

NUSOJ

Ururka Qaranka Suxufiyiinta Soomaaliyeed
National Union of Somali Journalists



DEATH, DETENTION AND DURESS STATE OF MEDIA FREEDOM IN SOMALIA–2020

2019 Incidents of Attacks against Journalists and News Media Organisations

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FOREWORD

This report is our annual flagship review of the state of media freedom in Somalia. It summarizes violations and abuses against journalists and media organisations. The 2019 year ended with serious challenges to the media in general and journalists in particular. The intolerance of journalists' independence accompanied by the abuse of governmental organs, continue to place journalists in dangerous situations.

The year under review was characterized by killings, arrests, threats and intimidations, as well as campaigns to stifle the independent media. This period was also marked by disproportionate and unjustified use of the police and judiciary in the regional administrations, unnecessary orders, restrictions of media work and a denial of access to online news media.

In addition to Al-Shabaab's deadly activities against journalists, Somalia's regional administration (Federal Member States and Somaliland) have been recognised as the principal violators of rights and freedoms of journalists in 2019. These administrations appear to believe that independent and critical journalists and their media houses are adopting an oppositional stance to the government, and are thus deserving of the treatment they receive.

When the journalists and their media houses are gagged, effective communication, the public's right to know, and constitutional right of access to information are all curtailed. The existing environment in Somalia points in this direction.

The above scenario has not been mitigated by an increased number of media houses and journalists. If oppression is not tackled meaningfully, independent media houses will be shut down or suspended. In turn, journalists

will become ineffective, failing to oppose the administration in order to avoid being arrested, judicially harassed, deported, or denied access to information.

As we enter 2020, a year when Somalia holds its "one-person, one-vote" elections, the days ahead for the country's media community are characterized by insecurity, fear and frustration. This underscores the importance of this annual report. The latter examines how the practice of journalism has been impacted and also provides a telescope view of the protection of media freedom and freedom of information.

Despite constitutional guarantees and some relative improvements, the noble struggle for media freedom in Somalia is far from over. Inhibitive laws need to be challenged, impunity needs to be tackled head on, and enemies of freedom of expression must be exposed. The entrenchment of Somalia's nascent democracy and the attendant benefits such as rule of law and free media must not be relegated to the periphery or only invoked when it suits the government of the day.

It is our sincere hope that this annual review of the State of Media Freedom in Somalia can contribute to foster robust discourse on how journalists' rights and media freedom can be strengthened in deepening the transition to democratic governance in Somalia.

Omar Faruk Osman

Secretary General

National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, journalists in Somalia's different regions have continued to face an array of serious repressive attacks including killings, threats, physical assaults, harassment, intimidation and censorship. These sinister efforts were knowingly designed to silence journalists and their media houses.

The number of attacks in 2019 has reduced in comparison to previous years. However, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) still monitored and documented 84 cases of killings, threats, intimidations, physical assaults and censorship as well as attacks on news media organisations. In these reported incidents, journalists and media houses were attacked specifically because of their work and/or news reports.

Three (3) journalists were murdered in Somalia in 2019 for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. For the first time in 10 years, no journalist was killed or wounded in Mogadishu in 2019, a city known to be the mostly deadly place for journalists in Somalia.

Twenty-five (25) journalists were arrested in different regions of Somalia because of their media work. Puntland, Somaliland and Southwest State effectively sought to punish journalists through Somalia's old and draconian criminal laws. Somaliland is the leading offender in media repression in Somalia and seems to have institutionalised its desire to use the judiciary as the most effective tool to suffocate journalists, silence independent media houses and curtail freedom of speech. The only journalist currently serving time in jail is in Hargeisa.

Regional Administrations or Federal Member States as they are officially known, have taken a similar stance against journalists. In the run-up to the disputed elections of Jubbaland, journalists came under fire. New to the media repression tactic, Jubbaland administration bought plane tickets for critical or outspoken journalists and deported them to Mogadishu. In Southwest State, journalists and media houses not favoured by the administration can lead to incarceration.

Taking a turn for the worse, Puntland attempted to prosecute a journalist through military court for reporting alleged human rights abuses by

Puntland police. In addition, forced confession was applied to challenge national and international outcry over the issue. Journalists in Jowhar also experienced severe repression and abuse of power by top executives of Hirshabelle.

As compared to preceding years, there has been some respite in media repression for which the Federal Government of Somalia was largely responsible in previous years. This was partly the result of senior government officials discouraging junior officials from arresting, intimidating or taking a journalist to court. The improved relationship between senior government communications officials and journalists contributed to dispelling perceived enmity and

misgivings between the parties and resolving journalists' grievances in favour of victims. The Federal Government, however, needs to contain and discipline its errant and violent soldiers both in the police and Somali national army.

.....there is still widely entrenched impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, especially the police (both Federal and State) and senior officials of regional administrations. Lack of accountability of crimes against journalists is dissuading them to seek justice.

For accountability and justice to reign, the sources of these violations against journalists and media houses must be identified. 84.3% of the documented attacks against journalists and media houses in 2019 were committed by perpetrators in the Regional Administrations or Federal Member States. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 3.6% of the incidents reported in 2019, mainly the killings. Forces of the Federal Government of Somalia, including the police and national army, were responsible for 11.7% of media freedom violations. The means of violations were diverse, depending on the aim of the perpetrator.

Perpetrators of Media Freedom Violations

Al-Shabaab	3.6%
Federal Government	11.7%
Somaliland	31%
Puntland	17.9%
Southwest	3.6%
Hirshabelle	16.7%
Jubbaland	15.5%
Total	100%

An analysis of the oppression experienced by journalists in 2019 reveals that almost 89.7% of violations were committed against journalists working in the regions outside Mogadishu as opposed to the 10.3% of journalists working in Mogadishu. This is a chilling conclusion with regard to the current state of journalists' safety and freedom of expression in Somalia. Journalists working in broadcast and electronic media were most victims of these violations as opposed to print and online journalists.

Despite increased vigilance and activism for media freedom, there is still widely entrenched impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, especially the police (both Federal and State) and senior officials of regional administrations. Lack of accountability of crimes against journalists is dissuading them to seek justice.

Beyond physical attacks and persistent judicial harassments, as well as direct confrontation with authorities, the journalists in Somalia are faced with many challenges. They work in conditions that hamper them professionally, resulting in a situation where the media is muzzled by those it is meant to scrutinise.

There have been sustained levels of self-censorship and fear of reprisals for independent reporting. Journalists also experience subtle or direct encouragement from the rich, powerful and politically connected to follow stories that favours their interests. Some journalists are groomed by sources/informants; others live exclusively by handouts from organizers of events the journalists report on. This situation has diminished the ethical standing of journalists and the quality of the news reports, thus undermining the real essence of media freedom.

Khadar Awl Ismail

**Secretary of Information and Human Rights
National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)**

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Three broadcast journalists were brutally murdered in 2019, the same number of journalists murdered in 2018. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for these murderous attacks although no-one has yet faced justice. For the first time in more than 10 years, no journalist was killed in Mogadishu.



#	Journalist's Name	Date	News Media Organisation	Place	Suspected Perpetrator	Cause of Death	Status
	Mohamed Sahal Omar	12 July 2019	Somali Broadcasting Corporation (SBC)	Kismayo	Al-Shabaab	Suicide Bomb	No Justice
	Hodan Nalayeh	12 July 2019	Integration TV	Kismayo	Al-Shabaab	Suicide Bomb	No Justice
	Abdinasir Abdulle Ga'al	14 Aug 2019	Radio Station of SNA	Awdhigle	Al-Shabaab	Suicide Bomb	No Justice

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED

A range of sophisticated measures was used to curb journalists' freedom. One of the most frequently-used measure was to haul journalists into police stations or detention centres, and subsequently release them without any formal charges having been laid. Almost all regional administrations in Somalia arrested journalists. The largest number of arrests in 2019 were in Somaliland and Hirshabelle, while Puntland openly demonstrated its determination to put

journalists behind the bars by any means. Unlike previous years, there was no particular case in which the Federal Government carried out an arrest and persecution of a journalist due to his media activity. Abdulkadir Sulaiman Asayr of HornCable TV is the only journalist languishing in jail at the time this report was compiled. According to cases documented by NUSOJ, following journalists were arrested in 2019:



Journalist Abdulkadir Barre Moallim (second person from left) with fellow colleagues at NUSOJ General Assembly in August 2019 in Mogadishu

#	Journalist's Name	Media Organisation	Date	Place	Perpetrator	Status
	Abdishakur Mohamed Hassan	SAAB TV and STAR FM	19 Mar 2019	Beledweyne	Hiran Regional Administration	Released
	Mohamed Sahal Omar	Somali Broadcasting Corporation (SBC)	24 May 2019	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Released
	Badri Kosar	Eryal TV	30 July 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Aidarus Mohamed	Eryal TV	30 July 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Kamal Abdi	Eryal TV	30 July 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Abdirahman Abdullahi Fantastic	Eryal TV	30 July 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Abdiwali Jama Hassan	Radio Voice of Peace	24 Aug 2019	Galkayo	Puntland	Released
	Burhan Mohamud Abdi	BBC Media Action	24 Aug 2019	Galkayo	Puntland	Released
	Abdiqani Abdillahi Ahmed	Hadhwanaag News	10 Sept 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Abdirisak Good Nur	Hadhwanaag News	10 Sept 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released

#	Journalist's Name	Media Organisation	Date	Place	Perpetrator	Status
	Abdirahman Sheikh Hassan Sheikh Ahmed	Hadhwanaag News	19 Sept 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Hassan Heykal	Radio Daljir	14 September 2019	Bossasso	Puntland	Released
	Abdulkadir Barre Moallim	Freelance	25 September 2019	Baidoa	Southwest State	Released
	Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed (TallMan)	Radio Daljir	17 October 2019	Garowe	Puntland	Released
	Ahmed Nur Iseh Mohamed	Bulsho TV	10 November 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Ibrahim Abdirahman Ibrahim	Horyaal24 TV	10 November 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Released
	Abdulkadir Sulaiman Asayr	HornCable TV	18 November 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Detained / Convicted
	Mohamed Ali Omar	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Nur Mohamed Moallim	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Abukar Ali Mohamed	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Sakariye Osman Abdi	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Abdinasir Filabin	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Hussein Farey	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Mahad Muse Mahdi	City FM	19 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released
	Abdiqani Sheikh Mohamed	Jowhar Radio	29 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Released

JOURNALISTS THREATENED, TORTURED, INTIMIDATED OR CENSORED

In 2019, the different regional authorities in Somalia as well as the Somali Police Force and Somali National Army under the federal government of Somalia, unleashed a torrent of repression against journalists. Journalists were physically assaulted, intimidated, threatened, censored, beaten and even subjects to bullets being fired at them. The ripple effects of this suppression continue to inhibit media freedom and curb the right to information for many Somalis.



#	Journalist's Name	Media Organisation	Date	Place	Perpetrator	Description
	Abdullahi Dahir Abdi	Dhanbaal	8 Feb 2019	Mogadishu	Somali National Army	Beaten and handcuffed
	Said Warsame Sabriye	Dhanbaal	8 Feb 2019	Mogadishu	Somali National Army	Beaten and handcuffed
	Abdullahi Hussein Anshur	Kulmiye News Network	22 May 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated, beaten and bullets fired
	Mohamed Abdulkadir Jirow	Kulmiye News Network	22 May 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated, beaten and bullets fired
	Jama Nur Ahmed	Al Jazeera Media Network	15 June 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated and bullets fired
	Mohamed Abdihakim Ismail	Al Jazeera Media Network	15 June 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated and bullets fired
	Feisal Omar	Reuters	15 June 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated and bullets fired

#	Journalist's Name	Media Organisation	Date	Place	Perpetrator	Description
	Abdirisak Hussein Farah	AFP	15 June 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated and bullets fired
	Sadak Mohamed Mohamud	Anadolu	15 June 2019	Mogadishu	Federal Police	Intimidated and bullets fired
	Abdulkadir Moallim Mohamed	Banadir Region Radio Station	25 June 2019	Mogadishu	Somali National Army (SNA)	Physically assaulted
	Mohamud Warsame	SOMNEWS TV	13 July 2019	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Intimidated, beaten and with minor injuries
	Ahmed Isak Abdullahi	SNTV	13 July 2019	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Intimidated, beaten and with minor injuries
	Mohamed Qasim Wahar	Somali Cable TV	13 July 2019	Kismayo	Jubbaland	Intimidated, beaten and with minor injuries
	Mohamad Hassan Dhallo	Radio Daljir	29 October 2019	Badhan	Puntland	Physically assaulted and confiscated the equipment
	Abdiaziz Abdullahi Hassan	HornCable TV	29 October 2019	Badhan	Puntland	Physically assaulted and confiscated the equipment
	Mohamed Ahmed Agta	Somali Broadcasting Corporation (SBC)	29 October 2019	Badhan	Puntland	Physically assaulted and confiscated the equipment
	Abdishakur Abdullahi Ahmed	CityFM	11 December 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Physical assaults

NEWS MEDIA ORGANISATIONS ATTACKED

Well-orchestrated attacks on independent news media organisations (both broadcast and online) have been alarming. Puntland, Somaliland and Hirshabelle authorities are the key culprits of these attacks, which occurred without any official or written warning to news media organisation

owner or manager. The media attacks have been tied to open criticism of authorities or senior leaders. However, the precise reasons for the attack are never made fully public and rarely do cases go before courts of law, apart from Somaliland cases.

#	News Media Organisation	Date	Place	Perpetrator	Type of Attack	Status
	HORYAAL 24 TV	15 June 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Closure	Reopened
	Eryal TV	15 June 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Closure	Reopened
	Hadhwanaagnews.com	3 Sept 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Blocked	Blocked
	Puntlandtimes.com	3 Sept 2019	Garowe	Puntland	Blocked	Blocked
	Radio Daljir	14 Sept 2019	Garowe & Bossasso	Puntland	Raid, Brief Shutdown	Reopened
	HornCable TV	18 Nov 2019	Hargeisa	Somaliland	Suspended	Suspension Lifted
	City FM	19 Dec 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Shutdown	Reopened
	Jowhar Radio	29 Dec 2019	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	Shutdown	Reopened

WORKING CONDITIONS OF JOURNALISTS

The rights of many journalists to just and favourable working conditions continue to be violated. 98% of working journalists are employed verbally instead of via a written contract of employment. Majority of journalists, mostly young reporters, do not earn fair wages or receive equal remuneration for work of equal value. Most salaries are between US\$20-\$50 per month. However, even those paid are paid irregularly. The current standard monthly salary falls well below the decent living standard of US\$300 per month for a person. Fewer than 2%



of media employees are paid US\$100. Working conditions for women in the media are inferior to those enjoyed by men doing equal work; many are prevented from doing the same work as the men.

Media owners claim they are unable to pay due to a lack of financial resources or income. While this may be true, media owners remain reluctant to allow union representatives' access to the financial records of the media house. Case in point is a director of a private radio station in Mogadishu who adapted "payment avoidance tactic" by travelling to Nairobi over the month-end period. By doing this he was able to avoid paying salaries to journalists working for his media house and facing their demands.

Leisure time, relaxation, limitations on working hours, overtime and paid holidays are completely unfamiliar in Somalia. Journalists are called to duty at any time by the media owner/director, and risk being fired if he or she refuses to comply. It has become well known that a working journalist is a soldier on standby duty even at night.

Working journalists do not get equal opportunities of promotion. This is because the current criteria, instead of being based on seniority and competence, is based on how close the employee is to the media boss or whether he or she is of the same clan or sub-clan. Young, unskilled journalists are regularly employed since they agree to work in exchange for exposure as opposed to money. Media employers do not provide health and safety assistance for employees even while on assignment.

Moving from one media outlet to another for the sake of better salary or other work benefits intensified in the past 12 months. Some media managers ask their journalists to secure money from the newsmakers, an amount which determines the journalist's salary for that month. Equally, some newsmakers, including politicians, businessmen or those who want their stories to be covered by the media, resort to paying money to journalists to broadcast these stories. These practices, known locally as "Sharuur", "Duub", "Transportation", "Tea (shaahi)" or "Children's Milk" increases corruption and manipulation of news information.

The existing, poor working conditions of journalists continue to be a discernible threat to the growth of professional journalism and press freedom. Professional mistakes as well as paid-for, corrupted or manipulated news and information put journalists in dangerous situations, undermine the credibility of quality journalism and can, at times, become a pretext for those who attack journalists.

JOURNALISTS' REPRESSION DURING DISPUTED JUBBALAND ELECTIONS

NUSOJ documented threats to media freedom and freedom of expression in Jubbaland Regional State of Somalia in the lead-up to, during and after its recent disputed elections. The reported climate appears disturbingly unchanged.

Intimidations, coercion, and censorship against local journalists, as well as the forced deportation of critical journalists from Kismayo to Mogadishu have obviously had a chilling effect on media coverage and public debate, particularly inside Kismayo. The negative impact is compounded by the fact that those responsible for preventing and investigating threats against journalists are often the same perpetrators. This repression impacts the entire media environment by promoting self-censorship and prevalent uncertainty about the limits of legitimate criticism of the Ahmed Madobe administration.

Testaments by local journalists highlight the difficulties in impartially reporting on key political issues. Covering the events of candidates competing with the incumbent President of Jubbaland, Ahmed Madobe, led to threats and intimidation. In unprecedented move, six journalists were forcefully deported from Kismayo to Mogadishu without their families.

On 6 July 2019, Journalist Mas'ud Abdullahi Adan, reporter of Jubbaland TV, was dismissed by Director of Jubbaland TV, Mr Abdirahman Mustaf Mohamed. Adan was accused of posting favourable comments on Facebook for presidential aspirant, Mr. Abdinasir Serar Mahi, and preparing a news report on presidential candidate Abdullahi Ilmooge Hersi.

On 17 May 2019, in an effort to suppress criticism of the Jubbaland administration, Jubbaland's Attorney General Mohamed Sheikh Osman Sa'id, summoned particular local journalists in Kismayo. The journalists, who anonymously spoke to NUSOJ for fear of reprisal, asserted that Mr. Sa'id warned them against reporting on anything that will damage the operations of the administration, or on anything negative relating to the security forces of Jubbaland. They were informed that if they did not comply, the Office of the Attorney General would not hesitate to use harsh measures.

Independent journalists who sought to cover the arrival of Jubbaland presidential aspirants, in particular, how candidates were received by their supporters, were denied access to the Kismayo airport. Certain media owners, particularly those who own media houses based outside Jubbaland, were pressured by the administration to censor or drop stories filed by their reporters and even told to tone down criticism of Jubbaland administration.

In an effort to control who is a practicing journalist, the administration required local journalists to go through vetting process and obtain press card. According to this process, a journalist will be first screened by intelligence and security agency agents. Subsequent to this, the journalist pays a fee of \$25 to the security agency, followed by a fee of \$10 to \$15 to the Ministry of Information for an approval letter. Finally, the journalist will have to pay another \$10 to \$15 for the printing of business cards.

Several local reporters confessed that the disputed elections forced them to circumvent certain stories that they feared would have gotten them into trouble with authorities or may have caused media managers to be compelled to fire them.

Several local reporters confessed that the disputed elections forced them to circumvent certain stories that they feared would have gotten them into trouble with authorities or may have caused media managers to be compelled to fire them.

At the time of Jubbaland election campaigns, there were a myriad of subtle and overt ways that the presidential candidates competing against incumbent President Ahmed Madobe were denied fair access to the media. Monetary inducements also came into play. While it is common practice for candidates to pay a TV station for airtime, some journalists noted that candidates competing with Ahmed Madobe were sometimes forced to pay considerably higher prices. In addition, despite paying the required amount, such candidates do not get covered as agreed due to pressure on the media from the officials of the incumbent administration.

VEXATIOUS LEGAL ACTIONS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

When authorities in Somaliland, Puntland and Southwest State failed to incriminate journalists using existing criminal laws of Somalia, they resorted to using vexatious legal proceedings as a tool to silence them.

Most of these cases are without merit in any independent judicial proceedings but are brought against journalists in order to harass, intimidate and prevent them from pursuing a story or to punish them for reporting on newsworthy story. Prosecutors are convinced journalists will be found guilty, even though it is unlikely this would be the case in a legitimate, competent and independent court of law.

These criminal cases, under penal code of 1964, stem from the publication or broadcasting of reports that were critical of authorities' programs or policies or insulting public officials. Charges range from defamation to more serious accusations of sedition.

The prosecutors' offices in Somaliland, Puntland and Southwest State effectively used their powers to summon, question, and charge journalists with varying accusations. Puntland even attempted to try former Director of Radio Daljir Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed on military court. Finally, Ahmed Sheikh was forced to make a false confession in exchange of dropping bogus charges.

The absence of protections of due process afforded in formal court proceedings have been a source of concern for some journalists. According to journalist Abdulkadir Barre Moallim in Baidoa, "First, we were worried for our arrest but then we became more concerned when we were detained for days without formal charges, and our situation took a turn to the worse when we were not subjected to a fair trial. In our first day in court, we lost hope of succeeding because the dictation from senior government officials to the judge was amply clear."

Using criminal offences stipulated in Somalia's old and draconian penal code as reprisal against journalists or to curtail freedom of expression, including the right to freedom of speech, is incompatible with the constitutional provisions of Somalia and needs to be challenged.

INSISTENT IMPUNITY

High levels of violence and abuse of power against journalists and their news media organisations, and the subsequent impunity of the perpetrators, are important factors in the very high level of attacks on the media community in general, and journalists in particular. At the time of this report being released, many of the journalists attacked are still awaiting justice, while there is no ongoing investigations of those journalists who were killed.

Victimization of journalists and the accompanying impunity of the perpetrators are being fostered because journalists and media houses are vehicles that reveal a particular truth. This includes reporting on divergent political views of different political stakeholders, coverage of human rights abuses, and stories highlighting corruption. Security related activities, and judicial protection for journalists and those who fight for accountability and justice are rarely obtained.

In some parts of the country, particularly Puntland, Somaliland, Southwest State, Jubbaland and Hirshabelle, police and government officials have acted with impunity, threatening journalists who seek sensitive information. Federal Police in Mogadishu carried out violent attacks without waiting or receiving instructions from senior officials from Banadir regional administration or the federal government.

On 1 November 2018, in a rare move, Somalia's Court of Armed Forces issued a verdict which found a policeman, Abdullahi Ahmed Nur (nicknamed Arabey), guilty in absentia for murdering young journalist Abdirisak Qasim Iman, cameraman and reporter for Somali Broadcasting Service (SBS) on 26

July 2018. The convicted killer is on the run. The court sentenced Nur to five (5) years of imprisonment and ordered him to give 100 camels to the family of the late journalist as a compensation. Although the ruling was handed down in November 2018, the court's decision was only made public on 8 July 2019 after NUSOJ, with the consent of Iman's family, appealed for disclosure. This was as a result of concerns that the fugitive killer may further abscond from justice.

On 25 June 2019, a member of Somali National Army (SNA) who was a member of presidential guard, attacked a defenceless journalist, Abdulkadir Moalim Ahmed. The errant soldier was arrested by Villa Somalia and apologised to the victim.

On 24 March 2019, Somalia's court of armed forces remanded two soldiers into custody after the Office of Attorney General of Armed Forces formally charged them for torturing and threatening two journalists, in breach of article 265 of Somali Penal Code. The two soldiers are currently being held at Mogadishu's central prison, awaiting trial.

The accused soldiers, Ali Adan Abdi Gaab and Sakariye Hassan Ibaar of Somali National Army (SNA), tied the hands and the feet of two journalists behind their back, and forced them to lie down on their chests on 18 February 2019 in a main road in Mogadishu's Hodan district. According to papers filed at the court, two journalists, Abdullahi Dahir Abdi and Said Warsame Sabriye of Dhanbaal media were also tortured by the said soldiers. Later the two journalists accepted apologies and reached out-of-court settlements with the soldiers.

The conviction of a journalist's killer and the arrest of government soldiers in Mogadishu for abusing and mistreating journalists are very important steps taken in tackling a rampant culture of impunity. However, much still needs to be done to address the issue of media repression. There remain officers in federal police and national army who there are unruly and abusive and who intentionally attack journalists whilst they are carrying out their media activities.

ABOUT NATIONAL UNION OF SOMALI JOURNALISTS (NUSOJ)

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) is a fervent champion for media freedom, the rights of journalists, workers' rights and for social justice in Somalia. Member journalists work across the whole industry as reporters, editors, sub-editors and photographers. NUSOJ has 623 members that work in broadcasting, newspapers and in the new media.

NUSOJ systematically monitors and conducts investigations into violations of press freedom and human rights of journalists. The union provides accurate, prompt and impartial information concerning attacks on journalists such as killings, arrests, death threats and harassments, as well as acts of aggression against media organizations.

NUSOJ is a full member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), Eastern Africa Journalists Association (EAJA) and the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU).

For more information, visit

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