



Ururka Qaranka Suxufiyiinta Soomaaliyeed
National Union of Somali Journalists

Targeted Online Unsafe Offline

Gender-Based Violence and Impunity
Against Women Journalists in Somalia

Commemorating the international day to
end impunity for crimes against journalists

Produced by:

National Union of Somali
Journalists (NUSOJ)

Mogadishu, Somalia



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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Women Journalists in Somalia: Reality Check	4
3.	Scale of the Problem	6
4.	Forms of Violence	8
5.	Emerging Threat: AI-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence	12
6.	Real Experiences	14
7.	Response and Resilience	17
8.	The Way Forward: Ending Impunity	18

Publication Statement

This report was produced by the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) to mark the 2025 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. It documents the alarming rise of gender-based and technologically facilitated violence against women journalists in Somalia and exposes the widespread impunity that allows these crimes to continue. The report aims to promote accountability, strengthen protection mechanisms and advocate for the rights and safety of women working in the media.

i. Introduction



Women journalists in Somalia continue to face serious risks both online and offline harassed in newsrooms, assaulted in the field, and targeted on social media simply for doing their job.

Breakdown by year:

- 2023: 31 cases
- 2024: 21 cases
- 2025 (so far): 27 cases

Types of incidents reported:

- Sexual harassment
- Physical assault
- Attempted rape
- Severe online abuse

Every year on 2 November, the world observes the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (IDEI). It is time to recognise the courage of journalists who risk their lives to report the story of Somalia with the truth and to demand justice for those who are attacked, threatened, or killed because of their work.

The 2025 IDEI is being commemorated under the theme “Chat GBV: Raising Awareness on AI-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Women Journalists.” This theme highlights a new and dangerous trend: the growing misuse of technology and most specifically artificial intelligence, to spread harassment, sexual abuse and disinformation against women journalists.

In Somalia, the situation is increasingly alarming but unreported to the scale it deserves. Women journalists continue to face serious risks both online and offline. They are harassed in newsrooms, assaulted while reporting in the field and targeted on social media through coordinated attacks intended to shame and silence them. Behind each statistic are women who live with fear, humiliation and lasting trauma simply for doing their journalistic job.

Over the past three years, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) has recorded 79 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women journalists across several regions of the country. This includes 31 cases in 2023, 21 in 2024 and 27 cases so far in 2025. These incidents range from sexual harassment and physical assault to attempted rape and severe online abuse. The union, however, believes there are many more unreported cases.

These figures reveal only part of the problem. Many more incidents are never reported because survivors fear retaliation or social stigma or believe that seeking

justice will lead nowhere. As a result, there is a widespread sense of hopelessness, censorship and discouragement that protects perpetrators and silences victims.

The impunity surrounding these crimes allows violence against women journalists to continue and deepen. Offenders rarely face investigation, survivors are denied justice and the culture of silence grows stronger. The lack of accountability sends a dangerous message that women journalists can be targeted without consequence.

This report draws attention to this urgent and worsening situation. It explores the scale and nature of violence faced by women journalists in Somalia, including the rising threat of AI-facilitated abuse. It also calls for stronger protection, accountability and justice. Ending impunity is not only about punishing offenders but also about ensuring that every woman journalist in Somalia can work freely, safely and with dignity.



ii. Women Journalists in Somalia: Reality Check

Working as a journalist in Somalia is already one of the most dangerous professions in the country. For women, it is even more difficult. Multiple layers of risk begin in the newsroom and continue into the field, their homes and online spaces. What should be a career of purpose and public service often becomes a daily struggle for safety and dignity.

In Somalia, women journalists face constant harassment, intimidation and discrimination. Many are denied opportunities to progress in their work simply because of their gender. In several newsrooms, women are paid less than their male colleagues, facing a gender pay gap, being excluded from decision-making and being forced to tolerate harassment to keep their jobs. Some are made to feel that speaking out about abuse could end their careers or put them in danger.

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) has recorded 79 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women journalists over the past three years. These include 31 cases in 2023, 21 cases in 2024 and 27 cases so far in 2025, reported from regions. The violations range from verbal harassment and unwanted sexual advances to physical assaults, attempted rape and online abuse. Many more incidents remain undocumented because survivors stay silent out of fear, shame or lack of faith in justice.

The reality behind these figures is heartbreaking. Women journalists in almost every region in Somalia have been sexually assaulted while

covering media assignments in the field. Others have been threatened by colleagues or supervisors who exploit their position of power. Online, female reporters face endless attacks through social media, including the circulation of manipulated images, veiled threats on Facebook Messenger and rumours and hateful messages. These attacks are often coordinated and designed to discredit the journalist's work, question her morality and isolate her professionally.

The problem is not only the violence itself but also the impunity that allows it to continue. Very few cases of abuse against women journalists have ever led to a formal investigation or prosecution. Survivors who report violations are often ignored, blamed or pressured to withdraw their complaints. This absence of accountability reinforces the perception that women's safety is not relevant and that perpetrators will never be punished.

In some cases, the abuse takes place inside media houses, where there should be protection and solidarity. Reports received by NUSOJ show that newsroom sexual violence and harassment remain a serious and persistent problem. Several women have described a toxic work environment in which sexual violence and harassment is tolerated or dismissed as a personal issue rather than a violation of professional ethics and human rights.

The country's political and security environment exacerbates the situation. Powerful individuals or others associated with powerful people often target female journalists reporting on corruption, human rights, or politics. Threats they receive can

quickly escalate into physical danger. The growing use of artificial intelligence has added a new layer of risk. Attackers use manipulated images, deepfakes and fake online profiles to undermine the credibility of women journalists, often resulting in devastating personal consequences.

Despite all this, many Somali women journalists continue to work courageously. They report on conflict, human rights, health, education and women's issues, often under extremely unsafe conditions. Their commitment to telling the truth reflects both resilience and professional integrity. However, courage should not be mistaken for safety. These women should not have to risk their wellbeing to perform their duties.

The evidence is clear. Violence and harassment against women journalists in Somalia have reached an alarming level. Silence, weak institutional responses and the absence of justice sustain the cycle of abuse. Without decisive action, the country's media freedom will continue to deteriorate, causing more women to suffer in silence and losing their voices.

Ending this crisis requires real accountability. Authorities must investigate and prosecute perpetrators. Media houses must adopt and enforce clear anti-harassment policies. Society must stand with women journalists rather than questioning their right to work. Protecting these women is not only a matter of justice but also essential for Somalia's democracy and freedom of expression.



Courage should not be mistaken for safety. Somali women journalists should not have to risk their wellbeing to perform their duties.

- 79 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women journalists were recorded by NUSOJ over the past three years.
- Women journalists across almost every region in Somalia have faced sexual assault while covering assignments.
- Very few cases have ever led to formal investigation or prosecution, reinforcing impunity.

iii. Scale of the Problem

The scale of violence and abuse against female journalists in Somalia has reached a level that can no longer be denied or minimised. It is not a collection of isolated incidents or a few unfortunate cases. It is a deep-rooted, systemic crisis that has embedded itself in the country's media environment and continues to expand without restraint. Behind every statistic are women who have been assaulted, humiliated or forced to abandon the profession they loved.

Between 2023 and 2025, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) documented 79 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women journalists. These cases were reported from across the country, including Mogadishu, Baidoa, Beledweyne, Galkayo, Garowe, Kismayo and other towns. The violations include sexual harassment, assault, attempted rape, intimidation and severe online abuse. These are not just numbers. Each represents a woman who has experienced violations to her safety, dignity and livelihood, resulting in fear, broken trust and lasting psychological damage.

The figures that exist, however, reveal only part of a much darker reality. Many survivors never report what happened to them. Some are paralysed by fear of losing their jobs or facing retaliation. Others have been directly threatened into silence and most believe that reporting will change nothing because the justice system rarely acts. Experts believe that the number of unreported cases could be several times higher than those officially documented. Fear, shame and a deeply ingrained culture of impunity conceal the true scale of this crisis.

Failure to hold perpetrators accountable has normalised abuse in the environment. Most of the reported cases have not been looked into. Only a few have reached the courts and even those have rarely resulted in conviction. Survivors continue

to carry their trauma in silence while perpetrators walk freely, often continuing to work in the same offices or communities. Unchecked impunity has emboldened abusers and sent a dangerous message that violating women journalists can go unpunished.

This impunity is not only the fault of weak law enforcement. It reflects a wider pattern of institutional neglect and complicity. Many perpetrators hold influential positions in media organisations or public institutions, making it nearly impossible for victims to seek justice without risking their livelihoods. Complaints are routinely dismissed as “personal issues” or “misunderstandings” and women who speak out are often discredited, shamed or pushed out of their jobs. The result is a system that punishes the victim while protecting the offender.

The abuse does not end in physical spaces. The digital world has become a new battlefield. Somali women journalists are targeted online with a level of cruelty that is relentless and deeply personal. They face sexualised insults, explicit threats of rape and death and the spread of manipulated images designed to humiliate them publicly. The rapid growth of artificial intelligence has made this even more severe. Deepfake videos, cloned voices and fake social media accounts are being used to destroy reputations and incite hatred. For many, there is no longer a distinction between online harassment and real-world danger.

The consequences of this violence reach far beyond the individual. It is driving women out of journalism entirely and silencing those who remain. Each woman forced to leave takes with her an essential voice and perspective. As women's participation declines, coverage of gender issues, education, human rights and justice becomes thinner and the diversity and credibility of the Somali media suffer. When women are silenced, society loses access to balanced and truthful reporting.

This crisis has now become a national emergency. It is not a private matter or a women's issue alone. It strikes at the heart of media freedom, justice and democracy in Somalia. Violence against female journalists has reached a level that demands immediate, coordinated and courageous action. Every case that goes unpunished invites another. Every silence deepens the cycle of abuse. Somalia cannot claim to defend press freedom while turning away from the suffering of women who risk their lives to report the truth.

Ending this epidemic of violence will require political will, institutional reform and accountability at every level. Law enforcement agencies must investigate and prosecute offenders without bias. News media organisations must establish and enforce strict protections and anti-harassment measures. Communities must reject the culture of silence and stand with survivors rather than blaming them. Without such action, the violence will continue to grow, fear will deepen and Somalia will lose more of the women whose courage and voices are essential to the nation's progress.



IV. Forms of Violence

Protecting women journalists must become an urgent national priority. Without safety, there can be no free and fair journalism in Somalia.

Abusers are found inside media houses, in the field, and online — showing that no environment is safe.

Perpetrators include:

- ➊ Managers, editors, and supervisors
- ➋ Security officers and political figures
- ➌ Members of the public
- ➍ Anonymous online attackers

The violence faced by women journalists in Somalia is widespread, brutal and deeply rooted in both social and institutional structures. It takes many forms, each aimed at silencing their voices, humiliating them publicly and forcing them out of the profession. These violations do not occur in isolation. They are connected by a pattern of abuse, discrimination and impunity that makes the work of female journalists not only difficult but dangerous.

1. Sexual Harassment and Assault

Sexual harassment is one of the most common and yet least reported forms of abuse within Somali media. Many women experience unwanted touching, inappropriate comments, sexual propositions and degrading jokes from male colleagues or supervisors. Some have been pressured into providing sexual favours in exchange for job security or career advancement.

Inside media houses, where journalists should feel safe, women are often targeted by those in positions of authority. There are cases of newsroom managers, editors and even security officers using their power to intimidate and exploit women. Others have faced sexual assault during assignments, often in isolated and politically sensitive or security situation areas where they are vulnerable and unprotected. These experiences leave lasting psychological scars and the absence of any internal complaint mechanisms makes the situation even worse.

2. Workplace Harassment and Discrimination

Workplace harassment is a daily reality for many women journalists. They are mocked, excluded from editorial decisions and denied opportunities for promotion. Some are given trivial assignments or deliberately kept away from high-profile stories because they are women. In several cases, women who have reported sexual harassment have been forced to resign or have been publicly humiliated.

This discrimination creates an environment where men dominate newsrooms, while women are made to feel inferior and dispensable. The result is not only personal suffering but also a loss of professional diversity, as



capable and committed women are pushed out of journalism altogether.

3. Physical Violence and Field Harassment

Reporting in Somalia is already dangerous, but for women it carries additional risks. Female journalists covering protests, political events, or conflict zones have been physically assaulted, groped, or verbally abused by security forces, officials, politicians, or members of the public. Some have been obstructed from interviewing sources simply because they are women.

There have been incidents where female reporters were deliberately targeted because of the stories they were covering. Harassment on the streets has become so common that some women avoid field assignments altogether, which restricts their ability to do their journalistic jobs effectively. Every attack in the field sends a message that women should not be seen or heard in public life.

4. Online Violence and Digital Harassment

Online abuse has become one of the most aggressive and damaging forms of violence against women journalists in Somalia. The internet, which should be a space for information and expression, has turned into a weapon against them. Women are attacked with sexually explicit messages, threats of rape and death and waves of coordinated hate speech.

False information is spread to destroy their credibility. Their photos are stolen and manipulated into sexually suggestive or pornographic images. Some have had fake accounts created in their names, posting inflammatory content to provoke anger and hostility from the public. These attacks are often fuelled by political or social motives and the rise of artificial intelligence has made it easier to create realistic fake content that damages reputations instantly and permanently.

Online harassment does not end when a woman logs off. The threats often extend into real life. Many women journalists have reported that online threats were followed by stalking, anonymous phone calls and physical intimidation. The fear of being attacked in person has caused several journalists to withdraw from social media or reduce their public presence, which directly affects their professional visibility and career opportunities.

5. Psychological Abuse and Intimidation

The constant exposure to harassment, violence and fear takes a heavy psychological toll. Many women journalists live under continuous stress, anticipating the next insult, threat or confrontation. Some develop anxiety, depression and insomnia. Others suffer in silence, afraid that admitting emotional distress might be seen as weakness.

Psychological abuse also occurs through deliberate exclusion and humiliation in the workplace. Some women are ignored at meetings, have their ideas dismissed, or are publicly criticised for minor errors. This constant belittlement erodes confidence and self-worth, gradually pushing talented journalists out of the profession.

6. Professional Reprisal and Economic Punishment

Women who speak out against abuse often face retaliation. They are threatened with dismissal, denied assignments or blacklisted by media managers. Some lose their contracts entirely, while others are demoted or forced into less visible roles. In several cases, survivors of sexual harassment have had their names circulated in informal networks, branding them as “troublemakers” or “liars”.

These reprisals reinforce silence across Somalia. The message is clear: if a woman journalist reports abuse, she risks her career, her safety and her reputation. This culture of punishment protects perpetrators and isolates survivors.

The forms of violence against women journalists in Somalia are not new, but their severity has increased. What makes the problem even more alarming is that most perpetrators remain untouched by justice. The system that should protect these women fails them repeatedly. Many survivors have nowhere to turn for help and some are forced to work side by side with their abusers every day.

This situation is a national crisis. It is destroying journalism careers, silencing voices and eroding freedom of expression. The violence is not only an attack on individual women but on the right of the Somali public to receive information from diverse and independent voices. Protecting women journalists must become an urgent national priority. Without safety, there can be no free and fair journalism in Somalia.



Workplace harassment is a daily reality for many women journalists. They are mocked, excluded from editorial decisions and denied opportunities for promotion. Some are deliberately kept away from high-profile stories simply because they are women. Those who report abuse are often forced to resign or publicly humiliated.



V. Emerging Threat: AI-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

A new and dangerous frontier of abuse is emerging in Somalia's media landscape. Once celebrated for its innovation, technology now targets and silences women journalists. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool for harassment, disinformation and humiliation. Technology now carries out manipulation and rumours with frightening speed and precision.

For women journalists in Somalia, this threat is particularly severe. Many already operate in an atmosphere of intimidation, sexual harassment and social stigma. The introduction of AI-driven abuse has made that environment even more hostile. Online platforms have become breeding grounds for digitally created violence that extends beyond the screen and into real life.

1. Deepfakes and Image Manipulation

One of the most disturbing uses of AI is the creation of deepfake images and videos. Social media rapidly spreads explicit or compromising material featuring the faces of female journalists. The design of these fake images is to destroy reputations, shame women publicly and silence their voices. Once such material circulates, the damage is almost impossible to undo. Even after confirming the truth, the humiliation persists because, in Somalia, there is a saying that says, «A lie that escapes can never be caught by the truth.»

In Somalia's conservative society, the impact of such abuse is devastating, because it is easy to believe without verification. Victims face not only public ridicule but also rejection from their communities and families. Deepfake material about them has prompted some women to quit their jobs or relocate completely. Many experience professional and personal isolation as a result of this form of digital violence.

2. Impersonation and False Profiles

AI tools are also being used to impersonate women journalists by creating fake accounts that publish false or inflammatory posts. These accounts often share political content or

fabricated statements designed to provoke anger, leading to threats and harassment from the public. In several cases, female journalists have discovered multiple fake profiles using their names and photos to damage their credibility.

Such attacks have a direct impact on professional safety. Colleagues and audiences may begin to doubt their integrity, while security threats increase because the fake posts can offend powerful individuals or groups. The impersonation of women journalists is not just defamation; it is a deliberate strategy to make their work impossible.

3. Voice Cloning and Audio Manipulation

Another growing trend is AI-based voice cloning, which allows attackers to recreate a journalist's voice and produce fake recordings. These fake audio recordings are then used to spread lies, fabricate confessions, or create false impressions that can damage a woman's professional standing. In Somalia, where recordings often serve as evidence in public debates or investigations, this form of manipulation poses a grave risk to credibility and personal safety.

Imagine a journalist whose cloned voice is used to insult a political leader or claim she carried out something harming her professional work, like taking a bribe or having an affair with a newsmaker. The potential consequences could include public

rebukes, arrests, retaliation, or even physical harm. Such technologies are giving abusers powerful new tools to endanger women's lives.

4. Automated Harassment and Coordinated Attacks

AI is being used to automate and amplify harassment. Networks of fake or bot-driven accounts can now flood a journalist's social media with thousands of hateful comments and threats within minutes. These attacks often combine misogynistic language, sexualised insults and violent threats. These attacks aim to overwhelm the victim, instilling a profound sense of isolation and fear.

Women journalists in Somalia report that these online attacks do not stop at the screen. The same people who organise digital harassment may follow them physically, send threatening messages to colleagues, or attempt to ridicule women journalists in public spheres, such as ceremonies, events, or press conferences. The combination of online and offline intimidation leaves victims feeling that they are unsafe everywhere.

5. Data Harvesting and Stalking

AI-driven tools also enable the mass collection of personal data from social media accounts, websites and digital archives. This means Somali women journalists can easily access and misuse private information such as phone numbers, home addresses and family details. The perpetrators then weaponize this information to threaten, stalk, or blackmail the women. Some have received anonymous messages referencing their families or private details, a clear sign that their digital information had been exploited. Such

intrusions blur the boundary between professional life and personal safety, forcing many women to withdraw from public spaces entirely.

The spread of AI-facilitated gender-based violence in Somalia represents a new phase of oppression against women journalists. It deepens existing inequalities and adds a layer of technological sophistication to already entrenched misogyny. What makes this threat particularly dangerous is that it often goes unrecognised by law enforcement and ignored by social media companies. There are no clear legal frameworks in Somalia to address AI-generated content, leaving victims without any form of protection or justice.

This matter is not simply a digital issue. It is an attack on media freedom, gender equality and human rights. It is part of the same pattern of impunity that protects those who harm women journalists offline. AI-based violence makes the abuse faster, more widespread and more damaging, whereas the perpetrators remain hidden behind screens.

If this emerging threat is not confronted now, it will silence even more women. Somalia needs stronger laws, faster response mechanisms and digital literacy programs to protect journalists from this growing menace. Social media companies must act responsibly by detecting and removing AI-generated content that targets journalists. Media houses must provide digital safety training and stand firmly with affected staff.

AI can serve the public beneficially, but in the wrong hands it has become a weapon of control and humiliation. How quickly and decisively Somalia addresses this challenge will determine the future of Somali journalism. Protecting female journalists from AI-facilitated violence is essential for safeguarding truth, justice and the right to speak freely in Somalia.

Vi. Real Experiences

Behind every statistic in this report is a woman who has been violated, silenced or forced to choose between her safety and her journalism career. The experiences of Somali women journalists reveal a reality that is painful, dangerous and often invisible. Many of these women have shared their stories with the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) and other partners, sometimes in private, sometimes anonymously, because speaking publicly can put them at even greater risk.

These accounts are not only about harassment or discrimination. They are about lives turned upside down, dreams lost and courage tested in ways that most people will never experience.

“They used my face to destroy my name.”

A young radio journalist in Mogadishu discovered that her photo had been stolen and used to create fake social media accounts. Within days, the accounts began posting sexual content and political insults under her name. She was flooded with abusive messages, accused of immorality and attacked online by people who believed the fake posts were real.

When she went to her editor for help, she was told to “stay quiet until it passes”. Instead of support, she received suspicion. Some colleagues avoided her and others whispered that she had brought shame to the station. The false posts eventually stopped, but her reputation never recovered. She left journalism a few months later, saying she could no longer bear the humiliation.

“They told me to bring a man if I wanted to ask questions.”

A female television reporter from Baidoa recalls being stopped while covering a press conference. Security guards refused to let her speak and told

her she should send a male colleague to ask questions instead. When she protested, she was laughed at and pushed aside. Later that day, she received text messages from unknown numbers calling her names and telling her to “know her place”.

This form of harassment is common in Somalia, where cultural and social barriers still treat journalism as a man’s profession. Many women are discouraged from attending press events, particularly in political or security settings, including those held late at night, because they are not expected to be on duty or in the field around midnight during political meetings due to ongoing intimidation. As a result, their voices and perspectives are missing from the stories that shape national debate.

“He assaulted me and still works in the same office.”

A female journalist from Garowe shared her experience of being sexually assaulted by a senior colleague. She reported the incident to her manager, who told her to “forget it” because the perpetrator was “an important man” in the newsroom and that “he asked you something normal”. When she insisted, she was transferred to a less visible role and her salary was delayed. The man who attacked her still works at the same media outlet, while she struggles to find stable work elsewhere.

Her story reflects what many survivors face: a system that punishes the victim and protects the offender. The lack of accountability inside media houses reinforces the cycle of abuse and forces women to stay silent to avoid retaliation or loss of livelihood.

“The threats followed me home.”

A journalist based in Kismayo covered a story exposing corruption involving local authorities. After the report was broadcast, she began receiving death threats on her phone and social media accounts. Some messages sent through Facebook Messenger



were graphic, threatening sexual violence against her and her family. Others included her home address, showing that her personal information had been leaked.

Within a week, she noticed strangers loitering near her home and station. She stopped sending her children to school for several days out of fear. She eventually fled from one home to another and has not returned to journalism since. Her story shows how online threats easily turn into physical danger, particularly in regions where law enforcement is weak and impunity is the norm.

“They said the story of rape victims is not for women to tell.”

A journalist from Baidoa who was reporting on sexual violence against internally displaced women was told by her editor to drop the story. He said it would “make people uncomfortable” and that women should not discuss such topics. When she refused, she was accused of being “disrespectful” and was suspended for a week.

Her attempt to highlight the suffering of other women turned into an experience of harassment

and censorship. This form of silencing shows how the fight for women’s rights and media freedom are closely linked.

These are not isolated accounts. They reflect a consistent pattern across Somalia. Women journalists face physical assault, online abuse, psychological intimidation and professional retaliation. Many continue to work because they believe in the power of journalism, but each attack erodes that courage and makes the space for women in the media smaller.

The emotional cost is immense. Some women live in constant fear, checking over their shoulders every time they leave the office. Others have lost their confidence or developed depression and anxiety. Many have withdrawn from public life altogether.

Their pain and resilience must not go unnoticed. These stories show that the problem is not only about individual acts of violence but about a system that allows abuse to flourish. The courage of Somali women journalists deserves protection, not punishment. Every time one of them is silenced, Somalia loses a voice that could have told the truth.

Vii. Response and Resilience

In the face of relentless threats, harassment and discrimination, Somali female journalists continue to demonstrate extraordinary courage. Their persistence to keep reporting, even when their safety is constantly at risk, represents one of the strongest forms of resistance against silence and fear. Although the situation remains dangerous, their resilience has begun to reshape the national conversation about gender, safety and justice within the media industry.

1. Standing Up Through Collective Action

Over the past few years, Somali women journalists have become more organised and vocal about their rights. Through this national union, associations and advocacy groups, they are building nationwide conscience and solidarity and demanding accountability from media houses and authorities. NUSOJ has played a vital role in this effort by documenting violations, supporting survivors and calling for justice in cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

NUSOJ's interventions have brought attention to a problem that was once ignored and broken the taboo that these crimes committed against women journalists need to be exposed and confronted. The union continues to train female journalists and media managers on preventing sexual harassment and to lobby for gender-sensitive policies across the industry. The union's public reports have exerted pressure on institutions that have traditionally ignored instances of abuse. However, despite this progress, most survivors' justice remains out of reach because of weak enforcement, limited legal protection and fear of retaliation.

2. Breaking the Silence

Women journalists are speaking out more increasingly and boldly about the harassment and violence they experience. Some have shared their stories at public forums and conferences, while others use their reporting to expose discrimination within the media itself. Younger women have been inspired to enter journalism by these brave acts, challenging the traditional belief that women should avoid public work and that such shameful actions should be ignored.

Breaking the silence has not been without consequences. Those who speak out often face more harassment, online attacks and even job losses. Yet many persist, believing that speaking the truth is the only way to bring change. Their willingness to name their abusers and confront powerful institutions shows the depth of their resilience and commitment to justice.

3. Training, Partnerships and Legal Advocacy

Local and international organisations have also contributed by supporting women journalists in Somalia. The Somali Media Women's Association (SOMWA), in partnership with UNESCO and NUSOJ, has organised training on digital safety, gender awareness and workplace ethics. These programs help women recognise, document and respond to harassment; they also provide a platform for collective advocacy.

Several activities that focus on addressing online violence and the growing threat of AI-facilitated abuse need to be organised. Female journalists must acquire the skills to safeguard their personal information, authenticate manipulated content and report instances of digital harassment. These efforts will supply women journalists more tools to defend themselves, although much more support is needed to reach journalists in smaller towns and rural areas.

4. Gaps That Remain

Despite these initiatives, the overall protection system for women journalists in Somalia remains weak. Most media houses do not have written policies on sexual harassment or safety. Law enforcement rarely investigates threats or attacks and survivors continue to face stigma and disbelief. The absence of legal safeguards for digital harassment has left women particularly vulnerable to online abuse and AI-based manipulation.

Many survivors also lack access to counselling, legal aid or emergency protection. Some are forced to relocate or leave journalism altogether because there are no mechanisms to guarantee their safety. The government's limited engagement with this issue has made it difficult to turn advocacy into real accountability.

5. Unbreakable Resilience

Despite these enormous challenges, Somali women journalists continue to work with integrity and determination. They report on sensitive stories, mentor younger female reporters and create an atmosphere where women cannot be perceived to be pushed around. Their courage to persist in an environment of hostility is a powerful reminder that resilience is not the absence of fear but the strength to act in spite of it.

These women are not victims. They are survivors, professionals, leaders and truth-tellers. Their collective strength has forced Somali society to confront issues it once ignored and has opened the path for meaningful reform. However, their resilience should not replace the state's responsibility to ensure their safety. Institutions, law enforcement, the media industry and the public must share the burden of protection for true progress to occur.

Somalia's female journalists have demonstrated that truth remains unabated, even in the most challenging circumstances. Their courage deserves more than admiration; it demands action. The country owes them not only respect but also protection and justice, as well as the right to work without fear.



In the face of relentless threats, harassment and discrimination, Somali female journalists continue to demonstrate extraordinary courage. Their persistence to keep reporting, even when their safety is constantly at risk, represents one of the strongest forms of resistance against silence and fear.

Resilience and Impact

Women journalists continue to:

- Report sensitive stories
- Mentor younger reporters
- Create a culture where women's voices are recognized

Outcome:

Their collective action has:

- Forced societal acknowledgement of harassment issues
- Opened pathways for reform in journalism and gender equality
- Demonstrated that truth-telling persists despite danger

Viii. The Way Forward: Ending Impunity

The crisis facing women journalists in Somalia can no longer be met with silence or sympathy. It demands urgent, coordinated and sustained action. The continuing violence, harassment and humiliation of women in the media is not only a personal tragedy but also a national failure. Allowing this to persist undermines Somalia's democracy, press freedom and commitment to human rights.

1. Government and Law Enforcement

The Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States must recognise violence against women journalists as a direct assault on freedom of expression and any tenet of justice to prevail in the country. Law enforcement agencies should objectively and conclusively investigate all reports of harassment, assaults, or threats with urgency and impartiality. Police officers, prosecutors and judges need training on how to handle gender-based violence cases with sensitivity and professionalism.

Somalia urgently requires stronger legal frameworks to address both physical and online violence, including AI-facilitated abuse. Parliament and relevant ministries should work with NUSOJ, women's media groups and civil society to introduce and enforce laws that criminalise sexual harassment, digital impersonation, deepfake creations and online threats. Justice must be visible, consistent and fair, so perpetrators understand that abuse will have consequences.

2. Media Houses

News media organisations have an ethical and professional obligation to protect their staff. Every newsroom should have a clearly enforced policy on sexual harassment, workplace safety and gender equality. Complaints must be treated confidentially and survivors must be supported rather than punished.

Newsrooms must also promote women into leadership roles and provide them equal opportunities for training and advancement. A fair,

inclusive and safe media industry will strengthen Somali journalism and build public trust in the media.

3. Social media and Technology Platforms

The National Communications Authority (NCA) and the technology companies operating must take responsibility for the content shared on their platforms. They should remove AI-generated sexual materials, fake profiles and manipulative images that target journalists. Platforms must improve reporting systems and work closely with NUSOJ and rights organisations to prevent online harassment.

AI and digital tools can be used for good. Platforms should invest in detection technology and digital literacy initiatives to empower users and protect journalists from online attacks. Preserving evidence of abuse is also vital to support legal investigations and accountability.

4. Media and Civil Society Organisations

NUSOJ and women's organisations, such as SOMWA, have been at the forefront of documenting abuse and providing support to survivors. Their work must continue with stronger institutional support, funding and collaboration. These organisations can provide safe spaces, legal assistance and counselling for journalists who have experienced violence or harassment.

Media and civil society institutions must also continue to raise awareness and challenge harmful attitudes that blame or shame survivors. Public campaigns, training sessions and school-based education can help build a culture that rejects violence and defends women's rights to speak freely.



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The Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States must recognise violence against women journalists as a direct assault on freedom of expression and any tenet of justice to prevail in the country.”

5. The International Community

Global partners, including UNESCO, UNFPA, ILO and UN Women and international media freedom organisations, should maintain their support for Somalia’s efforts to end violence against journalists. Funding for legal reform, digital safety and survivor support remains critical. International advocacy helps keep pressure on national authorities to investigate crimes and to uphold justice.

6. A National Commitment to Change

Ending impunity will require strong political will and shared responsibility. The federal government of Somalia, federal member states, the media industry, the judiciary and society must all participate in building a system that protects women journalists and holds abusers to account.

Every unpunished act of violence encourages the next. Every woman who leaves journalism because of fear weakens Somalia’s media. Protecting female journalists is not simply about safety; it is about defending truth, democracy and the right of the public to know. Somalia’s women journalists have shown courage and resilience in the face of unrelenting danger. They continue to inform, question and challenge power, despite the risks. They deserve more than admiration; they deserve protection, justice and equality. Ending impunity for crimes against them is not only a moral obligation but also a test of Somalia’s commitment to human rights and press freedom. When women journalists are safe, Somali journalism is strong. When they are silenced, the entire nation loses its voice.



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