

Annual Report - 2021

Journalists Safety and Media Freedom in Somalia



Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)
Mogadishu, Somalia

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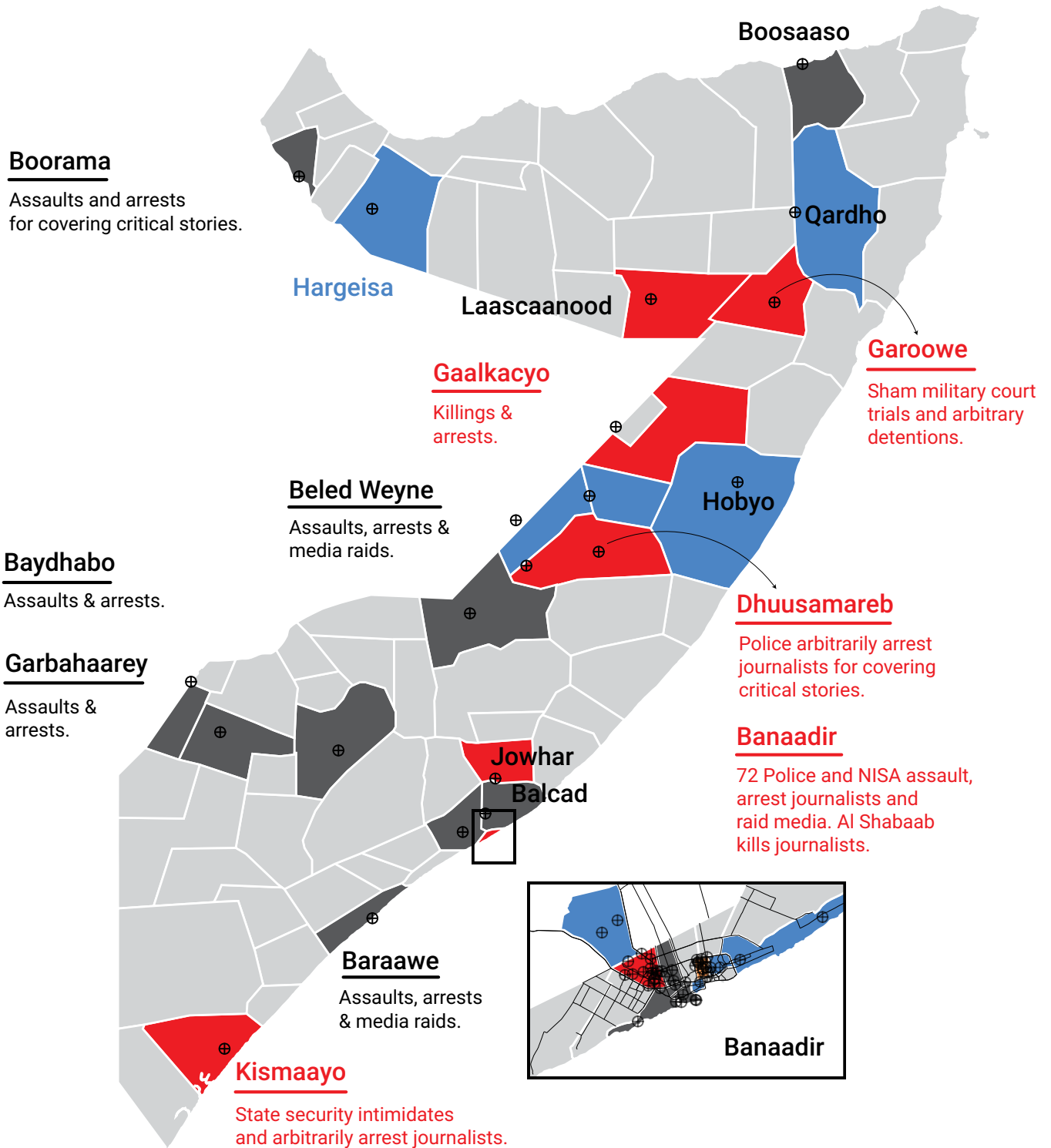
Journalists Safety and Media Freedom in Somalia

Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)
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Attacks and Threats Against Somali Media in 2021

Journalists covering election stories and protests in Banadir and state capitals faced unprecedented levels of attacks, arrests, assaults and harassment.

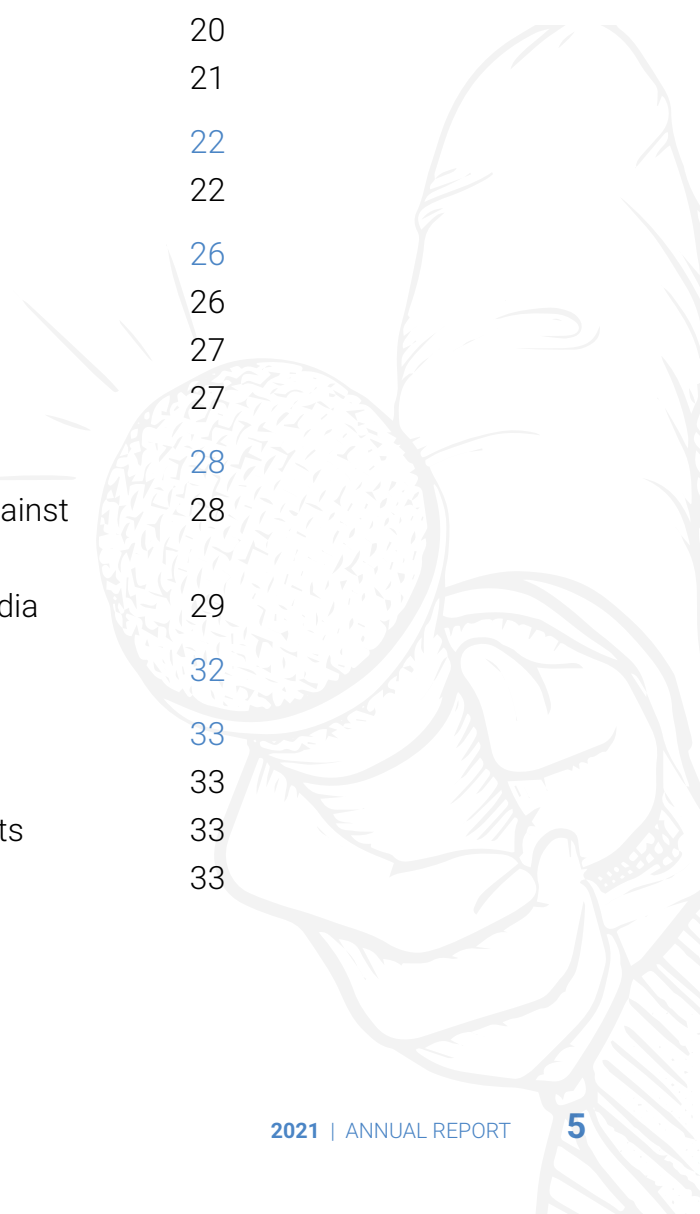
● Dangerous
 ● Serious
 ● Difficult
 ● No Data



Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

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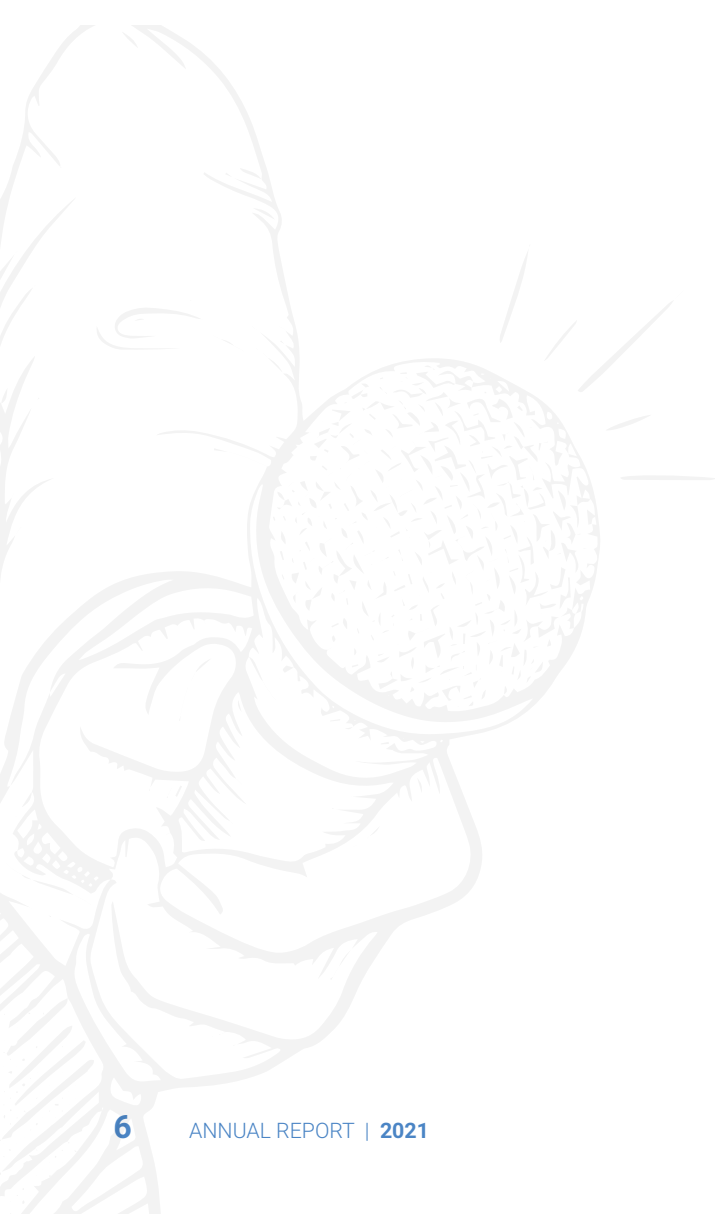


Acknowledgement

We would like to thank SMSJ network member organisations and their staff for their continued hard work in pursuit of safer working conditions for Somali journalists. We also thank the network coordinator, Mohamed Okash, for his excellent contribution to this report in overseeing the systematic tracking and collection of data on incidents of violations against journalists and media workers.

Special thanks go to Abdalla Mumin, Secretary General of SJS, and Farah Nur, Secretary General of FESQJ, for sitting down with the report writer, Mohamed Abdimalik, to share their internal data and reports, and to clarify details on numerous incidents covered in the report. Thanks also go to other SMSJ members – MAP, SWJO, SOMA, and SIMHA, for their invaluable help in reviewing and validating the report’s draft dataset.

Finally, we would like to thank the many journalists and other media workers who spoke to SMSJ to share their experiences, insights, and views on cases of violations. It is our hope that this work will help to shed light on their extremely difficult working conditions and to inform efforts to alleviate their suffering.

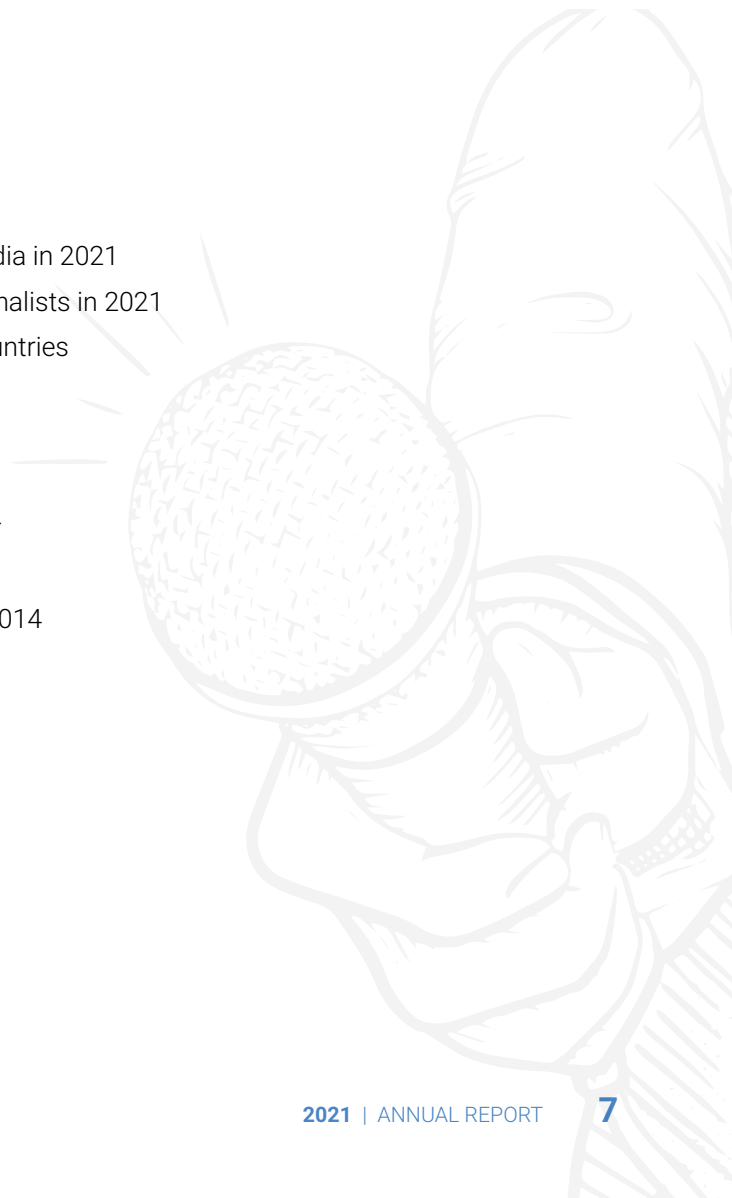


List of Acronyms

BRA	Banadir Regional Administration
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
FESQJ	Federation of Somali Journalists
IMS	International Media Support
MAP	Media Association of Puntland
NISA	National Intelligence and Security Agency
RSF	Reporters without Borders
SIMHA	Somali Independent Media Houses Association
SMSJ	Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists
SNTV	Somali National Television
SOMA	Somali Media Association
SPF	Somali Police Force
SWJO	Somali Women Journalists Organisation
VIKES	Finnish Foundation for Media Development

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Foreword

Caynsane Mohamed, SMSJ Chair

Safety and protection of journalists are key priorities for our coalition of media rights defenders and journalist unions aptly named the Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ), which is generously supported by International Media Support (IMS) and FOJO Media Institute.

In 2021, our members launched numerous initiatives to increase and protect the safety of Somali journalists: advocacy, tracking, analysing, reporting threats and cases, provision of emergency funding and legal support to affected colleagues and their families.

As we knew and had just witnessed again in 2021, brutal violence, arbitrary detentions, intimidation, and harassment of journalists rises to alarming levels during elections, at a time when the Somali public most needs accurate and timely information. As detailed in this report, SMSJ recorded at least two serious violations each week in 2021, including two gruesome murders, 66 arrests, 14 outlets raided or closed, and 27 cases of physical assault and harassment.

To counter and mitigate violence against journalists, SMSJ and its members took proactive steps. Since the signing of the first election agreement in September 2020, our members have organised and held dozens of high-level engagement meetings and workshops to bring together political leaders, security chiefs and media defenders in order to foster common understanding and working relationships based on trust and respect for press freedom and freedom of expression.

SMSJ members also conducted numerous training workshops on election reporting, safety, and conflict-sensitive reporting approaches in the headquarters of all regional states.

This report, which has been compiled from incident monitoring data contributed by SMSJ members, aims to provide an overview of the media freedom situation in Somalia in 2021 with a special focus on cases of violations against journalists and media workers. We therefore wish to thank SMSJ safety committee members, their staff and partners for their input, review, and ideas to make the production of our first joint report a reality.

Signed by:

1. Mohamed Dahir Ceynsane - SMSJ Chairman, MAP Representative
2. Farhiya Mohamed Kheyre - Member, SWJO Representative
3. Mohamed Osman Makaran - Member, SOMA Representative
4. Hassan Ali Gesey - Member, SIMHA Representative
5. Hamdi Hashi - Member, MWN Representative
6. Farah Omar Nur - Member, FESOJ Representative
7. Abdalla Ahmed Mumin - Member, SJS Representative

Executive Summary

In 2021, 105 incidents of media violations were recorded. The violations recorded by SMSJ largely targeted on-duty journalists and included: two cases of murder, 66 arrests, 14 media outlet raids, 14 physical assaults, 13 cases of harassment, and two sham trials.

The figures represent an overall 62 percent increase from 2020 (65 cases: two killed, four injured, 56 arrested, and five media shutdowns), and the highest caseload recorded in almost a decade. Two senior Somali journalists were targeted for their work and killed by Al Shabaab.

Since 2017, 15 Somali journalists were killed, and according to CPJ, Somalia's fatalities represent more than half of all journalists murdered in Africa.

The scale and frequency of violations has seen a sharp dramatic rise as the government's term expired in early 2021, and political tension caused by illegal mandate extension ensued. Street protests, violent armed clashes, and insurgency rocked the country, and the media

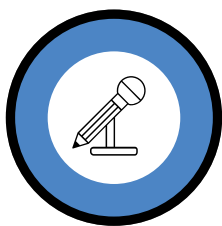
suffered the brunt of various armed actors and political groups.

Banadir region took the unenviable top spot for the third consecutive year as the most dangerous location for journalists. It accounted for nearly half of all violations, 71% of physical beatings, 37% of arrests, and 69% of threats and harassment targeted at media workers. In a bid to enforce media blackout on unfavorable political events, police and NISA officers in Banadir raided four media outlets, confiscating equipment and damaging the facilities.

Security also resorted to the use of roadblocks to block members of the media from covering protests and other critical public interest stories. In other states such as Jubaland and South West, officials harassed the media through arbitrary detentions, summonses, and interrogations to warn them against covering protests and aggrieved parties during the election. In Puntland, journalists continued to face illegal military court detention and sham trials.

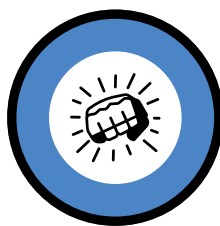
Key Numbers: Violations Against Somali Journalists, 2021

Some of the violations against the media recorded by SMSJ between Jan to Dec 2021



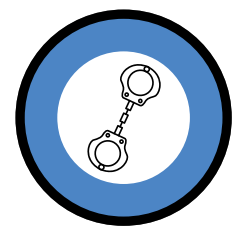
109

Journalists
Affected



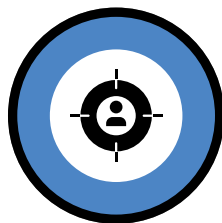
14

Media Houses
Attacked



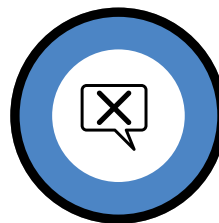
66

Journalists
Arrested



2

Journalists
Killed



3

Media
Shutdowns

Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

Government actors (federal and state security services) continue to top the list of perpetrators of violations against journalists and media workers, with over 94% of recorded cases. Police and NISA officers are implicated in over 80% of the violations - mostly brutal clampdowns, torture, and arbitrary detentions. They are followed at a distance by the military and state security officials.

During the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Somali media continued to struggle with financial crisis. Media outlets have let go of staff, reduced salaries, and cut back on production and coverage of public interest news and reporting.

Government authorities under the pretext of pandemic control measures have imposed draconian restrictions on media access to information, impeding media ability to provide critical information to save lives and to counter misinformation about vaccines, and other important issues. The data in the report shows that a pervasive

culture of impunity for crimes against the media continues unabated. Authorities across all the federal states of Somalia continue to deepen media repression and harassment.

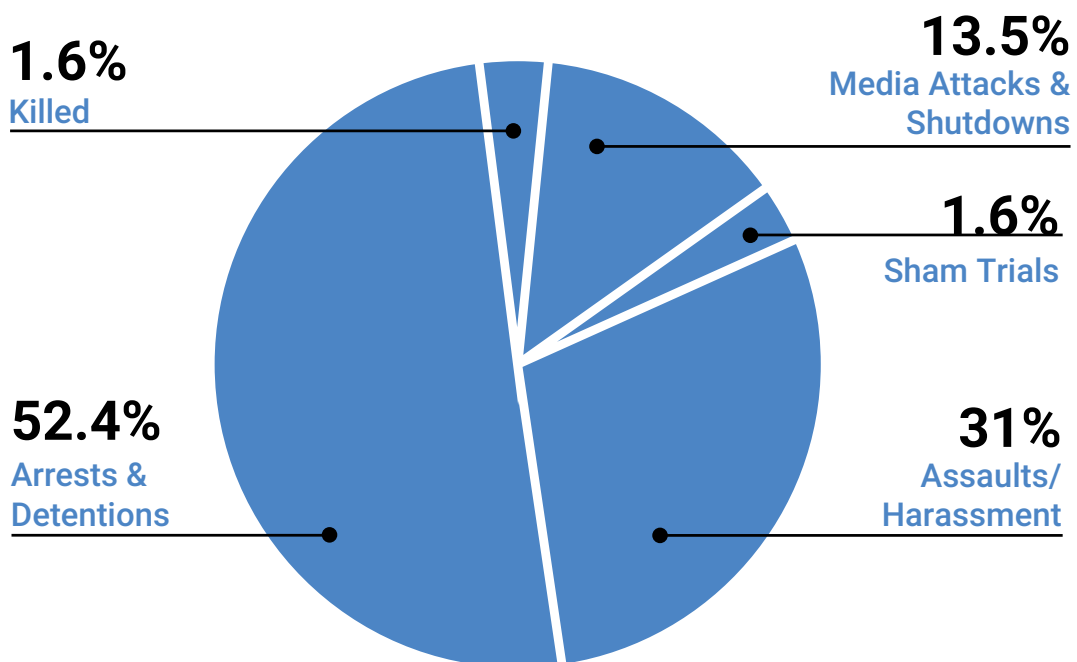
Despite promises to prosecute violations against journalists and address the longstanding list of unresolved murder cases, the federal government has not taken any action.

In the following annual report, SMSJ presents highlights of trends in violations against the media recorded in 2021 and the advocacy work of the network, which included numerous activities to ensure safety and protection of journalists.

The data contained does not cover all violations, as some journalists chose not to report incidents due to the climate of fear and repression.

Violations by Type in 2021

SMSJ recorded 66 incidents of arbitrary arrests in 2021, an increase of nearly 20% compared to 2020.



Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)



Somali journalists sit in a silent protest against the signing of the media law by the Somali president in 2021.

1.0 Introduction and Background

In 2021, heightened political tensions after the expiry of President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo’s mandate, which followed a series of failed election talks, long delays, an illegal attempt at term extension and the outbreak of armed factional clashes in Mogadishu, led to a dramatic spike in violations against journalists and media workers. In total, 105 cases of violations were documented during the reporting period.

Against this backdrop, this annual report on “Safety of Somali Journalists” compiled and released by the Safety Mechanism for Somali Journalists (SMSJ), a network of media defenders supported by IMS, examines the status of media safety and media freedom in Somalia. It highlights key trends in serious violations and abuses against journalists and media workers and offers a set of recommendations to address urgent concerns.

Targeted terror attacks, political violence, use of the archaic 1964 Penal Code and military tribunals, remain the most serious threats to the freedom of the media and freedom of expression in Somalia.

According to Reporters without Borders (RSF), Somalia continues to hold onto the dubious honour of being one of the worst countries in the world for journalists,

ranking 161 out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index.

As the country moved towards the much-awaited parliamentary elections, Somali media faced multiple serious violations such as persistent targeted assassinations, violence, and abuses. Journalists covering critical election stories and related protests faced repeated harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, arrests, and physical attacks.

None of the serious violations, killings and violent attacks listed in this report has been investigated or prosecuted in a court of law. Impunity for crimes against the media in Somalia continues to encourage perpetrators to act with unhindered brutality.

Challenges facing journalists have worsened since 2020 with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial losses by media outlets and a freeze on travel and training opportunities brought lay-offs and reduction of an already meagre salary for media workers. Pandemic control measures are still being misused by local authorities to target and raid media outlets for closure, and to jail journalists for spreading “fake news” and misinformation.

Press Freedom Ranking for Horn of Africa		
Country	Global Score	Rank in 2021
Kenya	33.65	102
Ethiopia	33.65	101
Uganda	41.19	125
Sudan	52.93	159
Somalia	55.47	161
Djibouti	78.62	176
Eritrea	81.45	180

Data: RSF, 2021 World Press Freedom Index. [Rank out of 180 countries]

1.1 SMSJ – Aims and Activities

The purpose of the safety mechanism is to improve the safety and protection for media and journalists in Somalia. Over the last 10 years, killings, imprisonments, harassment, threats, and abductions of journalists have reached historic highs.

These attacks represent a fundamental threat, not just to individual news professionals, but to the practice of independent journalism. Locally based journalists face by far the largest threat and suffer the vast majority of murders, imprisonments, and abductions with less attention.

SMSJ has been created with the purpose of providing emergency support to the journalists and the media at risk. Its work includes producing monitoring of media freedom in Somalia and particularly the safety for journalists in Somalia.

The principle of media/press freedom is enshrined in international, regional, and national human rights laws. The principle of the right to seek, receive and impart information is recognised by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

This right is restated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been signed or ratified by more than 140 states, including Somalia. Somalia's provisional constitution clearly guarantees and protects the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom of the media.

Media is an important actor and instrument in a free and democratic society, as media should provide public with quality information to help citizens to reach desired informed decisions on important matters that affect their lives and also hold their government and those in positions of power accountable for their actions and decisions. In order to ensure that the media can undertake its crucial duties and roles, it is obligatory to ensure the protection of media and journalists, thereby enabling them to operate freely and without fear.

Monitoring of media freedom and the safety of journalists is an essential element in promoting safety of journalists, free flow of information, as well as enabling a safe environment for media operations. Monitoring

the violations against journalists and the media will help the media organisations, media outlets, and relevant stakeholders to evaluate the levels of potential risks and threats towards the media and journalists.

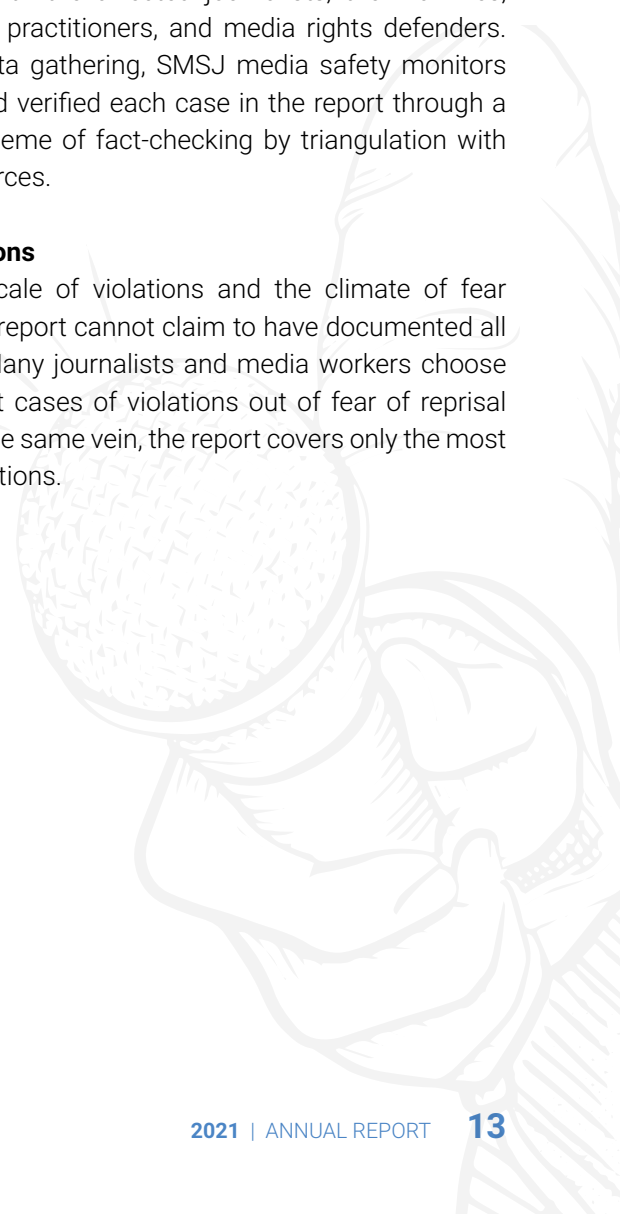
SMSJ has therefore created an effective and sustainable national protection and response mechanism for journalists at risk. The system provides a comprehensive system of support for journalists, including safety trainings, support at the time of risk, legal aid, and capacity development.

1.2 Methodology

The data and information in this report was collected by SMSJ network members based in five federal states of Somalia. The data collection methodology relied on a mixed approach. First, routine quantitative data was collected by the regional monitoring teams in order to analyse and understand trends and patterns of violations. Secondly, SMSJ conducted direct in-person qualitative interviews with the affected journalists, their families, other media practitioners, and media rights defenders. After the data gathering, SMSJ media safety monitors reviewed and verified each case in the report through a rigorous scheme of fact-checking by triangulation with multiple sources.

1.3 Limitations

Given the scale of violations and the climate of fear created, the report cannot claim to have documented all violations. Many journalists and media workers choose not to report cases of violations out of fear of reprisal attacks. In the same vein, the report covers only the most serious violations.



2.0 Killed

In 2021, Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the murder of two veteran Somali journalists. The group continued to deliberately target and kill journalists solely for doing their work. In April, they gunned down senior journalist Jamal Farah in Galkacayo North, Puntland.

In December, a suicide bomber carried out a gruesome terrorist attack that killed Radio Mogadishu director, Abdiaziz Mohamed Guled. The 2021 death toll, which is the same as that of 2020, shows that the deadly trend of political violence against the media continues unabated.

In the absence of credible investigations and action, perpetrators continue to act with unbridled impunity. These murders have created a climate of fear, which is now fueling a silent exodus from the media profession.

The journalists who choose to remain have to live with the fear and attendant self-censorship. To survive and avoid reprisal attacks from the government and terror groups, media workers shun covering critical and investigative stories.

Somali Journalist Killed since 2016

Name	Date	Media Affiliation
Abdiaziz Mohamed Guled	20 th November, 2021	Radio Mogadishu
Jamal Farah Adan	1 st March, 2021	Freelance
Abdiwali Ali Hassan	16 th February, 2020	Freelancer
Said Yusuf Ali	4 th May, 2020	Kalsan TV
Mohamed Sahal Omar	12 th July, 2019	SBC
Hodan Nalayeh	12 th July, 2019	Integration TV
Abdinasir Abdulle Ga'al	14 th August, 2019	Radio SNA
Abdirizak Kasim Iman	26 th July, 2018	SBS TV
Abdirisak Said Osman	18 th September, 2018	Codka Nabada Radio
Abdullahi Mire Hashi	27 th October, 2018	Darul Sunnah Radio
Awil Dahir Salad	22 nd December, 2018	Universal TV
Abdullahi Osman Moalim	13 th September, 2017	Jubaland TV
Ali Nur Siad-Ahmed	14 th October, 2017	Freelance
Jafar Ali Mohamed	25 th October, 2017	Dayah FM
Mohamed Ibrahim Gaabow	11 th December, 2017	Kalsan TV
Sagal Salad Osman	5 th June, 2016	Somali National TV
Abdiasis Mohamed Ali	27 th September, 2016	Radio Shabelle
Mahad Ali Mohamed	6 th November, 2016	Voice of Mudug Radio

Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

2.1 Details of Journalists Killed in 2021



Journalist Jamal Farah

1 Mar: Two armed men killed journalist Jamal Farah Aden in Galkacayo at his shop in the northern part of the city. The insurgent group Al Shabaab later claimed responsibility for the murder. Veteran journalist Jamal Farah worked in the media industry in various capacities in a career spanning over two decades. Until 2018, Jamal was the station manager of Radio Daljir and a special reporter covering the administration of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.



Journalist Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled

20 Nov: Senior journalist and Radio Mogadishu director, Abdiaziz Mohamud Guled (popularly known as Abdiaziz Africa) was killed by a suicide bomber in Mogadishu at around 8pm on Saturday 20 November 2021. At the time of the incident, Abdiaziz Africa was in the company of SNTV Director, Sharmarke Mohamed and his driver Abdikadir Dhagahow, who were both critically injured in the attack. Abdiaziz was the producer of the popular TV programme, Gungaar, which covered critical interviews with Al Shabaab elements captured by security forces.

2.2 Impunity – State of Investigations on Violations

Since President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo came to power in 2017, 15 journalists and media workers were killed in Somalia. Despite routine condemnations and reform promises to end impunity for crimes against the media, local authorities rarely investigate or prosecute the murders, assaults, and arbitrary arrests of journalists.

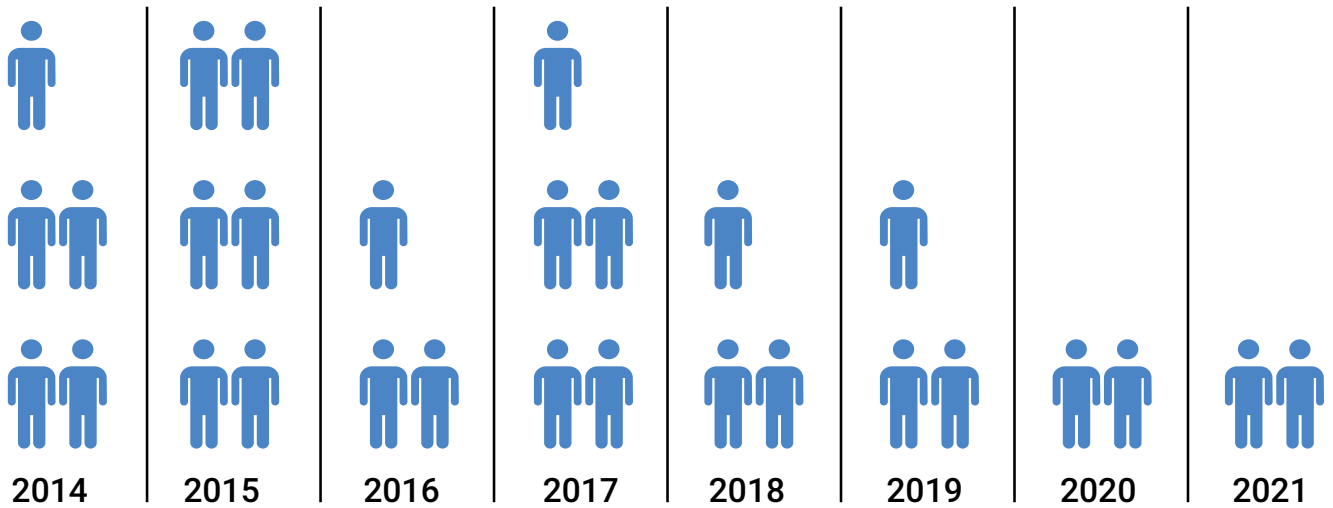
SMSJ, through its network of member organisations, routinely calls on Somali authorities to investigate the rampant infractions and bring perpetrators to book.

In September 2020, following unremitting advocacy, the federal government announced the appointment of a special prosecutor, a new mechanism, to probe and prosecute the long litany of unresolved cases of murder.

The decision, which was widely hailed by the entire media fraternity and human rights defenders, is yet to materialise into any action at all. More than a year later, the new special prosecutor's office for crimes against journalists has not even begun any inquiries. The families of the murdered journalists continue to wait for justice.

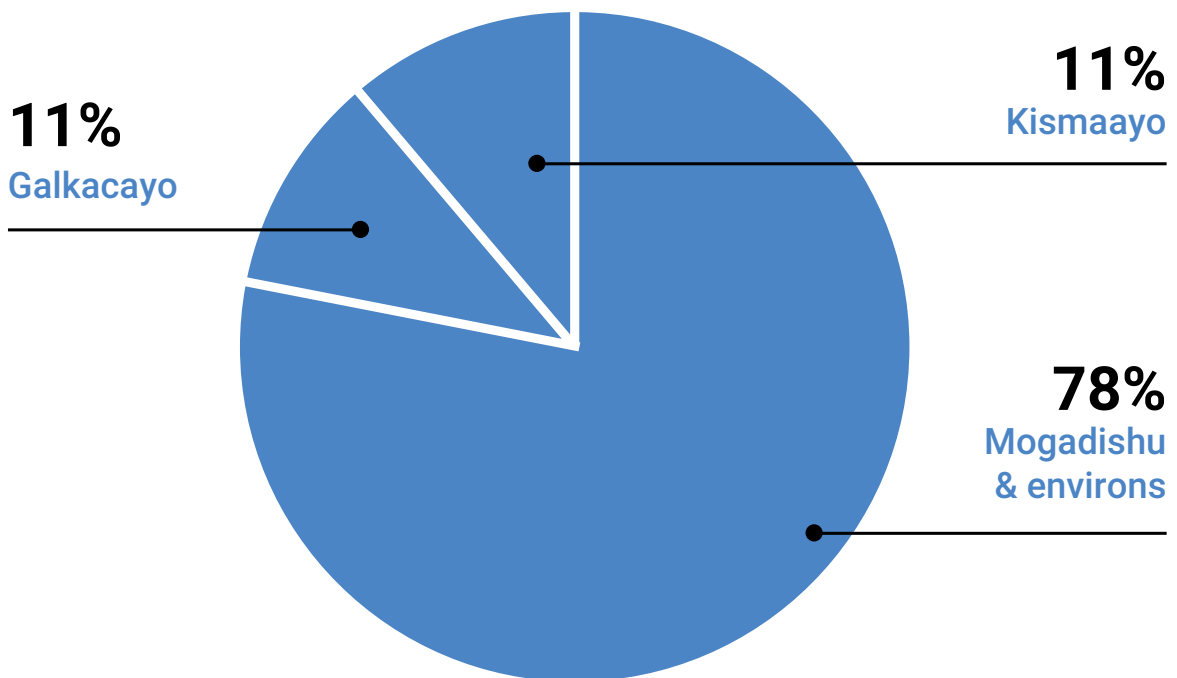
Number of Journalists Killed since 2014

Targeted assassination of journalists by all types of armed actors continue unabated and with impunity



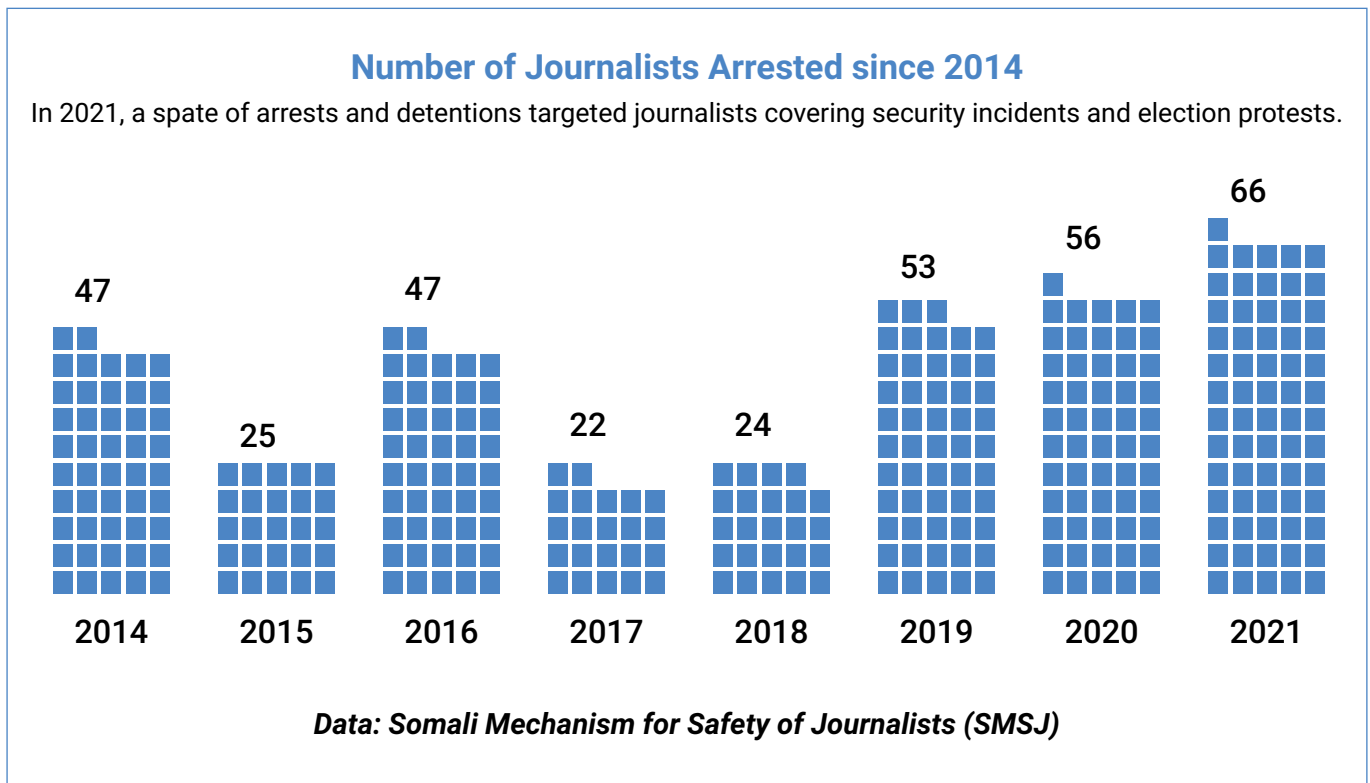
Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

Since 2016, over 60% of Murdered Journalists were killed in Mogadishu and environs



Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

3.0 Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions



In 2021, SMSJ documented a total of 66 arbitrary arrests and detention of Somali journalists. This represents a significant spike compared to 2020, which saw 56 arrests. The dramatic increase in the number of illegal arrests is a result of the series of protests and public anger over the election failures and delays.

The overwhelming majority of those arrested were detained briefly in police stations across the country, and then released without any formal charges.

In many of these arbitrary arrests, journalists were also subjected to physical assaults and intimidation. Many had their equipment broken or confiscated, while some had their footage deleted as a condition for their release.

More than 30% of recorded arrests were carried out by Banadir Regional Administration police and NISA soldiers, who showed heavy-handedness in their harassment of media workers.

3.1 Details of Incidents

Q1: January - March

2 Jan: Police in Barawe district arrested its leading radio journalist, Aways Aways Bahar, after he aired complaints from elders on marginalisation of

Barawe youth in employment opportunities. He was released after four days without charge.

16 Jan: Police in Boorame arrested four journalists: Hussein Gaafane of Universal TV, Abdillahi Daahir of SAAB TV, Ahmed Diiriye of SBC TV, and Shuayb Maxamed of Bulsho TV, for airing an ongoing investigation by the Auditor General concerning the district commissioner, Saleeban Hassan.

20 Jan: Police in Galmudug following orders from the state ministry of information arrested two journalists: Mohamed Toohow of Universal TV and Abdullahi Warsame of SNTV, for covering Al Shabaab attacks in the region.

In Beledweyn, soldiers loyal to the Deputy President of Hirshabelle state, Yusuf Ahmed Hajar, attacked and threatened the journalists and media workers of HiiraanWeyn radio station. The soldiers also arrested reporter, Omar Khamiidi, for Facebook posts that criticised Yusuf.

29 Jan: Police in Abudwaq arrested the founder of Sooyaal Online TV for reporting the case of a

female victim who was raped and killed in the town.

31 Jan: Freelance journalist, Nune Ali Hassan, was arrested while covering the Hotel Afrik attack by NISA agents. He was released a day later without charge or stated reason.

3 Feb: Galmudug Police in Wisil arrested journalist Saadaq for covering elders protesting about the newly appointed town administration. Police forced him to delete his footage and later released him without charge.

8 Feb: NISA officers armed with pistols attacked Somali Cable TV offices in Mogadishu and arrested photojournalist, Sayid Ali, and TV station driver Ali Malaq on unfounded allegations of recording videos of Godka Jilacow jail and its vicinity.

11 Feb: NISA officers detained at Hodan Police Station a photojournalist from Andalou News Agency for collecting public views on the impact of COVID-19 in Mogadishu.

18 Feb: Harmacad police detained for three hours three journalists: Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul, Mahad Hassan Abdi, and Zakariye Ahmed Muse,

for covering the deployment of forces to preempt opposition protests slated for 19 February at KM4 in Mogadishu's Hodan District. They were later released without charge.

19 Feb: Harmacad Police arrested four journalists: Farhan, Fuad, Mohamed Yahye, and Abdinasir Yusuf while covering an opposition protest at Daljirka Daahsoon. They were detained at Shangani police station and later released without formal charge.

22 Feb: Police in Bari region, Puntland, arrested journalist Ahmed Bootaan for capturing and disseminating vox pop videos of residents responding to President Deni's speech on the election fallout with the federal government.

25 Feb: Police in Garowe detained Abdifitah Abdullahi, editor of Somali Television Network, in connection with a news report that carried public comments critical of President Deni's speech. He was released without charge after agreeing not to publish any more similar stories.

5 Mar: Nation FM journalist, Mohamed Jinow, was arrested at Hamar Jajab district following a



Figure 1 SBC TV journalist Yusuf Mohamed after he was assaulted by security forces attached to Bari Governor in Bosaaso

story he reported about a man who claimed that his son was eaten by a cannibal in Mogadishu

Q2: April - June

9 Apr: Police in Adaado arrested radio journalist, Hashim Omar Hassan, after he reported on gunfire by the police that resulted in the death of a footballer.

13 Apr: Police in Hargeisa arrested veteran journalist, Adan Abdi Idle, over publication of photos and an article on alleged corruption by Somaliland Central Bank governor, Ali Ibrahim Baqdadi. He was released on 28 April after the court found no reason for him to be detained.

16 Apr: US-trained Danab forces raided Radio Deegaan and arrested journalist, Mohamed Omar Yusuf, and held him incommunicado in a military cell in an undisclosed location for 20 days and later released him without charge.

21 Apr: Police in Galkacayo South detained freelance journalist, Ali Said Mohamud, over a corruption report published on his Facebook page. He was released a day later.

23 Apr: Somaliland police in Borama arrested journalist, Abdiqadir Mohamed Ishaq, at his house on the morning of 23 April over a video he posted on Facebook showing a cleric critical of the government.

25 Apr: NISA forces shot at and beat Radio Hubal journalist, Bashir Ali Shire, who was covering a protest in Karaan district. Officers snatched his mobile and kicked and hit him with their guns. He was later interrogated and released without charge.

Q3: July - September

2 May: Police in Afgoye detained Dalsan TV journalist, Ibrahim, after he covered internally displaced families complaining of food diversion. He was freed after his TV deleted the footage as a precondition for his release. He faces continued harassment and blockage at government events.

11 Jun: NISA officers raided Star FM studio in Guriel and detained journalist, Ubayd Hassan, over his reports on the administration's failure to end the

inter-clan conflict in the region. He was held at a private residence of NISA commander for four days.

1 Jul: Police in Mogadishu raided Radio Bandhiga premises and arrested three journalists: Ibrahim Abshir, Ibrahim Sheikh Hussein, and Ilyas Daud. They were detained at Hamar Jajab police station.

3 Jul: Star FM journalist, Mohamud Mohamed Lafagari, was arrested over remarks critical of the Gedo administration. He was released on 7 July without charge.

4 Jul: RTN TV reporter, Hussein Abdi Jimale, in Beledweyne following an interview with local youth opposed to the state leadership.

5 Jul: Freelance journalist, Barkhad Mohamed Bashe, after covering a protest by local mothers complaining about their sons' arrest by the police in Lasanod.

22 Aug: Police in Hodan detained three journalists: Salad of SomNews TV, cameraman Abdifitah Mohamed of SomNews TV, and reporter Samiir Abdirisak of Hanti TV, for covering protests at KM4 against AMISOM for killing civilians in Lower Shabelle region.

5 Sep: At a protest rally against the government over the missing NISA agent, Ikran Tahlil, police were seen in live footage beating and dragging along the road journalist and producer, Bashir Mohamud, who was arrested briefly before being released to attend hospital.

28 Sep: Dhusamareb police officers detained journalist, Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow, on 28 September following a report he released on 15 September revealing the Dhusamareb police commissioner, who had surrendered a machine-gun mounted vehicle and weapons to Ahlusuna militia resulting in the commissioner's suspension on 16 September.

Q4: October - December

2 Oct: Somaliland police officers detained Mowlid Ismail Digid, who reports for the Facebook

news site Halbeeg Media, and held him at Lasanod police station before he was freed later that day without charge. The journalist was taking photos as police conducted forceful evictions of non-locals, targeting ethnic southern Somali persons living in Lasanod city.

The operation saw hundreds including women, children and elderly persons forcibly evicted from their homes and businesses in Lasanod, a city controlled by Somaliland and transferred to Puntland.

3 Oct: Radio Hayaan journalist, Mohamed Abduqadir Said, was briefly detained in Galkacayo South for covering a statement by Sufi followers, who threw their support behind the resurgence of Ahlu Suna Wal Jamaca movement. He was freed a day later without charge.

4 Oct: In Adaado, police also arrested Radio Adaado journalist Hashim Omar Hassan for covering Sufi followers supporting the resurgence of Ahlusuna Wal Jamaca in Galmudug.

20 Oct: Police officers who raided Radio Hiigsi premises, an independent radio station, arrested the radio's director, Hussein Ahmed Tifow, and released him after three hours without charge.

21 Oct: Hirshabelle Police arrested three journalists and media rights defenders: SJS Secretary General, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, SJS Head of Training, Hanad Ali Guled, and SJS Information and Human Rights Secretary, Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul, while conducting journalists' safety training in Jowhar in Hirshabelle.

24 Oct: Somaliland police in Lasanod arrested journalist, Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi, who reports for online news media Holhol Media, following his coverage of a press conference by a group of local clan elders who spoke against the women's quota for their clan seat in the upcoming elections of the Lower House of the Somali Federal Parliament. He was held until 26 October, with reports saying he was transferred to Mandera Prison.

28 Oct: South West State police led by Baidoa Airport police commander, Hussein Kerow, detained

seven journalists from local media houses, who were at the airport gate to cover the arrival of former South West State president, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who was a presidential candidate in the upcoming elections of the Federal Government of Somalia. The journalists were held at the airport police station before being transferred to the police headquarters in Baidoa.

Police arrested Editor-in-chief of Radio Warsan, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele, over comments he made on the arrests of the journalists. Police also summoned and demanded an apology from Hilaal Shueyb, Radio Warsan director and chairman of the Somali Media Association (SOMA), over his comments to the BBC Somali service over the arrests of journalists at Baidoa airport. He was released after he made a forced apology.

28 Oct: In Galmudug, police arbitrarily detained freelance journalist, Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow, following his coverage of the recent clashes in Guriel between government forces and Ahlusuna militia.

26 Nov: Puntland police in Qardho detained Qardho media journalist and editor, Mohamud

Abdirisak Osman, for airing and conducting interviews deemed critical of the move by Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni, to fire the director of Puntland Security Force (PSF), which sparked security tension in Bosaso town. Police also arrested Guled Abdirisak Nur Kibonge, the director of privately-owned radio Anfa in Qardho, for the same reason.

30 Dec: Sool Governor, Abdikarin Adan Haji Diiriye, ordered the police in Lasanod to arrest two journalists, Abdikhadar Farah of Universal TV and freelance Hamze Abdirahman. The two were detained briefly after they produced interviews with community elders criticising the governor and calling for his removal.

3.2 Sham Trials and Military Tribunals

Federal states in Somalia, keen on making an example of targeted journalists, are increasingly resorting to sham trials resulting in harsh sentences and the use of secretive military tribunals to convict journalists on grave crimes based on trumped up

charges. Press freedom advocates, media labour rights unions, and lawyers representing affected journalists, are facing threats and harassment in the course of defending their clients.

In 2021, police and court officials, in some cases, refused to collaborate with or share documents and case facts with SMSJ members and other media defenders.

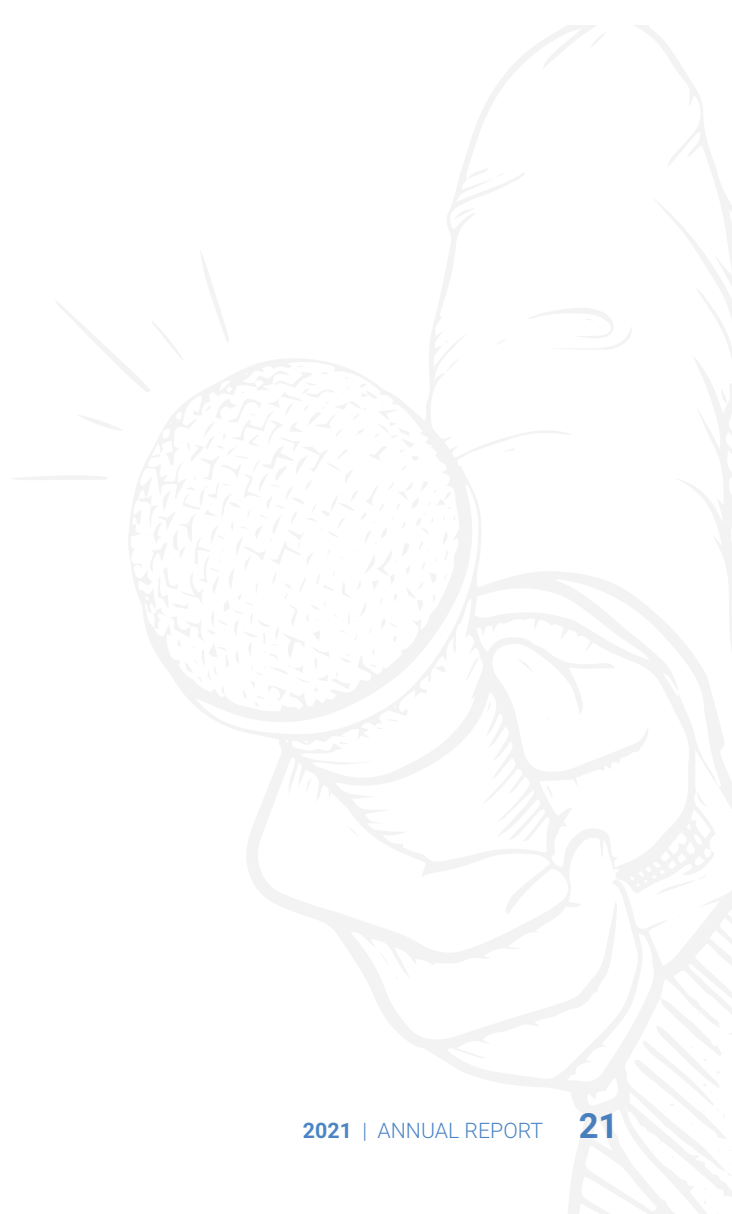
3.3 Details of Cases



Freelance journalist Kilwe Adan Farah

17 Mar 17: Puntland military court sentenced journalist, Kilwe Adan Farah, who was arrested on 27 December 2020, to three years imprisonment. He was freed on 22 March by presidential pardon after spending 84 days in jail.

1 Dec: Police officers in Puntland presented Osman and Kibonge to the Qardho District Court where only a judge, several police officers, and clan elders were in attendance. Both Osman and Kibonge told SJS that without a lawyer representing them, they were forced to sign a document allegedly prohibiting them from reporting “any information critical to the state in the future.” Both were freed without charge the same day.



4.0 Physical Attacks, Threats and Intimidation

Physical assaults, intimidation, and threats in 2021 jumped dramatically to a new height, with a total of 39 incidents. In 2021, 14 journalists were physically assaulted while reporting in the field compared to four in 2020. Some of the attacks used live ammunition against on-duty journalists causing life-threatening wounds and injuries.

In the most common cases, state security officers beat, intimidated, and engaged in wanton vandalism of media equipment for no apparent reason.

Most of the attacks happened in Mogadishu, accounting for 68% (19 cases) of the total. Four cases were in Jubaland, where journalists were summoned and instructed to stop critical stories concerning the ongoing, widely disputed election. There was one case each in Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South West and Puntland.

Somali Police Force (SPF) were implicated in the overwhelming majority of cases (70% or 74 incidents). SMSJ's compiled incident data shows that a high proportion of the violations were linked with government's use of brutal measures to repress coverage of election protests and numerous other related demonstrations. Abusive acts of political repression against journalists escalated as soon as the government's term expired in February 2021.

Political allies of President Farmaajo, heads of security forces, ministers, and state presidents, who enjoy impunity for crimes against the media, openly encouraged and facilitated a campaign of violence and harassment against the press.

In September 2020, President Farmaajo during a public address likened critical media houses and journalists to Al Shabaab, giving an implicit greenlight to already brutal security forces. Verbal abuses of journalists' integrity have also risen in 2021.

In April, Somalia's minister of information, Osman Abokor Dubbe, during a press conference publicly insulted Universal TV journalist, Mohamed Bulbul, after the latter asked a question on the election impasse.

4.1 Details of Incidents

13 Jan: Police in Bakara Market assaulted Radio Simba journalist, Mohamud Bolbire, while reporting

on a bomb attack at the market, forcing him to stop his work.

4 Feb: Police attached to the Bari Governor briefly detailed SBC TV journalists, Abdisamad Abwaan and Yusuf Mohamed, for unclear reasons. Both the governor and his security allegedly assaulted the journalists with canes.

6 Feb: Journalists covering the federal parliament were harassed and intimidated by NISA officers inside the assembly in a bid to disrupt interviews with opposition members during a charged session.

8 Feb: Journalist Liban Abdulle of Somali Cable TV was assaulted and threatened by a member of the state chamber of commerce over a report on the death of a miraa trader aired on 4 February.

21 Feb: Security officials in Mogadishu beat and threatened the director of Radio Bandhiga and forced him to delete his footage. Four TV journalists were arrested in Boorame for reporting on ongoing Auditor General investigations into the district.

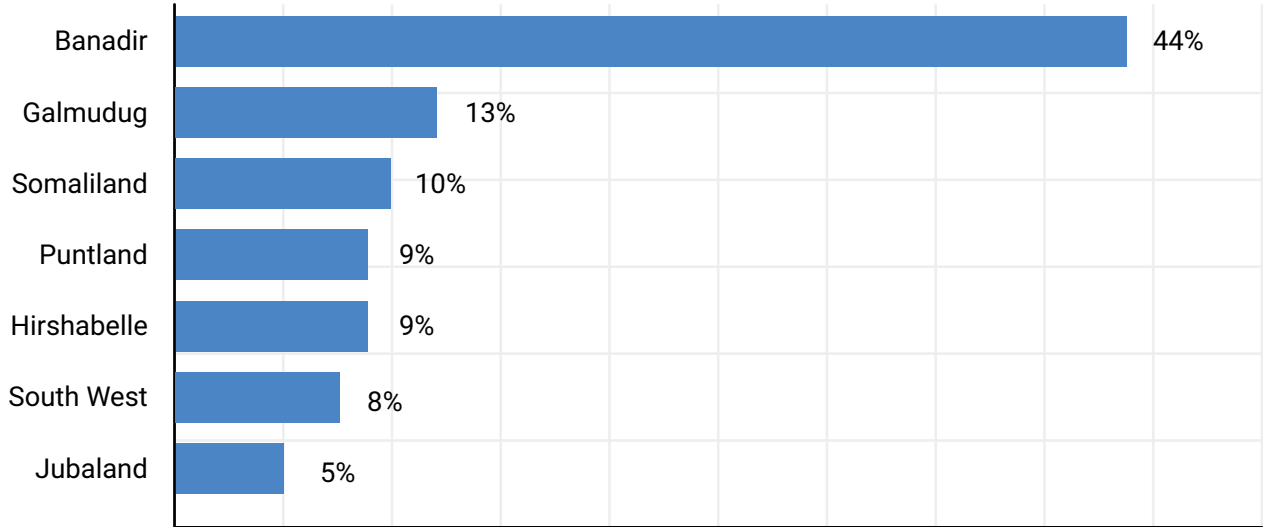
23 Feb: Goobjoog reporter Abdirahman and cameraman Abdirisak were stopped at Daljirka Daahsoon and their footage deleted by NISA officers.

25 Feb: NISA officers harassed news reporters, Isaq Hersi and Mohamed Abduqadir of Goobjoog, while collecting vox pops on the election impasse at Taleex junction in Hodan. Interviewees were chased away from the scene. NISA officers also harassed cameraman, Abdirisak Fagas of Goobjoog Media, while reporting on a story at KM4 junction in Mogadishu. Radio Director Abdiaziz Hassan Ibrahim was assaulted by Haramacad police in Mogadishu.

Police also confiscated his equipment and smartphone and deleted all his footage recorded during anti-government protests organised by opposition leaders, which were disrupted with live bullets.

20 Mar: A Somali police officer shot Goobjoog cameraman Sharmarke at Sinai junction in Mogadishu. The bullet hit him in the stomach and

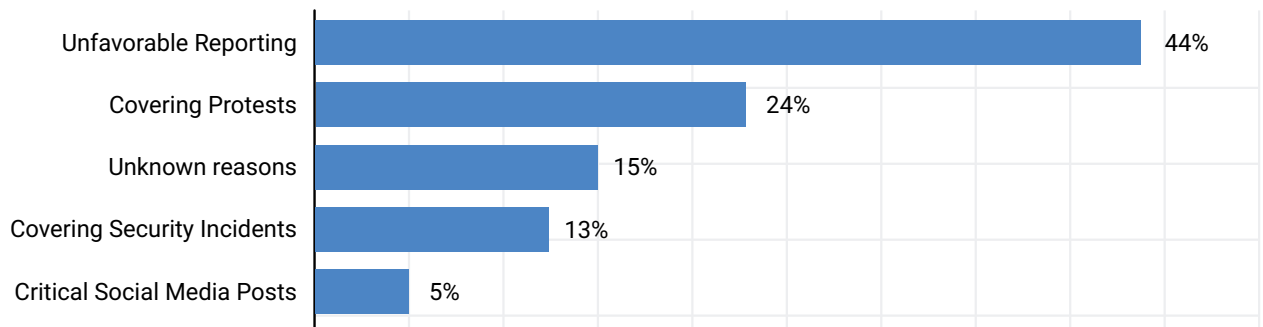
Violations Against the Media by State



Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

Context of Attacks in 2021

Nearly over half of attacks against the media in 2021 were reprisal for unfavorable news



Data: Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ)

fractured his left arm. The reason for the attack is unknown.

24 Mar: Following border skirmishes between Somali and Kenyan forces, authorities in Beled Hawo, Gedo region, arrested and injured scores of journalists.

Videos recorded of these incidents show security forces badly wounded radio journalist, Abdirizak Sheikh Ismail (nicknamed Africa).

24 Apr: Somalia Information Minister apparently angered by the journalist's question on the election impasse publicly berated and insulted Mohamed Bulbul calling him "a wedding photographer" and terming his questions as "irrelevant."

25 Apr: NISA officers harassed and forced Universal TV reporters covering a protest at Kaaraan to delete their event footage.

27 Apr: Harmacad Police assaulted Mustaqbal Media reporter, Bashir Mohamed Yussuf, confiscating his equipment such as office computer and camera. The reason for the attack is unknown.

16 May: Hamarweyne Police Chief, Major Sharmarke Hassan, beat and confiscated the equipment of Radio Kulmiye reporter, Fardowsa Mohamud, during a protest at Daljira Daahsoon over missing Somali recruits sent to Eritrea.

23 May: Bay Police Chief Amin Mad-Darur summoned three journalists who covered clan elders protesting against Jubaland ministerial appointments and coerced them not to file their report. The journalists complied out of fear.

24 Jun: Unidentified men ambushed and stabbed Hanad Ali with knives in the back of his neck causing severe bleeding. The journalist, who is also SJS Secretary of Training, was rushed to hospital.

5 Sep: On Sunday afternoon, armed police officers from Hodan and Waberi districts attacked 12 journalists from the local and international news agencies covering protesters at KM4 demanding justice for missing National Intelligence and Security



Journalist Hanad Ali Guled attacked and injured by unknown persons.

Agency (NISA) employee, Ikraan Tahlil Farah. Police were seen in live footage beating reporters and confiscating their equipment.

15 Sep: Local militia and military officers at Abbay Dhahan in Mogadishu outskirts assaulted Goobjoog reporters, Mohamed Rooraye and Sharmarke Abdinur Weheliye, who were in the area to cover the burial of a suicide victim.

29 Sep: Police in Puntland summoned and interrogated journalist, Mohamed Salah, after he reported the death of a female university graduate who was shot dead by the security guards of Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni, in Garowe on Monday night.

8 Nov: Journalist Ali Taliye Abdi was summoned by police officers and threatened with harsh

consequences following his coverage of a press conference by the Shiidle clan elders who criticised the Hirshabelle State president, Ali Gudlawe, for interfering in the parliamentary seats allocated to the minority Bantu clans.

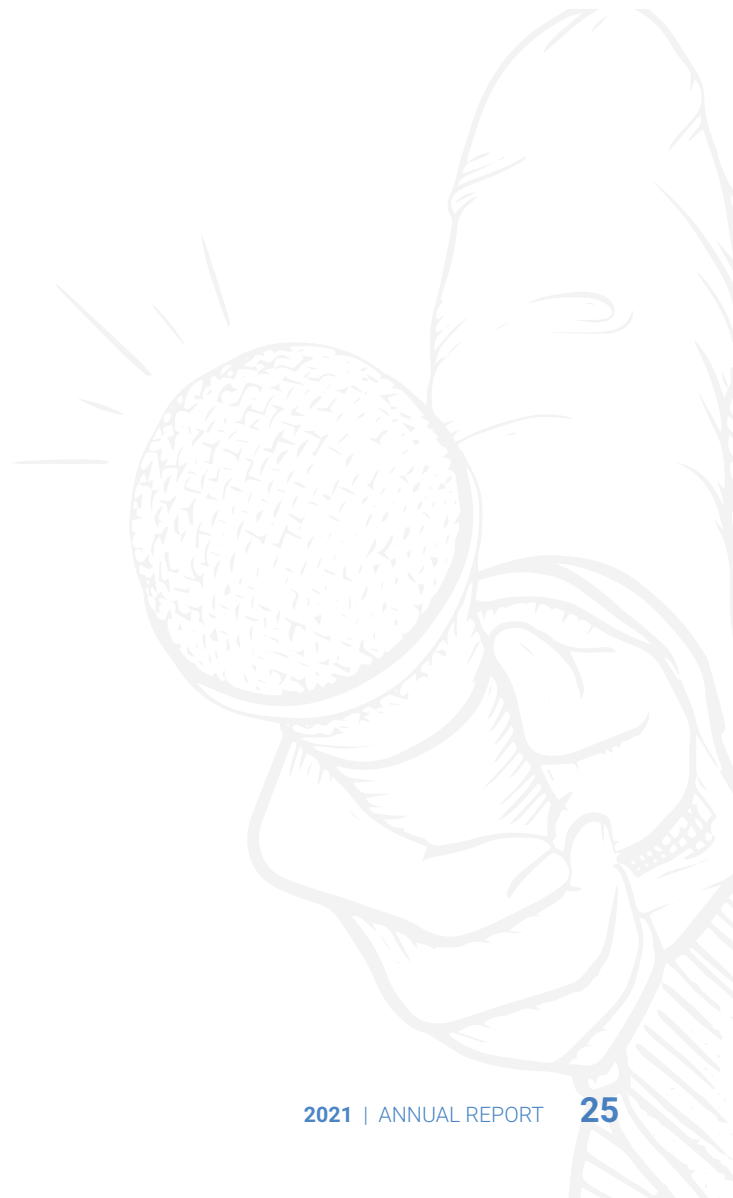
24 Nov: Mogadishu's Hodan district police officers blocked and used live bullets against a group of journalists from local media houses covering a suicide car bomb attack in Hodan district. The officers securing the site threatened to shoot journalists if they did not leave, forcing reporters to leave instantly out of concern for their lives.

30 Nov: A domestic plane carrying journalists and humanitarian workers came under gunfire as it landed at Garbaharey Airport in Gedo region. At the invitation of the United Nations, the journalists were travelling to cover the drought-hit communities in the region. According to interviews with affected

journalists and media reports, the flight made an emergency landing back to Mogadishu. Garbaharey Airport is secured by Somali government forces.

20 Dec: Jubaland intelligence officers summoned journalists and instructed them to keep off any coverage related to election disputes and complaints. A senior Jubaland intelligence officer, named Basaam, threatened journalists with harsh consequences should they report complaints about the results of elections for Lower House seats in the state.

28 Dec: A group of journalists covering the election of Lower House seats in Kismayo's Daawad hall were threatened with arrest, some were beaten and had their camera equipment confiscated, to prevent the journalists' independent coverage.



5.0 Media Raids

In 2021, Somali federal and state governments continued to target and raid media outlets considered disloyal to the regime. In total, 14 media outlets were attacked by armed soldiers and officials. Some outlets were shut temporarily, others had their staff arrested, and equipment confiscated or destroyed.

Media raids are the most potent weapon of impunity in the arsenal of authoritarian leaders. They deal a blow simultaneously to press freedom and to the operational capacity of affected outlets, which often suffer huge property damage and other costs that negatively impact on their current and future work.

5.1 Details of Violations

20 Jan: Guards of Hirshabelle Vice President, Yusuf Ahmed Hajar, raided the premises of Hiiraan Weyn radio station in Beledweyn and harassed staff.

8 Feb: Two NISA officers armed with pistols raided and attacked Somali Cable TV offices in Mogadishu on allegations that reporters recorded videos of NISA detention facility at Godka Jilacow.

16 Apr: US-trained Danab forces raided independently owned Radio Deegaan in Galkacayo South at midnight and confiscated equipment

including laptops and voice recorders. The reason for the raid has not been explained.

27 Apr: Harmacad Police Unit raided Mustaqbal Media building in Mogadishu, attacked and tortured reporters including Bashir Mohamed Yussuf and confiscated their equipment such as office computers and cameras. The reason for the attack is unknown.

11 Jun: NISA officers raided Star FM radio studio in Guriel town to intimidate reporters and suppress news on interclan conflict in the region

1 July: Armed police raided Radio Bandhiga premises in Mogadishu looking for the radio management and owners.

20 Oct: Four police officers from Mogadishu's Shibis police station raided Radio Hiigsi studio, harassed journalists on duty and confiscated phones. The reason for the raid is unclear.

28 Oct South West Criminal Investigation Department (CID) raided Radio Warsan compound in Baidoa seeking to detain the radio's editor-in-chief, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele, after the editor



Mustaqbal Media Office after the raid.

condemned the arbitrary detention of journalists at the airport.

29 Oct: Armed police officers led by Qardho police commander, Omar Hiram Katun, raided the home and office of Habibo Ladan Abdi Ibrahim, a female journalist reporting for SBC TV, for her coverage of residents of Qardho commenting on the security tension in Bosaso. According to Habibo Ladan, the officers were attempting to arrest her but after failing to find her, the police commander called her and threatened her over the phone with “actions.” She remains in hiding.

26 Dec: Somaliland police in Lasanod detained Holhol Media journalist, Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi, who also reports for Saab TV, after he posted a video clip in which Lasanod residents appealed to President Muse Bihi Abdi to fire the Governor of Sool region, Abdikarin Adan Haji Diriye, citing “mismanagement and sowing division among the community.”

30 Dec: AlShabaab fighters raided and destroyed the studio of the privately-owned Radio Balad in Balad town, about 30 km north of Mogadishu, during an armed attack which resulted in an intense gun battle in the town. Journalists and other staff fled the studio before the attack and were all unharmed.

5.2 Bans, Closures and Shutdowns

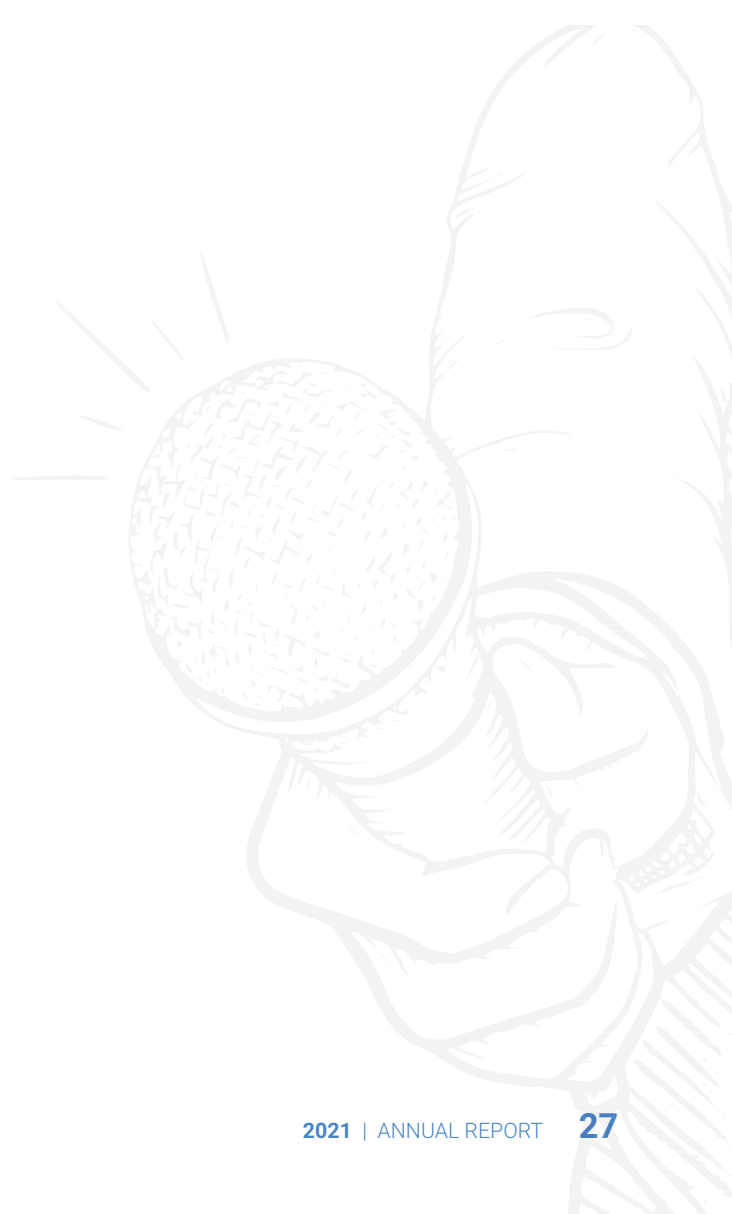
Closures and banning of media outlets and journalists constitute an egregious violation on the media freedoms and the public’s right to information. Somali authorities routinely resort to media shutdowns when their efforts to pressure, harass and intimidate fail to stop journalists from covering critical stories. In 2021, SMSJ documented three incidents of media closures and bans to prevent the coverage of political events.

5.3 Details of Violations

2 Jan: Ten South West State police officers in Barawe district raided and shut down the popular Radio Barawe after the station aired complaints from local elders on perceived marginalisation. However, the outlet resumed programming following days of advocacy and pressure.

18 Sep: Dalsan TV reporter, Mohamed Yasin Mahdi, who also reports for City FM, was banned from reporting after he covered the scuffle at the Hirshabelle Parliament Hall that resulted in the postponement of Upper House elections in Jowhar. Officials at the Hirshabelle presidency informed the journalist that his TV was banned from Jowhar.

25 Sep: NISA officers blocked journalists from covering a suicide car bombing at El Gaabta junction.



6.0 Journalists' Access to Official Information



Mohamed Abduwahab Abuuja (third from right) holds hands in victory with media leaders after he was freed by a military court in Mogadishu.

As the Somalia 2021 election went into high gear, journalists faced difficulties accessing official sources of information, which hampered their ability to report on the government response to COVID-19 and on progress of ongoing elections in an accurate, responsible, and timely fashion. Federal and state government officials routinely declined interview invitations and requests for information from various ministries, instituting a closely controlled, centralised, and highly choreographed release of information.

Somalia's Provisional Constitution guarantees the right of access to information, with Article 32 calling for the establishment of access to information legislation. So far, despite repeated promises, the government has not begun drafting an access to information bill, thus denying citizens and journalists effective and easy avenues to obtain government data and information.

The media fraternity led by SMSJ network members launched strong advocacy and outreach efforts aimed at improving journalists' access to information. The SJS report released in July 2021 noted that Somali officials intent on hiding details of the embezzlement of COVID-19 funds had put in place a system of "enforced secrecy" to stem public criticism and knowledge of alleged corruption. In the absence of official sources, journalists in Somalia now rely on social media user generated and political leaks, which have notable downsides.

6.1 Media Labour Conditions and Violence Against Women Journalists

Media working conditions in Somalia remain precarious. According to a labour conditions survey conducted by FESOJ and VIKES in 2020, the overwhelming majority of media workers work without formal contracts. Journalists earn meagre salaries below the cost of living and media owners are often unable to pay employees on

time. Media outlets cannot provide insurance schemes such as health cover to compensate for hospital costs.

Female journalists in particular are disproportionately disadvantaged as they face extra challenges, including the lack of benefits and amenities such as paid maternity leave. For women journalists, getting pregnant usually means losing their salary and jobs. There are few women journalists in Somalia, as the social cultural restrictions, insecurity, and grim risks associated with the profession deter many. In recent years, more women have joined newsrooms, thanks to the improving security, the stream of new journalism graduates, and the training and advocacy work of women journalist associations. Still, women journalists grapple daily with additional work environment challenges such as wage inequality compared to their male counterparts, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

According to the 2021 SMSJ data, only two incidents affected female journalists.

May 16: Reporter Fardowsa Mohamud Sahal, at the time working for Radio Kulmiye, was assaulted by Hamar Wayne Police Chief, Major Sharmarke Hassan, while covering protests at Daljirka Daahsoon.

Nov 29: Reporter Habibo Ladan Abdi Ibrahim, SBC TV, based in Qardho went into hiding after receiving threats from a local police commander. Subsequently, police officials raided her house but failed to find her.

Unfortunately, these two cases represent only a small fraction (2%) of the many incidents of physical violence, attacks, threats, and harassment faced by female journalists and media workers in 2021 - almost all of which went unreported. Anecdotal evidence and experience show that violence against female journalists is a prevalent problem in Somalia and has been on the rise over the past few years. In particular, online abuse and misogynistic attacks in the form of targeted trolling is routinely used, at an alarming rate, to intimidate, threaten and silence women journalists on popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube.

The insurgent group Al Shabaa0b, which is against women's participation in public and professional life, also routinely targets women journalists. The absence

of legal safeguards, including a protection mechanism to report sexual harassment and discrimination, leaves women journalists vulnerable.

6.2 COVID-19, the 2022 Elections, and the Media

On 16 March 2020, Somalia registered its first case of COVID-19. Since then, media outlets in the country provided round the clock coverage of the virus, providing citizens with regular updates about the virus, news of caseloads as released by the Ministry of Health, announcements on curfew measures, as well as awareness and educational messages on prevention and protection.

It is important to note that even in the midst of dwindling advertising revenue occasioned by the pandemic, the majority of media owners in Somalia, in the interest of the public, opted to scrap charges for health-related public messaging and COVID-19 announcements. This was a generous platform which was widely utilised by federal and state government authorities and others.

Despite all the best efforts of the media, the government, which initially hosted daily press briefings through the COVID-19 taskforce, later ceased media contact and actively prevented journalists from accessing more detailed data and information on the outbreak and response, choosing instead to give insufficient updates via government social media accounts.

Authorities used the pretext of spreading false news to arrest critical journalists in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismaayo. A consequence of these repressive and secretive tactics was to undermine the media's capacity to provide timely and accurate information on the pandemic to save lives. The lapse in collaboration empowered peddlers of fake news on social media and allowed online rumours and misinformation to go unchallenged, probably contributing towards low COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Some of the online fake news found its way into traditional media and was readily amplified by unsuspecting journalists without access to official facts and data.

The COVID-19 outbreak continues to negatively impact the lives and income of media workers. The pandemic induced an economic shock that forced many outlets - already under financial pressure - to lay off or reduce the already meagre salaries of journalists by sending them on

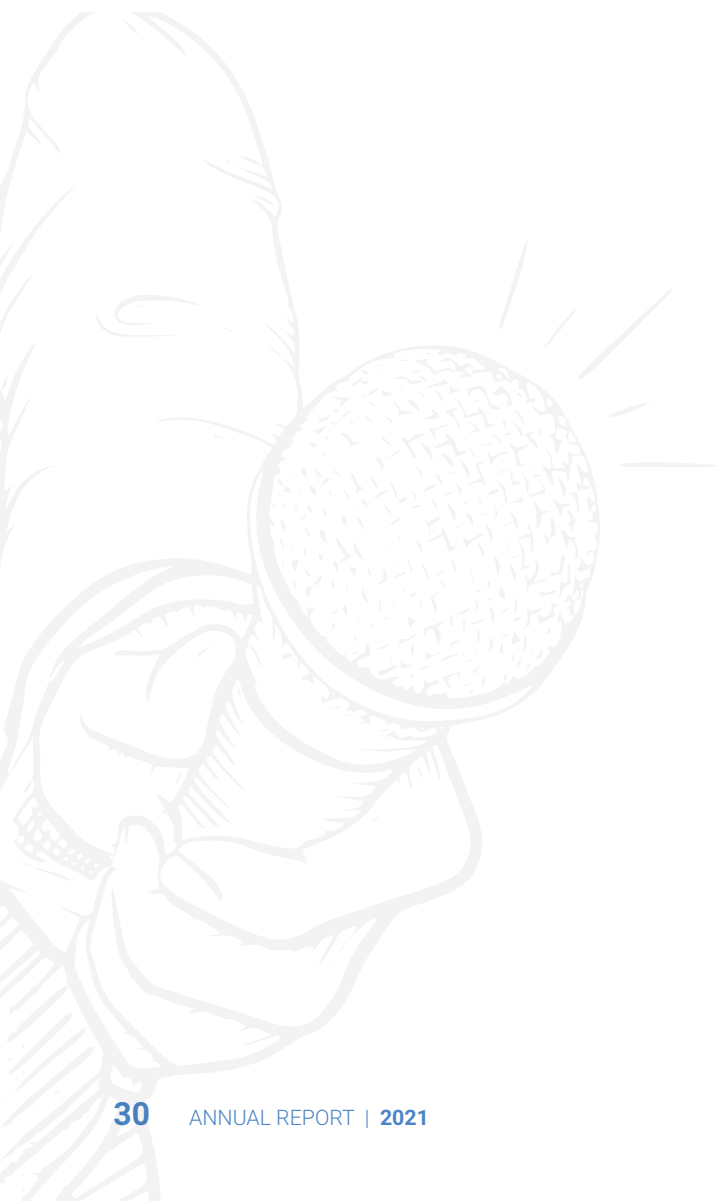
temporary unpaid leave to avoid total collapse. According to interviews with journalists, many of the media workers are still languishing without jobs and income close to two years since the pandemic began.

Since early 2020, Somalia leaders were engaged in a series of long-winded, confrontational discussions to establish an indirect election model, election management responsibilities and electoral timeline.

Disagreements and election delays led to armed factional confrontation in Mogadishu in April 2021. This was followed by frequent election-related protests which erupted in many towns across the country but were largely concentrated in Mogadishu.

Local authorities responded with a repressive, heavy-handed approach to quell the protests. Banadir Regional Administration, in particular, deployed paramilitary police forces, which blocked roads with tanks, and clamped down on protestors, journalists and media workers.

Most of the arrests and assaults recorded in 2021 were election related. According to SMSJ records, 37% of journalists were physically assaulted while covering election protests or scenes of security incidents.





FREE JOURNALIST ABUJJA
SIIYA XORRIYADDIISA WARIYE ABUJJA



FREE JOURNALIST COLDOON
SIIYA XORRIYADDIISA WARIYE COLDOON



A young female protester holds up photos of two journalists detained in Mogadishu and Hargeisa during a freedom protest.

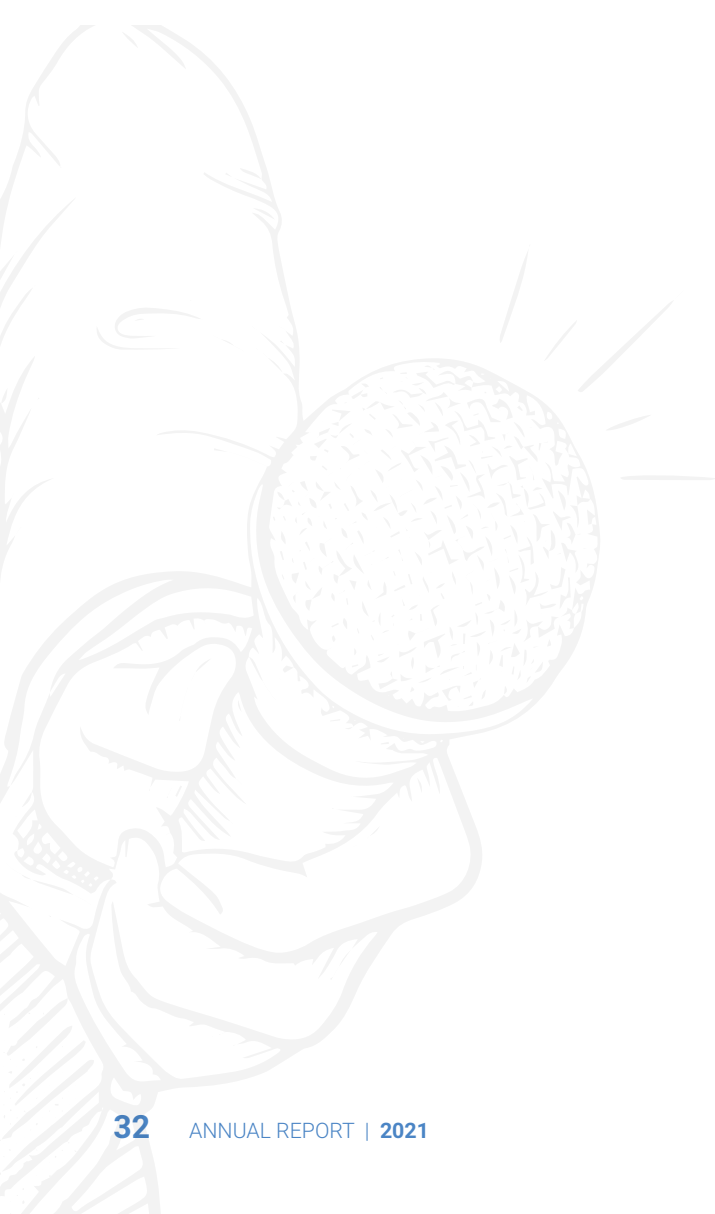
7.0 Conclusion

The report's findings show that political tensions during an intense election year, a brutal crackdown on media, and tremendous financial setbacks due to the indirect impact of COVID-19, have all combined to exacerbate risks and threats to media freedom and the personal safety of journalists. As a result, 2021 was one of the most violent years for the Somali press: murder of journalists continued unabated, media freedom and freedom of expression significantly declined, and an unprecedented number of media workers were attacked and arbitrarily arrested. In addition, many of the outlets that laid off staff in 2020 due to COVID-19 financial losses have not yet regained full operational capacity.

Somali journalists play a crucial role in the country's pursuit of lasting peace, stability, and democratic transition. Attacks and threats to stifle their critical role to provide the public with information derails the achievement of Somalia's national goals and aspirations.

In a crucial election year, journalists faced unbearable restrictions and roadblocks to access official information, leading to the proliferation of misinformation and fake news that has caused further damage to the credibility and safety of the press.

The Somali government must show its commitment to the protection of journalists and media freedom by taking strong and meaningful action to address the rampant impunity for crimes against the media.



8.0 Recommendations

8.1 To Federal and State Governments:

- Publicly condemn and order all officials to cease attacks on journalists, media workers, and media organisations.
- Impunity must end. We call on the government to direct the Minister of Security to investigate all the above listed violations and to prosecute any official, police officer, or other security officers found culpable. Police and security officials must refrain from the use of force against media workers covering protests and public events.
- The Prime Minister and State Presidents must stop the practice of their officials, in particular the ministers, summoning journalists to intimidate them for their work.
- The Special Prosecutor's Office on Crimes Against the Media should begin a swift, transparent, and impartial investigation into all violations against the media fraternity, in particular to resolve as a first priority the long list of murder cases, and to immediately dismiss all spurious charges against journalists.
- Public officials must promote and respect the right of the media to access information including the right of the media to report freely without fear or favour. Access to accurate and timely information is critical for media to report accurately on public interest issues and as such officials must refrain from unnecessary restrictions that curtail the ability of the media to inform the public.
- Government officials must publicly condemn and act on attacks against women journalists such as sexual harassment, online abuse and threats, which are becoming a common weapon to stifle their voices and important work.
- Support reform efforts to bring Somalia's draconian media laws and policies into line with national and international obligations on media freedom and rights.

8.2 To Al Shabaab, Daesh, and other insurgents:

- Stop all forms of attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment of journalists, media workers, and media outlets.
- Publicly condemn and disavow attacks and harassment targeted at the media fraternity.

8.3 To Friends and the Media Fraternity:

- Government capacity building, especially the training support targeted at police and military officers, should include mandatory training on human rights, press freedom and rights of the media.
- Friends of the media, partners and donors should continue to support journalist safety training and the provision of emergency funds to assist victims of violent attacks.
- Media rights organisations and media labour unions should double their efforts to entrench safety and protection practices and mechanisms for journalists and media workers including but not limited to championing professionalisation, better media management, and better welfare and working conditions.
- Friends of the Somali media including members of the international community, donors, and partners should encourage their government counterparts and politicians to stop threats and harassment of journalists. Donors should support media rights defenders and advocates to monitor, report and publicly call out violations and abuses against journalists and media workers.

The Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists (SMSJ) consists of the following organisations: The Federation of Somali Journalists (FESJ), Media Association of Puntland (MAP), Media Women's Network (MWN), Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA), Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), Somali Media Association (SOMA) and Somalia Women Journalists Organisation (SWJO).







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IMS (International Media Support) is a nonprofit organisation supporting local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. We push for quality journalism, challenge repressive laws and keep media workers of all genders safe so they can do their jobs. Peaceful, stable societies based on democratic values rely on ethical and critical journalism that aims to include, not divide.

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