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Africa - Somalia

Impunity

Impunity guaranteed for violence against journalists in Somalia

20 November 2014

Reporters Without Borders condemns journalist Abdirisak Ali Abdi's murder on 18 November 2014 in Galkayo, in the northeastern semi-autonomous region of Puntland. This unclaimed killing has yet again highlighted the urgent need to break the cycle of impunity in Somalia, one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists.

Also known as "Silver," **Abdi** was in a restaurant when two gunmen walked in and shot him several times. He died shortly after being rushed to a hospital. He freelanced for various media including *Radio Daljir*, based in Puntland, and *HornCable TV*, based in the neighbouring region of Somaliland.

Aged 25, he is survived by a wife and two children.

His close colleague, **Ahmed Ali Kilwe**, the Deputy Director of *Radio Galkayo* has since then received phone threats telling him he « will be next ». He fears for his life.

"We are deeply shocked by Abdi's murder and worried about the threats made against Ahmed Ali Kilwe," said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk. "Unfortunately working as a journalist in Somalia entails a constant risk of being killed, attacked threatened or thrown in prison."

"This now routine violence does enormous harm to freedom of information by inducing journalists to censor themselves on such subjects as rebel groups, corruption and human rights violations. We call on the Puntland authorities to investigate Abdi's murder in order to identify his killers and bring them to justice."

Not an isolated act

The climate of intimidation and violence against journalists has worsened steadily in recent months. **Nure Mohammed Ali**, a freelance journalist working for *Radio Kulmyie* and other media, was badly injured by a car bomb in Mogadishu on 9 November. **Abirizak Jama Elmi**, London-based *Somali Channel Television's* Mogadishu bureau chief, narrowly escaped a murder attempt on 12 October and is still in need of intensive medical assistance. Freelance journalist **Yusuf Keynan** was not as lucky. He was killed by a bomb placed under his car in June.

Aside from the various political disputes, faction fighting and demands for autonomy, all the acts of violence against journalists have one thing in common – impunity. There has been only one conviction in the 43 murders of journalists since 2009. The victim was **Hassan Yusuf Absuge** and his killer, a member of the Al-Shabaab Islamist militia, was summarily executed in August 2013, a [sentence RWB had condemned at the time](#).

Physical attacks against journalists are often the work of rebel groups such as Al-Shabaab, which is on the Reporters Without Borders list of "[Predators of Press Freedom](#)." But the government is also guilty of abusing its authority with journalists, constantly ordering illegal closures of news outlets and carrying out arbitrary arrests.

Members of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) held journalist **Abdirizak Omar Ahmed** for three days after arresting him at his home on 10 November for allegedly collaborating with *Al-Andalus*, the Al-Shabaab radio station.

Mohamed Abdillahi, a journalist with privately-owned *Somali Channel TV*, was arrested in mid-report on 3 November in Berbera, in the northwestern region of Somaliland, and was held by the police for several hours.

Mukhtar Nuh Ibrahim of *HornCable TV* and **Mohamed Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** of *SomSat TV*

spent several days in prison the same week in Gabiley, another Somaliland town, for distributing footage of a demonstration that the authorities accused them of instigating.

In early September, officials acting arbitrarily [closed several radio stations](#) temporarily and arrested employees for broadcasting a statement by Al-Shabaab's spokesman. *Radio Shabelle* and *Sky FM*, two stations owned by the Shabelle Media Network, were raided by police and closed on 15 August for allegedly endangering national security.

Two of the four [Shabelle Media Network employees arrested](#) during the raids, *Radio Shabelle* editor **Mohamed Bashir Hashi** and *Sky FM* director **Mohamud Mohamed Dahir**, are still being held without trial while those that have been released live in fear of being arrested again.

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

(photo : Abdirisak Ali Abdi)

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