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3.6. Journalists and other media workers

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.7.; Security 2025, 1.6.; Targeting 2021, 7.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

As of September 2024, media freedom in Somalia remains deeply concerning. Journalists continue to face harassment and threats by both the Somali government and Al-Shabaab. Somalia ranked third on the 2024 Global Impunity Index by the Committee to Protect Journalists, highlighting the high rate of unsolved journalist killings. Despite efforts such as the National Action Plan and the appointment of a special prosecutor, progress has been limited due to ongoing impunity, restrictive legislation, and political interference.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which journalists could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, journalists have been subjected to arbitrary arrests, detentions, beatings, torture and physical abuse by state actors and government-aligned militias all over Somalia, FGS, Somaliland and Puntland authorities. Incidents of killings, physical violence and harassment by Al-Shabaab were also reported in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas as well as in Mogadishu. Raids of media houses have also led to violence against media workers and arbitrary detention.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that journalists and media workers could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. More specifically, self-censorship is widely spread in Somalia, including in South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, as well as Al-Shabaab-controlled areas. Self-censorship was usually caused by acts of systematic threats, intimidation, harassment, raids on media houses, destruction and confiscation of equipment, freezing of media outlet accounts, fines, legal restriction using vague provisions in law (e.g., the practice of making reference to the Penal Code to criminalise journalists' activities was reported), banning coverage of politically sensitive issues etc.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated in the case of journalists and media workers seen as critical of an actor particularly active in a specific area or in control of a specific area. Journalists or media workers involved in reporting on government misconduct, corruption, or security failures, covering politically sensitive topics (e.g., Al-Shabaab attacks), or practicing independent journalism in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas are particularly targeted in Somalia.

In the case of **other journalists and other media workers**, the individual assessment should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances** such as:

- **Gender**: a high number of sexual and gender-based violence against female journalists were reported mainly due to their work on issues that are perceived as 'controversial' and as disruptive to traditional gender norms by working outside the home.

- **Visibility of activities and public profile**: Illustrative incidents included the killing of a prominent and award-winning female journalist, the killing of the Somali Cable Television's director by Al-Shabaab, and the announcing of criminal charges against the Somali Journalists Syndacate organization and its leadership by the FGS.

- **Home area and reach of the actors they report on:** Journalists critical of an actor in areas outside its control or where the actor has limited operational capacity would face a lover risk.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as journalists and other media workers would be perceived by different actors as critical of their policies, security failures, or as promoting views contrary to prevailing political ideologies and being a threat to public order and national security.

In the case of targeting by Al-Shabaab, persecution of this profile may also be for reasons of **religion**, as journalists and other media workers may be perceived by Al-Shabaab as critical to prevailing religious ideologies and being a threat to religious norms.

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