



**International  
Federation  
of Journalists**

**JIM BOUMELHA**  
President

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General Secretary

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon  
United Nations Headquarters  
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CC: Ambassador Francois Fall  
Special Representative of the Secretary General for Somalia  
UN Political Office for Somalia  
Via facsimile: + 254 20 7622697

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Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

On behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), representing over 600,000 journalists in 114 countries worldwide, I am writing to urge you to take immediate action to improve journalist safety in Somalia, where media workers are being threatened and killed with impunity.

Violence in the country has been escalating and this has put enormous pressure on our colleagues reporting on the conflict for both Somali news organisations and international media.

Journalists themselves have become targets. This year alone seven journalists and news professionals have been killed in Somalia, four of them in Mogadishu.

Eleven journalists have been arrested. Only a few of them have been charged officially and brought to court while the rest have been held without trial and cannot communicate with their families, colleagues or legal counsel. Five journalists have been ambushed and robbed.

Through the National Union of Somali Journalists, the IFJ affiliate in Somalia, we have heard reports of four journalists being tortured. Five news media outlets have been attacked: one was burned down while another was destroyed by missiles. Three other media institutions have been forced to shut down at some point this year.

The pace of attacks on media has been rising rapidly. The only constant is that, unlike other crimes committed against the rest of the civilian population, all of these crimes have gone unpunished. Both Somali and international authorities have ignored these crimes.

As you know, there is history of impunity for press crimes in Somalia that has been formed by the lack of political support to prosecute these crimes. This lack of support is reflected in the absence of a legal framework for press freedom and journalist safety and the enforcement mechanisms needed to keep journalists safe and to investigate attacks against them.

Mogadishu has experienced the worst press freedom violations, with journalists facing constant attacks, harassments, libel and intimidation. This has sent a chilling message to the journalist community there that not only will they not be protected but in fact they will be targeted if they publish investigative or critical articles. This has led to self-censorship, an exodus of journalists from their profession and crippled news dissemination.

Despite this crisis and the constant death threats, detention and arrest that our colleagues in Somalia face, many of them are continuing to work independently despite the risk to their personal safety.

We are calling on you to intervene immediately to protect our colleagues and force authorities to make their safety a priority.

As you know the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1738 last December, which says that in armed conflict situations journalists and media workers are considered civilians and that violence against them may be considered a war crime.

In your recent report on Somalia you noted the attacks on journalists.

Point 102 of the report says that “[i]ndependent verification of allegations of serious and gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law would be an important step to establish confidence in the political process. With a view to the limited capacity of local human rights actors in Somalia, a joint mission of independent mandate holders could be a possible option to gather facts about alleged human rights and humanitarian abuses committed during the recent outbreaks of fighting in Mogadishu and south and central Somalia.”

With this in mind, we urge you to investigate immediately the attacks on journalists in Somalia and push Somali authorities to make press freedom and safety a priority.

We look forward to your response on this matter.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aidan White". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Aidan White  
General Secretary