



Journalists' unions, media organizations condemn latest violations against media freedom and journalists in Somalia, including the restrictions, threats and censorship

MOGADISHU, Somalia 16 June 2022 – Somali journalists unions and media houses associations under the umbrella of Somali Mechanism for the Safety of the Journalists (SMSJ) today condemned the latest violations against the freedom of the media and journalists in Somalia, including the restrictions, threats and censorship by the office of the Somali President.

On Monday 13 June, journalists covering the visit of U.S Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland in Mogadishu, were blocked and even threatened by the Villa Somalia communications officials. We have been alerted that presidential staff including those working at the communications unit and the president's security detail locked journalists in a small room for nearly an hour blocking their access to the venue. Journalists were initially registered to cover a supposedly joint press conference by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Under Secretary Nuland. However, President Mohamud quit the press conference over unjustified reasons while only ambassador Nuland briefed the local journalists.

While it was unfortunate for the new president, whom the public have been waiting to learn about his new measures to rebuild the shattered country and plans for security and economic reform and improve human rights situations, to miss this important opportunity of briefing journalists, it was also unacceptable the threats and harassment imposed on the local journalists who were at the hangar to cover this vital event.

On Wednesday, June 15, security guards at Villa Somalia barred journalists from covering the appointment of the new prime minister, Hamze Abdi Barre at Villa Somalia. The journalists were all accredited and even got invitation to cover the press conference by President Mohamud as he announces the new prime minister.

We are also concerned about the new threats made this week by officials from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) against the independent media over their coverage on the Ikran Tahlil case.

Speaking at a press conference in Mogadishu today, Mr. SMSJ Chair, Mr. Farah Omar Nur and SMSJ Secretary-General, Mr. Abdalle Ahmed Mumin condemned the recent restrictions and threats as they also called for immediate actions by the authorities.

"We strongly condemn Villa Somalia's new tactics of harassment, repression and intimidation against journalists. We are also concerned about the new threats from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) targeting media houses covering the case of Ikran Tahlil. This threat must stop, and the motives of those involved – in particular NISA which is known for its poor record of human rights – must be investigated," SJS Secretary-General, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, who is also the Secretary-General of SMSJ said. "We were indeed optimistic that the new leadership will carry out measures to improve the deteriorating human rights situation in Somalia and that of the freedom of expression. Unfortunately, there is a glimmer of hope."

"The era of censorship is over. If the beginning of this new government is like this, what can we expect at its end? We suggest that the current violations of press freedom and the work of journalists by presidential officials be addressed immediately," Mr. Farah Omar Nur, Secretary General of FESOJ and Chair of SMSJ said.

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