



SMSJ: Attacks against Somali journalists and media and impunity for these crimes must end

MOGADISHU, Somalia 24 June, 2022 – The Somali Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists (SMSJ), a network coalition of seven journalists’ unions and media houses associations, on Thursday published its annual monitoring report covering the state of journalists’ safety and media freedom in Somalia.

The report launch was followed by two live panel discussion streamed on local television stations at the Jazeera Palace Hotel in Mogadishu and brought together leaders of independent media organisations, civil society representatives, media editors, religious scholars, women’s groups and government representatives.

The report, which has been compiled from incident monitoring data contributed by SMSJ members, provides an overview of the media freedom situation in Somalia in 2021 with a special focus on cases of violations against journalists and media workers.

In 2021, attacks against journalists spiked, with 105 incidents of media violations recorded by SMSJ, largely targeting on-duty journalists. The figure represents a 62 per cent increase from 2020 and the highest caseload recorded in a decade and includes: two cases of murder, 66 arrests, 14 media outlet raids, 14 physical assaults, 13 cases of harassment, and two sham trials.

The SMSJ Secretary-General, who is also the Secretary-General of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, stated: “As we have witnessed again in 2021, brutal violence, arbitrary arrests, intimidation and harassment of journalists increased to alarming levels during elections, at a time when the Somali public needed most accurate and timely information. To combat and reduce violence against journalists, SMSJ and its members have taken proactive steps by documenting these media violations.”

SMSJ Chairperson, Farah Omar Nur, who is also the Secretary-General of the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ), said the release of the report will be a good entry point to engage in dialogue with the relevant stakeholders to put an end to violations against media and journalists.

“We have government representatives with us today and we appeal to them to help us in getting accountability for the attacks against journalists. We also call for the Somali government can also help in the protection and the safety of Somali journalists,” SMSJ Chairperson, Farah added.

Chairman of the non-state actors (SONSA), Osman Tahlil, said the presentation of the annual SMSJ report demonstrates the solidarity of the media community and the efforts to promote media freedom which is crucial for state-building in Somalia. He commended the work of SMSJ and its struggle to protect the rights of journalists.

Abukar Albadri, Somalia Programme Coordinator for International Media Support (IMS) and FOJO Media Institute, who have supported SMSJ, said that IMS-Fojo will continue to support efforts to ensure a safer and more conducive environment for journalists and media in Somalia and to address impunity.

Speaking at the launch of the report, the Director General of the Federal Ministry of Information, Abdullahi Hayir Duale, praised the report launch saying that the repeated harassment and attacks of journalists was regrettable.

“It is my pleasure, as the representative of the ministry of information, to attend the presentation of the SMSJ annual report. We encourage you and welcome your report,” Hayir said.

Safety and protection of journalists are key priorities for the Somali Mechanism of the Safety of the Journalists (SMSJ) which is generously supported by International Media Support (IMS) and FOJO Media Institute. SMSJ is grateful to IMS/FOJO: Media Institute for their tireless support as we also appreciate the role of Sweden, Denmark and the European Union for their solidarity and support for the Somali media.

Signed by SMSJ member organisations:

1. Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS)
2. Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ)
3. Media Association of Puntland (MAP)
4. Somali Women Journalists Organisation (SWJO)
5. Somali Media Association (SOMA)
6. Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA)
7. Media Women Network (MWN)

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