

SOMALI STAKEHOLDERS COALITION FOR THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

(The findings of the report is based the actual situations that the press faced in 2007. Every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of the findings. However, in the event of inaccurate and/or information that is presented in the report that may or may not be necessarily the case, enquiries with relevant remedies should be addressed to Osman Moallim, The Coordinator of Somali Coalition For Freedom of Expression and Olad, Chairman of SOFCA Tel:+252-1250708 E-mail:socfex@yahoo.com Tel:+252699988003, Email: colaadistiila@hotmail.com

Introduction

Despite operating in a very dangerous environment, Somali journalists are committed to maintain their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

They are convinced that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Summary of Report

Somalia's press has been heavily under government control since 1969 and after ousted the late dictatorship regime of General Mohamed SiyadBarre, media started to change into an independent Media under the control of media corporations and privately owned by individuals. And the Somali media become one of the most independent in the world, because of the lack of government institutions in the country.

The year 2007 was the worst for all the previous years to be shed the most of the blood of Media practitioners in Somalia. Unforeseen, the year 2007 started when the country especially southern Somalia came under the influence of the Somali government forces supported by Ethiopian Army, after ousting and took control over Union of Islamic Courts who controlled Mogadishu and parts of south Somalia for six month.

Independent media in Somalia came in a critical situation and trapped inside the risk of continues conflicts and confrontations between allied Somali government and Ethiopian forces against Islamic Insurgents.

Somali Independent media tackled with torture, intimidation, harassments, detention and even bombardments against media houses especially in the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

Media violations became conventional and increasingly, working as a journalist meant being in a risk and destitution, and those challenging same in every aspect due to their hatred of the media wishing that media fulfill their interest.

Attacks on media houses, wounding and arresting journalists become common in everyday life in April 2007, furthermore, an attack was carried out in April a vehicle carried a journalist ahead of his job was confiscated and stolen.

The pressure and ban from the authorities and Transitional Federal Government against the media have increased in a substantial number. In addition of the arrests of the journalists comes other aspect entering the media premises including studios of radio station by armed people by force.

Security force of Somali Transitional Federal government enters different radio station in several times, creating tension and fear after harassing and threatening journalists inside. In August 2007, other bloody month after three journalists were killed, other violations occurred threatening the life of many journalists some of them were apprehended for hours, others intimidated while some of the media outlets stopped their operations for lack of security.

It was the first that almost a high number of 58 journalists fled from the country seeking a safe heaven to Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti and northern part of Somalia (Somaliland). And in October 2007, 24 journalists who sought asylum in Somaliland were expelled to Djibouti after Somaliland authorities ordered them to leave their territory.

Media situation in South and Central regions

It is the regions in south and central Somalia are where the violence and conflict is highly concentrated. The media houses that operate in these regions bear the blunt of the violence as warring parties either compete for media attention in their favor or treat them with adverse effect.

No more patience was left for the Freedom of Expression in Somalia and that is why that some Somali journalists sacrificed for their life, and came to be difficult how the accurate facts could reach and make known to the public.

The Transitional Federal Government come to the first place to the suppression of the independent media tackling to talk about the mass displacement in Mogadishu, the on going fighting continuing since last year in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. The government comes ahead with obstacles before the media since failing to guarantee the safety and the protection of the journalists. Most of the slain journalists or arrested were operating in the southern parts of Somalia.

Although a new media law was approved by the Somali Parliament in Badiua, the official site of the parliament in 2007, some of the government establishments such the presidential office departments, the intelligence services and Mogadishu's regional Authority regularly harass and put pressure on the independent media in Mogadishu sometimes ignoring the role of the government itself and ministry of Information.

Media situation in Puntland

The region enjoyed peace and stability compared to southern parts of Somalia but, unfortunately, that peace were not extended to the press and freedom of expression.

The media in the regions suffered arbitrary shut down just because of unfavorable news bulletin the media prints or broadcast. Morse worse, there is no process of law that media houses can use to challenge decisions of novice officials, who believe that they are the law

itself rather than law enforcers.

The security existing in the Puntland semi-autonomous region of Somalia couldn't afford to guarantee for journalist to exercise and do their job freely.

Puntland in general all the printing media operating in the area including the most influential newspaper in Puntland called "Shacab" disappeared and was closed down. Many radio stations in Puntland receive censorship and intimidations on daily bases.

Media situation in Somaliland

Despite the peace and tranquility enjoyed by the people in the regions of Somaliland the media is one part of the society that continues to experience hardship and ill treatment in the disguise of media licensing. The authorities appear to be uncomfortable with the idea of freedom of expression. Arrest of journalists without charges became a norm within the authorities.

The presidential and security forces pick on journalists to react so that they can justify their disproportional heavy handedness at later stage. In spite of proclaimed democracy by the Somaliland authorities, the media houses are operating in an environment of tension, pressure and fear.

In the self declared republic of Somaliland setbacks come to the freedom of press and in 2007 suppression has started after journalist from the Hatuf newspaper were arrested and their paper banned by the authorities, although later they released with pardon by the DahirRayale, president of Somaliland and the ban lifted over the newspaper.

With the lack of tolerance of the authority, the print media the only independent media consent to exercise come on pressure. Journalist flees from Mogadishu for safety was also expelled from Hargeysa, capital of Somaliland.

It is clear that Somaliland authorities were not pleased the Media law, so far adopted and in the second time prepared other media with constraints and the authorities face against the establishment of independent radio station in Somaliland.

Media situation in Islamist controlled areas

The Islamists and fundamentalists who took control of majority of southern regions continued to treat media and journalists with hostility. The extremist authorities issued orders to intimidate the media such as "no music and songs on air" furthermore; unfavorable news broadcasted will result in station closure and/or stringent punishment.

September 11 2009 Alshabab shut down Horn Afrik branch in southern port town of Kismayo, an independent radio station with out explanation. They took over the equipment and they turned the station to their own property and named it Adulus. They now use it to broadcast propaganda for their own Jihads principles.

On 30 September 2009 Al-Shabab forces in the south western Somali town of Baidoa entered the premises of privately owned Warsan Radio and demanded that the FM station stop broadcasting.

Radio stations in Bar-dhere, Beledhawo, Jowhar and Beledweyn all controlled by Alshabab always face violations, including arbitrary arrests of their journalist's constant imposition of new orders and regular threats.

On April 9 2010 al Shabaab took over the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) off the air in regions they controlled, saying it spread Christian propaganda. They had looted transmission equipment belonging to the BBC in Five regions.

The BBC broadcasts its London-based programming onto its own local FM frequencies in Somalia and local stations relay its signal. The BBC does not have any studios in Somalia. So the group also ordered Horn Afrik Media Company based in Mogadishu to stop relaying BBC and VOA programs from its station.

In May 2010, The Insurgent Al-Shabab group took all the equipment, including computers, FM transmitter and other accessories, belonging Somaliweyn radio station in Mogadishu amid heavy fighting in the neighborhood.

The affected independent radio station was based in the government-controlled neighborhood of Boondheere, north of the capital, but fell into the hands of the Al-Shabab militias during a fighting.

According to reliable source said that, Alshab used the Somaliweyn equipment to a new radio station they opened in Central Somali town of EL-bur.

In September 2010 The Islamist fighters of Al-shabab and Hizbul Islam have taken over the local FM radios and Televisions of Horn Afrik and GBC in the strongholds of Islamists in the Somali capital Mogadishu. Although GBC is still on air broadcasting the agendas of the militants, Horn Afrik believed to be the first of an independent radio station in Somalia remains out of air.

Imposition of orders and censorship

Apart from the killings of the journalists also there have been gross media violations and repressions imposed on both journalists and the media houses further worsening the already risk surrounded media in Somalia.

Hizbul Islam insurgent group imposed restrictions on radio stations. The group banned music and jingles; describing them as un-Islamic. They also made direct threat to journalists working in the government-controlled territory, who could not immediately obey their orders.

The order got into effect on 13th April 2010, ten days after it was issued. Most of the radio stations in Somalia stopped paying music.

In July first 2010 Hizbul-Islam again banned radio stations from airing programs on the country's national Day.

As a the first defiance by a radio station in the rebel controlled area to an order imposed by militants,Shabelle broadcaster secretly, moved from its premise in Bakara market to the government controlled area and immediately re-started airing the celebrations and national songs on the national independence day, as well as airing songs. Its authorities described the move as one that led them to more freedom of speech.

As long as their safety is concerned both the media stations and journalists continue to receive phone call death threats, intimidating text messages and direct physical harassments to deter them from performing their duty impartially.

The threats created fear and endless worry with in the journalists, forcing many to abandon their jobs and seek refuge in the neighboring countries such as; Kenya and Uganda, where they are leading very desperate living conditions as exile journalists.

According to records compiled by Somali Foreign Correspondents Association, for the last five years more than 198 cases of journalists' arrests and abductions were reported across Somalia.

Somalia's north eastern Semi-autonomous region of Puntland and in the North West self-declared republic of Somaliland were leading the record of the journalists' arrests and arbitrary detentions, While the south and central Somalia was notorious with the killings abductions and the constant death threats

As of the last witness to the journalists' ordeals in Puntland authorities there have arrested Reporter Abdifatah Jama Mire.

Jama was sentenced to six years in jail on 14th of August 2010 after being arrested a day earlier and charged with supporting terrorists and inciting violence. Mire is the head of station that had interviewed the leader of a militia that has battled government forces recently.