

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	881
Land:	Somalia
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	Somalia 2020
Udgivet:	7. april 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	12. april 2021

Document #2048608

AI – Amnesty International

Somalia 2020

Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian targets continued. Freedom of expression was suppressed; journalists were threatened, harassed, intimidated, beaten, subjected to arbitrary arrests and killed. Women and girls continued to be subjected to sexual violence. Internally displaced people were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and faced forced evictions. In Somaliland, government critics and journalists were censored, harassed and prosecuted, and attacks on media houses continued.

Background

The ongoing conflict between the government and its regional and international partners on one side, and the armed group Al-Shabaab on the other, combined with a series of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, had a devastating impact on the civilian population, causing further food insecurity and mass displacement.

All parties to the conflict continued to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law with impunity.

Heightened political tensions between federal and regional authorities ahead of the 2020/2021 elections prevented the implementation of necessary judicial, constitutional and human rights reforms.

Indiscriminate attacks

USAFRICOM (the US military’s command responsible for military operations in Africa) continued to use drones and manned aircrafts to carry out at least 53 airstrikes.¹

On 2 February, a US airstrike targeted a house in Jilib in the Middle Shabelle region. Nurto Kusow Omar, an 18-year-old woman, died from a shrapnel wound to the head. Her sisters, aged seven and 12, and their 70-year-old grandmother were injured.

On 24 February, a Hellfire missile from another US airstrike killed Mohamud Salad Mohamud at his farm near Kumbareere village on the outskirts of Jilib. During the year, USAFRICOM admitted responsibility for killing three civilians and injuring eight others in three separate airstrikes in 2019 and 2020. Although USAFRICOM acknowledged responsibility for the 2 February killing of Nurto Kusow Omar and the injuring of her two sisters and grandmother, it maintained that Mohamud Salad Mohamud was an Al-Shabaab operative, despite significant evidence suggesting he was a civilian. None of the victims were compensated by the US or Somali governments.

In April, July and November, USAFRICOM issued its first civilian casualty assessment reports. It also established an online civilian casualty reporting portal, which allowed people with internet access to report allegations of civilian casualties. However, there was a need for further safe and accessible mechanisms to ensure accountability for such attacks, which constitute war crimes when they target civilians or civilian objects.

Abuses by armed groups

Al-Shabaab continued to enjoy impunity for frequent and indiscriminate attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including restaurants and hotels. It also carried out targeted killings of those it perceived to have links with the government and other people, including journalists. According to the UN, Al-Shabaab was responsible for 207 out of the 596 civilian casualties it had recorded between early February and early August.

On 16 August, Al-Shabaab attacked the popular seaside Elite Hotel in Mogadishu, detonating a car bomb and indiscriminately firing at residents and staff inside the hotel. At least 11 people were killed and 18 injured.

Unlawful killings

In April, a police officer shot dead two people in Mogadishu because they were outside their homes during the night-time curfew, introduced to control the spread of COVID-19. After protesters took to the streets calling for justice for the victims, the authorities arrested a police officer in connection with the killings. He was sentenced to death in July by a military court in Mogadishu.

On 27 May, eight health workers, including seven who worked at a mother and child clinic in the village of Gololey in the Middle Shabelle region, were abducted and killed by unidentified armed men dressed in Somali military and police uniforms. On 28 May, the then President of Hirshabelle state appointed a seven-person committee to investigate the incident. The outcome of the investigation had not been made public by the end of the year.

Freedom of expression

Journalists

Two journalists were killed during the year. Journalists were also threatened, harassed, intimidated, beaten and arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted by the police, military and other government officials throughout south-central Somalia and Puntland.² The authorities restricted access to information by occasionally denying journalists access to government buildings, major events and scenes of incidents such as Al-Shabaab attack scenes. Journalists were also denied interviews with senior government officials. Authorities also failed to effectively investigate reports of attacks against journalists.

In February, Abdiwali Ali Hassan, a freelance journalist, was shot several times by unknown assailants suspected to be Al-Shabaab members, near his home in Afgooye, Lower Shabelle region. He died on his way to hospital. In May, Said Yusuf Ali, a Kalsan TV journalist, was stabbed to death in Mogadishu by a lone attacker. Media reports suggested the killing was linked to his coverage of Al-Shabaab activities.

In March, Mohamed Abdiwahab Nur (known as Abuja), an editor for Radio Hiigsi, was arbitrarily arrested for the second time in eight days. He was detained incommunicado by the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) without access to his lawyers or family for almost three months. His lawyers, other journalists and his family believed he was held for criticizing the security forces' conduct in Mogadishu. On 7 June he was secretly taken to a military court, which ordered his transfer to Mogadishu Central Prison where he was finally allowed to see one of his lawyers the following day. He remained there for a further two months. The authorities said he was detained while they investigated his alleged Al-Shabaab membership and involvement in a murder. In August he was acquitted by a military court of all charges.³

On 2 April, the NISA used Twitter to intimidate and harass Harun Maruf, a Washington DC-based Somali journalist with the Voice of America. The Twitter posts threatened him with legal action for having “links that threatened national security” and for “engaging with actions outside the media code of conduct.” On 23 April, the NISA announced it had concluded its investigations against the journalist and forwarded his case to the Attorney General.

In April police arrested Abdiaziz Ahmed Gurbaye, editor and deputy director of the independent Goobjoog Media. He was arrested for alleging on Facebook that the government had mismanaged its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the President had taken a ventilator which had been donated to a local hospital. On 29 July, he was sentenced to six months in prison by the Banadir Regional Court in Mogadishu, but released the same day after paying a fine.

In May, the President said he was committed to “decriminalizing journalism and reviewing the Penal Code”, under which journalists frequently faced prosecution, and to respecting the right to freedom of expression. However, journalists continued to be prosecuted.

In August, the President approved amendments to the 2016 Media Law. Although it contained provisions on protection and promotion of the right to freedom of expression – including media freedom – and journalists' right to safety and security and access to information, other provisions threatened these rights. For example, it criminalized the reporting of a wide range of issues and gave the authorities broad and sweeping powers to regulate and monitor the media.

In September, the Attorney General established a Special Prosecutor to address crimes against journalists.

Violence against women and girls

Sexual violence against women and girls was widespread in south-central Somalia and in Puntland. Attacks often went unreported due to the climate of impunity, as well as the stigma and fear associated with the crime, which prevented many survivors from seeking justice.

The UN documented 45 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence against four women and 41 girls between May and August, mostly by unidentified armed men.

In April, two girls, aged three and four, were raped near Afgooye and left in a nearby field with serious injuries. In September, a public outcry followed the alleged gang rape and murder of 19-year-old Hamdi Mohamed Farah in Mogadishu. Her attackers then allegedly threw her to her death from a building. The authorities said that during the month of September they had arrested at least 11 suspects in relation to the case.

In August, despite the authorities’ pledge to strengthen laws to protect women and girls from sexual violence, the Federal Parliament introduced the Sexual Intercourse Related Crimes Bill which contained provisions that breached international law and regional standards regarding rape and other forms of sexual violence. It also contained flawed definitions of offences, and failed to provide survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence with adequate protection.

Internally displaced people

The prolonged conflict, droughts, floods and a locust invasion worsened the humanitarian crisis and resulted in the displacement of over 1.2 million people by November, in addition to the nearly 2.6 million already displaced in the country.

Internally displaced people (IPDs) were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and were forced to live in severely overcrowded conditions. Many of them earned an income from the informal economy, but COVID-19-related restrictions prevented them from earning a living and meeting basic needs, like water, food and sanitary items.⁴

Security forces and private landowners continued to evict IDPs, despite the pandemic. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 100,000 IDPs had been evicted from their homes by September, most of them forcibly and with no alternative accommodation offered. They faced difficulty finding housing, and some lived in the open where they were exposed to additional health risks during the pandemic.

Freedom of expression in Somaliland

Censorship, harassment and prosecution of government critics and journalists, and attacks on media houses continued. In June, the Somaliland authorities arbitrarily closed the independent Universal TV and Star TV stations. The Minister of Information ordered local television cable providers to remove the two stations from their receivers and revoke their licences. Universal TV was targeted for allegedly failing to broadcast Independence Day celebrations and events as demanded by the authorities, and Star TV owners said they were targeted for airing reports and analysis on the condition of a detained former air force pilot, Fouad Youssouf Ali, in neighbouring Djibouti. In August, the Information Ministry issued arbitrary fines of SOS127,500,000 (US\$15,000) and SOS42,500,000 (US\$5,000) on Universal TV and Star TV respectively. Star TV paid the fine and resumed operations, but Universal TV remained closed as of mid-December.

In June, Abdimalik Muse Odon, a journalist, was released from Hargeisa Central Prison after spending over a year in prison for criticizing the President on Facebook. He had been arrested and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison in 2019 and charged with “spreading anti-national propaganda” and “disseminating false news”. He was released following a presidential pardon.

1. [Somalia: Zero accountability as civilian deaths mount from US air strikes \(Press release, 1 April\)](#)
2. [“We live in perpetual fear”: Violations and abuses of freedom of expression in Somalia \(AFR 52/1442/2020\)](#)
3. [Somalia: Authorities must immediately release journalist Mohamed Abdiwahab Nur \(Abuja\) \(AFR 52/2649/2020\)](#)
4. [Somalia: Internally displaced people surviving by “the grace of God” amidst COVID-19 \(Press release, 21 July\)](#)

© Amnesty International

ecoi.net summary:

Report on the human rights
situation covering 2020

Country:

Somalia

Source:

[AI – Amnesty International](#)

Original link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/somalia/report-somalia/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

7 April 2021

Document ID:

2048608

Austrian Red Cross Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien <u>T (Telefon)</u> +43 1 589 00 583 <u>F (Fax)</u> +43 1 589 00 589 info@ecoi.net	Contact Imprint & Disclaimer F.A.Q. Data Protection Notice
--	--	---

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

