

Country: **SOMALIA**

Submitted by: **The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)**

INTRODUCTION

Women journalists are the most vulnerable and adversely affected in the rat race that practicing journalism has become. Cornered, cowed and demoralized both in news rooms with unfair conditions of work and obnoxious risks outside the news rooms, female journalists in Somalia need to be protected if they are to perform their journalistic duties.

As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, has identified the issue of violence against women journalists as the subject of her next thematic report to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), response the below questions for the report of the special rapporteur:

Please indicate whether there are cases of gender-based violence and harassment against women journalists in your country. If so, please specify how these cases are documented, and describe the State response, or lack thereof, to such cases, including examples of good practice.

Gender-based violence against women journalists is a national problem that takes many different shapes and forms, including intimidation, threats of rape, threats against family, and sexual harassment in the newsroom and in the field in collecting news and information. On 12 July 2019, prominent female Somali journalist, Hodan Nalayeh, founder of Integration TV, was murdered by Al-Shabaab in Somalia's southern town. In the last 2 years, 63 female reporters who are mostly young adults were threatened with rape in retaliation for their work. More than 50 female journalists have reported cases of sexual harassment in the past two years both in the newsrooms and in the field in collecting news and information. Gender-based violence against women journalists in Somalia due to their journalistic work is widespread and action to combat it is either non-existent or inadequate in virtually every case.

Please indicate whether your country has early-warning and rapid-response systems in place, such as hotlines, online platforms or 24-hour emergency contact points to ensure that journalists and other media actors have immediate access to protective measures when they are under threat.

Journalists both male and female are the most endangered journalists. But female journalists are more exposed to risks and dangers than male journalists – making them most vulnerable. There are no early warning and rapid response systems in Somalia for all journalists.

Please specify whether there are any programs in place aimed at addressing factors that increase the likelihood of violence and harassment in the world of work for women journalists, including discrimination, the abuse of power relations, and gender, cultural and social norms that support violence and harassment.

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) in partnership with UN Women and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) organised a conference on violence and harassments against women journalists in Somalia on 2 November 2019, on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity of Crimes Committed against journalists. NUSOJ is advocating for the implementation of harassment policy to help protect female journalists. NUSOJ is pressing that there is a need of urgent action to bring the perpetrators of violence and harassment against women journalists to justice and give confidence to Somali women journalists to report such abuses.

The Federal Government passed Sexual Offences Bill (SOB) to combat violence and harassment against women and girls including women journalists. But the federal parliament has returned claiming that SOB is not in line with Islamic religion. NUSOJ is advocating for the SOB to be returned to the parliament so that the MPs debate and approve it to have a law that protects women journalists.

Please specify whether online and ICT-facilitated violence against women is recognized as a crime, particularly cases of killings, threats of rape and harassment of women journalists.

There are no explicit laws or policies in Somalia that recognise online and ICT-facilitated violence against women as a crime.

Please indicate whether transparent complaint mechanisms for cases of offline and online and ICT-facilitated violence against women journalists have been adopted, and if so, whether policies and procedures for reporting and requesting the removal of harmful content are available and easily accessible.

There are no transparent complaint mechanisms for cases of offline and online and ICT-facilitated violence against women.

Please indicate what challenges are faced by women journalists when reporting on cases of gender-based violence, and specify whether there are any good practices in this regard.

The media in Somalia always relegate gender-based violence in “other news” or not part of the main news. The women journalists do not know to prepare and cover violence against women or gender-based violence, even if they themselves are the victims. There is urgency need to empower female journalists to take and report on gender-based violence as a news worthy story and media managers should be encouraged to give their media houses the chance to cover it extensively.

ENDS