

# SOMALIA: EGREGIOUS MEDIA RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Somalia Annual Press Freedom Report –  
2021/2022 by the Federation of Somali  
Journalists (FESQJ)

**In 2021/2022,** Somali journalists and media workers endured some of the worst violations recorded. This annual report provides highlights of cases, analysis of trends, and recommendations to improve the plight of the sector being decimated by constant, unremitting attacks.

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**Farah Omar**  
*Secretary General, FESQJ*

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## Contents

Introduction.....	01
Executive Summary.....	02
Proposition of Cases.....	03
Journalists Killed in the Line of Duty.....	04
Physical attacks, threats and harrasments.....	04
Arrests and detentions.....	07
Conclusion.....	17
Recommendations.....	17

## Introduction

Somali journalists work in one of the toughest media landscape and operational environment around the world. Armed groups and political actors target journalists and media workers with assassinations, brutal violence, arrests, and harassment each year. In the past two years, these difficulties have compounded as a result of the tense electioneering period, political upheavals, the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital age disruptions which continue to threaten the traditional media business model, resulting in dwindling revenue, listenership, and viewers, which has in turn, caused many media outlets to either close down or cut-down staffing levels to the bare minimum.

Free and fully functional media is necessary for Somalia to provide access to information including access to security, governance, and development information. Informed citizens, with the right knowledge and tools, will effectively and willingly participate in rebuilding Somalia, and for this to happen, all relevant stakeholders need to ensure the citizens right to free flow of information - which includes the media's ability to investigate, shine light on corruption and hold the powerful to account.

Despite the media's significance for Somalia's critical national pursuits, Somali journalists struggle with violence and insecurity in their daily job duties. State and non-state actors continue to wield violent approaches to suppress the truth and stifle independent critical stories. Journalists and media workers who try to speak truth to power find themselves routinely subjected to arbitrary attacks, assassinations, arrests, physical assaults and verbal attacks, threats and harassment - and increasingly disaffected officials raid media outlets, temporarily closing the facility until their anti-press demands are met. These types of serious violations

against free press occurs every other week - and FESOJ, alongside other media rights defender,s fight brutal running battles against powerful institutions and individuals who resort to archaic laws there are inimical to freedom of expression.

On top of brutal violations, a major concern for the media fraternity during the reporting period is the governments repeated denial of access data and information at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as requests to information concerning the ongoing federal elections. Government officials and institutions across federal states in Somalia have used COVID-19 restrictions as an excuse to block press conferences, deny access to officials, or ignore submitted requests for information. In attempts to cover up information about mismanagement of pandemic response, the government has discontinued daily press conference with top officials on the status of the pandemic. In addition to this information blackout, the government has also resorted to enforced censorship of the media - a number of journalists were jailed over their reporting on COVID-19 and the elections – by circulating information which the government deemed was misinformation or false news, without providing evidence to the contrary.

**This annual report released by the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ) is based on recorded serious violations and abuses against journalists working in Somalia and in general the trend of press freedom situation in the country between May 2021 and May 2022.**

## Executive Summary

As part of its mandate, the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ) carries out regular research, monitoring and documentation of incidents and trends of violations against journalists, media workers, media outlets, and other members of the media fraternity. This vital work, which is carried out on a daily basis internally, and in collaboration with our partners - local media rights defenders and development partners - aims to promote the safety and protection of Somali journalists. This annual report presents a summary of key incidents and trends of violations, responsible perpetrators, analysis by region, and recommendations to improve the safety and welfare of journalists. Although FESOJ is unable to list all incidents of violations for both logistical and contextual challenges, this report, therefore, serves to provide an overall, rich picture of the situation of press freedom in Somalia during the reporting period.

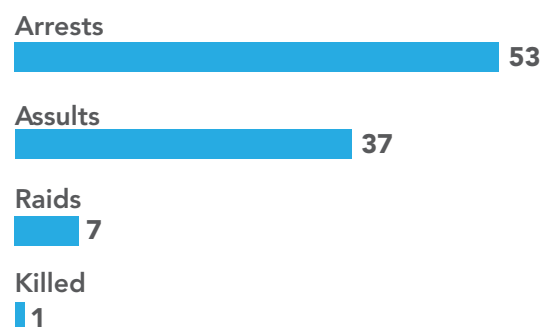


*Providing an overall, rich picture of the situation of press freedom in Somalia during the reporting period.*

In 2021/2022, cases of violations against the media rose sharply. Most violations targeted journalists engaged in the day-to-day reporting activities in the field, this includes coverage of election-related activities such as constituent gatherings, protests, candidate press events, and finally, reporting on security incidents that have heightened during the volatile election period. In all these situations, the Federation of Somali journalists (FESOJ) recorded numerous uncalled-for, heavy-handed responses from various local law enforcement agencies. Police and other security agencies such as NISA carried out brutal clampdowns on press freedom, including physical assaults against reporters, violent raids on media outlets, arbitrary detentions, inflicting damage on press equipment, frequent harassment, and intimidation aimed at silencing the free press. Since 2017, 15 Somali journalists were killed, and according to CPJ, Somalia's fatalities represent more than half of all journalists murdered in Africa.

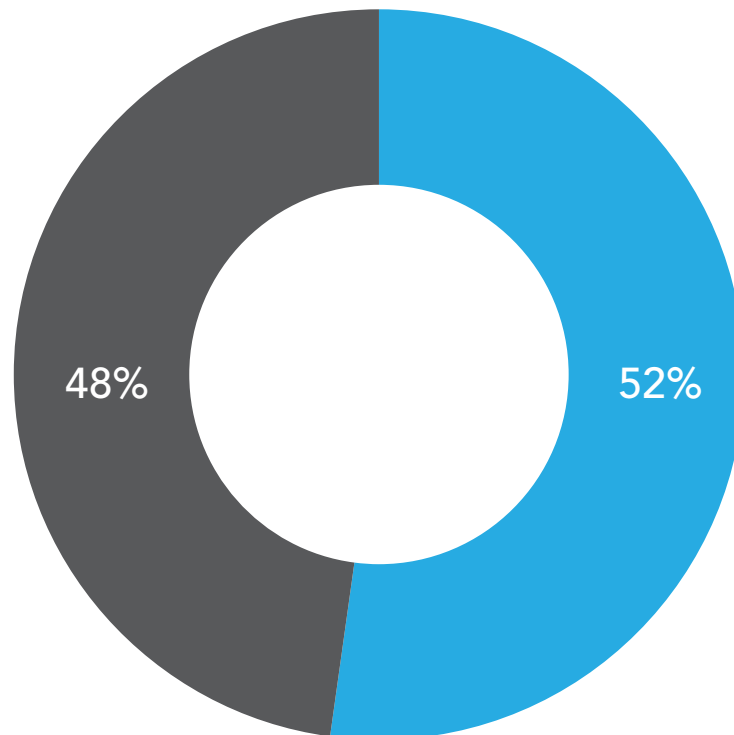
In the period between May 2021 to May, 2022 - FESOJ recorded a total of **98 violations** - and out of these, **1 journalist** was killed, **53** were arrested, **37** suffered violent beatings, injuries or harassment, **7** media outlets were affected by raids, temporary closure, and damage to property, and **16** journalists and media workers, in various regions, had reported to FESOJ about direct threats to their lives, including regular harassment by local authority officials - in most cases, these were reprisals related to their journalistic reporting.

### Number of Violations Against the Media 2021-2022



## Proposition of Cases:

### Banadir VS All Other Regions Combined 2021-2022



■ Other Regions:  
(Jubbaland, Puntland, Hirshabelle,  
Galmududg, & Somalialand)

■ Mogadishu, Somalia

The Somali Police Force and the National Security and Intelligence Agency (NISA) are the main perpetrators of violence against journalists and media workers. In their attempts to quell protests, police officers often directly target journalists covering these events with violence and arrests. As a result, 53 journalists were briefly detained during the reporting period - mainly in Mogadishu, which was home to most intense political activity and public agitation against electoral delay and perceived injustices. FESOJ in partnership with International organizations carried dozens of engagement workshops and meetings with local authorities in regional state headquarters to build trust, confidence and smooth working relationship between the police and media workers during this tense period.

Geographically, Mogadishu, which is the seat of the Somali government leads both the number of cases and frequency of violations, for the past five consecutive years. Out of 98 cases, 51 (or 52% of violations) were committed in Mogadishu. The city also leads in all other categories of violations except outlet raids. The findings stand in stark contrast to years of persistent advocacy by media rights defenders and repeated promises of reforms.

FESOJ hopes the findings in this report and its recommendations will shed much-needed light on the situation of press freedom in Somalia, the precarious working conditions of journalists, and the tough media operational environment. In addition, it will inform ongoing push for reforms, justice and better working conditions.

## Somalia's State of Impunity – 2021- 2022

### Journalists Killed in the Line of Duty:

**November 20, 2021:** Radio Mogadishu director and journalist Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled (popularly known as Abdiiaziz Africa) killed by a suicide bomber in Mogadishu on Saturday 20 November, 2021, and Sharmarke Warsame, the director of SNTV, was also wounded in the attack. Al-Shabab has claimed responsibility for the blast



Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled  
**Journalist**

### Physical Attacks, Threats and Harassment



**May 16, 2021:**

Hamarweyne Police Chief Major Sharmarke Hassan beat and confiscated the equipment of Radio Kulmiye reporter Fardowsa Mohamud during protest at Daljirka Daahsoon over missing Somali recruits sent to Eritrea.



**June 24, 2021:**

Unidentified men ambushed and hit Hanad Ali with knives at his neck causing severe bleeding. The journalist who is also SJS Secretary of Training was rushed to hospital.



**September 5, 2021:**

Armed police officers from Hodan and Waberi districts attacked 12 journalists from the local and international news agencies covering protesters at KM4 demanding justice for missing National

Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) employee, Ikraan Tahlil Farah. Police were seen on live footage beating reporters and confiscating their equipment. The footage also showed beating and dragging on the road journalist and producer Bashir Mohamud, who was arrested briefly before he was released to the hospital.



**September 15 2021:**

Local militia and military officers at Abbay Dhahan in Mogadishu outskirts assaulted Goobjoog reporter Mohamed Roor-aye who was in the area to cover the burial of a suicide victim.

Dalsan TV reporter Mohamed Yasin Mahdi, who also covers for City FM, has been banned from reporting since 18 September after He reported the scuffle at the Hirshabelle Parliament Hall that resulted the postponement of Upper House election in Jowhar. Officials at the Hirshabelle presidency had informed the journalist that his TV was banned from Jowhar.



**September 29, 2021:**

Police in Puntland summoned and interrogated journalist Mohamed Salah's after he reported the death of a female university graduate who was shot dead by the security guards of Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni in Garowe on Monday night.



**08 November 2021:**

Journalist Ali Taliye Abdi was summoned by police officers and threatened him with harsh consequences following his coverage of a press conference by the Shiidle clan elders who criticised the Hirshabelle State president, Ali Gudlawe of intervention into the parliamentary seats allocated to the minority clans of Bantu.



**November 24 2021:**

Mogadishu's Hodan district police officers blocked and even used a live bullet against a group of journalists from local media houses covering a suicide car bomb in Hodan district.



**November 30 2021:**

A domestic plane carrying journalists and humanitarian came under gunfire as it landed at Garbaharey Airport in Gedo region. Under the invitation of the United Nations, the journalists were travelling to cover the droughts-hit communities in the region.





**October 28, 2021:**

Police summoned and demanded an apology from Hilaal Shueyb, Radio Warsan Director and chairman of the Somali Media Association (SOMA) over his comments to the BBC Somali service over the arrests of journalists at Baidoa Airport. He was released after he made forced apology.



**December 20 2021:**

Jubbaland intelligence officers summoned journalists on 20 December and instructed them 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.



**January 16 2022:**

Former journalist Mo-hamed Ibrahim Moalimuu, who is currently the federal government spokesperson was targeted for assassination by Al Shabaab. The attacker exploded an IED that caused Moalimuu and his driver life-threatening injuries.



**January 24, 2022:** Police officers in Beledweyn physically assaulted Radio Hiiraann Weyn journalist, Abdullahi Ali Abukar following unfavorable reports on protests related to public disaffection about the election.



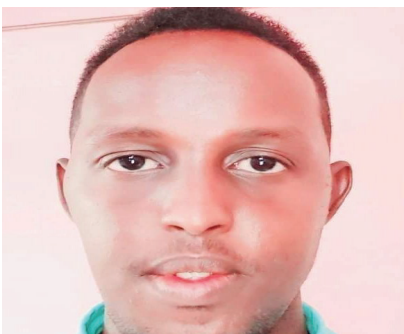
**February 17, 2022:** Four Somali journalists: Ismail Mohamed Muse & Mohamed Hassan Yusuf of Somali Cable TV & Aweys Mohamud Jila'ow and Mohamud Bari of Five Somali TV, who were reporting on terror attack scene in Kahda district of Banadir region were badly beaten and tortured by members of Harmacad Police force. The forces blindfolded them, tied their hands behind their back, and made them lie on the stomach on the ground in Mogadishu scorching heat, the soldiers then beat them with the barrel of the gun and sticks covered with nails.

## Arrests and Detentions



Ibrahim Mohamed Mayow  
**Journalist**

**May 2 2021:** Police in Afgoye detained Dalsan TV journalist Ibrahim after he covered internally displaced families complaining of food diversion. He was released after his TV deleted the footage as a precondition for his release. However, he faces continued harassment and blockage at government events.



Ubeyd Hassan  
**Journalist**

**June 11 2021:** NISA officers who raided Star FM studio in Guriel detained journalist Ubayd Hassan over his reports on the administration's failure to end the inter-clan conflict in the region. He was held at a private residence of NISA commander for four days



Bandhiga Media  
**Social Media**

**July 1, 2021:** Armed police raided Radio Bandhiga premises in Mogadishu and arrested journalists Ibrahim Abshir, Ilyas Da'ud and Ibrahim Sheik Hussein while they were at their station



Mohamud Mohamed Lafagari  
**Journalist**

**July 03 2021:** Star FM journalist Mohamud Mohamed Lafagari was arrested over remarks critical of the Gedo administration. He was released on 7th July without charge.



RTN TV  
Television

**July 04 2021:** Security forces in Beled Weyn arrested journalist Hussein Abdi Jim'ale (Diini) over his report on a new youth movements opposed to the current state administration. The journalist who works for RTN TV was arrested on the orders of senior officials of Hirshabelle state.



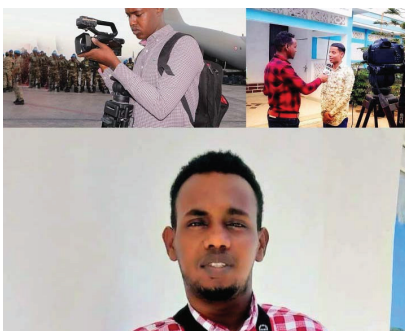
Barkhad Mohamed Bashe  
Journalist

**05 July 2021:** Freelance journalist Barkhad Mohamed Bashe was arrested by Somaliland security officials after covering protest by local mothers who complained about their who were sons arrested by the police in Lasanod.



Universal TV  
Television

**13 July 2021:** Police in Galmudug arrested Universal TV journalist Farhan Ahmed Abdi in Dusamareb after airing grievances from Bajaj (auto-rickshaw drivers) who staged a protest Outside the local district administration officers. Police also confiscated the journalists camera and other equipments.



Abdifatah, Salad and Samir  
Journalists

**22 August 2021:** Police in Hodan detained cameraman Abdifatah Mohamed & journalist Salad kheyre of SomNews TV and journalist Samiir Abdirisak of Hanti TV for covering protest at KM4 against AMISOM for killing civilians in Lower Shabelle region.



Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow  
**Journalist**

**September 28, 2021:** Dhusamareb police officers detained journalist, Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow following a report he released on Sept 15 that revealed the Dhusamareb police commissioner who had surrendered a machine-gun mounted vehicle and weapons to Ahlusuna militia resulting the commissioner's suspension on 16 September.



Radio Hayaan  
**Radio**

**03 October 2021:** Radio Hayaan journalist Mohamed Abduqadir Said was briefly detained in Galkacayo South for covering statement by Sufi followers who threw their support behind the resurgence of Ahlu Suna Wal Jamaca movement. He was freed a day later without charge. In Adaado, police also arrested Radio Adaado journalist Hashim Omar Hassan for covering Sufi followers who supported the resurgence of Ahlusuna Wal Jamaca in Galmudug.



Mowlid Ismail Digid  
**Journalist**

**October 2, 2021:** Somaliland police officers detained Mowlid Ismail Digid who reports for the Facebook news page Halbeeg Media and held at the Lasanod police station before he was freed later in that day without charge. The journalist was taking photos as police conducted forceful evictions of non-locals targeting ethnic southern Somali persons living in Lasanod city. The operation saw hundreds of civilians including women, children and elderly persons forcibly evicted from their homes and businesses in Lasanod, a city controlled by Somaliland and transferred to Puntland.



Abdalla Ahmed Mumin  
**SJS Secretary General**

**October 21, 2021:** Hirshabelle State police arrested Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, SJS Secretary General, Hanad Ali Guleed, SJS Head of Training and Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul, SJS Information and Human Rights Secretary while conducting journalist on safety and media freedom training at Jowhar in Hirshabelle.



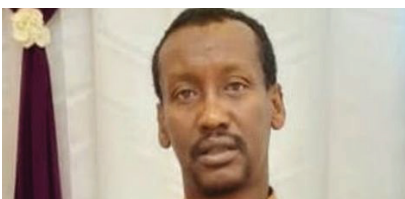
Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi  
**Journalist**

**24 October 2021:** Somaliland police in Lasanod arrested journalist Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi, who reports for Holhol Media, an online news media, following his coverage on a press conference by a group of the local clan elders who spoke against the women quota in their clan seat for the forthcoming elections of the Lower House of the Somali Federal Parliament. He was held until October 26, with reports saying he was transferred to Mandera Prison.



Qasim, Abdirashid, Hassan and Mukhtar  
**Journalists**

**October 28, 2021:** South West State police led by Baidoa Airport police commander, Hussein Kerow detained seven journalists from local media houses including Qasim Mohamed Ahmed Aadan, (HCTV reporter); Abdirashid Ahmed, (Shabelle TV); Hassan Ali Daud (Star TV); Mukhtar Sheikh Adan (Radio Warsan); Abdullahi Nur Adan (Radio Warsan/Saab TV); Farah Hussein Haji (Radio Warsan); and Mohamed Abdirahin (RTN TV). The journalists were at the airport gate to cover the arrival of former South West State president, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who is now a presidential candidate at the forthcoming elections of the Federal Government of Somalia. The journalists were held at the airport police station before they were transferred to the police headquarters in Baidoa city.



Mohamed Abdirahman Malele  
**Journalist**

**October 28, 2021:** Police arrested Editor-in-chief of Radio Warsan, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele over comments he made on the arrests of journalists.



Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow  
**Journalist**

**October 28, 2021:** Galmudug state police arbitrarily detained freelance journalist Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow following his coverage on the recent clashes in Guriel between government forces and Ahlusuna militia.



Mohamud Abdirisak Osman  
**Journalist**

**November 26, 2021:** Police in Qardho arrested journalist and editor Mohamed Abdirisak Osman and Guled Abdirisak Nur Kibonge, the director of a privately-owned radio Anfa in Qardho for airing and conducting interviews deemed critical to Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni’s move to fire the director of Puntland Security Force (PSF) which sparked a security tension in Bosaso town.



Habibo Ladan Abdi  
**Journalist**

**November 29, 2021:** Armed police officers led by Qardho police commander, Omar Hirad Katun, raided the home and the office of Habibo Ladan Abdi Ibrahim, a female journalist reporting for SBC TV for her coverage on the residents of Qardho commenting on the security tension in Bosaso. According to Habibo Ladan, the officers were attempting to arrest her but after failing to find her, the police commander called her and threatened with ‘actions’ over the phone. She remains in hiding.



Holhol Media  
**Social Media**

**26 December 2021:** Somaliland police in Lasanod detained Holhol Media journalist, Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi who also reports for Saab TV after he posted a video clip in which Lasanod residents appealed President Muse Bihi Abdi to fire the Governor of Sool region Abdikarin Adan Haji Diriye citing “mismanagement and sowing division among the community”.



Universal TV  
**Television**

**30 December 2021:** On the orders of Sool Governor, Abdikarin Adan Haji Diiriye Police in Lasanod arrested Abdikhadar Farah, Universal TV Reporter and freelance journalist Hamze Abdirahman Ahmed after the journalists produced interviews with community elders critical of the governor and calling for his removal.



**January 04 2022:** Freelance journalist Abdisalann Mohamed Jama (Jarmani) was abducted by plain cloth security officials in Hargeisa, and was released after three days. He suffered torture and physical assault while in custody.

Abdisalan Mohamed (Jarmani)  
**Journalist**



**January 17 2022:** Freelance journalist Abdisalan Mohamed Jama (Jarmani) who was earlier in the week kidnapped and tortured by plain cloth officials in Hargeisa, was again briefly detained by security officials.

Abdisalan Mohamed (Jarmani)  
**Journalist**



**February 10, 2022:** Salman Isak, a cameraman for M24 Somali TV, has been arrested by the police while filming a suicide explosion scene near the Elgabta junction #Mogadishu. Police also confiscated his equipment – such as the camera and phone.

M24  
**Social Media**



**February 16, 2022:** The Haramad Police forces tortured and detained 4 journalists operating in Mogadishu who went to Kahda district police Station for reporting attack on the station the night before.

Ismail, Mohamed, Aweys and Mohamud  
**Journalists**



**April 13, 2022:** Somaliland police arrested 15 journalists, including two females from numerous TV and radio stations, for covering prison riots in Hargeisa. Following the arrests, police carried out a Horn Cable TV studio raid and detained six more journalists. In addition, the raiding officers confiscated equipment, including cameras and phones, from the affected journalists. Twelve journalists were subsequently released, while three others remained in CID custody.

## Somaliland Journalists



## Raids and Closure of Media Outlets



Star FM  
Radio

**June 11, 2021:** NISA officers raided Star FM radio studio in Guriel town to intimidate reporters and suppress news on interclan conflict in the region.



Bandhiga Media  
Social Media

**July 01 2021:** Armed police raided Radio Bandhiga premises in Mogadishu, seeking the Radio management and owners.



Warsan  
Radio

**October 20 2021:** : South West Criminal Investigation Department (CID) raided Radio Warsan compound in Baidoa seeking to detain the radio's editor-in-chief, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele after the editor condemned the arbitrary detention of the journalists at the airport.



Mohamed Abdirahman Malele  
**Journalist**

**October 28, 2021:** South West Criminal Investigation Department (CID) raided Radio Warsan compound in Baidoa seeking to detain the radio's editor-in-chief, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele after the editor condemned the arbitrary detention of the journalists at the airport.



Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled  
**Journalist**

**December 30, 2021:** Al-Shabaab fighters carried out a raid and destroyed the studio of the privately-owned Radio Bal'ad in Bal'ad town, about 30km north of Mogadishu, during an armed attack that resulted in intense gun battle in the town. Journalists and other staff fled the studio before the attack and were all unharmed.



Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled  
**Journalist**

**21 January 2022:** The armed forces have stormed the radio headquarters in Beledweyne city, shut down the station, which was on air at the time, and detained all the media staff. The forces that attacked the Hiranweyn media centre have claimed that the vice president's office has issued the order. The Federation of Somali Journalists (FESoj) strongly condemns the closure of Hiiraanweyn Radio in Beledweyne and the arrest of seven of its journalists. The arrests came after the radio broadcast a Press Conference held by supporters of General Hud, who is against the Hirshabelle administration.



Mahad Bashir Osman  
Sooyaal TV Director

**January 30, 2022:** The latest incident was the Darwish police forces of Galmudug State raided Radio Sooyaal/TV Abudwak district, detained and beat its Director Mahad Bashir Osman for releasing an interview with a group of police officers who went on strike on Sunday due to unpaid salaries.

“Darwish Police forces first broke into the main gate of the radio premises before getting their way into the on-air studio and ordered the suspension of the live program.” Mahad Bashir Osman said.



## Conclusion

During the first six months of 2022, Somali journalists saw the worst violations recorded in recent times. Among the most gruesome attacks include a Person Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED) that targeted and killed Radio Muqdisho director Abdiaziz Africa and also grievously injured SNTV director, Sharmarke Warsame.

## Recommendation

In 2021/22, the Somali media witnessed one of the lowest periods in its history - battered by unbelievable level of violence and . The need for a safe and enabling environment for journalists is a hugely important priority, which requires the close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders.

### To the Federal Government of Somalia

- Publicly condemn and investigate all attacks on journalists and media organizations.
- Instruct the the Ministry of Security to urgently and thoroughly investigate all attacks on journalists, and ensure that any officials, police officers,
- NISA security forces, and any other entity found responsible for violence against journalists and media workers are immediately prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.
- We call on the Somali government to work with media rights defenders, civil society organizations, and media outlets to put in place effective mechanism to guarantee access to information for the media and the general public

### To other Armed Actors

- Cease and desist from all attacks against journalists, media workers, media outlets and civilians.
- Stop all threats, intimidation, and harassment of members of the media.
- Respect freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

### To Media Friends and Development Partners

- Condemn all actors who have made a habit of carrying out brutal violations against the media with impunity.
- We call on our friends and partners to encourage the government to guarantee the protection and safety of Somali journalists.
- We urge development partners to provide support for the training and capacity building of security agencies on how to protect and work with the media including observing respect for media freedoms. demanding justice for missing National