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1.7.2. Treatment and targeting

Somalia was ranked second and third respectively in the 2023 and 2024 Global Impunity Index of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an index rating countries based on measuring unsolved killings in proportion to a country's population.713

In March 2025, the SJS reported the increasing targeting of journalists covering security issues in Mogadishu, following an announcement by the government banning coverage of Al-Shabaab threats in the capital. Nineteen journalists covering an Al-Shabaab attack against the President's convoy on 18 March were briefly arrested, transported to a police station where the police confiscated their equipment and deleted their footage and photos, and then released.714 The Somali Media Association (SOMA) reported that, on 18 March 2025, the police raided and shut down Risaala Media Corporation's station in Mogadishu and arrested and detained five journalists. This media outlet was the first to publish news of the Al-Shabaab attack against the President's convoy.715 One week earlier, the Minister of Information Daud Aweis had made threats of '"legal action and severe punishment"' against journalists and media outlets that were reporting on 'security failures' in Mogadishu while Al-Shabaab attacks were increasing in and around the capital.716

In a statement to the UN Human Rights Council in October 2023, the Secretary General of NUSOJ highlighted the 'concerning frequency of attacks on journalists' and reported for 2023 an increase 'in sophisticated threats and intimidation, leading to widespread self-censorship' towards journalists and news media organizations, in almost all of Somalia.717 In addition, according to the NUSOJ annual report for 2023, throughout 2023, attacks against journalists presented some trends described as 'alarming'; most cases demonstrated a prevalence of 'intimidation tactics', while approximately 17 % of the attacks were of detention without immediate release, and 17 % were instances of torture.718 For the period from February to June 2023 a 76 % increase in arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists was reported.719 Similarly, the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law720 reported, as of September 2024, an increase in the targeting of journalists in Somaliland and Puntland.721

For 2023, the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) reported an increasing use of Facebook's Community Standards and mass reporting, aiming to 'censor Somali journalists critical of the government', which resulted in content removal, restriction to freedom of expression and deletion of accounts.722

Regional treatment and targeting. A trend of limiting civil liberties in Somaliland, including through an increasing number of arrests of journalists was reported.723 For 2024 and 2023,

arrests in Somaliland of journalists by the authorities were related.724 Puntland, together with Somaliland and the Southwest, was described as an area where in 2023 media freedom was 'significantly undermined', with political actions resulting in self-censorship of journalists and in editorial interference, notably during the Puntland elections. Journalists and media houses in Puntland faced both internal and external pressures, including interference, intimidation and pressure, affecting their ability to report in an accurate and independent way.725 Journalists additionally noted instances of media houses receiving communication from political figures to either change or omit reporting critically towards certain political forces in exchange for a bribe or by being intimidated.726 On the internal pressures, journalists reported that media house managers or owners, due to political pressure, instructed their newsrooms to cover in a positive way certain candidates, with stories being amended or entirely suppressed if they did not align with a positive narrative.727

Actors. According to NUSOJ, the main perpetrator of attacks against journalists in 2023 was the police, with nearly 87 % of attacks against journalists being attributed to them, while approximately 9 % of the attacks were attributed to NISA.728 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) noted that Al-Shabaab was 'primarily responsible for the killing of journalists', with those who do not self-censor being more likely to be targeted, arrested and arbitrarily detained.729 USDOS, citing local sources, noted that harassment towards journalists was perpetrated by state security forces in Somaliland, Puntland, South West State, Galmudug, Jubaland, government-aligned militias, clan and other private groups, and al-Shabaab.730

Data. In the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025, the Somali Journalists Syndicate reported 206 incidents against journalists, with the main type being detention, followed by arrests, threats and intimidation, denied access and physical assaults.731 Most of the reported incidents took place in the Benadir region, more specifically close to Mogadishu (129), followed by Somaliland, in proximity to Hargeisa (39).732 On 18 March 2025, one journalist was among those killed in a bomb attack by Al-Shabaab against the convoy of Somalia's President in Mogadishu, making him the first reported journalist killed in 2025.733 While the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and NUSOJ reported no fatalities of journalists for 2024,734 the International Federation of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists reported fatalities of journalists in 2024.735 For 2024 NUSOJ documented 52 cases of attacks against journalists, including physical assaults, arbitrary arrests, online and offline harassment, and sexual and gender-based violence targeting female journalists, while media houses were also attacked.736 ACLED, in the period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, reported six incidents related to journalists; in three of these incidents journalists appeared to be specifically targeted. For indicative illustrative incidents, see the paragraph below on **Illustrative incidents**.737

SGBV against female journalists. In its October 2023 statement to the UN Human Rights Council, NUSOJ highlighted the increasing incidents of gender-based violence against female journalists, as well as the absence of appropriate legal mechanisms to address and combat these crimes.738 Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against female journalists was described as a 'a grave issue in Somalia', significantly impacting media freedom, documenting 31 cases of sexual violence and harassment against female journalists in 2023.739 According to the Saferworld organisation, female journalists in Somalia face high levels of insecurity. They are targeted due to their work on issues that are perceived as 'controversial' and as disruptive to

traditional gender norms.740

Illustrative incidents. During the reference period, there were numerous incidents of arrests, detainment and in some cases imprisonment of journalists.741 On 17 December 2024, female journalist Shukri Aabi Abdi was assaulted by NISA plainclothes officers at Mogadishu's Daljirka Dahsoon, while reporting on the Mogadishu protest.742 On 18 October 2024, the award-winning Somali-Swedish journalist Amun Abdullahi Mohamed was killed by two gunmen with reported ties to Al-Shabaab. Mohamed was a prominent journalist, known for exposing extremism and the activities of Al-Shabaab through her investigative reporting.743 On 18 August 2024, Somali police at Mogadishu's Hawlwadaag police station briefly detained seven local journalists who were at Bakaro market to cover a strike by local business owners against new taxes and other fees. The journalists were told that police officers would give a press conference; as soon as they arrived at the police station, they were detained. They were released but warned against reporting on this topic.744

Between May and September 2024, five journalists were arrested and detained by the authorities, for reporting and commenting on matters of public interest. Out of the five journalists reported as arrested and detained by the authorities in the period from 24 May to 20 September 2024, two incidents took place in Somaliland and one each in Jubbaland, Puntland, Galmudug and Mogadishu.745

In May 2024, in Mogadishu, the government froze the accounts of the Somali Journalists Syndicate announcing criminal charges against the organisation and its leadership whose staff members had previously been repeatedly detained.746

NUSOJ reported on the ongoing mistreatment of journalists from MM Somali TV, who were raided, assaulted, had their equipment destroyed and confiscated, and were subsequently detained by Somaliland security forces on 6 January 2024.747 In the period between 6 and 14 January 2024, two journalists, two studio employees and one social media activist in Somaliland were reported to have been arbitrarily detained by the Somaliland Intelligence Agency allegedly for remarking on the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland. Three were released and not charged, while the other two continued being detailed without charges.748

On 16 April 2023, four journalists were arrested and detained in Mogadishu for trying to report on an explosion. On 18 March 2023, five male journalists in Somaliland were arrested and detained as they were conducting interviews on the alleged corruption of a government official. In both cases, the police released all the journalists on the same day without charges.749

Somali Cable Television's director Abdifatah Moalim Nur was killed in a suicide bomb attack on 16 October 2023 at the Blue-Sky restaurant in Mogadishu, allegedly by Al-Shabaab.750 According to NUSOJ, the restaurant was a well-known gathering place for journalists, with the attack raising 'serious concerns about the deliberate targeting of media professionals'.751 On 6 October 2023, a television journalist was killed by a suicide bomber using an improvised explosive device in a restaurant in Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab took responsibility for the attack, stating that the target was '"Somali security officials"'.752

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