

Report

Somalia: Media and journalism



Translation provided by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Belgium.

About Landinfo's reports

The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, is an independent body within the Norwegian Immigration Authorities. Landinfo provides country of origin information to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (Utlendingsdirektoratet – UDI), the Immigration Appeals Board (Utlendingsnemnda – UNE) and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

Reports produced by Landinfo are based on information from carefully selected sources. The information is researched and evaluated in accordance with [common methodology for processing COI](#) and [Landinfo's internal guidelines on source and information analysis](#).

To ensure balanced reports, efforts are made to obtain information from a wide range of sources. Many of our reports draw on findings and interviews conducted on fact-finding missions. All sources used are referenced. Sources hesitant to provide information to be cited in a public report have retained anonymity.

The reports do not provide exhaustive overviews of topics or themes, but cover aspects relevant for the processing of asylum and residency cases.

Country of origin information presented in Landinfo's reports does not contain policy recommendations nor does it reflect official Norwegian views.

© Landinfo 2017

The material in this report is covered by copyright law. Any reproduction or publication of this report or any extract thereof other than as permitted by current Norwegian copyright law requires the explicit written consent of Landinfo.

For information on all of the reports published by Landinfo, please contact:

Landinfo
Country of Origin Information Centre

Storgata 33A

P.O. Box 8108 Dep

NO-0032 Oslo

Norway

Tel: +47 23 30 94 70

E-mail: landinfo@landinfo.no

Website: www.landinfo.no

Report Somalia: Media and journalism

SUMMARY

59 Somali journalists have been killed since 1992, the majority during the past ten years. Due to the danger of being exposed to sanctions from both the government and al-Shabaab, Somali journalists and publishers conduct self-censorship on certain controversial issues. This particularly concerns security, corruption and regional issues. However, the death toll is more than halved in the last couple of years, and the decline is probably linked to increased security awareness among many journalists. Some might even have become more reluctant to publish cases that might provoke powerful opponents.

Press freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, but the new media law implemented in January 2016, could limit the freedom of the press.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
2. Freedom of the press and free speech	5
2.1 Legislation and free speech in practice.....	5
2.2 Critical reporting and corruption	6
2.3 Somali media	7
2.3.1 Radio stations.....	7
2.3.2 TV.....	8
2.3.3 Online newspapers, internet cafés and social media.....	9
2.3.4 Newspapers	9
3. The journalist environment	10
3.1 Journalist education	10
3.2 Salaries	11
3.3 Journalist organisations	12
4. Violence and threats	12
4.1 Who is behind violence and threats?	13
4.2 News reporting in al-Shabaab areas	13
4.3 News reporting in areas outside al-Shabaab’s spheres of influence.....	13
4.3.1 Which news stories can lead to violence or other reactions?.....	14
4.3.2 How do journalists protect themselves against violence and threats?.....	15
5. Somaliland	15
6. References	17

1. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the Somali media landscape, legislation, free speech in practice and reactions journalists may be subjected to if they violate the framework for free speech. The report does not provide a complete picture of the situation for media and journalists in all parts of Somalia, including in the breakaway republic of Somaliland, which is discussed in section 5, but deals with topics of particular relevance for the immigration authorities. There has been a significant growth in Somali online newspapers over the past decade, however the report does not aim to provide an overview of these.¹ The report is based on publicly available information and communication with local journalists. The local sources are anonymous for security reasons.

2. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREE SPEECH

2.1 LEGISLATION AND FREE SPEECH IN PRACTICE

The provisional Somali constitution from 2012 states in article 18,² first and second paragraphs, that:

Every person has the right to have and express their opinions and to receive and impart their opinion, information and ideas in any way.

Freedom of expression includes freedom of speech, and freedom of the media, including all forms of electronic and web-based media.

However on 9 January 2016 the federal government adopted the new media law that could restrict freedom of speech, and which according to some would also be in conflict with international democratic standards (BBC 2016; allAfrica 2016; NUSOJ 2015; UN Human Rights Council 2015).

The law (the legal text is not yet translated into English) requires that all media houses and newspapers pay a fee to register an annual license. This in itself is not unique to Somalia (the Norwegian Broadcasting Act, for example, states that anyone other than NRK must have a license to engage in broadcasting), but the new law also requires that all journalists must have university degrees in journalism, and that journalists must undergo a test in front of a commission when they apply for a license to work (Koronto 2016; Shabelle News 2016).

In most countries the issue of requirements for a journalism degree is left to editors and owners, and such a regulation of journalism – and the media – may restrict freedom of the press. There is little doubt that the quality of much of what is

¹ According to Noragric (2013) there was an increase of 44 % from 2006 to 2011.

² Somaliland's constitution does not restrict freedom of speech or the press either.

disseminated in Somali media has weaknesses. Defamation, misinformation, gossip and propaganda abound, and there is no Code of Ethics or general ethical guidelines (Dahir 2015). One of the government's arguments for the introduction of the law is that they want to raise standards in the media. The law also allows for prosecuting journalists and media houses and those who are convicted of breaking the law can be fined from USD 500 to 3,000. The Somali journalist union, NUSOJ, also points out that the law prohibits, amongst other things, reporting that may involve «escalation of hostilities» and «news that conveys extremism». This is a vague wording that is open to interpretations that can restrict news reporting.

Restrictions of the freedom of the press and challenges for journalists are also discussed in the report to the UN appointed independent human rights reporter Bahame Tom Nyanduga:

During the period under review, the exercise of the right to freedom of expression continued to pose a challenge particularly for journalists and the media. [...]

Journalists and media workers continue to receive threats to their lives including from Al-Shabaab and suffer intimidation as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions (UN Human Rights Council 2015, p. 7).

U.S. Department of State (2015) also points out that both the federal and local authorities subject journalists to pressure, harassment and detentions.

Both direct and indirect pressures, as well as sanctions from the government, al-Shabaab and individuals, are reasons why journalists and editors often exercise self-censorship. Most journalists working in online/print media use pseudonyms to avoid recognition and possible reactions (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 14 September 2015).

Freedom House considers freedom of the press in various countries based on an international standard that looks at pressure from government and non-government actors, legislation and funding. They give Somalia a score of 79 (on a scale where 1 is completely free, and 100 is not free), and concludes that there is no general freedom of the press in Somalia (Freedom House 2015).

2.2 CRITICAL REPORTING AND CORRUPTION

Ownership arrangements probably affect both the profile and content of what is published, and in this context clan affiliation and clan loyalty are important aspects. The importance of clan in Somali society is also reflected in the media, which is established and organised along clan lines. Reporting is characterised by this, and the various online newspapers and radio stations broadcast and safeguard their own clan's interests. The news picture communicated is often one-sided (Gaas, Hansen & Berry 2012).

Corruption and bribery also limit critical reporting and the credibility of the press.³ The foundation Foundation Free Press Unlimited describes the situation as follows:

A journalist is interviewing a politician or businessman. At the end, the interviewee offers the reporter an envelope full of money. And if he doesn't, the reporter asks for one himself. In Somalia, this practice has a name: Sharuur. And virtually every journalist takes part in it. The result: nearly all media reports in the country are biased and distorted. After all, you don't bite the hand that feeds you. This means that people in Somalia have next to no access to reliable and factual information (Free Press Unlimited, n.d.).

The new media law can contribute to some positive changes in terms of press ethics and methodology, but the main challenges are closely linked to social conditions that take a long time to change.

2.3 SOMALI MEDIA

Radio is the most important mass media in Somalia. This is not only due to poverty and widespread illiteracy, but also that oral tradition has deep roots in the population. The first radio broadcasts began in 1945 under the auspices of the British colonial administration. Under the Siad Barre regime (1969-1991) the media became controlled by the state. The main radio station, Radio Mogadishu, mainly disseminated propaganda, although some have claimed that it also helped shape a national identity and played a role in the process of building a nation state. After the fall of the Barre regime a number of private radio stations sprang up in several places in the country and have left their mark on both the political and social landscape in Somalia.

Today the media landscape consists of both local radio and television stations, and stations abroad, in addition to non-Somali stations, including BBC Somali Service and VOA: Voice of America. The latter two are widely respected amongst Somalis at home and abroad, and are considered credible news outlets, although some believe that VOA Somali Service has more in-depth analysis and better programmes than BBC.

A local source in Mogadishu pointed out that part of the explanation why the BBC no longer enjoys the same degree of confidence may indicate that the station has lost several of its talented journalists, and some of the new journalists speak poor Somali (e-mail 14 September 2015).

2.3.1 Radio stations

Radio Mogadishu is the country's only state-owned radio station and was established during the colonial era.⁴ The station was closed when the civil war broke out in 1991

³ According to the index compiled by the international organisation Transparency International (2015), which measures people's experience of the extent of corruption, Somalia is the world's most corrupt country with 167th place in the index, where Denmark has first place, and Norway has fifth place.

⁴ It was established by the Aideed family in 1951 (AU/UN 2013). The two most notable of this family are Mohamed Farah Aideed, general and military leader of the Hawiye organisation USC, United Somali Congress,

and was first reopened in the early 2000s. The station also runs a website by the same name. The radio station, which is collocated with the state TV channel, Somali National TV, has a total of 126 employees, of which 40 are women (AU/UN IST, n.d.).

As of March 2013 there were an estimated 93 radio stations throughout the country, including international stations.⁵ Most broadcast over the FM band, and the price of FM receivers/radios is low, and can also be built into mobile phones. This makes radio broadcasts available to a great many people.⁶ Online streaming services have also become common, and make the local radio stations also available to Somalis in the diaspora.

Some stations are mayflies, others are very popular and have many listeners. Stations such as *Radio Shabelle*,⁷ *Radio Kulmiye*, *Bar-Kulan*, the state-owned Radio Mogadishu, *Dalsan* and *Goobjoog* currently have a relatively large listenership (AU/UN 2013).

Al-Shabaab ran seven radio stations in various parts of Somalia as of March 2013, the most famous being Radio Andalus, which is still in operation.

2.3.2 TV

Somali National Television (SNTV) is the only national, state-owned TV station. It transmits via ground stations, satellite and Internet, and can therefore be seen both inside and outside Somalia. In Puntland *Puntland TV and Radio* broadcasts from Garowe. There are also several private TV stations both in the capital and in Somaliland.⁸

The development of satellite TV, dish antennas and online solutions have made television available to an ever widening audience, but it is still limited to those who have electricity, cable connection and the finances to purchase equipment and rent programme packages and services. Thus it is primarily people in the capital and other major cities who can use this media.

which removed former president Barre and his regime from power in January 1991. Aided was then a central warlord who controlled parts of the capital. He died in 1996 and his son Hussein Mohamed Farah took over his father's leadership role in the USC faction SNA, Somali National Alliance. The radio station was one of the few stations that broadcast on topics that were censored by al-Shabaab when the movement controlled most of the city (AU/UN 2013). Four of their journalists were killed during the period 2009-2012, probably by al-Shabaab.

⁵ For a list of radio stations with more complete information, see AU/UN Media Observatory project (2014).

⁶ According to AU/UN Media Observatory project (2014, p. 39) about 94 % of the population in Mogadishu has access to mobile phones and 83 % has access to radio. 76 % have radio via mobile phone, 74 % have access to TV and 39 % have Internet access. The figures for mobile users in Baidoa, Merca and Beled Weyne are almost identical to Mogadishu; i.e. between 80 and 90 %. In Kismayo the percentage is 52 %.

⁷ Radio Shabelle who in 2013 had between 25 and 35 employees is part of the media house Shabelle Media Network, which is privately owned and was established in 2002. The media house also transmits TV broadcasts over the Internet and has an online newspaper. Employees of this media house have been particularly affected by assassinations and assassination attempts. Seven radio journalists were killed during the period of 2007-2012.

⁸ For an overview of various TV stations, see Somali Media Mapping; <http://somalimedia.so/media-directory/somali-television-stations/>.

Common to TV broadcasts is that they contain entertainment, music, news, debate and commercials, in other words quite similar to what we are used to from our domestic media, but the quality of form and content is in many cases low.

2.3.3 Online newspapers, internet cafés and social media

The online newspapers primarily appeal to the city residents who either have Internet access at home or can afford to use net cafés.⁹ The growth in the number of Internet cafés and the use of social media such as Facebook has been sharp after al-Shabaab withdrew from the capital in autumn 2011. It is primarily the younger generation in urban areas who has access to and uses the Internet. However the cost of Internet use is too high for most people to use the service (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 8 September 2015). Downloading 1MB/per second costs about USD 300 or about NOK 2,600 per month (in comparison, in Norway we are offered a monthly subscription for an estimated NOK 300 for an allowance of 5 GB). There are also vendors that offer low-speed Internet (Dial-Up 56 kbs) for about 30 dollars or about NOK 260 per month (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 14 September 2015).

The use of social media is increasing and the number of Facebook users increased by more than 25 % from September 2012 to February 2013, and as of February 2013 there were more than 100,000 Facebook users in Somalia, thanks to the use of smartphones and sharing of computers (Socialbakers, n.d.).

2.3.4 Newspapers

Written publications are primarily published in the capital and some other major cities.¹⁰ The circulation figures are low, and daily, weekly or monthly editions only reach a very small proportion of the population. The reason for the low circulation figures is primarily widespread illiteracy, poverty and distribution problems. As of March 2013 there were five newspapers in Mogadishu, two in Puntland and about ten in Somaliland. The largest Somali newspaper is *Jamhurya*, which is published in Hargeisa, Somaliland, and which has a circulation of 6,000 (Gaas, Hansen & Berry 2012; AU/UN Media Observatory project 2014).

The following newspapers, published in the capital, vary in quality and format:

- *Hamar* is privately owned and is published weekly.
- *Mogadishu Times* is privately owned and published daily. The newspaper is also published online with the website www.mogtimes.com.
- *Xog Doon* is privately owned and published daily.
- *Xog Ogaal* is privately owned and published daily.
- *Xushmo* is privately owned and is published monthly.

⁹ For an overview of various online newspapers/websites, see Somali Media Mapping: <http://somali-media.so/media-directory/websites/>.

¹⁰ For an overview of newspapers, see Somali Media Mapping: <http://somali-media.so/media-directory/somali-newspapers/>.

3. THE JOURNALIST ENVIRONMENT

The saying «In Somalia, anyone with a camera is a journalist», in many ways describes the journalist environment and media picture (AU/UN IST, n.d.). There is little investigative journalism and both radio journalism and online newspapers are characterised by little analysis and background knowledge (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 8 September 2015; Dahir 2015).

There are no overviews of how many journalists there are in the country, but NUSOJ, the Somali journalist union, claims that there are 750, of which more than 500 are organised into the union (NUSOJ 2015). By comparison, nearly 9,000 Norwegian journalists are members of NJ, i.e. the Norwegian Union of Journalists (*Norsk Journalistlag*) (Tretterud 2016).

The new media law that came into effect in January 2016 could have serious consequences for the vast majority of today's Somali journalists, not only considering that many could at worst lost jobs and income, but also for news reporting, see the next section.

3.1 JOURNALIST EDUCATION

Until the new media law came into effect in January 2016, there were no formal educational requirements for obtaining contracts or employment in Somali media, but the new media law may – if enforced – reduce the number of journalists considerably.

Until 2015 the opportunities to get a journalist education in Somalia were limited. Then a journalist academy open in Mogadishu, but the students there do not graduate before 2018 (Somalia Current 2015; 2016; BBC 2016). One-year studies in journalism are not available in Somalia. Those who work in the media industry today have largely learned along the way – learning by doing – or for the lucky ones, by training received through NGOs that have offered this.

There are several international organisations that both support Somali media enterprises and offer shorter and longer courses in journalism. But despite this the professionalism and quality of both the education and reporting varies considerably. BBC Media Action, an independent charity that bases their business on the BBC's editorial standards, is one of the many volunteer organisations that offer training in media work in Somalia. For example in 2011 they held a three-week course in Hargeisa in Somaliland (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 14 September 2015). Other organisations such as *Internews*, *Relief International* and *Free Press Unlimited*¹¹ also have courses in journalism and media work in different cities.

Free Press Unlimited also has a training centre for journalists in Hargeisa, where they also produce three weekly editions with news and other material in the

¹¹ This foundation was established in 2011 and headquartered in Amsterdam. It has various media projects in 36 countries, see <https://freepressunlimited.org/en/people-deserve-to-know>.

programme Radio Hirad. This programme is broadcasted over 20 FM stations and various websites (Free Press Unlimited, n.d.).

*Relief International*¹² has conducted training of journalists in Mogadishu and Garowe, and has also established a resource and training centre for media in Puntland. The centre cooperates with the University of Nairobi.

*Internews*¹³ has a Media for Peace programme (2014-2016) where they support local media and local NGOs. The programme includes training for journalists and photographers. The training has also been available in Mogadishu (e-mail 2015).

All these courses and programmes under the auspices of the various organisations are free for the participants, but the selection criteria vary. Anyone can apply to some courses, for others an editor or owner selects suitable applicants. The length of the courses varies from a couple days to two-three months (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail, 15 September 2015).

There have been no demands from the various editorial offices or the owners' side that employees should have a formal education. The country's new media law, which came into force in January 2016, may change this. The law stipulates that all journalists must have a university degree in journalism, and the consequences can be serious for the individual, who must go to school, and do not have the opportunity to earn money. However for the press in general – and freedom of the press – the picture is more complex. If the law is enforced it may over time develop a more professional journalist profession, but experience shows that the professional standard in most Somali educational institutions is low. Problems connected with corruption and bribery do not disappear just because one establishes an educational requirement. But in the longer term, as other social conditions are also changed, education is probably an important component.

3.2 SALARIES

According to a local source in Mogadishu a journalist can earn an estimated USD 500-550 per month, if he or she is a permanent employee. However as a freelancer salary is entirely dependent on the case or news story to be sold, and who you sell it to (e-mail, 8 September 2015). There is no overview of how many are permanently employed and how many who work freelance. In other words it is difficult to assess whether this is an attractive profession, because salary and earnings vary.¹⁴ Looking

¹² Relief International, see http://www.ri.org/where_we_work/country.php?ID=14, is an international relief organisation with headquarters in Washington DC.

¹³ Internews is an international NGO registered in California, England and Wales, see <https://www.internews.org/about-internews>.

¹⁴ Wage levels in Mogadishu vary, but according to a survey commissioned by the organisation IOM, the average wage, calculated from a sample of 1,200 people between 14 and 30 years old, is about USD 190 per month. But this is largely people who work in the service industry or as craftspeople. Teacher's salaries vary from USD 300 to 700 per month, while a professor with a doctorate can earn up to USD 2,000 per month at a Mogadishu university (Vever et. al 2016, p. 33). A family of four probably needs about USD 400 dollars per month for food and rent. Schooling and health costs are not included in this amount.

at the number of journalists, there is little evidence to suggest that many choose this as their livelihood.

3.3 JOURNALIST ORGANISATIONS

The national media organisation National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) was founded in 2002 and has its headquarters in the Waberi district in Mogadishu. There is also a competing independent media organisation: SIMHA, Somalia Independent Media Association, which was founded in December 2013, with 18 media houses as members.¹⁵ Like NUSOJ it has its headquarters in Mogadishu, in the Wadajir district¹⁶ (Wararka 2015). Somaliland Journalist Association (SOLJA) has its headquarters in Hargeisa and organises journalists in the breakaway republic of Somaliland (Northwest Somalia).

4. VIOLENCE AND THREATS

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) 59 Somali journalists have been killed since 1992. The majority were killed over the last decade (CPJ, n.d.).¹⁷ Half of the victims were radio journalists, 24 % were editors, 29 % were producers, 10 % were photographers and 2 % were online journalists (CPJ, n.d.). The statistics also show that 61 % of the victims worked in radio stations, 46 % in TV, and 7 and 12 % in online media and print media, respectively. 20 % of those killed were freelance journalists.

Not all were victims of targeted assassinations: in total twelve journalists were killed in crossfire, bomb explosions and/or suicide bombings. In 2012 fourteen journalists were killed and twelve of the deaths were probably directly related to professional practice. The death figures have been reduced by more than a half over the past few years and the decline is probably due to journalists becoming more security-conscious. Of course it also cannot be ignored that some have been more reluctant to publish stories that could provoke dangerous opponents. The authorities in Mogadishu have also closed various radio stations and they have put limits on the discourse on al-Shabaab. For example in spring 2015 the head of the Somali intelligence agency ordered journalists to use the abbreviation *UGUS*, which

¹⁵ The membership figure varies between 18 and 35 depending on the source. According to DhanaanMedia (2016) there have recently been strong criticisms of NUSOJ's Secretary General Omar Faruk Osman. Conflict in the leadership and previous charges of corruption were probably also behind the establishment of SIMHA.

¹⁶ The district also referred to as Madina.

¹⁷ In 2007 eight journalists were killed and seven of the deaths were confirmed as being motivated by professional practice. In 2008 two were killed, in 2009 nine. In 2010 there were two murders with professional practice as the confirmed motive and one without, in 2011 two murders with confirmed motive and one without. In the peak year of 2012 there were twelve murders with motives related to professional practice and two without such a motive. In 2013 there were five murders of which one had an unconfirmed motive, in 2014 there were four killings and in 2015 three.

translated from Somali stands for «the group that humiliates the Somali people» for al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab responded that this was an insult and threatened to give those who used the acronym an «appropriate response» (Hiiraan Online 2015).

4.1 WHO IS BEHIND VIOLENCE AND THREATS?

CPJ (n.d.) explains in their statistics that during the period from 1992 to 2015 criminal groups were suspected of being behind 8 % of the killings, political groups were suspected of 75 % of the killings, and in 17 % of the cases there were no suspects. The organisation does not define what is meant by the term «political groups», but it is likely that this includes both al-Shabaab and regime-loyal individuals and groups.

4.2 NEWS REPORTING IN AL-SHABAAB AREAS

Journalists also work in areas that are controlled by al-Shabaab, but the scope is narrow and the opportunities are few for those who are not part of the movement's own media apparatus: either you have to keep a very low profile and not show that you are a journalist – this means that you either use pseudonyms or do not credit journalists in stories – or you can only report on al-Shabaab's premises. This implies that the reporting unequivocally expresses support for the movement and that it is critical of the federal government, because neutrality does not sit well with the movement. If you break these unwritten rules you may risk being regarded as a spy or government sympathiser. The consequences of such cases will be the death penalty.

An important reason why the information from these areas is very limited, and also mainly refer events or stories that serve the movement, is apparently the fear of extreme reactions. Al-Shabaab has also banned the use of smartphones in the areas they control and has fully or partially closed news services other than the movement's own (Somalia Report 2012; Khalif 2013; Speri 2014). Radio Andalus, the movement's official media house, had six stations in 2013 in Southern and Central Somalia.¹⁸ It is unclear how many are operating today. The content of the broadcasts are news/propaganda – and *jihadi nasheeds* – songs praising martyrdom and holy war. None of these stations have female journalists, in contrast to media houses outside the movement's sphere of control.

In 2011 al-Shabaab also started to use Twitter¹⁹ (Somalia Report 2012).

4.3 NEWS REPORTING IN AREAS OUTSIDE AL-SHABAAB'S SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Even in the government-controlled areas, including the capital, journalists are careful, if possible, not to reveal their identity in reports or news. One reason is that Shabaab can strike at their opponents in most places. But there are also numerous

¹⁸ The station was taken off the air in Mogadishu in May 2012 (Yusuf 2012).

¹⁹ See <https://twitter.com/radioandalus>.

examples of the authorities not only arresting critical journalists, but also closing radio stations.

4.3.1 Which news stories can lead to violence or other reactions?

On 08 October 2015 two local journalists who worked for the London-based company Universal TV were released after having been detained by the security service for six days (RSF 2015). The station was shut down by the security service earlier the same week. According to RSF the reason for the imprisonment of the two was that the journalists had hosted a debate programme where two parliamentarians had criticised the government's attitude towards the Ethiopian participation in AMISOM.

This reflects issues that the government is mindful of, i.e. corruption charges, regional policy and foreign policy. The most important issue is probably security, and the authorities have on several occasions stated that independent media gives a platform to al-Shabaab, and that they are negative in their discussion of the government's work with security issues (RFI 2015). A local source has informed Landinfo that one of the leaders in the security service on one occasion summoned media owners and told them not to cover any security incidents without the service's knowledge. When this leader was asked if he could be quoted on this, he refused (e-mail 15 September 2015).

Disclosures about rape and abuse committed by government soldiers in the winter and autumn of 2013 also attracted attention in Somali media. In February 2013 a journalist and his interviewee, a woman who had been raped, were sentenced to one year in prison for having «insulted state institutions».²⁰ After the conviction a journalist from Kulmiye Radio, Daud Abdi Daud, was arrested when he protested in court. He was released after a week (HRW 2013). In November of the same year both a journalist from the media house Shabelle News, his interviewee and the director of the media house were arrested (AFP 2013).

Not only the government and al-Shabaab may wish to stifle the press. Private players, such as businesspeople and others with power and economic interests, may also react to revelations and accusations.

However, it is the assassination attempts and murders of journalists that primarily cause fear and restraint, both inside and outside areas controlled by al-Shabaab. Most recently on 3 December 2015 the journalist Hindi Haji Mohamed was killed by a car bomb.²¹ She was a producer and reporter for Radio Mogadishu and Somali National TV. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for killing the mother of seven and widow of

²⁰ The journalist got the sentence reduced to six months after an appeal, and the woman was released a few weeks later (AFP 2013).

²¹ The Somali journalist organisation NUSOJ reported on 12 December 2015 that the security authorities had arrested several people who may have been behind the attack. All were suspected of having ties to al-Shabaab.

journalist Liban Ali Nur, who was killed in 2012.²² Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for some of the assassinations, while it is very unclear who is behind others. It is reasonable to assume that other players are responsible for the killings that the movement does *not* claim responsibility for. They may be people with power and economic interests who fear revelations, or who have personal antagonisms. But as long as perpetrators are rarely apprehended, and that applies to most cases, it is impossible to say with certainty who is responsible for all the attacks.

4.3.2 How do journalists protect themselves against violence and threats?

As mentioned in chapter 2.1, both journalists and editors exercise a large degree of self-censorship. Most journalists working in online/print media furthermore use pseudonyms to avoid recognition and possible reactions (local source in Mogadishu, e-mail 14 September 2015). There are also examples of journalists and editors who have sought refuge in the newsroom for periods, although this was probably most common in 2012 when attacks on journalists, not to mention employees of Shabelle Media, were very widespread. According to a local source in Mogadishu there is currently not a clear pattern: Some stay overnight in the newsroom, others go home (e-mail 15 September 2015). There are also examples of journalists who felt threatened in 2012 and 2013 and therefore left the country, have returned home.

5. SOMALILAND

Somaliland declared its independence in May 1991, but has not gained international recognition. It is nevertheless practical to describe media and journalism in the area separately from the situation in other parts of Somalia. This is also in line with the practice in a number of international organisations. The organisation Freedom House (2015) describes freedom of the press in Somaliland as limited, and gives it a score of 54 (partially free), unlike the rest of Somalia, which is given a score of 79 (not free).

The region's constitution guarantees freedom of the press, and although the press law of 2004 does not criminalise defamation, the authorities have on several occasions accused journalists of defamation under the Criminal Code. This reasoning was also used to close several media houses, including Haatuf Media Network, Universal TV and Somaliland Times.

In some of these cases, the reporting is obviously characterised by allegations of corruption against prominent dignitaries, and are not defamatory. Examples of this include the imprisonment of both the Chair and Chair Editor of Haatuf Media.

²² Liban Ali Nur was one three journalists who were killed in a suicide bombing on 20 September 2012 at the café The Village in Mogadishu. In total 14 people were killed in the attack, which Shabaab took responsibility for.

Network in May 2014. Both were charged with having published false information and for insulting public figures in a series of articles on corruption in government ministries. After sentences of three and four years, respectively, both were pardoned by the president and released after two months of incarceration (Freedom House 2015). But lack of press ethics, defamation and slander are also part of the media landscape in Somaliland (Allison 2015).

Violence against journalists is not common, and only one murder was reported in the past twenty years. On 23 October 2012 the correspondent for Universal TV in Las Anod was shot dead by unknown perpetrators. The reason for the killing is not known (CPJ, n.d.). But nearly 20 journalists have been imprisoned for shorter periods during recent years (Allison 2015).

The number of newspapers in the area is variable, but it is estimated that about ten publications are published regularly. The circulation figures are low because of high newsprint prices and lack of reading skills amongst large sections of the population. Radio is therefore the preferred medium for most people and the government-owned station Radio Hargeisa²³ is the only station based in Somaliland. There are also two online radio and news websites (AU/UN 2013). BBC is also available. The authorities in Somaliland do not allow the establishment of other, private FM stations.

There is one government-owned TV station: Somaliland National Television (SLNTV), but several Somali-language satellite-based – and online – television stations, including HornCable TV and Universal TV, which the authorities closed indefinitely in February 2014.

²³ <http://www.radiohargeysa24.com/>

6. REFERENCES

Written sources

- AFP, ie. Agence France Presse (2013, 27 November). UN warns Somalia after alleged rape victim, journalists arrested. *Arab news*. Available at <http://www.arabnews.com/news/480856> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Allison, S. (2015, 8 April). Somalia: Think Again - Somaliland and the Trouble With a Free Press. *Institute for Security Studies*. Available at <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/think-again-somaliland-and-the-trouble-with-a-free-press> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- AU/UN Media Observatory project (2014, april). *Media Mapping Briefing Note*. Somali Media Mapping. Available at http://somalimedia.so/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2014_05_01_Somali-Media-Mapping-Report.pdf [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- AU/UN IST (n.d.). *A view into Somali media today*. Somali Media Mapping. Available at <http://somalimedia.so/blog/view-media-somalia/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- CPJ, ie. Committee to Protect Journalists (n.d.). *59 Journalists Killed in Somalia since 1992/Motive confirmed*. New York: CPJ. Available at <https://cpj.org/killed/africa/somalia/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Dahir, A.M. (2015, 29 May). How lack of creativity and unethical journalism is killing the Somali media. *Sahan Journal*. Available at <http://sahanjournal.com/somali-media/#.Ve1jzSsUbg> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- DhanaanMedia.com (2016, 11 February). Somalia: Supreme Court ruling over «NUSOJ leadership» is a deliberate stab to the nation’s media fraternity and offers impunity to spoilers, warns MAP. *Dhanaan Media*. Available at <http://dhanaanmedia.com/somalia-supreme-court-ruling-over-nusoj-leadership-is-a-deliberate-stab-to-the-nations-media-fraternity-and-offers-impunity-to-spoilers-warns-map/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Freedom House (2015, October). *Freedom of the Press 2015*. Washington D.C.: Freedom House. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/somalia> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Free Press Unlimited (n.d.). *Independent reporting in Somalia: it’s possible... maybe*. Amsterdam: Free Press Unlimited. Available at <https://freepressunlimited.org/en/projects/independent-reporting-in-somalia-its-possible-maybe> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Gaas, M.H., Hansen, S.J., & Berry, D. (2012, mars). *Mapping the Somali media: an overview*. Ås: Department of International Environment and development Studies Noragric. Available at http://www.umb.no/statisk/noragric/publications/reports/noragric_report_no._65cover.pdf [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Hiiraan online (2015, 7 May). Somalia's govt changed al- Shaabab's name as UGUS. *Hiiraan online*. Available at http://hiiraan.com/news4/2015/May/99482/somalia_s_govt_changed_al_shaabab_s_name_as_ugus.aspx [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- HRW, ie. Human Rights Watch (2013, 11 February). *Somalia: Second Journalist detained Without Charge*. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/11/somalia-second-journalist-detained-without-charge> [downloaded 1 March 2016]

- Khalif, A. (2013, 16 November). Somalia's Shabaab militants ban residents from using smartphones. *Daily Nation*. Available at <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Shabaab-militants-ban-use-of-smartphones/-/1066/2075904/-/1ab362/-/index.html> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Koronto, A. (2016, 14 January). Back to school for Somalia's journalists? *BBC*. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35303220> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- NUSOJ, ie. National Union of Somali Journalists. (2015, 29 December). *Parliament passes Media Bill threatens Media Freedom in Somalia*. Mogadishu: National Union of Somali Journalists. Available at <http://www.nusoj.org/parliament-passed-media-bill-threatens-media-freedom-in-somalia/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- RFI, ie. Radio France Internationale (2015, 4 April). Somali journalists arrested over Garissa massacre coverage. *RFI*. <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20150404-somali-journalists-arrested-over-garissa-massacre-coverage> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- RSF, ie. Reporters Without Borders (2015, 3 December). Somali journalist killed in Mogadishu by bomb planted in her car. *RSF*. Available at <http://en.rsf.org/somalia-somali-journalist-killed-in-03-12-2015,48615.html> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- RSF (2015, 22 December). Black week for freedom of information in Somalia. *RSF*. Available at <http://en.rsf.org/somalia-black-week-for-freedom-of-22-12-2015,48682.html> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Socialbakers (n.d.). *Somalia Facebook page statistics*. [s.l.]: Socialbakers. Available at <http://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook/pages/total/somalia/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Shabelle news (2016, 10 January). Somali president sign new media law. *Shabelle news*. Available at <http://shabellenews.com/?p=22303> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Somalia Current (2015, 3 May). Somalia to establish journalism Academy. *Somalia Current*. Available at <http://www.somaliacurrent.com/2015/05/03/somalia-to-establish-journalism-academy/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Somalia Current (2016, 14 January) Inside Somalia's controversial media law and why journalists are partly against it. *Somalia Current*. Available at <http://www.somaliacurrent.com/2016/01/14/inside-somalias-controversial-media-law-and-why-journalist-are-partly-against-it/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Somalia Report (2012, 7 October). Al-Shabaab's Media Outlets. *Somalia Report*. Available at http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/3485/Al-Shabaabs_Media_Outlets [downloaded 1.mars 2016]
- Speri, A. (2014, 20 March). Al-Shabaab Is confiscating Camera-Equipped "Spy"-Phones. *Vice News*. Available at <https://news.vice.com/article/al-shabaab-is-confiscating-camera-equipped-spy-phones> [downloaded 1.mars 2016]
- Transparency International (2015). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2015*. Transparency International. Available at <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Tretterud, H. (2016, 5 January). Under 9000 medlemmer igjen. *Norsk Journalistlag*. Available at https://www.nj.no/no/Om_NJ/Medlemsstatistikk/ [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- UN Human Rights Council (2015, 29 September). *Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of human rights in Somalia, Bahame Tom Nyanduga (A/HRC/30/57)*. Geneva: UN Human Right Council. Available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/report-independent-expert-situation-human-rights-somalia-bahame-tom-nyanduga-ahrc3057> [downloaded 1 March 2016]

- U. S. Department of State (2015, 25 June). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014. Somalia*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of State. Available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236404#sthash.724SV8ya.dpuf> [downloaded 8 March 2016]
- Vever, F., Le Coz, C., Malakooti, A., Dillais, M., Davin, E. & von Berg, M. (2016, februar). *Youth, Employment and Migration in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa*. Altai consulting/IOM, ie. International Organization of Migration. Available at <http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/IOM-Youth-Employment-Migration-9Feb2016.pdf> [downloaded 8 March 2016]
- Yusuf, M. (2012, 24 May). Al-Shabab Radio Station Off the Air in Somali capital. *VOA, Voice of America*. Available at <http://www.voanews.com/content/al-shabab-radio-station-off-the-air-in-somali-capital/940395.html> [downloaded 1 March 2016]
- Wararka (2015, 29 October). Joint statement from SIMHA and NUSOJ Somalia. *Somaliweyn Media Center*. Available at <http://somalipayn.org/2015/10/29/joint-statement-from-simha-and-nusoj-somalia/> [downloaded 1 March 2016]

Oral sources

- Local source (A) in Mogadishu. E-mail 8 September 2015
- Local source (A) in Mogadishu. E-mail 14 September 2015
- Local source (A) in Mogadishu. E-mail 15 September 2015