

Somali journalists arrested and radio station closed down

Two journalists were arrested and one private radio station was closed down on 9 July 2016 in Somalia, following an interview in which an interviewee criticised food aid distribution in Somalia.



Image by 123RF

The International Federation of Journalists and its affiliate the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) has called on the authorities to immediately free the journalists and lift the ban on City FM, a radio station in the Middle Shabelle region.

The regional administration ordered the arrest of Abdishakur Abdullahi Ahmed (nicknamed Shashaa), editor-in-chief of City FM, and Abdirahman Hussein Omar Wadani, deputy editor-in-chief of City FM.

On Saturday, 9 July 2016, security forces raided the premises of City FM, shut down the radio station and arrested the two journalists. Later, security forces came back to the station and seized radio equipment.

The journalists were arrested for broadcasting interviews with people criticising the Middle Shabelle administration.

On Thursday, 7 July, the two journalists interviewed some internally displaced persons (IDPs) about the regional administration's distribution of food aid. Some of the IDPs accused the administration of "misappropriating" food aid.

"We denounce the arrest and harassment of Abdishakur Abdullahi Ahmed and Abdirahman Hussein Omar Wadani, and

demand the immediate and unconditional release of the two journalists and total return of radio equipment,” said Omar Faruk Osman, NUSOJ secretary general. “The administration must allow City FM to resume its operations without any harassment or restrictions.”

Abdishakur Abdullahi Ahmed, who is also reporter of Somnews TV in Jowhar, is a member of the union and last week attended the General Assembly of NUSOJ, which was held in Galkayo.

“The continued detention of the two journalists and sustained closure of City FM are an affront to media freedom and suppression of local people's freedom of expression on an issue of public interest,” added Osman.

IFJ General Secretary Anthony Bellanger echoed calls for the journalists' release and the reopening of the radio station. “These latest attempts to silence Somali press are an affront to media freedom and democracy in a country that desperately needs it.”

Source: IFEX. This statement was originally published on ifj.org.

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