

ANNUAL REPORT // STATE OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN SOMALIA // JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2010

“MOUTH-MURDER”

AND MEDIA HIJACKING: A YEAR OF
HEARTACHE AND FEAR FOR
SOMALI JOURNALISTS



■ The **National Union of Somali Journalists** (NUSOJ) would like to thank **Radio Shabelle, Horseed Media,** its member journalists who contributed photos to this report.

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OVERVIEW

A wide range of press freedom violations again blighted the year 2010, in Puntland as well as in southern and central regions. Killings of journalists have been a source of terrible pain in the hearts of journalists especially in the conflict-ravaged city of Mogadishu, which is still where most journalists were murdered in our beloved country.

While there was some respite in terms of numbers of journalists killed - down from nine last year to three this year - it remains a heartrending yearly task to compile the statistics of murdered colleagues who died for their profession. Telephone and face-to-face death threats are widespread throughout Somalia. Known as "mouth-murdering" acts, these threats have driven around 90 journalists out of the country in the past two years.

Since killing journalists has not been entirely effective in silencing independent journalism, the armed Islamist groups, al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, have this year resorted to seizing private media houses from their legitimate owners, taking over a total of seven media houses to use them for war propaganda and hate campaigns against those who fail to promote their ideology. This appropriation of media houses has damaged the private media sector not only through the loss of those media that have been occupied, but by sowing terror among those yet to be taken over who live in fear of being taken out at any time.

Another disturbing development has been the spread of individuals posing as "journalists" imbued with dangerous dogma who attack and inflict violence and commit crimes against society in the name of "religion". This use of the media to inflame fear and terror is particularly prevalent in southern regions. Young and unknown adults are increasingly appearing, claiming to be journalists but widely suspected to have another hidden and illicit agenda. This is another emerging threat to press freedom that reduces the space for professional and genuine journalists to operate.

It also gives ammunition to those who are eager to curb media freedom.

Independent reporting is no longer possible from places such as Baidoa, Jowhar, Beledweyne, Bardhere and Kismayo. People in these towns are therefore suffering a total blackout of independent news. In defiance of atrocities, Radio Shabelle continues to brave the deadly al-Shabaab and has moved to a new location to broadcast independently in the capital city. This broadcaster is currently the leading independent media for the voice of the Somali people.

"INDEPENDENT REPORTING IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE FROM PLACES SUCH AS BAIDOA, JOWHAR, BELEDWEYNE, BARDHERE AND KISMAYO."

Both al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam stepped up their efforts to curtail media freedom in this period by threatening, intimidating, shutting down media outlets and even taking over private media houses. With Islamists now in

control of the majority of southern and central regions, including most of the capital, the suffering of the media is unmistakable. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has failed to safeguard human rights, including the right to free expression and freedom of the press.

Puntland, a semi-autonomous state in the northeast, has been experiencing a worsening press freedom climate. One radio journalist was killed and another journalist was held for nearly three months after he was given a six-year jail sentence, the longest ever in the country. Journalists have been banned, critical journalists threatened and there is a lack of investigations into attacks on journalists, despite the fact that Puntland vaunts itself as a place where the rule of law is exercised. The Puntland administration is particularly sensitive to criticism of the administration from the media and sees negative media comments as unfair. Unlike southern Somalia and Puntland, the new leadership of the breakaway region of Somaliland achieved significant improvements and openness in restoring relations between the authorities ➤

➤ and the media. Although in the run-up to presidential elections, under the former UDUB party administration, they experienced extreme suffering, the KULMIYE led administration opened dialogue with the journalists and the media community. Across the country, local authorities, law enforcement bodies, armed Islamists and independent armed groups continued to pose a problem for press freedom. Continuation of the conflict is not however the main source of the insecurity for journalists since we have witnessed conflict periods in which no journalists were even arrested, let alone killed.

A way must be urgently found for the local authorities and the international community to pursue militant Islamist groups who commit crimes against journalists and other civilians. There can be no justification for the approach of a section of the international community which says there can be "no channel of communication with terrorists", since the armed groups consider this gives them a green light to continue their murderous ways with impunity.

Our concern is that as the period of the transitional government ends in August 2011 without a viable political and security solution for the country, armed power struggles may increase and politicians as well as armed groups will turn their guns on journalists who refuse to be cowed by their intimidation and manipulation.

"WITH ISLAMISTS NOW IN CONTROL OF THE MAJORITY OF SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL REGIONS, INCLUDING MOST OF THE CAPITAL, THE SUFFERING OF THE MEDIA IS UNMISTAKABLE. "

■ Omar Faruk Osman
Secretary General
National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)



INTRODUCTION

There has been no improvement in the state of press freedom in 2010 in comparison to the previous three years. The NUSOJ's press freedom team was able to monitor, investigate and report on cases of attacks against journalists in every city and at every scene of violation.

Ninety-six alerts, press releases, updates and reports were produced during 2010. Sixty-one of these releases related to southern and central regions, 31 were from Puntland and four from Somaliland. The releases covered cases of killings, arrests, injury, expulsion, death threats, imprisonment, looting of media houses, media houses taken over, court cases against journalists and journalists fleeing.

Seven media houses either fell into the hands of the Islamists or went off air as Islamist forces expanded in southern regions. The new leaders of Puntland immediately sought confrontation with the media and hostile relations developed. The Transitional Federation Government proved itself largely incapable of protecting journalists or media houses. The transitional federal parliament failed either to discuss or review media law.

The impunity with which journalists are attacked fuels further terrible crimes against journalists while in Puntland the judiciary has been hugely compromised. Lack of the rule of law in the southern regions continues to put the li-

ves of journalists in danger. There are similar problems in Puntland where police and security agents operate at will with no respect for the work of journalists.

Apart from issuing press releases, reports and alerts, the National Union of Somali Journalists' press freedom programme has been engaged in organizing a campaign inside and outside the country to defend media rights and press freedom. NUSOJ made a submission about widespread and routine violations of the right to freedom of expression, particularly freedom of the press, to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Somalia.

A campaign to free Abdifatah Jama Mire, director of Horseed Media was organized inside and outside the country which resulted in more than 50 journalists and free expression activists petitioning Puntland leader Abdirahman Mohamed Farole to free the journalist who was detained in Bossasso for 86 days.

Once again, most attacks against journalists have been attributed to Islamist armed forces, followed by the Puntland administration and their security forces and the transitional federal government.

"THE IMPUNITY WITH WHICH JOURNALISTS ARE ATTACKED FUELS FURTHER TERRIBLE CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS WHILE IN PUNTLAND THE JUDICIARY HAS BEEN HUGEY COMPROMISED."

■ **Mohamed Ibrahim Isak**
Press Freedom Coordinator
National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)

JOURNALISTS KILLED

5 May 2010 : Veteran journalist Sheik Nur Mohamed Abkey was murdered in Mogadishu. Hooded men armed with pistols followed the 52-year-old, who was working for Radio Mogadishu – Voice of Somali Republic, a government owned radio station, and killed him near his home in Ward-higley district. Journalists in Mogadishu believe that he was murdered because of his leading role and journalistic work with Radio Mogadishu which is owned and managed by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The government officially accused al-Shabaab of the killing. Sheik Nur Mohamed Abkey joined the profession in 1988 as a reporter with the former Somali National News Agency (SONNA), working chiefly in foreign news. In the past ten years he worked for several media houses in Mogadishu. He was a highly skilled journalist who worked as producer, reporter, presenter and even as a technician.

24 August 2010 : Barkhad Awale Adan, aged 60, was killed during clashes between the TFG and al-Shabaab in Mogadishu. Adan, the director of Hurma Radio, who was on duty at the radio station, was shot and killed in an exchange of fire between the warring sides. He was rushed to Madina hospital where he was confirmed dead upon arrival. Adan was born in Borame, Awdal region in northern Somalia. He had worked in the media for the last 30 years, the last four of which he was the director of Hurma Radio, which is owned and run by a civil society organization.

31 August 2010 : Abdullahi Omar Gedi of Radio Daljir was stabbed to death in Galkayo District in the Mudug region. Gedi, 25, was attacked by unknown assailants who stabbed him at least six times in the chest and the legs in Garsoor village. He died from his wounds on his way to the Galkayo General Hospital, according to his colleagues at Radio Daljir. His mobile was stolen. Gedi worked for Radio Daljir branch in Galkayo as a newscaster and reporter as well as technician.



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- 1 Sheik Nur Mohamed Abkey
- 2 Barkhad Awale Adan
- 3 Abdullahi Omar Gedi

JOURNALISTS WOUNDED

10 January 2010 : Osman Adan Areys, a stringer for Mogadishu-based SIMBA Radio and the Puntland station Daljir Radio was wounded in the arm in Koshin neighbourhood in Beledweyne town, where fighting was going on, according to local journalists. Areys was hit by a bullet while covering the fighting for control of the town between two rival Islamist militias. "I was hit by a bullet in my upper part of my left arm and I am being treated at the hospital." Osman Adan Areys told NUSOJ.

15 January 2010 : Unidentified assailants threw hand grenades at Radio Voice of Mudug, Radio Hobio and Radio Galkayo in Galkayo town of Mudug region in central Somalia. Journalists Mohamed Isse Mohamud of Radio Voice of Mudug, Abdulkadir Mohamed Jimale of Horn Cable TV and Faysal Abdi Jama of Radio Hobio were wounded in the attacks. One of the security guards at Radio Voice of Mudug was also wounded.

27 March 2010 : Abdifatah Hashi Nor, a news monitor for the Voice of Peace Radio in Mogadishu was wounded by a sniper bullet as he was working inside the premises of the radio in the KM5 neighbourhood. The stray bullet penetrated Nor's left kidney after passing through the glass of the window.

29 June 2010 : Eight journalists were wounded in a bomb attack at a police school in Abdiasis district of northern Mogadishu as they were covering a press conference held by an al-Shabaab spokesman after the Islamists took over the base on the previous day. One of the wounded journalists told the NUSOJ that the perpetrators of the attack knew that a press conference was taking place and that journalists were in attendance.

1 July 2010 : Farah Abdi Warsame, a freelance photo-journalist was wounded in fighting between the TFG and al-Shabaab in Mogadishu, while Mustafe Haji Abdinur, a reporter for the AFP news agency and Yusuf Jama Abdulahi (known as Yusuf Djibouti), a freelance cameraman were arrested by TFG police for taking pictures of the wounded Warsame, who had been hit in the left hand and back by shrapnel. Since the journalists were in the conflict area, government forces accused Mustafe and Yusuf of directing al-Shabaab's gunfire. Both were held overnight at the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

2 November, 2010 : Five masked assailants armed with pistols attacked Hassan Mohamed Abikar, known as Hassan Mator, while he was on his way home in Afgoi District, 30km southwest of the capital city, an insurgent controlled area. Abikar was shot four times in the chest and hands, and left unconscious, but luckily he was found alive and was rushed to Dayniile Hospital, northwest of the capital, his family said. Hassan Mohamed Abikar, who is a free-lance radio journalists based in Afgoi, works as a stringer for several radio stations in Mogadishu. It is not yet clear why he was attacked and Hisbul Islam that controls the district did not comment on the reason behind the attack on the journalist.

ARRESTS AND OTHER ATTACKS

21 February 2010 : Ali Yusuf Adan, a correspondent for Radio Somaliweyn in Lower Shabelle region, was arrested by the al-Shabaab administration in the Wanlaweyn district of Lower Shabelle and was later transferred to a prison in Merca town, headquarters of Lower Shabelle region. Al-Shabaab did not provide any reasons for the journalist's arrest. The arrest followed a report the journalist filed on 20 February about al-Shabaab militias who shot a man who arrived late for prayers in Wanlaweyn. It was believed that this report might be behind his arrest. Despite censorship and edicts imposed by al-Shabaab that led many journalists to flee the territories under their control many journalists continue to work under these harsh conditions. He was released after three weeks in al-Shabaab custody.

24 February 2010 : Ahmed Ibrahim Nor, a correspondent for Mogadishu-based Radio SIMBA in Bossasso, was beaten by the chief security officer of the high court in Bossasso and other guards during a court hearing on 24 February 2010. This happened while Nor and other journalists were recording the proceedings as the judge was sentencing a convicted criminal. «The commander told us to stop recording the proceedings and we did stop. Then, he started hitting me on the head. Then a group of seven other guards set on me, beating me badly,» Nor said in an interview with Radio SIMBA. ➤

● **28 February 2010** : Militias loyal to al-Shabaab raided the premises of Radio Holy Quran and kidnapped Abdikarim Mohamed Hersi, a reporter and newscaster on the radio station, in Mogadishu's Suuq Ba'aad neighbourhood, an al-Shabaab controlled area. He was released on 1 March 2010, after being held overnight.

16 March 2010 : Ahmed Omar Salihi, a director of Markabley Radio in Bardhere town and head of NUSOJ's Southwest Branch was detained overnight by the al-Shabaab administration in Bardhere, Gedo region. He was released on 17 March 2010. The arrest of the radio director came after Mohamed Abdikarim, a reporter for Radio Markabley in Belet-Hawo, a town bordering Kenya, filed a report about an appeal made by some elders in Belet-Hawo town to the Kenyan and Somali governments to intervene on alleged ill-treatment by the Kenyan police of Somali civilians crossing the border. The report apparently incensed the al-Shabaab administration in the town, leading to Abdikarim's arrest as well a threat of unspecified actions against the radio station.

16 March, 2010 : Mohamed Abdikarim, a correspondent for both HornAfrik and Markabley station, was arrested then released on March 20, after spending three days in a detention centre in Balat-Hawo town. [See above].

16 March 2010 : Mohamed Salad Abdulle who is stringer for both Somali Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) in Bossasso and Somaliweyn Radio in Mogadishu was released by al-Shabaab after being held for six days but was ordered to leave the Juba region of southern Somalia within 36 hours. Abdulle who also works as the Kismayo correspondent with Markabley radio in Bardhere was held in the custody of the al-Shabaab administration. He was arrested after he allegedly filed news reports about negotiations between the al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam. This is said to have infuriated the al-Shabaab administration in Kismayo.

24 March 2010 : Abdikarim Mohamed Bulhan, a correspondent for Mogadishu-based Radio Shabelle in Abudwaq, a town in the central Somalia, was detained after militias loyal to Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jama' arrived in trucks, stormed his house and took him to a detention centre in Abudwaq. Bulhan was released on 27th March after a court of moderate Sufis, Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jama, failed to provide evidence of the allegations against the journalist, who had been accused of filing reports critical of the Sufi administration in Abudwaq.

25 May 2010 : Hizbul Islam arrested three broadcast journalists in Afgoye, 30km southwest of the capital, who were working for Mogadishu based radio stations, the latest in a series of violations against the press. Militias loyal to Hizbul Islam jailed Sheekh Adow Amiin, a correspondent for Simba Radio, Ahmed Yusuf Idaajaa, a correspondent for Radio Holy Quran (IQK) and Mohamed Hussein Osman, a correspondent for Radio Xurma. The three, who were just going about their daily journalistic tasks at the time, were held for four days.

2 June 2010 : Three journalists working for different media stations were assaulted and detained by presidential security guards in Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland, for taking photographs at a house opposite the presidential palace that was being painted with the flag of the Kulmiye political party. Mohamoud Abdi Jama, chairman of Waaheen Media Group – a newspaper and a radio, Mohamed Said Abdillahi known as Xarago, editor of Berberanews.com and Mohammed Rashid Mahamoud, chief editor of Saxafi News Paper were briefly held at a prison within the presidential palace and they were later transferred to the central police station where they were detained for three days.

25 June 2010 : The information ministry of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland gave directions to independent media houses in Puntland. They were issued a statement signed by director of the information ministry Yasin Adan Roble telling all independent radios, televisions and websites in Puntland to take orders from the information ministry. The ministry said it would hold a meeting at which every independent media house should display the programmes they air. The ministry said media could only broadcast religious programmes of Puntland clerics. The statement which comprised 13 articles also banned Puntland media from broadcasting religious edicts against Puntland. The ministry also barred independent media from broadcasting programmes from organizations or individuals not yet subjected to information ministry censorship. This included a ban on commercials and advertisements in conflict with the culture of Puntland people. The media houses were told not to broadcast news not based on facts and the ministry also called on media companies to participate in building the country. The ministry also told them not to take part in political meetings against the existence of Puntland and dictated that news about the Puntland government should take priority over all other news. ●

➤ **26 June 2010 :** Hadis Mohamed Hadis, editor of Baadiyenews.com, an independent news website published in Somaliland was arrested by uniformed officers of Somaliland's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) at Hadhwa-naag Hotel in Hargeisa. When asked the reason of the arrest, the CID officers only said that they were investigating serious crimes that they suspect Hadis Mohamed Hadis was involved in, without further elaboration of the "serious crimes". Journalists present at the time of the arrest told NUSOJ that the officers also confiscated the journalist's digital camera and car keys. He was transferred the same night to Hargeisa central prison where he was held for five days.

7 July 2010 : The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) condemned in the strongest terms possible, the continued and illegal detention, incommunicado, of a Somali online reporter at the commercial port town of Bossasso by the Puntland Intelligence Service (PIS). The reporter, Yusuf Ali Adan, was working for a news website www.somalifans.net. NUSOJ said it feared for his safety and wellbeing. According to local journalists in Bossasso, Adan, who was the Bossasso correspondent for the news organisation was jailed and kept at a secret prison since June 2010. The motive behind his arrest was not officially stated but it was widely thought to be linked to critical articles Adan wrote about the Puntland Administration, which mainly touched on links to piracy. At yearend he was believed still held by the PIS at an unknown location. He was released on 30 December 2010.

10 August 2010 : Nuh Muse Birjeb, a journalist working for the Voice of America (VOA) Somali Service who is also a correspondent for Universal TV was banned from working in the Puntland region. The Puntland Ministry of Information, Telecommunication and Culture sent a letter to the journalist ordered him to suspend his work. The letter gave no reason for the suspension. The ban was lifted ten days later. However, journalists in Puntland believe the decision came from the top leadership of the administration, including the Puntland presidency. Journalists believed that Nuh Muse had been the target of ongoing repression and intimidation by senior officials of Puntland who, according to journalists, could not tolerate his news reports, though it is not clear where the reports that instigated the suspension were broadcast. Puntland has been carrying out repressive action against journalists working for the VOA Somali service.

Mohamed Yasin Isak, who was the VOA correspondent in Galkayo, fled to Kenya in fear of his life after he escaped from several attacks.

14 August 2010 : Abdifatah Jama Mire, Director of Horseed Media was jailed for six years by the Puntland authorities. The police commissioner for Bari region, which has its HQ in Bossasso, Colonel Abdisalam Aflaw, arrested Abdifatah and seven other media workers from the radio station on Friday, 13 August. The media workers were later released, but the director remained in custody. The arrest of the director comes after the radio carried an interview, the same day (Friday), of the rebel leader, Mohamed Said Atom, an Islamist commander whose forces were fighting the Puntland administration. The Puntland administration accused Abdifatah of broadcasting interviews with people hostile to the administration. Abdifatah was taken on 14 August to the First Level Court of Bossasso without prior notice and the Puntland Prosecutor, Mohamud Mohamed Yusuf (Shimbir), charged him with "interviewing and broadcasting views of people who are fighting the government". The prosecutor further asked the court to jail the director for three years. Journalists present at the court told NUSOJ that neither the prosecutor nor the police produced any evidence to substantiate their allegations, nor did they allow the journalist a defence lawyer despite a request to this effect from Horseed Media's management. There was shock as the chair of the first level court, Judge Farah Hassan Ismail, sentenced Abdifatah Jama Mire to six years in jail plus a fine of US\$500. The journalist was found guilty of breaching Puntland's anti-terror law. The arrest, illegal detention and the subsequent of imprisonment and fine are in contradiction with Somalia's Transitional Federal Charter, Puntland's Constitution and internationally agreed standards of freedom of expression. He was freed through a Puntland presidential pardon after 86 days in detention.

15 August 2010 : The authorities banned media in Puntland from interviewing rebels fighting the administration in mountain villages along the north-eastern coast, near the commercial town of Bossasso. Puntland Information Minister, Abdihakim Ahmed Guled, held a press conference in Bossasso and ordered news organizations and journalists not to interview the rebels whose armed forces, led by Sheik Mohamed Said Atom, are fighting forces of the semi-autonomous regional State. Guled said the rebels fighting his administration had links with international terrorists and ➤

☛ threatened any journalist or media house that failed to obey this order with "severe punishment". The minister also warned that Puntland security forces will take "appropriate action" against any news media organisation that reports about the rebels.

28 September 2010 : Mohamed Qani Hussein Kuusow, a stringer for Radio Shabelle and Radio Markale, was arrested after he filed a report to Radio Shabelle based in Mogadishu and Radio Markale in Bardhere town about reported military movements of government forces based in Doolow town. He was released four days later from the al-Shabaab jail. Al-Shabaab accused the reporter of "inciting the people" and "creating fear among the people". Al-Shabaab said they would shortly bring him before an Islamic court.

6 October 2010 : A letter from the Somaliland Minister of Information and Public Orientation, Abdullahi Osman Jama, banned Universal TV to work in Somaliland after the TV "failed to execute its media duties impartially". The Minister, who asked the Somaliland law enforcement bodies and the Interior Ministry to implement the ban, added that Universal TV flouted "international standards of journalism" and that its management had refused to take telephone calls from the Ministry, an allegation denied by Ahmed Abubakar, Director General of Universal TV who said that they had not received any complaint or communication from the authorities. Universal TV is a leading and popular Somali television network based in London but broadcasting in Somaliland and greater Somalia with a network of correspondents in many parts of the world. The ban was later lifted after talks between Somaliland and the TV's management.

9 October 2010 : Hassan Mohamud Halane, director of Radio Mandeeg in Beledhawo town, was arrested after he returned from a workshop in Hargeisa, Somaliland, conducted by an international aid organization. He remained in jail for eight days. Al-Shabaab objected to the director attending the workshop.

18 October 2010 : An explosive device was thrown into the building of the radio station, Horseed Media Network, based in Bosaso, when all the journalists and producers were in the newsroom. The station's reception area was completely destroyed but no staffers were hurt. The attack was reported to police who came to the scene but the sus-

pected perpetrators - two men armed with pistols - remained at large. The station was temporarily shut down.

11 November 2010 : Mayor of Bossaso, Mohamud Farah Beldaje, told a press conference in Bossaso that he was suspending the activities of journalists Ahmed Muse Ali and Ahmed Mohamud Mohamed working for Universal TV and Horn Cable TV respectively. The Bossaso mayor accused the two journalists of reporting "news against Puntland people and government", and said the two reporters have been interviewing people who were "mentally imbalanced" without expounding on his allegations. Beldaje added that he notified his decision to the Puntland Ministry of Information, the police chief, the chairman of first-level court and the Puntland prosecutor. Puntland leaders lifted the suspension the following day.



ATTACKS ON MEDIA HOUSES

3 April 2010 : Hisbul Islam imposed oppressive edicts on radio stations in Mogadishu, especially those based in areas under their control. The edicts instructed stations not to air music or songs and not to refer to foreign fighters as foreigners, but rather to refer to them as «Muhaajiriin». At a press conference held in Mogadishu, Moalim Hashi Mohamed Farah, the man in charge of Mogadishu for Hisbul Islam, said that any station that failed to act in accordance with the edicts would face serious consequences. "These rules will come into effect within 10 days beginning today," Moalim Hashi Mohamed Farah said at the press conference. This was the first time radio stations in Mogadishu faced such public censorship. Six of the eight radio stations operate in Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab-held neighbourhoods of Mogadishu, five of which are based in Bakaro, directly affected by these oppressive edicts.

9 April 2010 : Al-Shabaab banned news and other BBC programmes that are re-broadcast in Somalia through local FM stations, particularly in the regions and districts under their control. Al-Shabaab said it was banning BBC programmes and would "confiscate equipment". A statement from the group accused the BBC of broadcasting programmes "against Muslims and Islam". "The BBC makes propaganda for the enemy of Muslims and for Christian agents," the al-Shabaab statement added. Immediately after the release of this statement, al-Shabaab reportedly raided and looted

BBC offices in Mogadishu's Bakara Market and two other offices. All equipment from BBC offices in Baidoa, Mogadishu and Jowhar were taken away by al-Shabaab, according to local journalists in Jowhar, Mogadishu and Baidoa. Private radio stations that had agreements with the BBC to re-broadcast its programmes implemented the al-Shabaab ban for fear of their life and safety of their equipment. "The BBC is owned by Britain and it is the first voice that fulfils the agendas of the Christian colony to Muslim world," the al-Shabaab statement added. The group called on radio stations with contracts to re-broadcast the programmes of BBC and VOA to end today; otherwise they would be raided and plundered. The radio stations in Mogadishu complied immediately.

13 April 2010 : Mogadishu's 14 private radio stations were forced to implement orders to stop playing commercials and entertainment at the end of a ten-day ultimatum issued to radio stations by Hisbul Islam, local radio stations said, Hisbul Islam officials telephoned some of the stations to remind them of the deadline and warning them of dire consequences should they fail to comply. The stations feared life-threatening acts of retaliation if they did not. All the affected stations were in areas controlled by Islamists and by the Transitional Federal Government. ➤

➤ **15 April 2010** : Hisbul Islam militia stormed the premises of GBC radio and Television ordered the radio to go off air without notice while the radio was in the middle of airing its scheduled daily programmes. The group accused the radio of broadcasting music, following a music ban order from Hisbul Islam. It was believed that the music transmissions could have come from another newly-launched radio.

18 April 2010 : At a press conference held in Mogadishu, Abdikafi Hilowle Osman, the General Secretary of Banadir Regional Administration which also administers Mogadishu city for the TFG threatened to close down radio stations that complied with the music ban ordered by the Hisbul Islam insurgents. In the same week, at least 14 radio stations stopped music broadcasts in Mogadishu, in response to an ultimatum from Hisbul Islam. Most independent radio stations in Mogadishu complied with the order for safety reasons. Abdikafi Hilowle Osman said that "they will not tolerate the 14 radio stations that halted airing music and songs in the government controlled area," adding, "We consider these radio stations are working with insurgents and will be closed down".

21 May 2010 : The al-Shabaab group attacked Radio Somaliweyn's premises in Mogadishu's Boondheere district and seized all its equipment, amid heavy fighting in the neighbourhood. 26 May 2010: Members of military/police forces and the Puntland Intelligence Service (PIS) attacked six journalists who were reporting from a Kat (a stimulant leaf that many Somalis chew) market. The mayor of Bossaso, Mohamoud Farah Beeldaaje, said that he would «move the Kat market out of the town» at a media conference at the municipality offices in Bossaso, after the market was hit by a mudslide following heavy rainfall. Journalists Ahmed Mose Ali (Universal TV correspondent), Abdalle Ahmed Moumin (Raxanreeb website reporter), Jama Ahmed Ali (Radio Voice of Peace reporter) and Ayuub Abdirahman Mohamed (Horseed Media reporter) were briefly detained by the Puntland military police known as Darawish at the Central Police Command in Bossaso. Puntland officials including Security Minister Gen.

Yusuf Ahmed, Sea and Ports Minister Sa'id Mohamed Rageh and the mayor of Bossaso, Mohamoud Farah, who visited the journalists at the detention centre expressed dismay over what happened and ordered the arrest of the soldiers behind the detention of the journalists.

23 August 2010 : Al-Shabaab took over Radio Holy Quran (IQK), a privately-owned radio station in north Mogadishu after delivering a letter in which they explained their action to the management of the media house. "All the operations of Radio Holy Quran have effectively been taken over by the administration of al-Shabaab movement beginning from today 13th Ramadan of 1431 Hijri, which matches 23 August 2010," the al-Shabaab letter said.

19 September 2010 : Al-Shabaab and Hisbul fighters looted two independent radio stations, HornAfrik and Global Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), in Mogadishu. The two radio stations are independent radio and televisions based in the capital. Some of HornAfrik staff says armed militia from the al-Shabaab broke into the premises of the radio station in Bakaro market of Mogadishu in evening, chased away journalists working in the station before destroying cassettes and CDs in the studios of the radio and its sister broadcasting house, Capital Voice. Separately, heavily armed militia from Hisbul Islam, another Islamist rebel group fighting against the Somali government and the African Union peace keepers in Mogadishu, broke into the headquarters of GBC radio and television in Heliwa district in Mogadishu, taking it over.

PRESS FREEDOM IN PUNTLAND

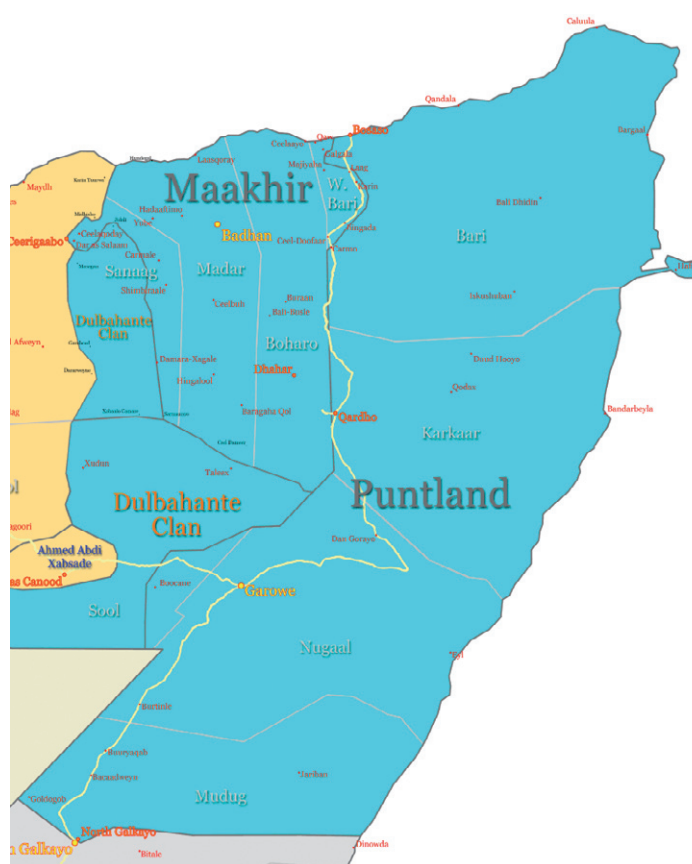
In the relatively peaceful Puntland State of Somalia, which declared itself a federal autonomous state in 1998 after the failure of more than a dozen internationally backed attempts to restore peace and order in Somalia, the authorities maintain a tight hold on the media via restrictions and harsh sanctions.

The state of free expression and press freedom in Puntland has been deteriorating of late, especially since the anti-terrorism law was put in place by the administration in July 2010. Journalists, other media professionals, intellectuals, community elders and ordinary citizens who try to express their views are often subjected to arbitrary arrests, suspension, harassment, mistreatment and other violations of constitutional rights. **Brutality by the administration's security forces continues with impunity.**

The Puntland administration has increased suppression and attacks against journalists and the independent media in the last six months. The harsh punishments and restrictions imposed on the media made the work of the journalists and free press very onerous in Puntland.

As can be seen from the chronologic listing of press freedom cases in Somalia, Puntland made a significant contribution to this unwelcome press freedom picture in the country. The administration has not made any strides in respecting and protecting freedom of expression. The recent arbitrarily arrests, suspension, censorship and other restrictions explicitly violate the fundamental rights of the press and journalists and strongly restrict freedom of expression and press freedom in Puntland.

There is a growing need to prioritise the securing of freedom of expression and access to information in Puntland, the defence of local journalists and the guaranteeing of safety throughout transition processes in the country. It is essential that pressure be applied to the TFG and the administration of Puntland and all political groups in Somalia to cease their war on free expression and to protect journalists from abuses that prevent them from carrying out their legitimate work.



■ **Burhan Ahmed Dahir**
Puntland Coordinator
National Union of Somali Journalists

ASSISTANCE FOR EXILED SOMALI JOURNALISTS

At least 90 journalists fled their homes in Somalia in the past two years because of attacks, threats and murder, especially from south-central Somalia. Every month, a journalist flees Somalia and reaches neighbouring countries for safety. Most of the journalists fled to Nairobi, Kenya and sought asylum from the UNHCR office in Nairobi.

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) opened a branch office in Nairobi to help those journalists who were forced into exile. The Branch office was opened in October in 2009, since then the office registered 68 Somali exiled journalists in Nairobi and 15 Somali journalists in Kampala, Uganda. These journalists lack jobs, shelter, healthcare and education and need a helping hand.

The office helped 34 individual journalists and five families of those who were murdered because of their job, through advocacy and financially. These five journalists were killed by gunmen in south central Somalia, most of them in the capital Mogadishu.

The office also helped 34 journalists by seeking living, medication and emergency relocation costs for them from international media and human rights organizations. Some of the journalists were made emergency relocation from Mogadishu and some of them from Puntland to Nairobi or Kampala.

The office played an important role in supplying legal defence for journalists arrested in Somalia illegally by writing alerts and asking international media organizations to intervene in their cases. The legal assistance, emergency relocation and living costs were paid by support organizations like Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). The office organized various workshops for the exiled journalists in Nairobi, where participants exchanged information about their plight and their plans for the future.

The office has also facilitated the cases of exiled journalists seeking asylum from the UNHCR office in Nairobi, Kenya. The office wrote support letters to UNHCR asking officers concerned to expedite recognition of the exiled journalists as refugees and any other help including the immediate processing of their cases. The branch office of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) which is a partner of Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), helped RSF identify exiled journalists who were in need. RSF, consequently, wrote recommendation letters for some of the exiled journalists with the help of this office.

■ **Ahmed Mohamed Farah**
Programme Coordinator
National Union of Somalia Journalists (NUSOJ)

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) is a fervent champion for media freedom, the rights of journalists, workers' rights and for social justice in Somalia. Member journalists work across the whole industry as reporters, editors and sub-editors and photographers. Members work in broadcasting, newspapers, magazines, and in the new media. NUSOJ systematically monitors and conducts investigations into violations of press freedom and human rights of journalists. The union provides accurate, prompt and impartial information concerning attacks on journalists such as killings, arrests, death threats and harassments, as well as acts of aggression against media organizations. NUSOJ is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), and Eastern Africa Journalists Association (EAJA). It is also a member of International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) and partner with Reporters without Borders.

■ For more information, visit www.nusoj.org
National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)
KM4 Area, Hodan District, Mogadishu, Somalia,
tel/fax : +252 1 859 944,
e-mail : nusoj@nusoj.org
Internet : <http://www.nusoj.org>