



STATE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN SOMALIA

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



About this report

Since its inception in 2019, the SJS State of Press Freedom in Somalia is published in January every year and is intended as an advocacy document. The annual press freedom report is compiled through the documentation by SJS press freedom monitors across Somalia including Somaliland, as well as interviews with journalists, editors, media directors, government officials, security officials and lawyers working with the journalists.

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About SJS

Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) is an independent journalists' trade union that speaks for the human rights of the working journalists. ' human rights. SJS was established in May 2019 to defend the rights of the working journalists and promote press freedom. SJS defends press freedom, advocates for journalists' safety and provides legal aid to journalists whose journalism work results in court cases and in need of legal defense through professional lawyers.

SJS monitors and documents violations against the media and the journalists across Somalia including Somaliland. SJS provides accurate, prompt and impartial information concerning attacks on journalists such as killings, arrests, torture, death threats and harassments, as well as acts of aggression against media organizations by releasing press statements, alerts and reports containing a constant stream of information to the local media, foreign press, local authorities, members of international community, inter-governmental organizations and the United Nations, urging them to take action to defend the press freedom and the human

rights of the working journalist.

Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) lobbies at various levels, targeting local media, local authorities, government and the international community, calling for them to respect, protect and promote media freedom, journalists' rights and to improve unfair policies and practices. It's a champion of media freedom, human rights and the rights of working journalists.

Our goal is to create a platform for the journalists to interact and communicate and build professional needs by means of networking and provide daily updates and address the growing needs of the media professionals by building their capacity through trainings, seminars or workshops, with the aim to strengthen the skills and the capacity of the journalists to produce a quality journalism.

SJS is a member of the global Alliance of Civil Society organisations (CIVICUS) and the [Global civil society coalition](#) to promote the implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

Acknowledgement

SJS is grateful to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the U.S Embassy in Somalia, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the Canadian Embassy, the British Embassy Mogadishu in Somalia, Free Press Unlimited, International Media Support (IMS), Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, International Press Institute (IPI), Article19, Pen International, Medico International, the International Press Association of East Africa and Human Rights Watch for their generous support to SJS. We also appreciate the solidarity and partnership of our friends and colleagues including the international human rights barrister Michael Polak and the Justice Abroad in the United Kingdom and the Somali Media Association.



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Summary

Somalia is regarded as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, as they face threats from both government and militant groups like Al-Shabab and a few clan militias. The country has topped the list of the Committee to Protect Journalists' Global Impunity Index for the eighth consecutive year making it the most dangerous country for journalists in Africa.

Much worse than the previous years, judicial harassment on journalists and union leaders, threats through orders and directives that curtail press freedom and impose the journalists and the media houses to remain under self-censorship fearing government reprisals has become the norm in 2022 and in this way, many stories with public interest went unreported.

The new directive imposed on the media on October 8, 2022 by the Somali ministry of information contains a blanket restriction on media freedom and journalists' right to access information. Journalists and media houses are concerned that the vague wording in the law would limit their ability to report freely on ongoing operations against any armed groups and restrict their media freedoms.

The raid on SJS office on October 10, the detention of SJS secretary-general Abdalle Ahmed Mumin on October 11 and the persecution against him are yet another chilling message to all the media fraternity in the country. The raid on SJS office was carried by masked men armed with AK47 rifles led by the commander of the Somali Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA)'s Howlwadag district Mr. Shakib shortly after SJS among four press freedom organization held a joint press conference raising concerns on the ministry of information's restrictive directive.

Following the October 8 directive, Jubbaland intelligence officers arbitrarily detained Horn Cable TV journalist and SJS press freedom coordinator, Abdullahi Hussein Kilas, in the port city of Kismayo on October 23, after covering an attack on a hotel in the centre of Kismayo that day. Kilas was freed later in the day after authorities forced Horn Cable TV to remove the his news report¹. Consequently, authorities in Hirshabelle raided Hiiraanweyn radio in Beledweyne and detained four reporters on December 22, for reporting the withdrawal of Ma'awisley² militia from villages in Hiiraan region over lack of payment. Galmudug police in Adado also detained two local journalists after interviewing clan elders who allegedly met with al-Shabaab members on December 25. Local journalists were also informed to refrain from reporting security related incidents including al-Shabaab attacks.

According to SJS documentation, arbitrary detention, use of threats, restrictions and blocking access to information has reached to another worrisome level throughout 2022 and on the other hand federal and local authorities have doubled their attacks on journalists covering the government-declared war between government forces and al-Shabaab in certain regions of the country. Subsequently, two prominent journalists were killed while ten others were injured in 2022, 84 journalists were arrested, seven media stations/offices were raided and shuttered due to their critical reporting.

SJS has documented a sharp rise of the number of journalists leaving the country as a result of threats related to their reporting. Over 10 journalists (three of them female reporters) have fled the country to different countries including Turkey and Kenya. These journalists said they decided to flee into exile as the pressure and threats from the authorities grew and crackdown on the free press has made the situation untenable.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/27/attacks-against-journalists-climb-as-somali-authorities-declare-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/30/local-journalists-detained-in-mogadishu-and-galmudug-amid-ongoing-crackdown-of-free-press-in-somalia/>



Restrictions on access to information entrenched self-censorship among the media. Journalists in Mogadishu, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, South West and Jubbaland told SJS that they were blocked from major events and to the scenes of incidents, including sites of Al-Shabaab attacks and denied access to information on public interests. Journalists have particularly narrated acts of censorship and intimidation aimed at stopping them from uncovering serious human rights violations.

Police commanders, judges, government officials, clan leaders and members of al-Shabaab were described as the key perpetrators of these violations. Journalists in Puntland told SJS that they were denied access to cover news reports revealing police wrongdoings and sexual violence against women and girls. Authorities in Somaliland have used severe restrictions on access to information including internet outage, detention of journalists, suspension of media houses as well as threats intended to silence critical coverage by the local journalists.

Journalists, particularly those covering human rights, have described about economic hardships as a direct consequence of their work to document and investigate human rights violations. The hostile attitude towards journalists covering human rights abuses and the lack of awareness for the general public also remain as part of the challenge.

Universal access to information means that everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information. The media plays a vital role, particularly when it aims to inform the public of critical information and monitors government actions. The right to universal access to information is also bound up with the right to freedom of the press. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Somalia and its member states are yet to introduce the Access to Information Bill which is a constitutional requirement under Article 32 of the Provisional Federal Constitution.

The growing pressure against Somali journalists and lack of access to information call for concern. When journalists are blocked, threatened and their access to information denied, it will entrench a culture of impunity. Providing and presenting information to the general public, particularly on human rights violations promotes redress for the victims or to seek justice regarding perpetrators through legal action.

We are alarmed by the rise of the attacks against the journalists who are solely targeted for their reporting on the pretext of the Somali government's military offensive against al-Shabaab. Sadly, these attacks on free press were motivated by the 8 October directive by the ministry of information restricting media coverage on the ongoing security operations.

While we condemn all kinds of attacks on the journalists in the strongest terms possible, we also reiterate our call for both the federal government and the federal member states to stop attacks against journalists and allow the independent media and their journalists to carry out their duties without threats and detention.

In addition, the Somali media law (amendment 2020) also includes provisions that threaten human rights, including freedom of expression, media freedom and could criminalize reporting and give the government overly broad powers and oversight over media organizations.

The provisions on criminal penalties are vaguely worded and could give law enforcement authorities wide scope for misinterpretation and abuse. These include the provision prohibiting reporting on issues conflicting with "national interest", "false information", "incitement to violence and clannism" and "dissemination of propaganda".

Furthermore, the law imposes unspecified fines on journalists who contravene its provisions, and journalists could face prosecution for failure to pay the fines. It also includes a provision which risks undermining journalists' rights to confidential sources and also contains administrative restrictions that give the Ministry of Information a broad mandate to regulate the media and media practitioners.

It's unfortunate that journalists are now fearful in their country and are resorting to either self-censor or leave the country. We urge for the local and federal authorities to end the restriction to access to information by state and non-state actors in Somalia.

The federal government and the federal member states should create a safe environment where journalists can exercise their profession without fear or reprisals and allow review for the media law with the consultation of the media stakeholders, media associations and journalists groups.

The federal government and the regional states – including Somaliland – should stop using the penal code for journalists and promptly finalize a comprehensive review of this outdated code and all other laws that impede the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, in addition to other rights, and bring them in line with Somalia's constitution and international human rights law and standards.



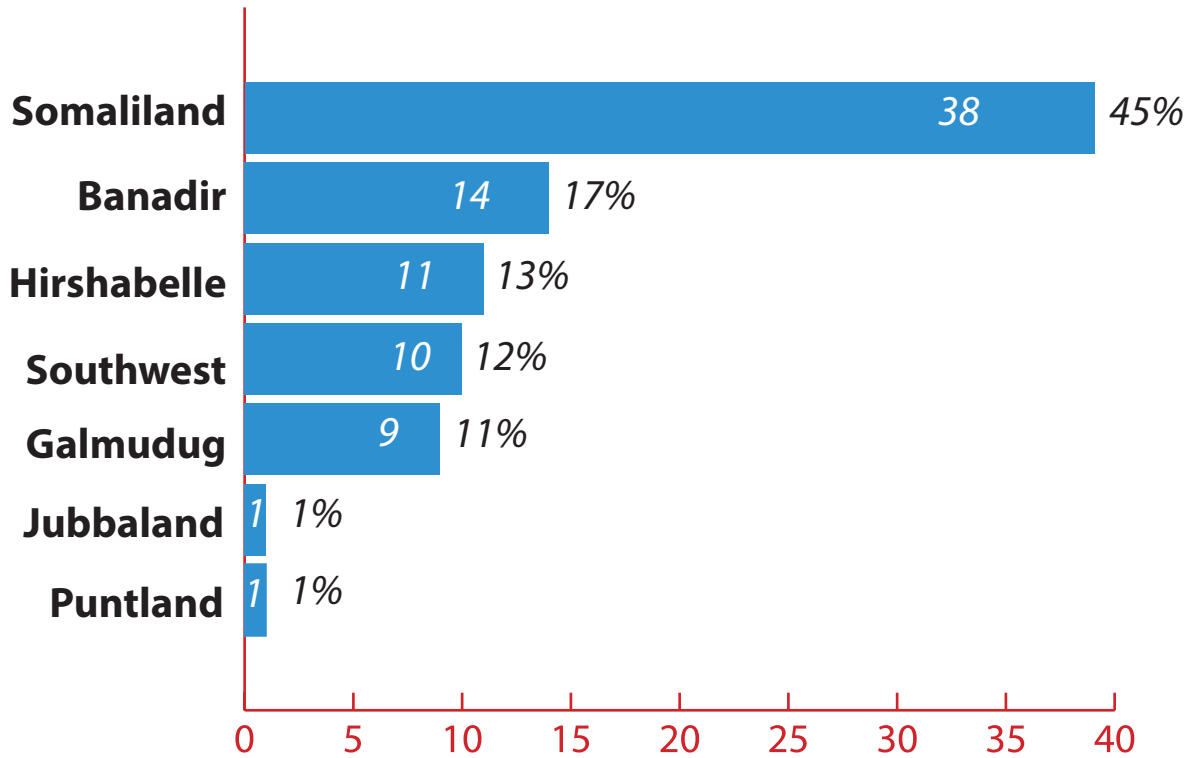
Mohamed Ibrahim Isak

President, Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS)

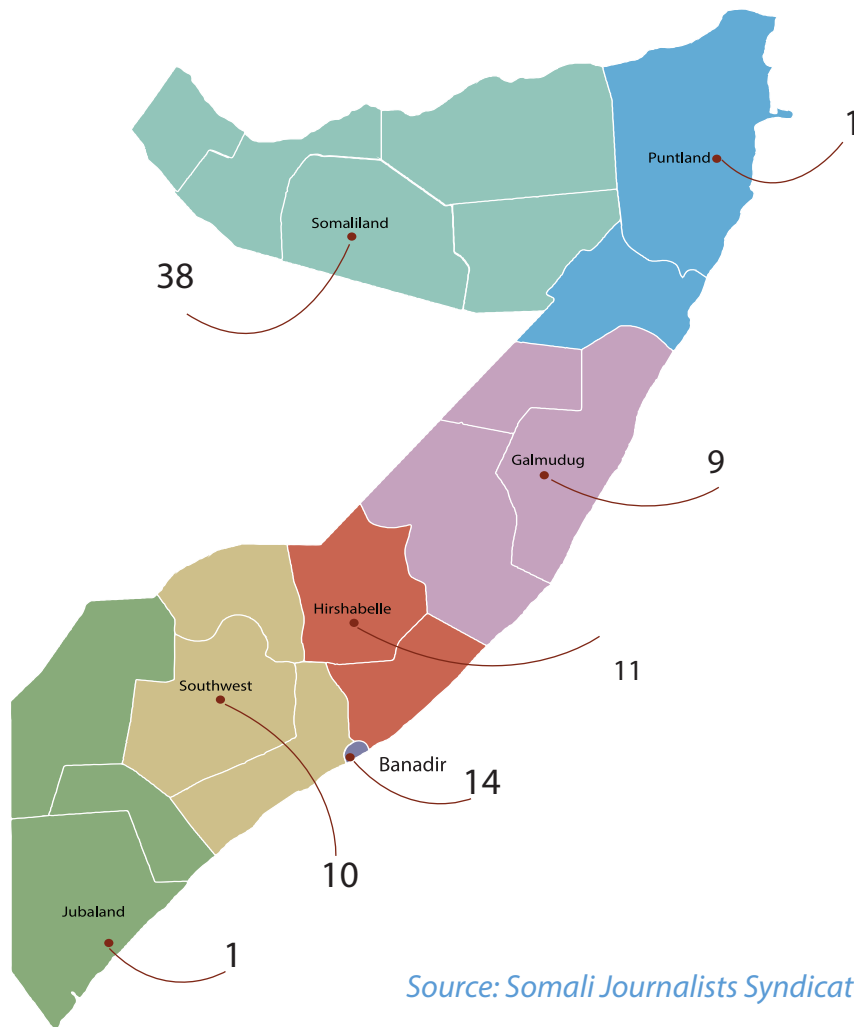
January 31, 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'M' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

Media Violations by state in 2022



Source: Somali Journalists Syndicate

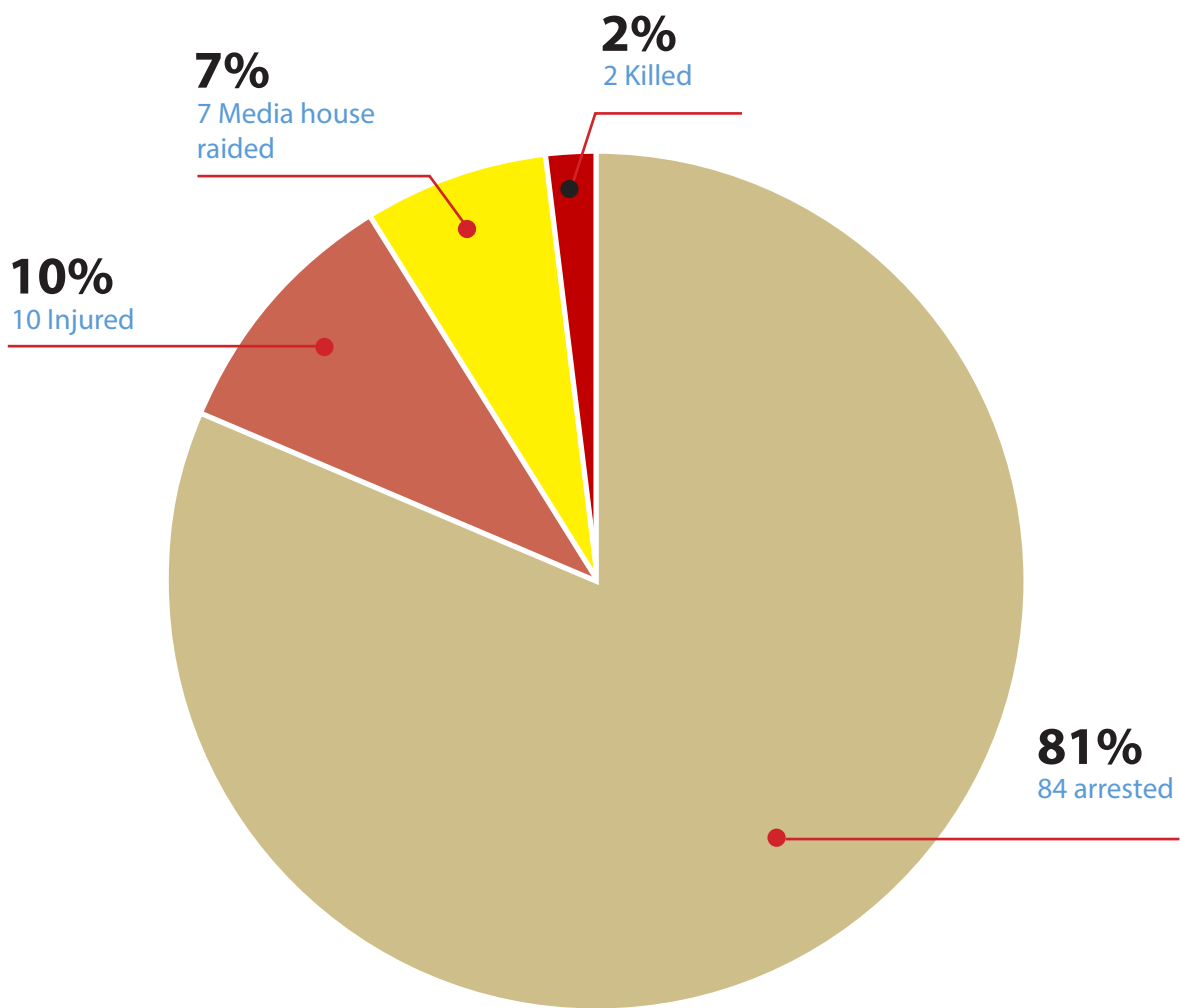


Source: Somali Journalists Syndicate



Media violations by type in 2022

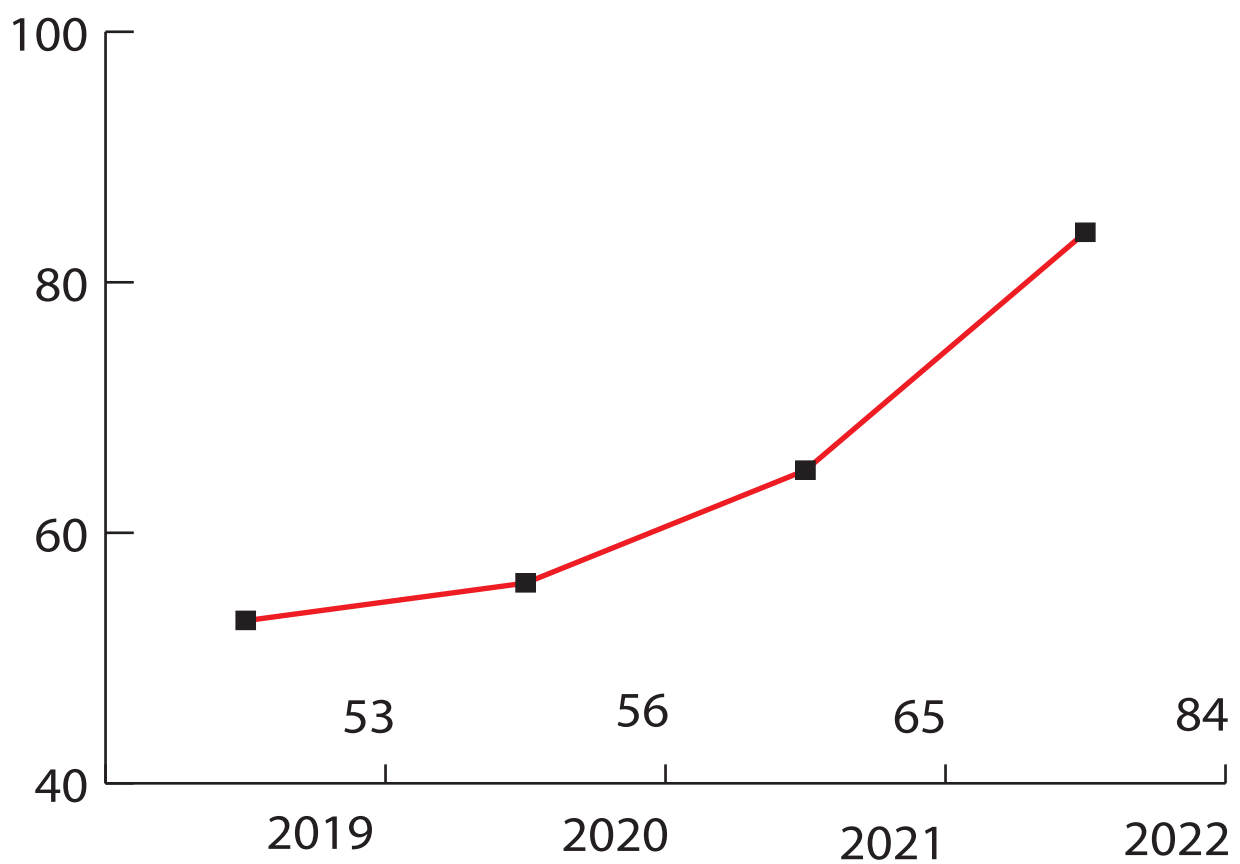
2 journalists were killed while 10 others were injured in 2022, 84 journalists were arrested, 7 media stations were raided and briefly shutdown.



Source: Somali Journalists Syndicate



Trend of journalists' detention in Somalia over the past four years



Source: Somali Journalists Syndicate

Killed journalists



SNTV journalist and cameraman, Ahmed Mohamed Shakur killed in a bomb explosion attack that took place in Basra town, about 30km north of Mogadishu on Friday 30 September, 2022. | PHOTO/ Courtesy/SJS.

On September 30, 2022: Somali National Television (SNTV) journalist, Ahmed Mohamed Shakur, 26, was killed¹ alongside security officials after an improvised explosive device hit him while walking alongside security officials. The chief-editor of SNTV, Abdullahi Qorshe, told SJS that Ahmed, who was based in Balcad town and embedded with the security forces to cover the ongoing military offensive by the Somali National Army for the state media. Ahmed Mohamed Shakur was a young and professional camera-journalist who despite the risks decided to keep the public informed about the Somali army offensive. He becomes the first journalist killed in Somalia this year and brings the total number of [journalists killed in the past five years](#) up-to 14.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/09/30/state-tv-journalist-killed-while-covering-security-operation-on-the-outskirts-of-mogadishu/>



Universal TV journalist, Mohamed Isse Koonaa killed in a suicide car bombing in Somali capital, Mogadishu on Saturday 29 October, 2022. | PHOTO/ Courtesy/SJS.

On October 29, 2022: Prominent TV journalist Mohamed Isse Koonaa was among killed and Reuters photojournalist, Feisal Omar and [M24 TV](#) journalist and Voice of America freelancer, Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulle were wounded in a terrorist attack¹ in Mogadishu. The three journalists are among confirmed casualties of [double suicide car bombings](#) that targeted a government building housing ministry of higher education and other offices located at Mogadishu's KM5 junction on Saturday. According to colleagues and police, the three journalists were rushing to cover the scene of the first bombing when they were caught by a second suicide bombing.

¹ *Journalist Murdered and two other wounded* <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/29/prominent-tv-journalist-killed-two-others-injured-in-mogadishu-bombings/>



Injured journalists



Somali Cable TV, Mohamed Hassan Yusuf shows injuries on his left hand after he and three other journalists were attacked by the Haramcad police in Mogadishu on Wednesday. | PHOTO/SJS.

On February 17, 2022: Two journalists working for Somali Cable TV, Ismail Mohamed Muse and Mohamed Hassan sustained injuries³ after they were brutally attacked and beaten by Haramcad police while they were on assignment to cover car bombing and gunfight attack in the Kahda district,



Mogadishu. According to the journalists and photos from the scene, the Haramcad police unit under their commander, Abdihamid Abdullahi Fanah, attacked the journalists before detaining them for several hours under open sun.



Abdikarin Mohamed Siyad (right) and Khalid Mohamud Osman (left) who work for Hirshabelle State-owned television were injured after their vehicle hit a landmine in central Somalia region of Hiiraan. | PHOTO/SJS/Courtesy.

On June 27, 2022: Journalists from Hirshabelle State-owned television; Abdikarin Mohamed Siyad and Khalid Mohamud Osman were wounded¹ after a [vehicle was hit with a landmine](#) at Qabno locality in Hiiraan region. The two journalists were injured with one of them remaining in critical condition. State media [reported](#) that at least three people were killed in the attack including Abdirahman Adow, the driver of the journalists' vehicle.

On July 18, 2022: Police and military officers in Mogadishu's Wadajir district attacked and injured two Arlaadi Media Network (AMN) journalists Mohamed Nur Mohamed and cameraman Munasar Abdirahman during their coverage the impact of roads blocked by the ongoing rains due to lack of maintenance in Wadajir neighbourhood.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/06/27/two-tv-journalists-injured-in-a-bomb-explosion-in-central-somalia/>

On August 21, 2022: Somali Police officer from Haramacad unit shot and wounded² M24 TV camera-journalist, Ahmed Omar Nur. The camera-journalist was among a group of local journalists [covering](#) the [Hayat hotel attack](#) from KM4 junction. Colleagues who witnessed the shooting said a group of the Turkish-trained Haramcad police officers were standing nearby when one of them [shot at the journalist](#). No explanation was provided on the circumstance of the shooting. He was rushed to the hospital where doctors conducted an emergency surgery on his cheek.

<https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/19/mogadishu-police-shoot-beat-and-detain-2-reporters-sws-holds-journalist-in-communicado-somaliland-bans-bbc/>

³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/02/17/haramcad-police-brutally-attack-journalists-covering-al-shabaab-attack-in-mogadishu/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/08/21/local-tv-camera-journalist-shot-and-injured-by-haramcad-police-while-covering-mogadishu-hotel-attack/>

On October 4, 2022: NISA officers in Bakaro market, Mogadishu attacked two Goobjoog journalists injuring one of them. Television reporter Liban Abdi Warsame and cameraman Najib Farah Mohamed were attacked while conducting interviews in Bakaro market when the armed NISA officers led by their commader Shakib attacked them and beat injuring Liban Abdi Warsame on the mouth and lips. The journalist later visited the hospital where he was treated.



Caption: Television reporter Liban Abdi Warsame and cameraman Najib Farah Mohamed were attacked and injured by NISA officers at Bakaro market. Photo: SJS



M24 TV/VOA Somali journalist, Abdukadir Mohamed Abdulle who was injured in Mogadishu bombing on 29 October 2022. | PHOTO/Courtesy



Reuters photojournalist Feisal Omar was injured in the Mogadishu bombing on 29 October 2022. | PHOTO/Courtesy.

On October 29, 2022: Reuters photojournalist1, Feisal Omar and M24 TV journalist and Voice of America freelancer, Abdukadir Mohamed Abdulle were injured in a terrorist attack in Mogadishu. The two journalists are among confirmed casualties of double suicide car bombings that targeted a government building housing ministry of higher education and other offices located at Mogadishu's KM5 junction on Saturday. According to colleagues and police, the two journalists were rushing to cover the scene of the first bombing when they were caught by a second suicide bombing.



Arbitrary detentions and arrests



Somaliland police in Hargeisa detained 15 journalists on April 13, 2022 as they were covering a shooting incident at the Hargeisa central prison. | PHOTO/Combined.

and held at the police station until 15 January when, and without a lawyer, a local judge ordered his release since the police failed to provide adequate charges.

On January 20, 2022: Galmudug's Guriel police commissioner, Osman Ali Hudey [detained](#)³ two freelance reporters Abdulkadir Abdullahi Mohamed and Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow in Guriel town after they have covered news stories about [the recent operations](#) conducted by Somali 'Gorgor' commandos deployed into the region by the Federal Government of Somalia. According to the journalists, they were held at the Guriel police station until Saturday night 22 January when they were freed without charges.

On January 21, 2022: Heavily armed police officers led by Beledweyne police commissioner Mohamed Hussein Mohamud (Duur dage) attacked and took over Radio Hiiraan Weyn and put the radio off-air before detaining seven journalists on duty. The seven journalists – Yasin Ali Ahmed (Chief Editor), Abdullahi Ali Abukar, Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, Mohamed Osman Mohamud, Abdisamad Elmi Abdi, Abdimajid Dahir and Mustaf Ali Addow – were transported on a police pick up truck and held at the Beledweyne police station without access to their families and lawyers. The journalists were freed after being in detention for 7 hours without charges and the radio station was allowed to resume operations the next day.

On February 2, 2022: Heavily armed Darwish Force raided the radio station, beat and detained the director of the radio Mahad Bashir Osman. Mahad and two other colleagues said that Officers first broke into the main gate of the premises before getting their way into the on-air studio and ordered suspension of the live programme. Mahad was taken to a bushy area on the outskirts of Abudwak town and was held for four hours under a tree which he saw when his eyes were uncovered.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/01/29/four-journalists-detained-in-galmudug-and-somaliland-while-hirshabelle-police-beat-and-threaten-radio-reporter/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/01/29/four-journalists-detained-in-galmudug-and-somaliland-while-hirshabelle-police-beat-and-threaten-radio-reporter/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/01/29/four-journalists-detained-in-galmudug-and-somaliland-while-hirshabelle-police-beat-and-threaten-radio-reporter/>

On January 4, 2022: Somaliland intelligence officers [detained](#)¹ freelance online journalist Abdisalan Ahmed Awad following a raid on his home in Hargeisa and was held in undisclosed location for five days. According to Abdisalan and colleagues, his arrest followed his [postings](#) on social media that criticised Somaliland authorities for jailing Abdimalim Muse Oldon, a local social activist currently detained in Somaliland. He was freed five days later and was not charged.

On January 12, 2022: Somaliland police in Aynaba [detained](#)² Horn Cable TV reporter, Ali Adan Dirir after a morning raid on his apartment in Aynaba town following a reporting assignment in which he covered the distribution of drinking water trucking [donated by a popular clan elder](#) for the rural families affected by the [desert locust and droughts](#).

The police officers also confiscated and damaged the journalist's camera and laptop. Dirir told SJS that he was interrogated

On February 17, 2022: Haramcad police detained four local journalists - Ismail Mohamed Muse and Mohamed Hassan Yusuf of Somali Cable TV and Aweys Mohamud Jila'ow and Mohamud Bari of Five Somali TV - who were on assignment to cover car bombing and gunfight attack on several police stations and security checkpoints in Kahda district, Mogadishu. According to the journalists and photos from the scene, the Haramcad police unit under their commander, Abdihamid Abdullahi Fanah, attacked the journalists before detaining them in the open sun. They were freed later in the day without charges.

On February 21, 2022: Somaliland police in Hargeisa arrested ¹Star TV journalist, Ahmed Jama Hersi following a Facebook post deemed critical to Somaliland president, Muse Bihi Abdi amid [his visit to the United States](#). He was held until 28 March, when the Marodi-Jeh Regional Court [sentenced](#) him to a year in jail and a fine of 1,000,000 Somaliland Shilling (USD 124). According to the court documents, he was alleged on "publishing false news". Colleagues said Hersi was freed a day after the sentence after he paid the fine and extra several hundred dollars in exchange for the year jail term.

On March 14, 2022: Somaliland police in Borame, Awdal region, [detained](#) ² Horn Cable TV reporter, Imran Hussein Adan, a day after he covered a vox-pop piece for Horn Cable TV seeking views of ordinary citizens on President [Muse Bihi Abdi's visit to the United States](#). The report which featured diverse views including [views that criticised](#) the composition of president Bihi's delegation as 'non-inclusive'. According to colleagues and family members, journalist Imran was taken to the Borame police station for interrogation where he is detained. He was freed days later without charges.

On April 3, 2022: officers from Somaliland intelligence service [detained](#) ³and [beat](#) Abdisalan Ahmed Awad from his home in Hargeisa after he raised complaints against the intelligence officers who [attacked and injured him](#) and another journalist on 18 March in Hargeisa. The journalist was released⁴ from incommunicado on April 20, 2022.

On April 14, 2022: Somaliland police and officers from the intelligence service⁵ [arrested](#) ten journalists: Mohamed Abdi Ilig (senior journalist and director of MM TV); Mohamed Jamal Jirde ([MMTV](#) cameraman); Hassan Galaydh (BBC Somali reporter); Sagal Mustafe Hassan (Voice of America reporter); Ahmed Nur Samrawi (Bulsho TV reporter); Ahmed Mohamud Yusuf (Saab TV reporter); Naima Abdi Ahmed (Caro Edeg Media reporter); Ahmed Said Hassan Shimali (Horn Cable TV reporter); Aidarus Mohamed (Goobjoog TV reporter) and Hamzew Abdi Hayd (CBA TV reporter) as they were [covering](#) the shooting incident at the Hargeisa central prison. Some of these journalists were [reporting](#) live from outside the prison facility. Police officers accompanied by intelligence unit officers later [raided](#) Horn Cable TV studio in the city centre of Hargeisa and detained six more journalists who were reporting about the prison gunfire: Abdijabar Mohamed Hussein (Horn Cable TV reporter); Mohamed Suldhan Ahmed (Horn Cable TV reporter); Khalid Mohamed Aleeli (Horn Cable TV reporter); Ayanle Abdi Buni (Horn Cable TV reporter); Mustafa Muhumed Abdi (Horn Cable TV cameraman) and Abdifatah Mohamud Ismail (Horn Cable TV cameraman). 12 Journalists were freed⁶ by Marodi Jeex regional court on April 19, 2022.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/04/09/somaliland-a-local-journalist-held-incommunicado-in-hargeisa-another-sentenced-to-a-year-in-jail/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/03/19/somaliland-two-journalists-survive-attack-in-hargeisa-tv-reporter-is-detained-in-borame/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/04/09/somaliland-a-local-journalist-held-incommunicado-in-hargeisa-another-sentenced-to-a-year-in-jail/>

4 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/04/20/somaliland-releases-journalist-from-incommunicado-detention-holds-three-others-in-jail/>

5 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/04/14/in-an-attempt-to-impede-independent-coverage-somaliland-jails-16-journalists-reporting-prison-shooting-in-hargeisa/>

6 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/04/19/alert-somaliland-court-frees-12-journalists-three-remain-detained-over-unspecified-reasons/>



On May 23, 2022: Somaliland's Marodi Jeh Regional Court¹ has [sentenced](#) MM Somali TV director, Mohamed Abdi Ilig and Horn Cable TV reporter, Abdijabar Mohamed Hussein with one year and four months in prison for what the judges described as "publication of false news". The journalist were held in detention in Hargeisa since 13 April [for covering the Hargeisa prison shooting](#) incident. The court acquitted journalist Abdirahman Ali Khalif of Gobonimo TV. According to the lawyers and journalists, the hearing took place in hastened proceedings without the knowledge of the defence lawyers and family members of the defendants. Lawyers said that the judges were not independent from police intervention and as a result the judges were not able to pressure evidences for the charges brought by the state prosecutor against the journalists. According to Ilig, they were freed after paying fines of \$10,000.

On June 1, 2022: Five Southwest armed police officers in the town of Barawe raided¹ Radio Barawe and violently detained journalist Osman Aweys Bahar, who also covers for Universal TV, and radio founder Fuad Shoble. Both were initially forced to walk to the beach on gun point, however, after resistance they were transferred to the police station where they were held. Uniformed officers were seen inside the radio premise with at least one officer pointing his gun at journalist Osman Bahar and threatening to shoot. The raid and the detention follows an order of arrest issued by Lower Shabelle court over journalist Bahar's coverage about the growing rift within Barawe district council and the district commissioner. Earlier, journalist Bahar said that the district commissioner, Liban Abukar Bafo and police commissioner, Abduqadir Adan Mohamed had threatened to detain him.

On July 4, 2022: Two journalists from Risaala Media Corporation, Kasim Ibrahim Adani and Abdukadir Hussein Anshur, were briefly detained² and threatened with shooting by Hawl-wadag police commissioner, Najib Abdi Abib and his armed officers in Hawl-wadag neighbourhood in Mogadishu. The journalists and their editor told SJS and SOMA that they were interviewing an armed [robbery attack](#) victim in the area when the police arrived and confiscated their equipment. They were held at an open place far from the police station at gunpoint as they were ordered to delete their footage. Later in the day the Hawl-wadag police commissioner, Najib Abdi Abib (popularly known as Najib Arab) raided the robbery attack victims' home and forced one of them to speak on the camera and retract his statement to the journalists. The terrorised male victim was videotaped as he retracted his complaint against the armed robbery attack that took place on Sunday night 3 July. The journalists were freed afterwards.

On July 9, 2022: Galmudug police armed police detained³ journalist Hashim Omar Hassan, who reports for Shabelle television and radio while covering the Eidul-Adha congregation in Adado town. The arrest of Hashim, who is also a member of SJS Human rights Network, follows after posting a [Facebook posts](#) deemed critical to Galmudug State president, Ahmed Abdi Karie (Qoorqoor). Hashim was freed four days later without charges after president Qoorqoor allowed his freedom.

On July 5, 2022: Baidoa police officers [detained](#)⁴ RTN television reporter, Mohamed Abdirahin Mohamed, who is a member of SJS human rights journalists network following following an interview with an opposition member of the South West State Assembly. The lawmaker, among six others, protested against [the revocation of their immunity and membership](#) in the state assembly. According to the journalist, armed police officers— acting on the orders of the Baidoa police commissioner, lieutenant colonel Mukhtar Mohamed Dugudow — were following him when he left the hotel and later detained him. The journalist was released without charges the following day.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/05/23/sjs-and-soma-strongly-condemn-travesty-trial-and-jail-sentence-on-journalists-in-somaliland/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/04/mogadishu-police-arbitrary-detain-and-threaten-journalists-covering-insecurity-in-the-capital/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/10/galmudug-police-detain-human-rights-journalist-over-a-facebook-post-deemed-critical-to-president-qoorqoor/>

4 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/06/tv-journalist-detained-in-baidoa-jubbaland-restricts-independent-media-covering-the-state-assembly/>

On July 15 2022: Journalist Hassan Ali Da'ud, who reports for Arlaadi Media Network (AMN) has disappeared from his home in Baidoa after he was detained and taken to unknown location by the intelligence officers. According to colleagues and family, his detention follows his coverage about a complaint made by members of South West State (SWS) opposition lawmakers who spoke about a physical attack by South West State president Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed (Laftagareen)'s security guards in Baidoa on 6 July. The report was broadcasted on AMN. He was held at the intelligence prison in Baidoa for 19 days when he was freed without charges.



Journalist Hassan Ali Da'ud who is held incommunicado detention in Baidoa since Friday, 15 July, 2022. PHOTO/SJS.

On August 4, 2022: Baidoa police summoned and then arbitrarily detained⁵ [Radio Warsan](#) reporter, Mohamed Abdirahman Abdulle known as Malele and producer Farah Hussein Haji known as Weerow. Police initially stated that they were investigating suspected scammers when they summoned the pair and held at the criminal investigation department without charges. The two journalists were freed a week later and were not charged.

On August 11, 2022: Police⁶ in Hargeisa [detained two Horyaal24 TV journalists](#), Abdinasir Abdi Haji Nur and Ahmed-Zaki Ibrahim Mohamud after covering [violent protests](#) over the postponed elections in Hargeisa and other towns that day. According to colleagues, police initially held them at the criminal investigation department before transferring them to the Mandhera prison on 15 August. The due were released by the Hargeisa court without charges.

On October 3, 2022: Arlaadi Media Network (AMN) journalist, Yusuf Mohamed Adam, was detained⁷ by the Ethiopian contingent under the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in Burhakaba town, Bay region and was at a military camp. According to the journalist and Arlaadi Media Network's director, Yusuf was detained by South West State security forces on Monday a day after [he wrote](#) on his Facebook page that the Ethiopian forces were occupying the only community-owned water well in Burhakaba while many of the locals were suffering due to lack of water as a result of the severe drought has affected people and animals in the region. Yusuf was detained near his home in Burhakaba and was held at a narrow tent with no ventilation at the ATMIS camp where he was blindfolded and handcuffed by the Ethiopian soldiers at the camp. While in the detention, the Ethiopian forces, through their translator, interrogated Yusuf's journalism work and his post on the ATMIS forces. The journalistsit was later released without charges.

5 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/08/08/south-west-state-police-should-free-two-radio-journalists-held-in-baidoa/>

6 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/08/18/somaliland-should-free-two-tv-journalists-detained-for-covering-protests-in-hargeisa/>

7 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/06/journalist-detained-at-atmis-camp-in-burhakaba-his-equipment-confiscated/>



On October 11, 2022 Somalia's intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) unlawfully and arbitrarily arrested Abdalle Ahmed Mumin at Aden Adde International airport in Mogadishu, while traveling to Nairobi. He was held against his will at the NISA detention, denying access to his lawyers and family members. On 13 October 2022, NISA transferred him to the CID, then the CID took him to court twice and accusing him of: Article 219 – Bringing the Nation or the State into contempt, Article 321- Instigation to disobey the laws and Article 505 – non-observance of orders of the authorities – of the Somali penal code. The court granted him bail on October 16, 2022 and said his case will be heard within 45 days. On 18 October, 2022, Abdalle was re-arrested by NISA and CID officers at the airport while traveling to Nairobi for medical reasons. He was taken and detained at the CID. The Benadir regional court revoked his bail on 19 October and ordered the CID to remand him.

On October 17, 2022: Somaliland police in Erigabo, Sanaag region, detained two local journalists. Horyaal24 TV reporter Abdirahman Mohamed Adani and SomNews TV reporter Jabir Said Duale were detained after they covered a story that exposed a Somaliland military officer who forcibly closed down the only available mother and child health centre in Fiqifuliye, a rural village in the southern Sanaag region which reportedly led to the death of a young expectant mother days earlier. They were freed on bail on the same day with their case pending at the Sanaag Regional Court.

On October 22, 2022: , Galmudug police in Southern Galkayo detained¹ journalist Sadaq Said Nur after reporting a news story about armed militia, who barricaded at the Qaboobe displaced camp, on the outskirts of Galkayo, ahead of the visit by UNHCR delegation at the camp. The story was published on [Mudug Journalist](#) Facebook page. However, according to Sadaq Said Nur, he was freed on the same day without charges but was forced to remove the story from the page.

On October 22, 2022: Somaliland police in Gabiley arbitrarily arrested² Horn Cable TV reporter [Farhan Abdi Isse](#) on the orders of Gabiley Mayor. The journalist's arrest follows after covering a news conference by Waddani opposition party members, who called for the Somaliland government to recognize Gabiley as a region instead of a town. According to local human rights activists, two opposition party members were also [detained](#) on 22 October. Local journalists said that journalist Farhan Abdi Isse and the two opposition party members were transferred to the Gabiley prison on 24 October after the court issued additional seven days of remand, giving the police the power to hold them in custody.

On October 23, 2022: Jubbaland intelligence officers arbitrarily detained³ Horn Cable TV journalist and SJS press freedom coordinator, Abdullahi Hussein Kilas, in the port city of Kismayo after covering an [attack on a hotel in the centre of Kismayo](#) city that day. Kilas was freed later in the day after authorities forced Horn Cable TV to remove the news report filed by Kilas. Local journalists were also informed to refrain from reporting security related incidents including al-Shabaab attacks.

On October 25, 2022: Galmudug's Dhusamareb police commissioner, Captain Nur Elmi Mohamed ordered the arrest⁴ of Dalsan TV journalist Mowlid Mo'alim Hassan in Dhusamareb town, following his coverage on a protest by a group of local women in Dhusamareb. He was held at Dhusamareb police station and was not yet charged. However, was freed after the intervention of clan elders in Dhusamareb.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/27/attacks-against-journalists-climb-as-somali-authorities-declare-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/27/attacks-against-journalists-climb-as-somali-authorities-declare-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/27/attacks-against-journalists-climb-as-somali-authorities-declare-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>

4 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/27/attacks-against-journalists-climb-as-somali-authorities-declare-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>



(From left to right) SJS officials Mohamed Bulbul, Hanad Ali Guled and lawyer Abdirahman Hassan Omar detained at Mogadishu airport while travelling to train journalists in Hiiraan on 24 December 2022. | PHOTO/SJS.

On November 30 2022: Southwest State intelligence¹ arbitrarily [detained](#) three SJS staff Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul (SJS Human Rights Secretary and SJS Executive committee member); Hanad Ali Guled (SJS Secretary of Trainings and SJS Executive Committee member) and Mohamed Bishar (Media Trainer) at Baidoa Airport as they were planning to travel back to Mogadishu, after completing training for local journalists. The three colleagues were [freed](#) on the same day only to be re-arrested on the next day on 1 December when they were stopped by Southwest intelligence officer named Ali Sharif at the Baidoa Airport. All were freed without charges.

On December 3, 2022: Galmudug police in Adado detained² Shabelle TV reporter, Hashim Omar Hassan after he [posted on his Facebook](#) page a news story about civilians abducted by al-Shabaab in central Somalia. According to Hashim and colleagues, he was [held at the Adado police station](#) under the orders of the regional president. He was freed late on Sunday night 4 December without charge.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/05/threats-arbitrary-detention-against-somali-journalists-on-the-rise-sjs-says/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/05/threats-arbitrary-detention-against-somali-journalists-on-the-rise-sjs-says/>

On December 12, 2022: Puntland authorities in Qardho detained journalist Mohamud Abdirisak who reports for Qardho Media, a Qardho-based online media after reporting a story allegedly describing Puntland president Said Abdullahi Deni's allegedly involvement in the Khat (Miraa) trade in Puntland. The journalist was freed few days later and was not charged.

On December 18, 2022:, Somali National Intelligence (NISA)³ agents [detained](#) the UK-based Channel4 News Africa correspondent, Jamal Muhumed Osman at the Mogadishu's Aden Adde Airport shortly after arriving at the airport from London. The multi-award winning journalist was held at an airport hotel overnight and his [movement restricted](#) until the next day when he was allowed to leave the country with the intervention of members of the parliament. Jamal later [wrote on his Facebook](#) that he was jetting back to London. Authorities said they deported the journalist back to London over unclear explanation. It was not yet clear why Jamal was detained. Earlier 2022, Jamal's reporting inside al-Shabaab won the [2022 Rory Peck Award](#) for Best News Feature in the United Kingdom.

³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/19/sjs-condemns-new-restrictions-censorship-orders-imposed-on-local-media-calls-up-on-somali-government-to-respect-press-freedom/>





Radio Hiiraanweyn journalists: (from left to right) Abdullahi Osman Idow, Mustaf Ali Adow, Abdirahman Moalim Muse, and Abdimajid Abdirahman Adan are detained in Beledweyne on Thursday, 22 December, 2022. | PHOTO/SJS/ Courtesy.

On December 22, 2022: Beledweyne police commissioner Bishar Hussein Jimale briefly arrested¹ four journalists from Hiiraanweyn radio; Abdullahi Osman Idow- radio technician, Mustaf Ali Adow (the radio's chief editor), Abdirahman Moalim Muse (news reporter) and Abdimajid Abdirahman Adan (news reporter) and forced the radio station off-air after the radio reported an al-Shabaab attack on the rural villages on the south of Beledweyne [following withdrawal of the Ma'awisley forces](#) who complained about lack of salaries. The four journalists were later released without charges and the radio resumed operation the next morning.

On December 24, 2022: NISA agents led by Mahad Carab Dhiblawe stopped and later detained² SJS human rights and information secretary, Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul, SJS training secretary Hanad Ali

Guled and SJS lawyer Abdirahman Hassan Omar while they were preparing to board a flight early morning to attend journalists training in Hiiraan region. They were held and interrogated at NISA office within the airport for two hours when they were all released but have missed their flight.

On December 25, 2022: Galmudug police detained two local reporters Sadaq Abdi Shidane and Mubarak Mohamud Adan in Adado district after they interviewed clan elders who allegedly said they met with al-Shabaab members in central Somalia. The two journalists were freed on the same day without charges.

On December 28, 2022: Somali police in Mogadishu's Hamarweyne district arbitrarily detained³ three Risaala Media Corporation journalists– news reporter Ilyas Daud Hassan, reporter Sayid Ahmed Abdullahi and their cameraman Ali Hassan Gure – who were covering Hamarweyne community members who were complaining about the closure of city roads on Wednesday following the visit of Djiboutian president Ismail Omar Guelleh in Mogadishu. According to Radio Risaala, the journalists were intercepted⁴ as they were preparing to record interviews with the members of the public and their equipment confiscated by the Hamarweyne police commissioner, Najib Arab. One of the journalists said they were held at the police station for two hours before they were freed without charges but were told not to interview the people complaining.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/22/radio-hiiraanweyn-shut-down-four-journalists-detained-in-beledweyne-after-covering-al-shabaab-attack/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/24/nisa-briefly-detains-three-sjs-officials-at-aden-adde-airport-gunmen-attack-local-media-editor-in-mogadishu/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/30/local-journalists-detained-in-mogadishu-and-galmudug-amid-ongoing-crack-down-of-free-press-in-somalia/>

4 <https://www.facebook.com/risaalatelevision/videos/1812652289121209/>

Assaults, beatings and harassment against media professionals

On December 19 2022: NISA agents¹ at the federal parliament's Lower House building in Mogadishu assaulted Arlaadi Media Network reporter, Mohamed Nur Mohamed who was at the parliament to cover the parliament sitting on Monday. The journalist, who was accredited to cover the parliament was also removed from the venue by NISA agents.

On February 17, 2022: A group of local journalists went to report car bombing and gunfight attack [on several police stations](#) and security checkpoints in Somalia's capital Mogadishu the night before. According to the journalists and [photos](#) from the scene, the Haramcad police unit under their commander, Abdihamid Abdullahi Fanah, attacked ²the journalists. Journalists said that they had managed to escape on foot, however four TV journalists: Ismail Mohamed Muse and Mohamed Hassan Yusuf of [Somali Cable TV](#) and Aweys Mohamud Jila'ow and Mohamud Bari of [Five Somali TV](#) were captured by the Haramcad officers and beaten with the barrel of the gun and wooden sticks that contain nails. Two of them Ismail Mohamed Muse and Mohamed Hassan sustained injuries. The four journalists said that they were detained, their phones and camera equipment confiscated as they were [escorted](#) to a police vehicle while blindfolded. After a short drive, they were brought to another location, ordered to lie on the ground under the open sun with their hands and legs tied. They were held for several hours and later released.

On March 18, 2022: Armed plain-clothed officers attached to Somaliland's intelligence unit physically³ [attacked](#) two journalists: Abdisalan Ahmed Awad and Ali Mahdi Jibril as [they drove from a hotel](#) in the city centre of the capital, Hargeisa. The officers who were armed with pistols blocked the journalists' vehicle midway and fired three bullets before physically beating both journalists. Both Jibril and Awad said they were dragged out of the vehicle as the officers shouted "*our mission is not to kill*". Both were beaten with handgun and stones. The journalists said, their attackers were loudly telling them to "*stop their critical coverage*" on president Muse Bihi Abdi.

On December 24, 2022: Arlaadi Media Network's news editor, Aweys Bashir Abdirahman was attacked ⁴and beaten by three men at around KM4 area in Mogadishu while walking to his media station. The attackers were plain-clothed and one of them was armed with and according to Aweys he was singled out and dragged to the street corner, beat him with the barrel of the gun. The journalist was threatened to be killed should he continue his reporting on Southwest state of Somalia.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/19/sjs-condemns-new-restrictions-censorship-orders-imposed-on-local-media-calls-upon-somali-government-to-respect-press-freedom/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/02/17/haramcad-police-brutally-attack-journalists-covering-al-shabaab-attack-in-mogadishu/>

³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/03/19/somaliland-two-journalists-survive-attack-in-hargeisa-tv-reporter-is-detained-in-borame/>

⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/12/24/nisa-briefly-detains-three-sjs-officials-at-aden-adde-airport-gunmen-attack-local-media-editor-in-mogadishu/>

UN declares the detention of journalist Kilwe Adan Farah a human rights violation

On May 31, 2022: Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) and human rights lawyer, Michael Polak of Justice Abroad jointly welcomed the opinion of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) declaring the arrest and detention of journalist Kilwe Adan Farah, in Somalia's Puntland State as an arbitrary detention and was in contrary to his right to freedom of movement under article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 12 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

After covering street protests in Garowe, the capital of Puntland State, Mr. Kilwe was detained by Puntland police officers at gunpoint on 27 December 2020. He was held incommunicado for 16 days before he was arraigned in a military court on 3 March 2021. He was first charged with murder despite the fact that the authorities were unable to point to any victim and then following this, inside a small room at the Garowe central prison, on 17 March 2021, Puntland military court judges sentenced him to three years in prison for "media related offences". Neither Mr. Farah's lawyer nor his family were allowed to attend the hearing of this sham trial conducted by this kangaroo court. As a civilian there was not way that Mr Kilwe should have been tried by a military court.

Journalist Kilwe, who comes from the marginalized Sanaag region, was released after 84 days in prison, on 22 March 2021, following a special pardon decree by the President of Puntland, Said Abdullahi Deni and after submissions had been made to the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention by Mr Polak on behalf of the SJS.

SJS and the human rights barrister, Michael Polak welcome this historic decision by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention regarding the human rights violations committed by Puntland State authorities perpetrated against journalist Kilwe Adan Farah.



Freelance journalist, Kilwe Adan Farah detained on 27 December, 2020 is charged with 'attempted murder' by Puntland's military court on 11 January, 2021. | PHOTO / SJS/Courtesy.

<https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/08/15/un-declares-the-arrest-and-detention-of-journalist-kilwe-adan-farah-in-somalias-puntland-a-human-rights-violation/>

Obstruction, restrictions and blockage of access to information

On February 14, 2022: In Galmudug, NISA officers blocked¹ independent journalists from covering the voting process in Dhusamareb. Journalists' access was blocked in particularly on 14 February during the election of [Abdullahi Kulane](#), an ex-NISA officer, and on 25 November during the election of the current acting NISA commander, [Yasin Farey](#). Journalists in Dhusamareb had been instructed not to interview candidates complaining against the anomalies of the process. Journalists said NISA officers loyal to Abdullahi Kulane and Yasin Farey approached reporters and ordered them to leave as they interviewed female candidates who protested against the malpractice that took place in Dhusamareb.

On June 13, 2022: Journalists covering [the visit of U.S Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland](#) in Mogadishu, were blocked² 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.

On June 15, 2022: Security guards at Villa Somalia [barred](#)³ [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.

On July 4, 2022: Military officers attached to Somali navy stopped⁴ Risaala radio journalist Abduqadir Osman Indhoy and his cameraman Mohamed Said Nur while they were conducting interviews with Mogadishu fishermen at the Liido beach. The journalists were investigating the effects of the summer monsoons on the fishing sector which also affects food security. According to the journalists, they were stopped at gunpoint, their equipment confiscated by a navy officer stationed at the beach who threatened to shoot them. Later police officers from Hamarweyne police station arrived and took the pair to a different location and held them for more than an hour at an open space before demanding \$30 payment of "fine" from each of them in return for their release which the journalists declined. After contacting SJS and their editor, the journalists were freed and their equipment returned back.

On July 6, 2022: Jubbaland president's office banned⁵ independent media from covering the opening session of the fourth sitting of the Jubbaland Assembly in Kismayo where president [Ahmed Mohamed Islam \(Madobe\) was addressing](#) the regional lawmakers. Journalists told SJS and SOMA that the orders to ban the media was given by the president's communications director.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/03/10/repressed-and-threatened-journalists-blocked-from-observing-and-reporting-elections-across-somalia/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/06/16/journalists-unions-media-organisations-condemn-latest-violations-against-media-freedom-and-journalists-in-somalia-including-the-restrictions-threats-and-censorship/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/06/16/journalists-unions-media-organisations-condemn-latest-violations-against-media-freedom-and-journalists-in-somalia-including-the-restrictions-threats-and-censorship/>

4 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/04/mogadishu-police-arbitrary-detain-and-threaten-journalists-covering-insecurity-in-the-capital/>

5 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/06/tv-journalist-detained-in-baidoa-jubbaland-restricts-independent-media-covering-the-state-assembly/>



Raid, suspension and closure of media houses

On January 21, 2022: Heavily armed police officers led by Beledweyne police commissioner Mohamed Hussein Mohamud (Duur dage) [attacked](#)¹ and took over Radio Hiiraan Weyn and put the radio off-air before detaining seven journalists on duty. The seven journalists – Yasin Ali Ahmed (Chief Editor), Abdullahi Ali Abukar, Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, Mohamed Osman Mohamud, Abdisamad Elmi Abdi, Abdimajid Dahir and Mustaf Ali Addow – were transported on a police pick up truck and held at the Beledweyne police station without access to their families and lawyers. The journalists were freed after being in detention for 7 hours without charges and the radio station was allowed to resume operations the next day.

On January 24, 2022: , Hirshabelle police officers in Beledweyne led by Beledweyne police commissioner, Mohamed Hussein Mohamud (Duur-dage), [stopped](#)² Radio Hiiraan Weyn journalist, Abdullahi Ali Abukar, while on his way to home from work after covering [violent protest](#) in the city which was sparked by the deployment of new federal forces from Mogadishu into Beledweyne. After stopping the journalist, the officers harassed and [beat him with their guns](#) before ordering him to clear heavy stones left on the middle of the road by the demonstrators that day. Abdullahi was let go after nearly an hour as officers threatened with shooting if he looks back to the officers.

On February 2, 2022: Heavily armed Darwish Force raided the radio station, beat³ and [detained](#) the director of the radio Mahad Bashir Osman. Mahad and two other colleagues said that Officers [first broke](#) into the main gate of the premises before getting their way into the on-air studio and ordered suspension of the live programme. Mahad was taken to a bushy area on the outskirts of Abudwak town and was held for four hours under a tree which he saw when his eyes were uncovered.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/01/22/hirshabelle-police-attack-and-close-independent-radio-station-detain-seven-journalists-in-beledweyne-over-critical-interviews/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/01/29/four-journalists-detained-in-galmudug-and-somaliland-while-hirshabelle-police-beat-and-threaten-radio-reporter/>

³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/02/02/galmudugs-darwish-forces-raid-independent-local-media-station-beat-and-detain-journalist-in-abudwak/>



On June 1, 2022: Five Southwest armed police officers in the town of Barawe raided¹ Radio Barawe and violently detained journalist Osman Aweys Bahar, who also covers for Universal TV, and radio founder Fuad Shoble. Both were initially forced to walk to the beach on gun point, however, after resistance they were transferred to the police station where they were held. Uniformed officers [were seen inside the radio premise](#) with at least one officer pointing his gun at journalist Osman Bahar and threatening to shoot. The raid and the detention follows an order of arrest issued by Lower Shabelle court over journalist Bahar's [coverage about the growing rift](#) within Barawe district council and the district commissioner. Earlier, journalist Bahar said that the district commissioner, Liban Abukar Bafo and police commissioner, Abduqadir Adan Mohamed had threatened to detain him.

On July 23, 2022: Somaliland police in Hargeisa [raided](#)² the office of BBC Media Action, the BBC's international charity, in Hargeisa and detained five staff members: the head of the BBC Media Action in Hargeisa, Mohamed Gaas, journalist Abdullahi Jama, Samatar Gahnuug, film editor Ahmed Fa'iz and their transport manager Yahye Ali before closing down the office. There were no immediate explanations from Somaliland authorities regarding the raid of the BBC Media Action office and the detention of its staff. However, Somaliland minister of information, Suleyman Yusuf Ali (Koore) issued [a two-page letter](#) addressed to the minister of foreign affairs [accusing](#) "the BBC of losing its neutrality in its news and programs on political issues". The move follows an unlawful decision on Tuesday [banning](#) BBC Somali Service from operating in Somaliland.

On September 7, 2022: Somaliland Ministry of information suspended³ privately-owned independent [CBA television](#) in Hargeisa. Somaliland Minister of Information, Suleyman Yusuf Ali Koore issued a letter in which he [suspended](#) CBA TV headquarters in Hargeisa. Citing the region's media law, the minister alleged the station on "spreading news and programs against the peace and the unity of the people of Somaliland and that the expiration of the station's license". In a statement, CBA TV management [refuted](#) both allegations. The Minister surprisingly brought up and referenced an article that does not include in the Somaliland Media Law.

On October 10, 2022: Armed officers from the Somali national intelligence agency (NISA) agents raided⁴ SJS office in Mogadishu on the afternoon of October 10 after SJS and four other media associations issued a joint press statement expressing concern on a new directive by the ministry of information. The officers, some of them masked, attempted to force open the office which was closed at 6:29 pm local time as they harassed a neighbor before leaving the scene immediately.

1 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/06/01/as-somalias-new-president-tours-southwest-state-its-police-attack-local-radio-beat-and-detain-journalists/>

2 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/07/25/somaliland-detains-bbc-media-action-staff-while-somali-police-spokesman-threatens-reporters-covering-police-operations-in-mogadishu/>

3 <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/09/09/sjs-and-soma-condemn-somalilands-suspension-on-independent-tv/>

4 <https://www.voanews.com/a/raid-on-somali-journalists-syndicate-seen-as-attack-on-media/6787775.html>



Spotlight: the arbitrary detention and persecution of SJS secretary-general



SJS Secretary-General, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. | PHOTO/ SJS File.

On the afternoon of October 11, 2022, armed officers of the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) [detained](#) SJS secretary general, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin at Aden Adde Airport, Mogadishu, while preparing to board a flight to Nairobi, Kenya. It was the day after masked NISA agents raided the SJS office in Mogadishu and another raid on Abdalle's residence.

The raid and detention come after SJS and four other media organizations released [a statement](#) on October 10, raising concerns that the new order issued by the Ministry of Information could restrict legitimate speech and media freedoms.

Shortly after this statement, Deputy Information Minister Abdirahman Yusuf Adaala phoned SJS president Mohamed Ibrahim and threatened that he would 'target Abdalle and SJS like al-Shabaab'.

Hours before his arrest, Abdalle received separate phone calls from Abshir Ahmed, the president's minister of state, and Abdukadir Mohamed Adde, the information ministry's director of private media relations. Mr. Bukhari asked the media rights group to withdraw the joint statement while Mr. Adde simply tracked Abdalle's location.

<https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/10/11/somali-media-fraternity-strongly-condemns-the-arrest-of-abdalle-ahmed-mumin-and-calls-for-his-immediate-release/>

Abdalle was held in the national intelligence's Godka Jila'ow underground jail, a place with poor sanitation where the temperatures could go as high as 50°C. In late 2018, the Somali government declared to have closed down this notorious detention and torture prison.

While in jail, Abdalle became unwell and at one night became nearly unconscious due to lack of oxygen as there was no ventilation for the cell. He did not drink water for several hours as there was none. While in detention, intelligence agents interrogated him constantly about his work as a media advocate. As doctors confirmed later, Abdalle needed medical attention due to kidney pain and had developed an allergic reaction on his eyes however he was not allowed to see a doctor.

Although the officers who arrested him at the airport did not have a warrant for arrest, Abdalle was held incommunicado for two days and his lawyers and family were denied access to him. Apart from his detention, Abdalle witnessed the first-hand accounts of about 30 detainees – majority from minority clans – held inside the underground cells. He stated that he could hear other inmates crying and screaming.

On the night of October 12, NISA agents transferred Abdalle to the police criminal investigation department at KM4 junction. He first saw a judge on October 13 but the judge ordered the police to present charges and the reason of the arrest within three days which upon expiring, the police and the office of the attorney general then requested additional 45 days which also ended on November 26.

During a court hearing on 16 October, the prosecutors said they were investigating Abdalle for violating the government's new directive and publishing "secret" footage. However, he was freed with a bail only to be re-arrested on October 18. The court returned Abdalle to police custody until his release on stringent bail conditions on 22 October.

Representatives from the information ministry contacted Abdalle and colleagues on November 15 to offer a [deal](#)¹: quit media advocacy and no further criticism of the government and issue a full apology.

The representatives promised that charges against him would be dropped if he would be allowed to leave the country should he accept the demands. Abdalle and the SJS advocates turned down these unacceptable and unlawful demands resulting in the discussion to end abruptly and without any result. On January 4, 2023, the Banadir Regional Court began the first hearing of the case.

<https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/11/16/somali-authorities-set-new-conditions-to-drop-charges-and-free-abdalle-mumin/>

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/24/journalist-under-strict-bail-terms-in-somalia-after-arrest-in-crackdown>



Press freedom violators in Somalia

The Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) names the deputy minister of Information of the Federal Republic of Somalia Mr. [Abdirahman Yusuf Omar Al-Adaala](#) the worst violators of press freedom in Somalia. Mr. Al-Adaala remains the most repressive person in the Somali government and has authorized and directed attacks and persecution of journalists, including those from minority groups, under his capacity as the country's deputy minister of information.



Photo of Abdirahman Yusuf Omar Al-Adaala, Somalia's deputy minister of Information

In February, 2020, Mr. Al-Adaala, who was then the director-general of the Ministry of Information, was the key person who authorized the arbitrary detention and persecution of journalist Mohamed Abduwahab Nuur (Abuuja) who comes from the Somali Bantu, a vulnerable minority community in Somalia. Mr. Abuuja was detained on February 29, 2020, in retaliation for an editorial he published three days earlier criticizing Somali security forces for engaging in threats and intimidation against Somali citizens.

During that detention, officers tortured journalist Abuuja and threatened to kill him if he continued his reporting. He was released a few days later on the condition that he would not speak about his detention; however, Mr. Nuur was vocal about his unlawful imprisonment and on March 7, 2020, National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) authorities¹ re-arrested him. He was held incommunicado for 92 days before his lawyer was finally allowed to see him, and only officially charged on August 3, 2020 by a military court which ordered him to be released after nearly five months in detention.

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In September 2021, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) declared the arrest and detention of journalist Mohamed Abdiwahab Nuur Abuuja in Somalia arbitrary and in violation of international law². In a Whatsapp call to SJS president on the morning of October 10, 2022, Mr. Al-Adaala threatened to target SJS and its secretary-general Abdalle Mumin "like al-Shabaab."

On 8 October 2022, Mr. Al-Adaala issued a new order to restrict media freedom and threatened journalists who remain neutral with "with criminal charges". On 11 October 2022, Mr. Al-Adaala ordered the arbitrary detention and persecution of SJS secretary-general Abdalle Ahmed Mumin a day after SJS and four other media organizations issued a joint press release raising concern on the new order that could restrict the media freedom in Somalia. Mr. Abdalle Mumin was held³ at the notorious underground Godka Jila'ow in Mogadishu where he was continuously interrogated for two days before he was transferred to the criminal investigation department. He did not drink water or eat for the two days and has developed kidney pain and allergic on his eyes. On 15 November 2022⁴, Mr. Adaala suggested two conditions to restrict Abdalle's freedom of expression and media advocacy in return for his freedom.

Mr. Al-Adaala continuous to threaten media advocates, journalists and other civil society groups. He directs violence, intimidation and reprisals against journalists who are critical to the government or to the ministry of information and remains the worst violator of press freedom in Somalia.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/16/un-declares-the-arrest-and-detention-of-journalist-mohamed-abuuja-in-somalia-is-in-violation-of-international-law/>

² https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session90/A_HRC_WGAD_2021_18.pdf

³ https://twitter.com/sjs_Somalia/status/1585148174569639938

⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2022/11/16/somali-authorities-set-new-conditions-to-drop-charges-and-free-abdalle-mumin/>

Restrictions on access to information entrenching self-censorship among the media



Journalists and media representatives attended a protest against government restriction on media in Mogadishu on 5 December, 2022, Photo credit: SJS

The year 2022 was another critical one for the right of access to information as the Somali journalists had little to celebrate about. The often precarious and volatile environment is coupled with restrictions on access to information, duress and insecurity.

Journalists in Mogadishu, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, South West and Jubbaland told SJS that they were blocked from major events and to the scenes of incidents, including sites of Al-Shabaab attacks and denied access to information on public interests. Journalists have particularly narrated acts of censorship and intimidation aimed at stopping them from uncovering serious human rights violations. Police commanders, judges, government officials,

clan leaders and members of al-Shabaab were described as the key perpetrators of these violations.

Journalists in Puntland told SJS that they were denied access to cover news reports revealing police wrongdoings and sexual violence against women and girls. Authorities in Somaliland have used severe restrictions on access to information including internet outage, detention of journalists, suspension of media houses as well as threats intended to silence critical coverage by the local journalists.

In SJS human rights journalism training sessions supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, journalists shared their plight by narrating first hand experiences. Lack of access to information creates a chilling climate of self-censorship and co-optation by a majority of the media houses and journalists nationwide. Journalists, particularly those covering human rights, have spoken about economic hardships as a direct consequence of their work to document and investigate human rights violations. The hostile attitude towards journalists covering human rights abuses and the lack of awareness for the general public also remain as part of the challenge.

Universal access to information means that everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information. The media plays a vital role, particularly when it aims to inform the public of critical information and monitors government actions. The right to universal access to information is also bound up with the right to freedom of the press. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Somalia and its member states are yet to introduce the Access to Information Bill which is a constitutional requirement under Article 32 of the Provisional Federal Constitution.

The growing pressure against Somali journalists and lack of access to information call for concern. When journalists are blocked, threatened and their access to information denied, it will entrench a culture of impunity. Providing and presenting information to the general public, particularly on human rights violations promotes redress for the victims or to seek justice regarding perpetrators through legal action. We call for an end to the restriction to access to information by state and non-state actors in Somalia.



In election year, journalists and media workers faced detention and harassment

The 2022 was an election year, however the restrictions and blocking of independent media and journalists seeking to observe and report on the process of the indirect elections in Somalia rose to a worrying level with repression and threats against journalists dealing with allegations of irregularities, harassment of candidates and looting of seats in Mogadishu and in the federal Member States.

Journalists in Mogadishu, Hirshabelle, the South West, Jubbaland, Puntland and Galmudugu have faced systematic restrictions as they have been denied access to information related to the electoral process, monitoring of polling stations and also investigating profiles of candidates running for parliamentary positions.

Electoral authorities in Mogadishu and regional states have used security forces, including National Intelligence and Security Agency officers, federal and regional police officers, as well as election staff, to prevent journalists from covering the election campaigns of opposition candidates and allegations of delegate-buying and malpractices including phony contestants, barring access and right to contest of certain candidates.

In Jubbaland, intelligence officers attached to the office of president Ahmed Mohamed Islam (Madobe) summoned 13 journalists on 20 December and instructed to keep off any coverage related to election dispute and complaints. A senior Jubbaland intelligence officer called 'Basaam' had threatened journalists with harsh consequences should they report complaints about the results of election of the Lower House seats in the state.

On 28 December, a group of journalists covering the election of Lower House seats in Kismayo's Daawad hall were threatened with arrest and beating and their camera equipment taken to prevent the journalists' independent coverage that day. Repression and intimidation led journalists in Kismayo to resort to self-censorship for fear of possible detention, torture or even death. SJS and SOMA documented five cases of journalists, some of whom fled Kismayo, while others chose to refrain from reporting election-related issues or reports that could irritate the Jubbaland authorities.

In Hirshabelle, on 31 January, police officers in Jowhar, under the command of Police Commissioner Hassan Dhi'isow, called by phone and threatened Tusmo TV reporter Abdirahman Shamcun after the journalist posted a video on his Facebook containing the complaints by Shiidle elders of the Bantu minority community. Shiidle elders complained that the selection of their two seats had been mishandled accusing Hirshabelle president Ali Abdullahi Hussein (Gudlawe) of embezzling the delegate selection process. According to the journalist, On the same day Hirshabelle police spokesman Diini Roble called reporter Shamcun and asked about his whereabouts and an hour later NISA and police raided the journalist's headquarters in Jowhar. However, the journalist fled after his family advised him to leave.

Beledweyne journalists have been denied access, despite the state's indirect election team's commitment to accredit journalists. Reporters in the city were stopped and harassed on 20 February as the voting of a parliamentary contested by the former NISA commander Fahad Yasin took place in the city.

Local reporters reported that they were blocked from the hall when they approached as roads in the city were closed that day with most traffic blocked and public movement restricted by the Gorgor and Haramcad forces. A rival candidate who protested about the election process was prevented from speaking to the media, although one Mogadishu-based media outlet later broadcasted the protester's speech.

In Mogadishu, independent media outlets and their journalists were not allowed to cover the proceedings of the Lower House election for the Somaliland clans in Mogadishu from late January to February. Journalists said that although they had been given entry cards during the Upper House elections, they were informed by the electoral staff that reporters could not come to the Hangar inside Mogadishu Airport where the voting took place.

NISA officers and police locked the venue to prevent journalists from entering the hall. Journalists cited the fact that the process was murky and some legitimate candidates were not allowed to contest as the reason to block independent media.

In South West State, Journalists have given up their intention to cover Lower House election in the regional state as in November due to the pressure, repression and intimidation from South West officials. The intimidation came into effect in late October 2021 when police at Baidoa Airport targeted and detained eight local media journalists who were at the airport to report an election campaign by an opposition contender.

On 16 February, NISA officers entered a hotel in Baidoa where an opposition parliamentary candidate was holding a press conference and ordered journalists out of the hotel by threatening to beat and arrest them.

Journalists said the parliamentary election process in South West was largely run by relatives and family members of Southwestern President Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed (Laftagaren) and had weaponised security forces to threaten journalists and block independent media access to election stations or places where clan delegates met.

In Barawe, on 17 February, South West State Parliament Speaker Ali Said Faqi, had instructed NISA officers in Barawe and his personal bodyguards to arrest journalist Osman Aweys Bahar who works for the community-owned Radio Barawe. That was a day after the journalist published a video interview of Mr. Faqi. The interview which journalist Bahar conducted contained critical questions on Mr. Faqi's (now MP-elect) role in "the malpractice of the electoral process in South West and blocking rival candidates".

On 24 February, a police officer informed journalist Bahar that a case against him was brought at the Barawe police station by unnamed officials. Puntland officials held the Lower House elections inside at military bases in Garowe and Bossaso. Journalists said live television coverage has been barred, with a small number of journalists getting access to the 54th Division military camp in Garowe. Opposition figures were not permissible to be interviewed. In Bosaso, the base of the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) was used as another polling station, to which local journalists did not have access.

In Galmudug, NISA officers blocked independent journalists from covering the voting process in Dhusamareb. Journalists' access was blocked in particularly on 14 February during the election of Abdullahi Kulane, an ex-NISA officer, and on 25 November during the election of the current acting NISA commander, Yasin Farey.

Journalists in Dhusamareb had been instructed not to interview candidates complaining against the anomalies of the process. Journalists said NISA officers loyal to Abdullahi Kulane and Yasin Farey approached reporters and ordered them to leave as they interviewed female candidates who protested against the malpractice that took place in Dhusamareb. The Somali leaders failed to uphold their commitment to allow journalists to observe and report on the electoral process. Journalists across the country have been denied access, threatened and some even forced to flee their hometowns. Now the question is about the legitimacy of a parliament and a government formed out of this murky process where journalists were threatened and independent coverage blocked.



Journalists professional and safety trainings



Women journalists in Beledweyne, Hirshabelle receive training on professional skills supported by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in December 2022. | PHOTO/SJS.

Throughout 2022, SJS conducted series of professional capacity building and safety trainings for Somali journalists across the country. From January to December, SJS held 15 rounds of trainings in all the five regional states and Mogadishu capacitating more than 300 local journalists. Among the beneficiaries are 164 female journalists including those from marginalized communities.

The training sessions focused on various key areas including human rights journalism, safety and security of journalists, professional and ethic code of conduct for journalists, professional skills for women in the media, freedom of expression and media freedom coupled with limitations and responsibilities, journalists' code of conduct, fact-checking and verification of information as well as conflict-sensitive journalism.

The training emphasized the need for the trained journalists to provide factual, objective, balanced and verifiable information to the public to inform decisions about themselves, their community and government. Professional journalists need to practice and be bound by a discipline of fact-finding and verification of the TRUTH. In the longer term, journalists who got these trainings will be able to advocate for themselves in the improvement of journalists' working conditions, good pay and safety.

SJS provided hardcopy training manuals in Somali language to every participant essential for absorbing knowledge and information. For the first time, SJS has included journalists from Sool and Sanaag into the trainings.

SJS is grateful for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the U.S Embassy in Somalia, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the Canadian Embassy, the British Embassy in Somalia for their generous support to these training sessions which took place in Mogadishu, Puntland, Southwest state, Galmudug, Hirshabelle and Jubbaland.

SJS activities in photos



Journalists pose for a group photo alongside British Ambassador, Kate Foster_ SJS Secretary-General, Abdalle Mumin and Banadir Police Deputy Commander, Col. Said Baryare on Tuesday 24 May, 2022. _ PHOTO_SJS.



Training participants pose for a group photo alongside the SJS Secretary-General, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin and the U.S Ambassador, Larry André in Mogadishu, on Wednesday July 27, 2022. | PHOTO/SJS.



Women journalists pose for a group photo alongside the SJS team and Deputy Ambassador Sascha Andreas of the German Embassy in Somalia on Thursday August 18, 2022. | PHOTO / SJS. PHOTO



Women journalists pose for a group photo alongside the SJS team and Deputy Ambassador Sascha Andreas of the German Embassy in Somalia on Thursday August 18, 2022. | PHOTO / SJS. PHOTO





A group of journalists pose for a group photo during the conclusion of a three-day human rights journalism training supported by the National Endowment for Democracy in Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia, September 21, 2022.



Local journalists in Dolow, Jubbaland region of Gedo, complete a three-day training on the journalists safety and media freedom supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) in January 2023. This training was the first one for the local journalists in this drought-hit region of the country. PHOTO/SJS.



Journalists in Beledweyne, Hirshabelle State, complete human rights journalism training supported by the National Endowment for Democracy on December 31, 2022. | PHOTO/SJS.



Local women journalists in Baidoa and trainers gather for a group photo during the conclusion of a three-day training session supported by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. The training took place in Baidoa from 25 -27 November, 2022. | PHOTO/SJS.



A prominent journalist Yusuf Muse, who is a person with special needs receives his certificate handed over by the SJS Secretary-General Abdalle Mumin, SJS trainer Abdirahman Omar and the U.S Ambassador to Somalia, Larry Andre on July 27, 2022 in Mogadishu. PHOTO/SJS.



Recommendations

The Somali federal government and its FMS should:

- Review the ministry of information's 8 October directive and ensure that the freedom of expression and media freedom should not be muzzled under the pretext of the fight against al-Shabaab;
- Investigate and repeal the presidential order seeking the independent media to send their content for approval;
- Encourage the government security forces to protect journalists and stop threats and attacks on the journalists;
- End the impunity for crimes against journalists including those perpetrated by government officials and the members of the security forces;
- Allow journalists and media workers access to government information including by not putting restrictions on accessing government buildings and interviewing public officials;
- Provide safety and protect journalists who are investigating and uncovering serious human rights violations including those perpetrated by the government officials, the security forces and the armed groups;
- Protect whistle blowers who contribute valuable information to the journalists for the sake of public interest;
- Not unjustifiably restrict and interfere with the rights of individuals including media professionals to seek, receive and impart information;
- Accelerate and draft the Access to Information Bill through the parliament as required by the Constitution.
- Direct the ministry of information to open the review and amendment of the Media Law with a wider consultation with the journalists, media associations and other stakeholders in order to amend the provisions that restrict media freedom and threaten journalists' safety;
- Stop using the outdated penal code for journalists and encourage the decriminalization of journalism in Somalia;

The international partners should:

- Support local civil society groups to carry out systematic monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses of the right to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom throughout the country;
- Urge the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States to respect, protect and promote the rights of journalists;
- Pressure the Somali Federal Government and FMS to accelerate the Access to Information Bill through the parliament and provide the necessary support.
- Support public education campaigns on respect for human rights including the right to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom;
- Support actions that promote the safety of journalists in Somalia;
- Include the Somali development and peace-building funding support initiatives that promote human rights, media freedom and safety of the journalists;
- Strengthen efforts made by the local civil society and journalists associations to promote media freedom and the right to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom.



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