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<http://www.rsf.org/somalie-security-agency-arrests-11-09-2014,46931.html>

Africa - Somalia

Crackdown

Security agency arrests journalists, closes radio stations after banning coverage of Al-Shabaab

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Taking its fight against the Islamist militia Al-Shabaab to the airwaves, Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) has been arresting journalists and closing news media since 2 September, when it issued a ban on national media coverage of all Al-Shabaab activities.

In one of its latest operations, the NISA raided *Radio Kulmiye* and stopped its broadcasts on 7 September. It also arrested *Radio Kulmiye* director **Osman Abdullahi Guure** and the head of the state radio broadcaster, **Abdirahim Isse Addow**, for broadcasting a statement by Al-Shabaab's leader confirming the death of its leader and naming his replacement.

The two journalists were released three hours later and *Radio Kulmiye* was allowed to resume broadcasting.

Radio SIMBA suffered the same fate the previous day for the same reason, broadcasting the Al-Shabaab spokesman's statement.

The NISA arrived at the station on the evening of 6 September, ordered it to stop broadcasting, seized some of its equipment and arrested three of its journalists – **Abirahman Mohamed Olad**, **Sharmarke Mohamed Hussein** and **Mohamed Ahmed Sheik**. After being held overnight, they were released and the station was allowed to resume broadcasting.

The NISA arrested *Radio Shabelle* journalist **Mohamed Bashir Hashi** on the morning of 6 September for still unknown reasons apparently linked to the [closure of Radio Shabelle and Sky FM](#) on 15 August. Three journalists of these two medias are detained since then, and have allegedly been tortured. Mohamed Bashir Hashi is still being held.

Hassan Ali Gesey, the director of *Radio Dalsan* and head of the Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA), and *Radio Dalsan* journalist **Abukar Muhyadin** were detained for several hours on 3 September, a day after Gesey criticized the NISA ban on covering Al-Shabaab.

"The media should not have to suffer because of the government's fight against Al-Shabaab," Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles said.

"Journalists relayed a report about Al-Shabaab that was purely informative in nature. It is outrageous that they were arrested just for doing their job. In their war against Al-Shabaab, the authorities must respect fundamental freedoms, including freedom of information."

Many civil society organizations have meanwhile been [criticizing a new media bill](#), seeing it as way of gagging the media under cover of legality. Approved by the Somali Council of Ministers on 1 September, it is now awaiting a vote in parliament.

Somalia is ranked 176th out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

(photo: Hassan Ali Gesey)
