by extremist groups to recruit vulnerable individuals; and constantly providing audiences with counter-narratives and counter-arguments. Media stories should also be based on solid data gathering so that audiences are not repeatedly told what they already know but are given new insights into events and processes.

## II) Training and Capacity-Building

There is an enduring need for training journalists and editors in the skills needed to report on P/CVE. These may range from accessing new sources of information, investigative techniques, safety precautions, conflict reporting and content analysis. Training should also include mentorship programmes for inexperienced journalists and award ceremonies for outstanding performers so as to generate and sustain interest in reporting on P/CVE.

### III) Constructive Reinforcement via Social Media

Social media platforms should be utilised for the purpose of reinforcing and complementing rather than replacing or competing with mainstream media. Leading practitioners and media outlets should use their respective pages to reach audiences in real time and provide multiple reports that benefit from converged newsgathering techniques. Such platforms should make use not only of influencers with significant followings but also of ambassadors who enjoy high levels of credibility with the general public including the Somali diaspora.

### IV) Establishing Storytelling Hubs

Worldwide, storytelling is emerging as one of the most powerful tools for persuasive messaging. Letting people tell their own story in their own words can be more effective in bringing about social change than standard news reports. Furthermore, storytelling offers a unique opportunity for media to touch the hearts and minds of audiences in ways that can play an essential role in prevention and counter messaging. Storytelling hubs have proven ability to bring these stories into the public domain. Sponsored by media enterprises through the provision of dedicated airtime, these hubs offer space for real stories from survivors, returnees and law enforcers that can serve to build the resilience of vulnerable audiences to radicalisation and recruitment.

### V) Using Authentication Tools

Since social media posts are often used by extremists to promote manipulated content and propaganda, it is important to leverage tools such as Google Image Reverse, TinEye and Jeffreys Exif Viewer as well as geolocation software such as Google's mapping kit (Maps, Street View, Open Street Map, Earth Pro). These tools enable both journalists and citizens to debunk false images, audio and videos and to pinpoint the exact location in which a video was filmed or a photograph taken. Exposing manipulated content is an important step in degrading the credibility of online propagandists.

### VI) Amplifying the Voices of Opinion Leaders

There should be a sustained effort to bring the voices of opinion leaders -- especially clerics and cultural figures -- into the media space. Examples of effective approaches include special programmes in which opinion leaders are able to directly address and advise the target groups; regular columns in newspapers; and studio-based talk shows that engage viewers and listeners in a robust discussion of P/CVE. Experience shows that audiences are more likely to debate sensitive topics, if these discussions involve community leaders whose views and counsel they respect.

### VII) Cooperation between Government Agencies and the Media

P/CVE is an effort that requires the collective involvement of multiple stakeholders. Proper inclusion maximises the chances of achieving the goals of any strategy and, as highlighted above, media are vital interlocutors in this process. Consequently, full cooperation between the media and Government agencies is a key driver of successful P/CVE initiatives. In cases where there is a high degree of mistrust between these two stakeholder groups or where the Government takes systematic steps to undermine the work of journalists and the media, the chances of a positive outcome are dramatically reduced.

The Government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has announced its intention to review Somalia's counter-terrorism strategy. This opens up new opportunities for a constructive partnership between key Government players such as the ministries of Information, Internal Security, Education, Telecommunications and Religious Affairs on one side and the media sector on the other. This partnership will help facilitate efforts to strengthen proposals for strategic communication around P/CVE. A more practical step would be to include media representatives in the proposed P/CVE Taskforce, which will aim to support key ministries in implementing the Government's strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism.



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