



**MEDIA WOMEN NETWORK**  
**SHABAKADDA WARBAAHINTA HAWEENKA**



**Joint Statement by the Somali Independent Journalists Unions and Media Houses on the State of Freedom of Expression and Human Rights in Somalia**

**MOGADISHU, Somalia 4 June 2022** – Today, 4 June 2022, the Somali independent journalists' organizations/unions and the independent media houses associations held a consultative meeting in Mogadishu focusing on the latest developments in the country on the aftermath of May 15th presidential election and the state of freedom of expression and media freedom in Somalia, which has been ranked as the worst in the last five years.

- The Somali journalists' unions and the independent media houses precisely discussed the draconian Somali Media Law of August 2020, the endless arbitrary detention and targeting of Somali journalists, the implications of the enforcement of the Somali Penal Code against journalists and the media, the barriers to accessing information and the absence of the Access to Information law which could have granted Somali citizens the right to information.
- The Somali journalists' unions and the independent media houses also deliberated the various types of violations against Somali media and journalists, and the fact that perpetrators of these violations have not yet been held accountable, while raising concerns about the seriousness of human rights abuses in the country.
- The Somali journalists' unions and the independent media houses call on the the Government to show a sincere commitment to address human rights violations including the impunity for crimes against the media and journalists. The new leadership of the Somali Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) be mindful and cease the previous repressive practices against the independent media employed by the former leadership of the Federal Government.
- Following the consultations, the Somali journalists' unions and the independent media houses issued an urgent call to the new President of FGS, H.E Hassan Sheikh

Mohamud, the Speaker of the House of the People (Parliament) and the Speaker of the Upper House, the lawmakers of the Federal Parliament and the Federal Member States.

- We noted the dire consequences of the current drought in the country as we call for immediate assistance to the people dying of hunger and thirst in the country as a result of this drought. We also call on the independent media to play their part in highlighting the crisis to save lives and raising public awareness of the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

We, therefore propose the following points for the new leadership of FGS:

1. Protect **the freedom of expression in Somalia**, and expedite a presidential decree by the new President of FGS and the heads of the Federal Member States to enforce end of the illegal detention of Somali journalists throughout the country, and instruct the security and judicial institutions to respect freedom of expression and freedom of the media in accordance with Articles 18 and 32 of the Provisional Constitution.
2. Launch **review and amend the Somali Media Law** (of August 2020) by incorporating recommendations from the independent media and journalists' organizations and in compliance with the country's constitution and other international and regional human rights standards. The Media Law must clarify the protection of women's rights in the media and labor rights for working journalists. The Federal Member States should also harmonize the Media Law upon review and amendment at the federal level.
3. The new President should issue a **moratorium on the application of the outdated Somali Penal Code** on cases related to freedom of expression and journalists. Journalism is a legitimate profession and it is not a crime, therefore nobody should be punished for exercising journalism.
4. A **fair and thorough investigation** should be opened into all killings, injuries and other abuses against journalists, and victims and their families should be provided the opportunity to file lawsuits in the country's courts and that those found guilty should be brought to justice.
5. The Office of the President and other government officials should **openly condemn attacks on journalists**, strictly warn all government officials against attacks and harassment of journalists and the media, and should hold the perpetrators of crimes against journalists accountable in order to end the culture of impunity that has ravaged the country's justice system.
6. Independent media and journalists should have **access to key government offices** at all levels without any obstacle, authorities should stop sharing pre-edited videos and images and instead independent media and journalists should be allowed to interview and scrutinize key government officials including those at the Presidency, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Parliament and the Ministries. We recommend, the independent media to assign reporters to cover these public offices. The President of the Somali Federal Republic should encourage open press briefings by government officials as a way to provide information to the media and the general public.
7. Villa Somalia should cease the **illegal use of independent media logos** that have been deployed into the presidential press unit without the consent of the independent media. We suggest that accredited journalists to cover the press briefings at the Presidency.

8. The federal parliament should expedite and enact a law that recognizes and protects the **Access to Information** in accordance with Article 32 of the Provisional Constitution.
9. Upon completion of the review and amendment of the Media Law, we recommend the establishment of an **independent Somali Press Council** under the oversight of the Parliament and free from the influence of the government, and its members to be elected in a fair and inclusive manner. The independent media and journalists should play their part in the process to form the independent Press Council as an important stakeholder and not as guests.
10. The formation of the yet-to-be-completed **Somali Human Rights Commission** should be accelerated and completed to investigate and document human rights abuses in Somalia, and to hold perpetrators accountable. At the same time, the new government must reform and create an independent and just judiciary which is critical to peace-building and democracy in Somalia.
11. The new leadership of FGS should refrain from **appointment of the known human rights violators** – including violations of press freedom and the rights of journalists – for government positions.
12. The Somali media and journalists will convene for a general Somali **media stakeholders' conference** which will be announce in a later date.

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