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Africa - Somalia

Desolate north

Harassment and attacks on journalists in Puntland and Somaliland

23 September 2011

With growing concern, Reporters Without Borders has registered at least eight serious press freedom violations ranging from arbitrary arrest to shooting attacks on journalists in the past two months in the semi-autonomous northeastern region of Puntland and the breakaway northwestern territory of Somaliland. In most of these cases, there has been no investigation and no one has been punished.

"When attention is turned to Somalia, it tends to focus on the ruined capital of Mogadishu, where fighting continues and where two journalists were killed this summer, and the south, dominated by Islamist militias opposed to the transitional government," Reporters Without Borders said. "But very violent attacks on journalists are also taking place in the north, in Puntland and Somaliland.

"We urge the local authorities to stop this escalating violence by bringing those responsible for these attacks on journalists to justice. Each region must guarantee a favourable climate for media personnel, one in which they can work without fearing for their safety, without being arrested and without being forced to censor themselves."

Violence and impunity in Puntland

Hassan "Anteno" Mohamed Ali, a reporter with privately-owned *Voice of Peace* radio, sustained serious gunshot injuries to the chest yesterday when three unidentified individuals fired on him at close range in a café opposite the radio station in Bossaso. His condition is said to be critical.



(barkulan)

Photo : Hassan Mohamed Ali (Anteno)

Horriyo Abdulkadir Sheik Ali, a journalist with *Radio Galkayo*, was also seriously injured when unidentified individuals fired on her as she was returning to the radio station in Galkayo on 14 September. She was taken to the city's medical centre with four gunshot wounds to the stomach, chest and hand, and underwent an operation.

The premises of Galkayo-based *Radio Daljir* were damaged on 26 August by a bomb that also injured a security guard. The attack came almost exactly a year after *Radio Daljir* journalist [Abdullahi Omar Gedi](#) was fatally stabbed on 31 August 2010.

Reporters Without Borders urges the Puntland authorities to do whatever is necessary to ensure that those responsible for these extremely violent attacks are brought to justice and to guarantee the safety of the region's journalists.

Abuse of authority in Somaliland

In Somaliland, journalists are harassed by the police and judicial authorities, who take their orders from government officials. Abuse of authority, police violence and arbitrary arrest are all common.

On 12 September, an appeal court in Hargeisa gave **Abdifatah Mohamud Aidid**, the editor of the newspaper *Saxafi*, a week to pay a fine of 700 US dollars in a libel case brought by air transport and civil aviation minister Mohamed Ashi Abdi in January. Aidid was convicted by a local court on 30 April.

Somaliland's authorities have had the independent daily *Waheen* in their sights for months. One of its journalists, **Saleban Abdi Ali**, was badly beaten by members of the police Special Protection Unit in Hargeisa and detained for several hours on 10 September after he tried to cover the installation of the new interior minister, Mohamed Nur Aralle. In a further example of the lack of respect for journalists, an officer defended the treatment that Ali had received by citing the newspaper's "offensive" stories about government officials.

Ahmed Muse Mohamed, a *Waheen* reporter also known as Sagaro, was detained on 5 September at the police station in Buro, in the region of Togdheer, on the orders of Buro governor Yasin Mohamed Abdi. There was no arrest warrant and no other legal formalities were respected. On 7 September, he was taken before a judge, who ordered him held in pre-trial detention for week.

Finally freed on bail on 12 September, he is still facing prosecution in connection with an article about disputes between sports ministry officials and the local authorities, including the governor, who accused the newspaper of twisting his words. Other newspapers that carried similar reports were left alone.

Ali Ismail Aare, *Waheen's* correspondent in the Awdal region, was also detained for several hours on 5 September by the local authorities, who did not press any charges.

Mahad Abdillahi Farah, a reporter for the Hargeisa-based daily *Ogaal*, was detained for seven hours on 6 September by members of the Criminal Investigation Department in Buro.

Local sources told Reporters Without Borders that a total of six newspapers – *Saxafi*, *Ogaal*, *Hatuf*, *Waheen*, *Hargeisa Star* and *Yool* – are currently the target of legal proceedings in Hargeisa.

Deadly Mogadishu

The two journalists killed this summer in Mogadishu were **Noramfaizul Mohd Nor**, a visiting Malaysian cameraman with *Bernama TV* who was fatally shot on 2 September, and **Farah Hassan Sahal**, a presenter with privately-owned *Radio Simba*, who was killed by three shots fired at close range outside the station near Bakara Market on 4 August. No one has so far been brought to justice for these two murders.
