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Somalia: authorities must end crackdown on independent journalism as arrests spike in Somaliland



Le journaliste de la chaîne de télévision en ligne KF Media TV, Abdiaziz Saleban Sulub, condamné à un an de prison et à une amende d'environ 3 000 euros pour avoir posté des extraits d'un discours d'un gouverneur. @RSF

ORGANISATION: RSF_en

Since the beginning of the year, journalist arrests have increased dangerously in Somaliland, self-proclaimed independent state unrecognized by international bodies. Notably, journalist Abdiaziz Saleban Sulub was sentenced to one year in prison on 7 October, accused by a governor of editing out parts of one of his speeches and altering its message. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the territory's authorities to allow journalists to do their work – and to end their crackdown on independent journalism.

The latest in a worrying series of arrests, *KF Media TV* journalist **Abdiaziz Saleban Sulub** was sentenced on appeal to one year in prison and a fine of 2 million Somali shillings (approximately 3,000 EUR) for posting excerpts from a governor's speech. While he was released the next day after his sentence was "bought" by the regional press freedom organisation The Somaliland Journalists Association (SOLJA) – which is legally permitted for prison sentences of one year or less – he should never have spent a single day in detention, or been sentenced to a custodial sentence for doing his job.

Accused by the governor of Togdheer, a region in central Somaliland, of cutting passages from one of his speeches and thus altering its message – in reality, his edits did not distort its meaning – Abdiaziz Saleban Sulub spent almost a month in prison. Arrested on 12 September by police in Burao, the capital of Togdheer, he appeared in court on 24 September and was released three days later. However, he remained in detention until the appeal decision, in which he was sentenced to a one-year prison term.

“This conviction of a journalist sadly illustrates the increased repression facing news professionals in Somaliland, where around twenty journalists have been arrested or detained since the beginning of the year. The Somaliland government must absolutely put an end to their repression of independent journalism, which has intensified since it came to power in December 2024. We call on the government to guarantee that journalists can practice their profession without fear of reprisals.

Sadibou Marong
Director, RSF Sub-Saharan Africa

Increase in the number of journalists arrested by the police

Since January 2025, the administration of Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, in power since December 2024, has drastically silenced dissenting voices, particularly through arrests and summonses to appear before the judicial police. The year 2025 has been marked by a growing number of arrests of journalists in Somaliland: RSF has recorded 21 since the beginning of the year, seven of which lasted more than two days.

In September alone, nine journalists were subjected to arbitrary arrests in the region. On 27 September, Somaliland police in Erigabo, the capital of the region Sanaag, briefly arrested four reporters who were covering a visit by the Somaliland Minister of Education to schools. They were beaten – notably kicked – by the police before being detained at the local station for seven hours and then released without charge. The other five journalists were arrested without charge and released the same day.

Former president of the Somaliland Journalists Association forced into exile

These growing threats to journalism in the region forced the former president of the Somaliland Journalists Association, **Mohamoud Abdi Jama** – also known as **Xuuto** – to flee the territory after he criticised the government. On the morning of 19 June, the journalist responded to a summons from the office of the commander of Somaliland's Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The day before, in a [Facebook post](#), he had questioned the way an agreement between the Somaliland government and the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) was handled.

“The commander showed me my publications and wanted to detain me, without a warrant. A minister called him to request my arrest,” Mohamoud Abdi Jama, founder of the daily *Waaheen*, told RSF. While the commander asked him to wait by the door, the journalist managed to leave discreetly, returned home to quickly pack a backpack, and left the country.

Contacted by RSF, Information Minister Ahmed Yasin Sheikh Ali Ayanle did not respond to questions about the worrying deterioration in conditions for journalism in Somaliland.

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