

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/somalie-confidentiality-of-sources-would-15-07-2013,44937.html>

Africa - Somalia

Repressive bill

Confidentiality of sources would end under proposed new law

15 July 2013

Reporters Without Borders is very worried by the grave threat to media freedom and media pluralism posed by a bill that the Somali cabinet approved on 11 July and, if adopted by parliament, would replace the 2007 media law.

Its provisions include giving the courts the power to order journalists to reveal their sources – a flagrant violation of freedom of information.

“By approving this bill, the cabinet has betrayed its contempt for journalists and the basic principles of media freedom,” Reporters Without Borders said. “In what is already one of the world’s most dangerous countries for the media, the self-censorship resulting from a lack of protection for sources would reduce reporters to near silence.

Reporters Without Borders added: “We urge Somalia’s parliament to defend freedom of information by rejecting this draconian legislation without delay.”

The proposed law would provide a legal basis for the strong pressure that the Somali authorities already apply to both local and foreign media on security grounds.

One of the main sources of concern is the vague wording used in connection with media offences. The law would also undermine the independence of the National Media Council, which regulates the media.

National Union of Somali Journalists secretary-general Omar Faruk Osman said: “If left unchanged and passed by the federal parliament, the draft law would seriously restrict media pluralism, curb the independence of the press and impose a chilling effect on the freedom of expression and public debate, all essential for democracy.”

Its approval by the cabinet came just eight days after two journalists in the northwestern region of Somaliland – **Hassan Hussein Abdullahi**, the editor of the Hargeisa-based daily *Hubaal*, and **Mohamed Ahmed Jama**, the newspaper’s manager – were given [jail sentences and heavy fines on libel charges](#).

Violence continues to threaten the work of journalists. TV reporter [Liban Abdullahi Farah was gunned down](#) as he was returning to his home in the north-central city of Galkayo on 7 July.

[More information about media freedom in Somalia.](#)

Photograph: Somalian Prime Minister, Abdi Farah Shirdon Said (Abdurashid Abdulle - AFP)

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