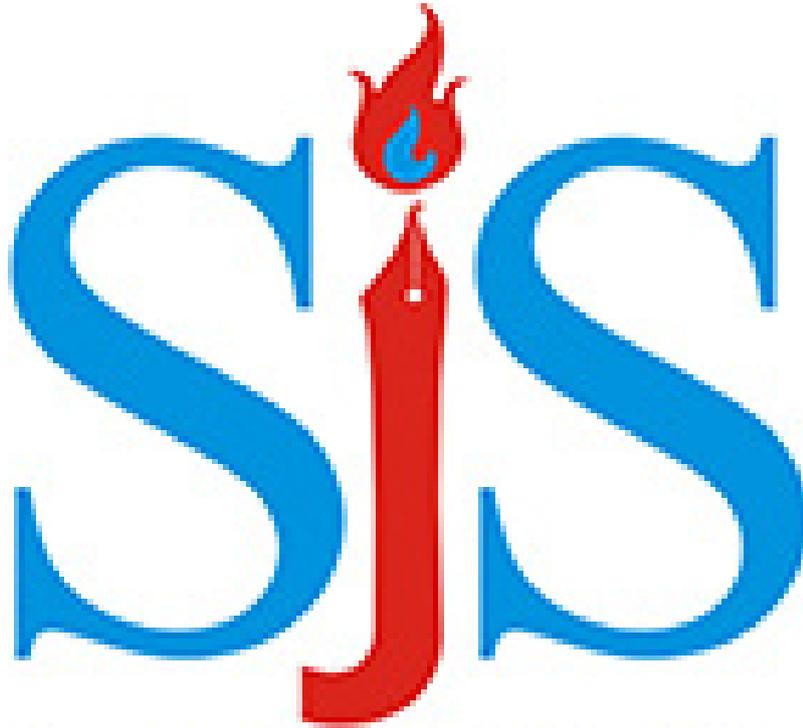




ALARMING ESCALATION: ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA IN SOMALIA AND SOMALILAND



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2025



World Press Freedom Day 2025

3 May, 2025

Copyright @2025

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced, redistributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS). For permission requests, write to sjs@sjsyndicate.org

Summary

From January to April 2025, Somalia and Somaliland saw a sharp rise in attacks against journalists and media outlets. The safety of journalists remains a significant concern, especially in Mogadishu, which has become one of the most dangerous areas in the country. On 18 March 2025, journalist Mohamed Abukar Dabaashe was killed in an Al-Shabaab bombing targeting the Somali president's convoy near the presidential palace—one of the supposedly safest zones in Mogadishu. Impunity continues as the Somali government fails to investigate such attacks and bring those responsible to justice, including for the killings of civilians and journalists.

Between 1 January to 30 April, in total, 46 journalists were arrested or detained during this period, and two journalists were kidnapped and disappeared in Lower Shabelle, Southwest State. Southwest State also imposed restrictions on three local radio stations during Ramadan, while Somaliland closed Universal TV, and Mogadishu police raided Radio Risaala. More than 30 journalists had their equipment confiscated, and 10 others faced physical violence and intimidation. Female journalists represented 10.5% of those affected, while 89.5% were male. Both government forces and Al-Shabaab contributed to an increasingly hostile environment for media workers, with offline attacks, including arbitrary arrests and killings, complemented by online censorship. Somalia's State Security Forces and Police, many of whom are former Al-Shabaab defectors, were behind most raids, arrests,

and intimidations of journalists. The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) continued unlawful detentions and harassment, particularly in Mogadishu. A surge in arrests—41 in Mogadishu alone—signals a growing threat to media freedom in the capital. Government officials, including those from the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Internal Security, openly targeted journalists critical of the government or reporting on Al-Shabaab attacks or military withdrawals. This crackdown prompted many journalists to self-censor or flee the country.

Facebook has become a key platform for journalists in Somalia, yet Meta increasingly removed content or restricted pages, often in response to reports critical of the government or sensitive security issues. At least seven journalists and media outlets were affected by these actions during the period of this report.

Female journalists faced both physical attacks and online censorship, with six incidents specifically targeted with women reporters.

The Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) urges immediate action at both national and international levels to protect journalists, hold perpetrators accountable, and safeguard media freedom against the ongoing repression.

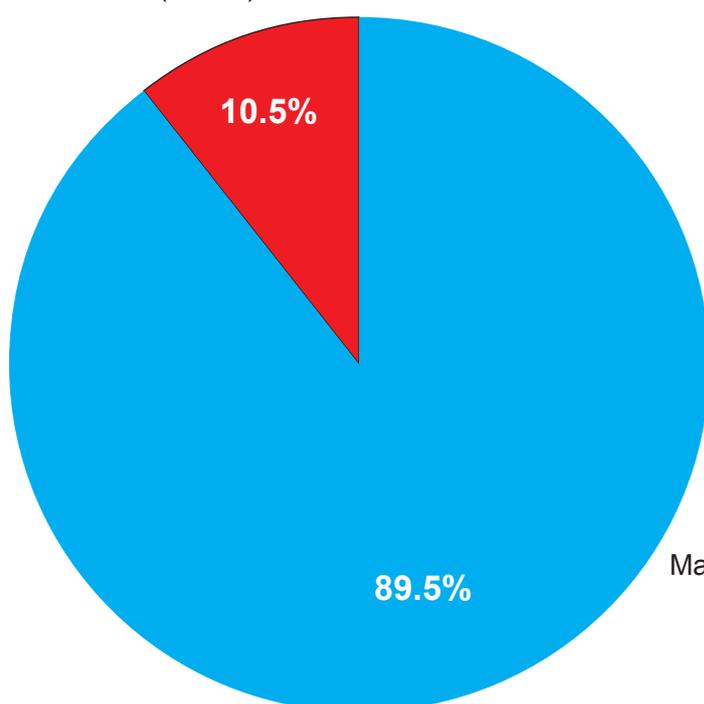
Key Trends (January – April 2025:)

Incident Type	Description	Where it Happened
Killed	Journalist Mohamed Abukar Dabaashe killed on 18 March 2025	Mogadishu
Arrests	46 journalists	Mogadishu (41), Puntland – Galkayo (1), Somaliland – Hargeisa (1), Burao (3)
Kidnapped and Disappeared	2 journalists	Lower Shabelle, Southwest
Media Raid/Closure	2 stations closed (one remains shuttered)	Mogadishu (Radio Risaala), Somaliland (Universal Somali TV)
Restrictions	3 stations affected S	outhwest State (Radio Arlaadi, Radio Warsan, Radio Voice of Baay and Bakool)
Online Censorship	7 cases	Facebook
Physical Attack/Injuries	6 cases	Mogadishu
Equipment Confiscated	Over 30 cases	Mogadishu and Galkayo

Source: SJS Data.

Gender Breakdown Of Journalists Affected by Physical Threats, Arrests (Jan-Apr 2025)

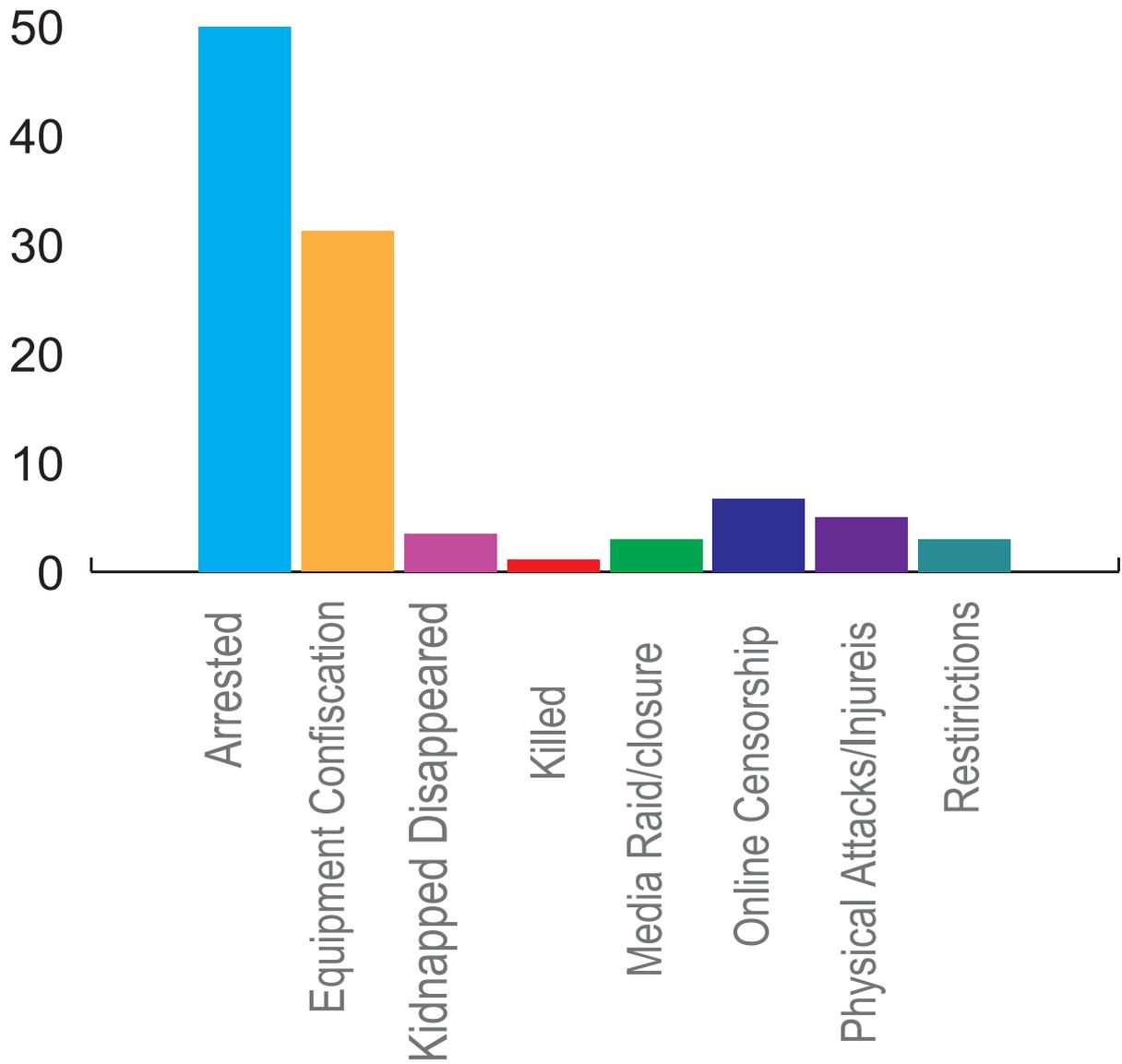
Female Journalist (10.5%)



Male Journalist (89.5%)

Source: SJS Data.

Chart: Violations Against Media Freedom in Somalia and Somaliland (Jan - Apr 2025)



Source: SJS Data.



The body of journalist Mohamed Abukar Dabaashe was laid to rest on 19 March 2025. | PHOTO/SJS.

Murdered: Mohamed Abukar Mohamed (Dabaashe)

On 18 March 2025, Mohamed Abukar Mohamed (known as Dabaashe), aged 31, was killed when a massive improvised explosive device (IED) detonated at his residence in the Ceel Gaabta area of Mogadishu.

The attack, claimed by Al-Shabaab, was intended to target Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's convoy. Although the president survived, several people were killed and others injured, according to media reports. Dabaashe's body was discovered under the rubble of the collapsed building several hours after the explosion, and the body was laid to rest on 19 March 2025.

Dabaashe began his journalism career as a trainee at Radio Risaala in late 2011 and later became a full-time reporter for the station. Since 2019, he had been working as an independent online reporter, primarily using Facebook and YouTube platforms. Dabaashe is the first journalist killed in Somalia in 2025. His death adds to the long list of journalists and media professionals who have been killed in Somalia since 1992, many of whose cases remain unresolved ■

Attacks on Journalists And Media Stations

On 16 January, Shafi'i Abdi Mohamed (Shaaciye), a journalist known for his critical posts about Somaliland and authorities on Facebook, was arrested¹ upon his return to Hargeisa from Mogadishu, where he had resided for a year. Local journalists informed SJS that Somaliland police raided his home and arrested him following orders from Somaliland Police Commander Mohamed Adan Saqadhi. Somaliland police officials have not commented on the circumstances surrounding Shaaciye's detention. Shaaciye had previously fled Hargeisa, citing threats from Somaliland's national intelligence due to his critical posts. He spent nearly a year in Mogadishu. On 18 January, Shaaciye was brought before the Maroodi Jeh Court in Hargeisa, where his detention was extended for a week. On 22 January, he was released from police custody after the intervention of clan elders and on condition that he refrains from criticizing the police.

On 25 January, armed NISA officers raided² the home of journalist Sharif Abdi in Mogadishu's Waberi district. After failing to locate him, the officers tracked and detained him later that evening at a different location. Sharif was taken to the notorious NISA detention and torture facility, Godka Jila'ow, in Mogadishu, where he was held without charge. Sharif, who reports primarily on security operations in the Hiiraan region and criticizes NISA Director Abdullahi Mohamed Ali (Sanbalolshe), was subjected to intense interrogation.

On 7 February, a government-affiliated clan militia in Lower Shabelle kidnapped journalist Omar Yusuf Mohamed³ (Omar Guux), who reports for Nabad Somali TV, while he was covering community complaints about militia raids and civilian detentions around KM50, Lower Shabelle region. Omar was locked in an abandoned makeshift house before being freed later the same day. He said the militia interrogated him about his reporting on the disappearance of a local elder abducted during a militia raid on 31 January. On 8 February, journalists from a dozen media houses were invited to cover a joint press conference featuring senior Somali officials. During the event, RTN TV journalist Mohamed Abduqadir Hajir asked critical questions regarding the closure of business hubs in Mogadishu due to insecurity and alleged extortion. Deputy Minister Al-Adaala interrupted, harassed, and humiliated him publicly. Shortly after, security forces cut the recording, removed journalists' microphones, and the incident continued a pattern of intimidation against Hajir and RTN TV.

On 9 February, freelance journalist Sharif Abdi, who had been detained by NISA without a court order since 25 January, was released. Sharif was kidnapped from Mogadishu's city center, interrogated at Godka Jila'ow facility, and confined in poor conditions for ten days. His questioning centered on his critical Facebook posts, particularly those criticizing NISA chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali (Sanbalolshe) and his activities in Hiiraan.

On 12 February, Somaliland's Ministry of Information, Culture, and National Guidance ordered the closure of Universal TV in Somaliland⁴ after its report questioned Somaliland's unrecognized status during President Abdirahman Abdillahi Irro's visit to the UAE. The ministry accused Universal TV of violating agreements and undermining Somaliland's "nationhood," resulting in the ban of the station and its logo from cable networks and advertisers.

¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/01/22/somaliland-releases-journalist-shafi-shaaciye-after-a-week-in-detention/>

² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/02/02/nisa-chief-must-immediately-free-journalist-sharif-abdi-from-unlawful-detention-in-mogadishu/>



On 12 February, Somaliland’s Ministry of Information, Culture, and National Guidance ordered the closure of the privately-owned Universal TV in Somaliland.

On 25 February, Somaliland’s Togdheer Governor Mohamud Ali Saleban (Ramaax) ordered the detention of three journalists in Burao ⁵ —Said Ali Osman (Sky Cable TV), Ayanle Ige Duale (Sahan TV), and Abdiasis Saleban Sulub (KF Media)—after they reported on allegations that authorities destroyed water reservoirs amid a drought. The journalists were released after spending 24 hours in police custody.

On 27 February, authorities in Somalia’s Southwest State ordered three local media stations—Arlaadi Media, Voice of Baay and Bakool, and Radio Warsan—to halt their planned Ramadan radio contest ⁶. The directive came without a clear explanation, though it was suspected to be linked to the Southwest State media organizing a separate contest. The issue was later resolved, and the stations resumed their programs.

On 6 March, Somalia’s Minister of Information, Daud Aweys, announced new restrictions barring journalists and the public from reporting on security failures in the capital. The same day, Banadir Regional Police Commissioner Mahdi Omar Mumin (Moalim Mahdi) publicly vowed to detain any journalist reporting on security issues “in a hot and dark cell with no lights,” increasing fear and censorship among the media.

³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/02/10/two-journalists-illegally-held-separately-by-nisa-and-clan-militia-freed/>

⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/04/sjs-urges-somaliland-to-lift-universal-tv-ban-and-calls-for-press-freedom-in-southwest-state/>



A group of journalist were arrested at the Hamar Jajab police station, Mogadishu, on 18 March, 2025. | PHOTO/SJS

On 8 March, armed police officers led by Commander Abdi Ali stormed Risaala Media's station in Mogadishu's Hamar Jajab district, forcing the outlet off-air and arresting five journalists who had reported on a bombing attack targeting the president's convoy. The journalists were taken to Hamar Jajab police station, interrogated, and later visited by Banadir Police Commissioner Moalim Mahdi, who questioned why they reported on the bombing.

On 15 March, agents from Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) raided journalist Bahjo Abdullahi Salad's home⁷ after she reported on waste dumping near a government event. She was arrested, interrogated for four hours, and released only after public protest by other journalists.

On 18 March, an Al-Shabaab bombing in Mogadishu killed⁸ an online journalist Mohamed Abukar Dabaashe. He was among several civilian casualties in the attack that targeted the convoy of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud outside the presidential palace. Dabaashe is the first journalist killed in Somalia in 2025.

⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/04/sjs-urges-somaliland-to-lift-universal-tv-ban-and-calls-for-press-freedom-in-southwest-state/>

⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/04/sjs-urges-somaliland-to-lift-universal-tv-ban-and-calls-for-press-freedom-in-southwest-state/>



Journalist Mohamed Abukar Dabaashe killed in Mogadishu bombing on 18 March, 2025.
| PHOTO/Facebook.

On 18 March, following an Al-Shabaab bombing targeting the Somali President's convoy outside the presidential palace, police arrested nineteen journalists reporting at the scene. Following the attack, Mogadishu police launched a crackdown on journalists who had gone to the scene to report on the incident. The 19 journalists were detained, loaded onto a police truck, and transported to Hamar Jajab police station. At the station, police confiscated their equipment and deleted their footage and photos before releasing them. The arrested journalists are: Farah Mohamed Adam (Cameraman, Somali Cable TV); Abdiifafid Nor Barre (Reporter, Somali Cable TV); Nor Hassan Ali (Cameraman, RTN TV); Hamdaan Sheikh Ahmed (Reporter, RTN TV); Farhan Abdirisak Dahir (Cameraman, Himilo TV); Abdullahi Abdulkadir Dahir (Reporter, Himilo TV); Salman Abdirisak Shire (Cameraman, Somali People TV); Qasim Abdulle Barrow (Reporter, Somali People TV); Salah Osman Bille (Cameraman, RNN TV); Abdullahi Yusuf Hassan (Reporter, RNN TV); Ayanle Abdi Nuur (Cameraman, Goobjoog TV); Rowdo Hassan Abdi (Reporter, Goobjoog TV); Abdinasir Abukar Hared (Cameraman, Al Jazeera Arabic); Abdirahman Hussein (Camerajournalist, Reuters); Farah Abdi Warsame (Photographer, Associated Press); Abukar Mohamed Muhidin (Photographer, Anadolu Agency); Ismail Hussein Ismail (Cameraman, Dalsan TV); Abdisalan Jule Shakir (Reporter, Dalsan TV); Abdirahman Mohamed Waaberi (reporter, Daljir Media).

⁷ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/16/female-journalist-detained-for-exposing-health-hazard-from-government-officials-rubbish-amid-media-crackdown-in-mogadishu/>

⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/18/somali-journalist-mohamed-abukar-dabashe-killed-in-al-shabaab-bomb-attack-in-mogadishu/>



Journalists—Ali Ibrahim Abdullahi Suheyfa (reporter), Hamda Hassan Ahmed (female reporter), Mohamed Said Nur (cameraman), Liban Abdullahi Hussein (radio technician), and Abdalla Sharif Ali (cameraman). | PHOTO/Courtesy/ Risaala TV.

On 18 March, Mogadishu police raided and shut down Risaala Media Corporation without a warrant. Five journalists—Ali Ibrahim Abdullahi Suheyfa (reporter), Hamda Hassan Ahmed (female reporter), Mohamed Said Nur (cameraman), Liban Abdullahi Hussein (radio technician), and Abdalla Sharif Ali (cameraman)—were detained¹¹ and warned not to report on security issues before their release. The journalists were taken to Hamar Jajab Police Station, where they were subjected to intense interrogation about their coverage of the bombing that occurred earlier that day in Mogadishu. Later the same day, Risaala Media resumed broadcasting.

On 25 March, Journalist Ibrahim Mohamed Mayow¹² was forcibly disappeared by officers linked to the regional police commissioner after publishing a video of an Al-Shabaab attack aftermath in Afgooye. Although local journalists sought his whereabouts, police denied holding him. Mayow was secretly detained until 28 March, when he was dumped in Mogadishu by his captors without any formal statement from authorities.

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somali-militants-target-presidential-convoy-bomb-attack-president-safe-2025-03-18/>

¹⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/19/in-a-new-crackdown-on-free-press-somali-police-arrest-19-journalists-reporting-on-al-shabaab-attack-on-presidents-convoy/>

¹¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/18/somali-police-shut-down-an-independent-radio-station-and-arrested-five-journalists-after-reporting-on-the-bombing-attack-on-the-presidents-convoy-in-mogadishu/>

On March 25, Puntland police in North Galkayo, Mudug, arrested journalist Dalmar Isse Ahmed at midnight and took him to a police post on the outskirts of Galkayo. On March 13, Dalmar had visited the office of Somalia's Federal Government-administered National Identity Registration Authority in the south of Galkayo. He posted a video report on his Facebook page, saying he had registered for the national ID card and encouraging others to do the same. Puntland authorities had previously banned the FGS-issued document and introduced their own ID card for Puntland citizens. The journalist was held in a cell at the police post for a full day and night before being released without charge. His equipment was confiscated upon his arrest, and to this day, his camera equipment is missing. When asked, the police said they could not locate the equipment. As a result, the journalist fled the region.

On 26 March, Armed police raided the home of Mohamed Bulbul, SJS Secretary of Information and Human Rights, harassing his family and searching for him¹³. The raid followed death threats Bulbul received after publishing interviews exposing torture and sexual violence inside NISA's Godka Jila'ow prison.

On 28 March, Mogadishu police attacked and arrested five journalists covering women's protests against rape in Nairobi and child marriage in Puntland. Four journalists¹⁴—Abdirazak Haji Sidow Nor, Abdullahi Abdukadir Ahmed, Abdirizak Abdullahi Adan, and Abdirahman Barre Hussein—were arrested and later joined by female journalist Anisa Abdiaziz Hussein. Their equipment was confiscated, but all were freed the same day.

On 10 April, Somali police in Mogadishu briefly arrested Feisal Omar¹⁵, a Reuters photojournalist, as he reported on a protest by the Somali Bantu community over the death of a military officer in government custody. Feisal's camera was forcibly confiscated, and he was taken to Wadajir Police Station before being released later that day.

On 12 April, Somali police unlawfully arrested¹⁶ Abukar Sheikh Mohamud, Director of Shabelle Media, and his Deputy Director, Mahamud Abdinasir Soofeysane, following an interview with a Somali opposition figure criticizing the government over insecurity. Both journalists were released on the same day.

On 28 April, Somali police in Mogadishu arrested four journalists in Mogadishu¹⁷: Abuukar Mohamed Keynaan (Risaala TV), Abdirashid Adow Ibrahim (Risaala TV), Bashir Ali Shire (MM TV), Mahad Abdirisak Abdi (MM TV). The journalists were reporting on the aftermath of a mortar attack on Mogadishu's Aden Abdulle Airport when they were arrested. They were held at the Wadajir District Police Station in Mogadishu until late in the evening when they were released.

On 29 April, Somali police in Mogadishu's Dayniile district arrested four journalists who had gone to cover a local community protest against a planned forced eviction by the government targeting families in the area. At around 10:00 AM, a protest erupted near the site of the former cigarette and match factory, where the journalists were present to report. As the protest unfolded, Dayniile district police arrived quickly at the scene. Without warning, they opened fire with live ammunition, directly targeting journalists and their equipment. Subsequently, four journalists — Deeq Moalim Jiinow (Saab TV reporter), Hussein Makaraan (Hiiraanweyn Media camerajournalist), Shukri Abi Abdi (Shabelle TV reporter), and Najib Farah Mohamed (Shabelle TV cameraman) — were unlawfully arrested and taken to the Dayniile police station. They were detained there until approximately midday and were only released after all footage they had recorded during the protest was forcibly deleted.

¹² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/25/after-surviving-al-shabaab-attack-journalist-ibrahim-mayow-abducted-by-somali-police/>

¹³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/27/intensified-crackdown-on-journalists-mogadisu-police-raid-home-of-sjs-secretary-of-information-mohamed-bulbul-in-mogadishu/>

¹⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2025/03/29/somali-police-arrest-journalists-disperse-women-protesting-against-sexual-violence/>

¹⁵ https://x.com/sjs_Somalia/status/1910285812068909202

¹⁶ https://x.com/sjs_Somalia/status/1911045001405997370

¹⁷ https://x.com/sjs_Somalia/status/1916826962422607874

On 30 April, Somalia’s presidential guards, known as Unit 77, physically attacked, beat, shoved, and struck journalists with the barrels of their guns while they were in the parliament hall during a chaotic incident that erupted in the lower house of parliament. The journalists were forcefully removed from the hall, subjected to kicks and slaps, and some had their cameras confiscated and were pushed. As a result, SJS found that six journalists were physically assaulted. They are: Farah Mohamed Adam (cameraman for Somali Cable TV), Nimo Cardoofe (female reporter for Somali Cable TV), Guled Salad (cameraman for Universal Somali TV), Abdiaziz Abdullahi (reporter for Universal Somali TV), Abdukadir Mohamed Hassan (cameraman for RTN TV), and Abdifatah Mohamed Abdullahi Roble (cameraman for Shabelle TV).

Facebook Restrictions on Journalists

On 6 January, a diaspora-based journalist Mohamed Yusuf Bakeyle’s Facebook post about local clan elders calling for peace in the Sanaag region was removed. Facebook also put restriction on his page, with a notification citing violating the Facebook “community standards” under the notorious “dangerous individuals and organizations.”

On 8 January, Fahad Karie, a camera journalist based in Somaliland, had his Facebook page suspended for allegedly violating community standards. According to the notification he received this was due to a specific report he posted on 3 December 2024 about a meeting between Somaliland President Abdirahman Abdullahi Irro and a businessman which was flagged as “false information about COVID-19” even though the post never spoke about anything about COVID-19.



Screenshots from affected journalists' Facebook accounts. | Photo/SJS.

On 2 January, a UK-based female journalist Busharo Ali Mohamed (Busharo Baanday) who reports on Somaliland had her Facebook post removed after reporting that a local Somaliland artist was attacked in Hargeisa. The post alleged that individuals connected to state security agents were responsible for the attack. A notification from Facebook cited violation of “dangerous organizations and individuals” policies. Busharo appealed, but by 7 February, Facebook notified her that she “will hear back” from Facebook. Later, Facebook restricted her page even though the restriction was lifted in late April.

On 15 March, A community media group based in Mogadishu, Xogbile, had their Facebook page hacked. Hackers posted nudity content and deleted some material that Xogbile had broadcasted earlier. The journalists are still struggling to regain full admin access. An appeal to Meta, Facebook’s parent company, is pending.

On 22 March, Mohamed Bulbul, SJS Secretary of Information and Human Rights, had a post removed after reporting that local residents along the Mogadishu-Afgooye corridor feared sightings of Al-Shabaab militants. After SJS flagged the issue, Facebook restored the post.

On 1 April, Zakariye Mohamud Timacadde, a diaspora-based journalist, was notified that Facebook removed four of his news reports for violating standards related to “dangerous individuals and organizations.” These reports were about a blood donation appeal for a Somali woman hospitalized for childbirth complications; a report about the death of a Somali soldier; a report on the Somali government forces withdrawing from a village in Middle Shabelle and seized by Al-Shabaab; a report about Al-Shabaab’s attack on a hotel in Beledweyne, killing clan elders. After SJS intervention, Facebook restored these posts.

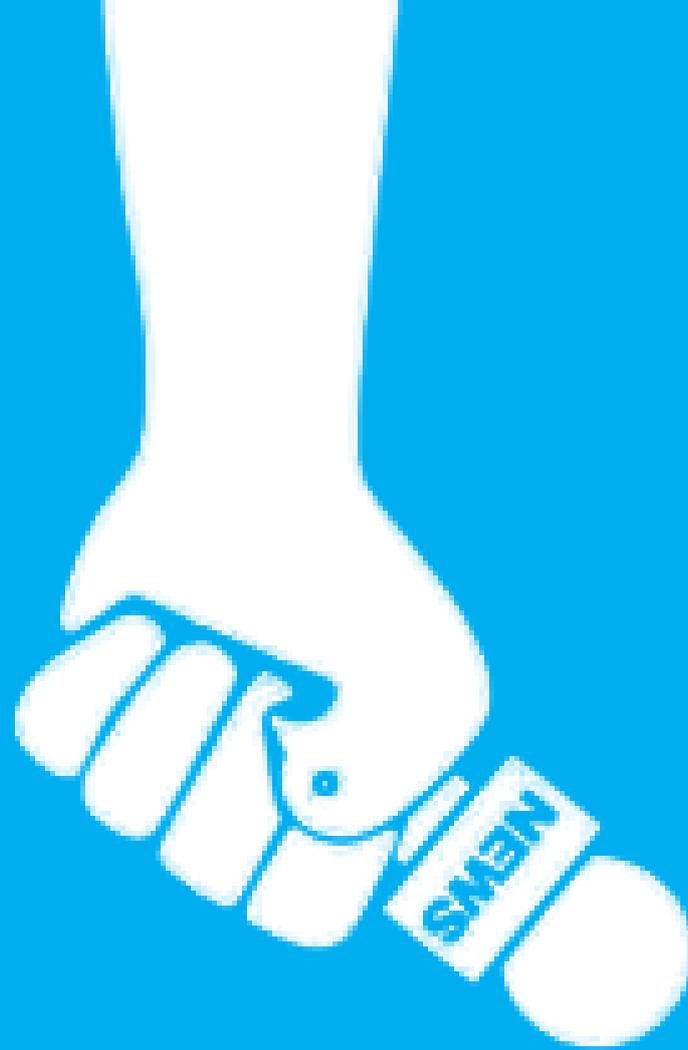
On 20 April, Gaylan Media, run by Somali journalist Farah Abdulkadir, had seven news reports removed under the “Dangerous Organizations and Individuals” policy. The reports removed included: the influence of rival foreign forces Somalia published on 6 April; a report about the United States Government suspending financial support for the African Union mission in Somalia published on 18 April; the Puntland achievement in its ongoing counter-ISIS operation on 19 April; a report about the Somali nostalgic for powerful African leaders published on 14 April; the Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed and the situation in Tigray published on 12 April; the Somali PM Hamza Abdi Barre’s Las Anod visit published on 14 April; the investigation into the assassination of Commander Nur Faray published on 9 April. These removals appeared to be a result of coordinated bad-faith reporting by pro-government trolls aiming to silence independent journalism. Each report contained criticism of Somali political leaders.

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/busharo.baande>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/Mohabulbul>

²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063647392210>

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GaylanMedia>



3 MAY 2025 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

 Somali Journalists Syndicate - SJS

 @SJS_Somalia

 www.sjsyndicate.org