

Somalia Media: A Profession Dying of Fear

WORLD

**PRESS
FREEDOM DAY**

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***"Shaping a Future at Peace:
Promoting Press Freedom for
Human Rights, Development, and Security."***



PRESS FREEDOM
For Human Rights



DEVELOPMENT
Through Information



PEACE & SECURITY
For a Better Future

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Introduction

The Federation of Somali Journalists presents this report at a time when the Somali media is going through one of the most difficult periods it has ever faced.

In recent years, press freedom and journalists have suffered serious harm due to blatant abuses committed against them. From May 2025 to May 2026, both press freedom and journalism itself have reached a point where there is real fear that these injuries could prove fatal.

What we are witnessing today is not only repeated violations, but also a gradual decline affecting the profession itself. Journalists who have been unlawfully arrested have been humiliated in police stations, photographed in front of police insignia displayed on walls, and made to appear like captured fugitives.

This title is not merely a description of a difficult situation being documented; it is a clear definition and an urgent alarm highlighting a profession slowly being destroyed by fear and pressure.

Many journalists who have been beaten and imprisoned are released only on the condition that they remain silent and do not file complaints. When their situation worsens, they are subjected to an informal practice known as “Shafashafo,” which often involves small payments and multiple intermediaries.

Opportunities for independent journalism have been obstructed by individuals with political influence who control information spaces and security institutions. These actors have promoted weak, imitation journalists, significantly undermining the essential role of the media in holding power accountable, exposing wrongdoing, giving voice to the public, and protecting the public interest.

This report is both a documentation of abuses and a call for action. The future of journalism in Somalia depends on the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to safeguard press freedom and uphold the rule of law, so that journalism does not perish under the fear it currently faces.

Farah Omar Nur

Secretary General of FESOJ

Executive Summary

Between May 2025 and May 2026, FESOJ documented **78 violations** against journalists across Somalia. **These included one killing, 45 cases of arrest and detention, and 32 incidents involving threats, assaults, harassment, abduction, censorship, or interference with reporting.**

Most violations occurred while journalists were carrying out their professional duties. Many journalists were detained without clear legal grounds and later released without charge, highlighting ongoing concerns about due process and misuse of authority. On the other hand, even journalists who are treated badly are afraid, out of fear, to bring their cases before the court.

Repeated targeting of individual journalists has also been documented. Journalists Aniso Ahmed and Abdihafid Nur have each been arrested several times while carrying out their work. This can put journalists in fear of harming their health. Journalists also faced confiscation of equipment, deletion of recorded material, and restrictions on access to public events. These practices continue to limit the ability of the media to operate freely and independently.

Overall, the findings indicate a worsening climate for journalism, where fear is increasingly driving how journalists work rather than freedom, raising serious concerns about access to information, accountability, and public trust.

Journalists Killed, Arrested, and Threatened in the Line of Duty

During the reporting period, one journalist was killed, marking a serious escalation in risks faced by media professionals in Somalia



Abshir Khalif Shide
journalist

On March 2, 2026, journalist Abshir Khalif Shide was shot and killed in Kismayo by a police officer. The incident generated widespread concern and heightened fear among journalists working in the region.

Beyond this case, journalists across the country were subjected to arrests, threats, and interference while performing their duties. These incidents reflect a broader and persistent pattern of pressure on the media, further undermining press freedom and the safety of journalists. The violations documented by FESQJ are detailed according to the following dates:

Recorded Cases

Arrests and Detentions

During the reporting period, FESQJ documented multiple cases in which journalists were arrested, detained, or summoned while carrying out their professional duties. In most instances, no clear legal justification was provided, and many of those affected were later released without charge, raising concerns about due process and the misuse of authority



On May 31, 2025, in Wanlaweyn: A radio journalist named Ismail Khaliif was arrested at his home by local district police. Authorities said the arrest was related to a report aired by his station about the district administration. He was released after being detained for 24 hours



On August 3, 2025, in Mogadishu, Somali police arrested journalists Hussein Isse Mohamed, Osman Abdullahi Mohamed, and Mahad Mutawakil from SMS TV and Daash TV. The journalists had been reporting on public grievances related to government land seizures. No official explanation was provided for their arrest.



On August 5, 2025, in Hargeisa, journalist Ahmed Mahmoud Dool was arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department in connection with his social media posts. His case was later postponed without a clear timeline, raising concerns regarding due process



On August 5, 2025, in Adaado, Galmudug State, Radio Deegaan reporters Hashim Omar Hassan and Hassan Qasaaro were detained after covering a sensitive case involving the death of a young girl, which had generated significant public concern



On August 08, 2025, Mogadishu, Jaafar Mohamed Jimcaale and Abdimaajid Abdirahman, who are members of Kalsan TV, were threatened and beaten by soldiers from the Galmudug President's security guards while they were reporting on a public protest taking place near the residence where the President of Galmudug is staying in Mogadishu



On August 14, 2025, in Mogadishu: Shabelle TV cameraman Mowlid Osman Bootan was arrested by Wadajir district police while recording a protest by internally displaced families



On August 18, 2025, in Mogadishu: journalist Omar Guux of Himilo Somali TV was briefly detained by security forces for approximately one hour before being released without explanation.



On August 26, 2025, in Mogadishu: Dalbile TV reporter Aniso Ahmed was arrested after reporting on insecurity in Deyniile district. She was initially held at Waaberi police station and later transferred to Deyniile police custody. This marked the first of several incidents involving the journalist during the reporting period



On August 28, 2025, in Mogadishu: Kalsan TV journalists Faisal Abdi Farah and Hassan Mohamed Xashi were detained by plainclothes NISA officers. They were held for several hours, during which they reported being threatened before being released without charge.



On September 9, 2025, in Garowe: Puntland authorities summoned journalists Hassan Hayal and Suweys Gaceyte following a complaint filed by the Ministry of Information.



On September 30, 2025, in Hargeisa: independent journalist Abdirahman Jumbo was arrested by security forces. No official reason for the arrest was made public.



On October 12, 2025, in Mogadishu: Himilo TV Director Ahmed Mohamed Aden and Deputy Director Khadar Cabdirahim Ibrahim were arrested to Waaberi police station and subsequently placed under arrest. The case was reportedly linked to an interview addressing public concern.



On October 17, 2025, in Jowhar: journalist Mohamed Amore of Radio Jowhar was arrested by forces linked to the Hirshabelle administration. Reports indicate that he was subjected to physical mistreatment prior to his detention



On October 18, 2025, in Mogadishu: journalists Hibo Mohamed Maxamuud and Sakariye Jinte of Daash Somali TV were arrested while covering the displacement of residents in the Sinai area. They were later warned not to return to the location



On October 25, 2025, in Mogadishu: journalist Abdihafid Noor of Somali Cable TV was detained at Aden Adde International Airport for approximately one hour without explanation. This was one of several incidents involving the journalist



On November 4, 2025, in Hargeisa: journalist Mohamed Andar and a cameraman from MM Somali TV were arrested while covering complaints by government employees regarding unpaid salaries



On November 11, 2025, in Mogadishu: Shabelle TV cameraman Najiib Farah was detained while performing his professional duties. He was later released after authorities deleted footage he had recorded.



On November 24, 2025, in Kismayo: journalist Mahmoud Ali Hassan of Radio Kismayo was summoned to a police station following a complaint. The matter was later confirmed to be unrelated to his journalistic work, and he was released



On November 29-2025, in Galkayo: Bootaan Dacal was arrested by the police in the center of Galkayo city. Bootaan, who is a sports journalist, was later released



On December 11, 2025, in Mogadishu: Khadar Cabdirahim Ibrahim, Deputy Director of Himilo TV, was detained along with other journalists while reporting on an incident involving civilian harm. While others were released, his press identification card was withheld



On December 18, 2025, in Dhusamareeb: journalist Cabdullahi Cabdulqadiir Nor, known as Waddani, was arrested without a clear reason and later released



On December 22, 2025, in Mogadishu: Abdihafid Noor was again arrested after returning from Kismayo. He reported being subjected to threats during his detention before being released.



On December 27, 2025, in Caabud Waaq: journalist Ahmed Mire was detained at the local airport while carrying out his duties and was later released without explanation.



On December 28, 2025, in Doolow: journalist Cali Mohamed Diiriye, known as Cali Yare, was detained following a work related trip. The detention was reportedly linked to dissatisfaction by local authorities over his reporting.



On December 30, 2025, in Borama: The Somaliland security forces in the city of Borama, in the Awdal region, arrested journalist Xasan Koronto, who works in that city. District authorities ordered the arrest of journalist Xasan Koronto while he was covering protests taking place in Borama. The protests were about the local community's opposition to Somaliland's recognition of Israel



On January 1, 2026, in Mogadishu, journalist Sakaria Ahmed Muse and cameraman Mowliid Osman Botan, both working for Shabelle TV, were intimidated and obstructed by security forces while carrying out their duties. The footage they had recorded in the city was deleted from their camera.



On January 2, 2026, in Mogadishu: several media outlets were denied access to cover a parliamentary session, reportedly due to their previous coverage of unrest



On January 18, 2026, in Baidoa: Amina Ibrahim Abdirahman, Deputy Director of Arladi Media, was briefly detained and questioned at the airport before being allowed to proceed



On January 19, 2026, in Mogadishu: journalist Abdirahman Waberi of Jubaland TV was detained while covering public complaints and later released without charge



On February 16, 2026, in Dhusamareeb: journalist Abdullahi Abdi Hersi was detained while conducting routine reporting work and reported facing threats during his detention



On March 1, 2026, in Garowe: journalist Shiine Abdi Ahmed of Puntland State TV was arrested while covering events in the city center. Some journalists also reported damage to their equipment during the incident



On March 2, 2026, Kismayo: Journalist Abshir Khalif Shide, who was affiliated with Radio Waamo, was killed in Kismayo. He was shot by a police officer from Jubaland. The journalist was driving a car when the officer opened fire on him. This incident has caused strong concern among journalists in the city of Kismayo, who have called on the Jubaland administration to bring the accused to justice as soon as possible

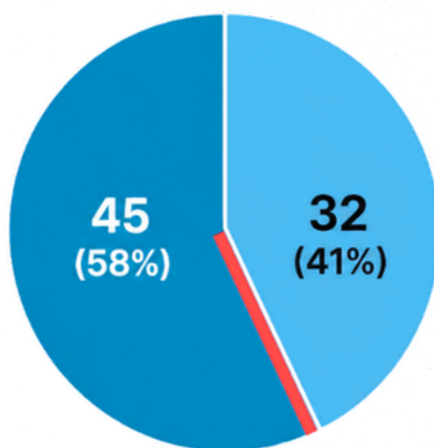


On March 18, 2026, in Mogadishu: journalists Amiira Saleebaan and Iqro Abdullahi were arrested while covering a protest. They were held for several hours, and their equipment was not returned upon release

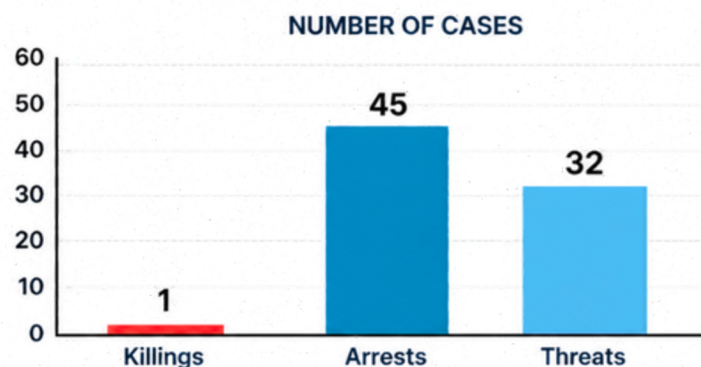


On April 1, 2026, in Mogadishu: Abdihafid Noor was arrested again in connection with a report shared on his social media and remained in detention for seven days before being released.

78 violation against journalists across somalia



■ Arrests:
■ Threats:
■ Killings:



The Impact of Fear on the Media in Somalia

The climate of fear has significantly affected the future of journalism in Somalia. Many journalists have left the profession after realizing that continuing their work poses a serious risk to their safety and lives.

Others have shifted to different livelihoods, such as small businesses or jobs related to communications, while some started advertising platforms, others chosen to migrate. A number of journalists have also joined the Army to seek protection, while others have taken jobs in state media institutions, where their role is often limited to reporting on government-related issues.

The result of this situation is that Somali journalism has been affected not only by direct violence, arrests, and intimidation, but also by a gradual decline in professional standards and the independent spirit that once characterized the media.

In Mogadishu and across the federal member states, many journalists have adopted self-censorship as a means of survival. This situation reflects a widespread decline in freedom of expression, editorial independence, and the media's role in holding society accountable—all of which are essential for accountability and democratic governance.

FESOJ and Hiil Law Firm

The Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ) has a Memorandum of Understanding with Hiil Law Firm to provide legal support to journalists facing violations. This partnership aims to facilitate access to justice and strengthen accountability by offering affected journalists a formal legal pathway.

However, many journalists who have experienced abuses remain reluctant to file legal cases with this office and the prosecutor's office. They fear pressure and retaliation against themselves and their families. As a result, they often turn to informal mechanisms and are sometimes forced into accepting apologies they are not satisfied with.

Although the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom, in practice the executive branch of the government often does not fully implement these rights.

Similarly, the Media Law—intended to protect the press and Somali journalists and to strengthen their independence—has largely become something that is only referenced when convenient. As a result, the legal framework meant to protect journalists is often ineffective, while accountability and institutional transparency continue to weaken. FESOJ encourages journalists to work with it in bringing their cases to Hiil Law Firm so they can receive proper legal representation.

FESOJ and Safeguarding Electoral Neutrality

During the preparations for the Banadir Regional Council elections held on December 25, 2025, the Independent National Electoral and Boundaries Commission introduced its media engagement framework for election monitoring by establishing a Code of Conduct to guide journalists and observers.

Within this framework, the Secretary General of FESOJ, Farah Omar Nur, was included among members of a committee tasked with monitoring media conduct during the election period. The Secretary General formally declined membership in the committee, reaffirming FESOJ's commitment to safeguarding media independence and preserving electoral neutrality.

FESOJ believes that the role of journalists during elections must remain independent, impartial, and free from affiliation with electoral bodies. While recognizing the importance of transparent and credible elections, FESOJ viewed participation in the election monitoring committee as a potential risk to public trust and confidence in the media.

Furthermore, FESOJ pointed out that certain provisions in the electoral code of conduct introduced by the electoral body—particularly those related to restrictions on documentation, information sharing, and participation in electoral procedures—could limit journalists' ability to deliver free and independent reporting to the public. Such restrictions, even if well-intentioned, may increase pressure on the media during sensitive electoral periods.

In light of these concerns, FESQJ reiterates its principled position that journalists should not assume roles that could compromise their independence or create perceptions of bias, especially during elections.

FESQJ remains committed to working constructively with electoral stakeholders, civil society organizations, and international partners to promote free, fair, and transparent elections, while firmly upholding the independence, safety, and professional ethics of Somali journalists.

FESQJ Membership in the East Africa Press Council (EAPC)



The 2nd Pan-African Media Councils Summit and the validation of the EAPC were held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2025.

The East Africa Press Council (EAPC) was founded in Tanzania under the coordination of the Media Council of Tanzania. It serves as a regional body uniting six countries: Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Federation of Somali Journalists (FESQJ) became a full member of EAPC in 2024, following its participation in a strategic planning meeting held in Rwanda.

In 2025, FESQJ took part in a key conference held in Arusha, Tanzania, organized collaboratively by the EAPC, the World Press Councils, and the Pan African Press Councils. During this gathering, the council finalized its governance framework and elected its leadership, including the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary General, Treasurer, and Secretariat. The conference also confirmed Nairobi, Kenya as the official headquarters of the EAPC.

Later, in November 2025, FESQJ attended a meeting in Kilifi Kenya, where it signed the final version of the EAPC Constitution and Code of Ethics. These frameworks are designed to harmonize media standards and strengthen a unified voice for journalism across East Africa.

As the representative body for Somali media, FESQJ is set to participate in the Annual Pan African Media Summit and the Annual Media Excellence Awards, scheduled for May 13–15, 2026, in Kenya.



The heads of the EAPC met in Kilifi County, Kenya, where they signed the EAPC Constitution and Code of Ethics.

Conclusion

During the reporting period between May 2025 and May 2026, Somali journalists continued to face various violations while carrying out their professional duties. FESOJ documented 78 violations, including one killing, 45 arrests and detentions, and 32 cases involving threats, attacks, harassment, abductions, censorship, and interference with reporting.

These incidents show that journalists in Somalia are still working in a highly dangerous environment, which has often forced them into self-censorship. They are targeted without clear legal grounds. As long as constitutional protections and media laws are ignored, it is essential for all media stakeholders to respond to the climate of fear that has weakened press freedom and limited the public's access to information.

Somali media stakeholders must take part in urgent actions to protect press freedom and journalists, strengthen due process, and prevent abuse of power in order to ensure accountability and good governance.

Recommendations

To the Federal Government of Somalia

- The government should clearly condemn all acts of violence, threats, and intimidation against journalists and media institutions.
- It must conduct prompt, independent, and transparent investigations into all violations against journalists, particularly killings and serious abuses.
- The government should implement constitutional guarantees and national media laws that protect freedom of expression and press freedom.
- Arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention of journalists must cease, and all legal procedures should comply with international human rights standards.
- The government should hold security personnel accountable for involvement in killings, intimidation, and attacks against journalists and media outlets.
- The government should operationalize the legal framework for establishing the National Media Council as an independent body to regulate the media and resolve disputes.

To Federal Member States and Local Administrations

- Regional governments should ensure harmonization of national media laws to enable a unified legal framework for the press.
- Each state should create a safe environment that allows journalists to work freely and without fear.
- They should promote effective cooperation between authorities, security forces, and media institutions based on mutual respect and transparency.

To Security Forces

- Respect the role of journalists and refrain from interfering with their professional duties.
- Avoid unlawful arrests, threats, and the use of excessive force against media personnel.
- Ensure that any action taken against journalists is in full compliance with national law.

To Development Partners and International Organizations

- **Defend Press Freedom:** Continue advocating for and condemning violations against journalists.
- **Protect Journalists:** Strengthen emergency assistance, legal support, and relocation for those at risk
- **Build Capacity:** Provide training on human rights and media freedom.
- Strengthen capacity building programs for journalists and security institutions on human rights and media freedom
- **Support Independent Media:** Invest in strengthening professionalism, independence, and sustainability of media institutions.

To Somali Journalists

- Maintain accuracy, neutrality, and professionalism, especially when reporting on sensitive issues
- Take necessary safety precautions, particularly when working in high-risk environments
- Be aware of your legal rights and the procedures to follow in cases of arrest or harassment
- Report violations committed against you to the appropriate authorities, including journalist unions and protection mechanisms
- Strengthen cooperation and unity within the media community
- Balance professional responsibilities with personal safety
- Participate in training opportunities to enhance your skills and awareness



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