

IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

Subject: Condemnation

The owners, managers, and journalists of independent media outlets in Somalia, alongside colleagues from foreign media, have released a press statement following three days of meetings and consultations in Mogadishu regarding the cabinet's approval of the so-called Somali National Media Council on 14th March.

As we had already expressed dissatisfaction with the creation of the country's media law, we strongly condemn the government's move to overtake the 13-year-long process of forming the National Media Council.

Regrettably, the Somali National Media Council was fully comprised of government-appointed members, rather than the intended three appointees. This showed a blatant violation of provisions in the media law amended in 2020 and abuse of power.

We are appalled by the Council of Ministers' decision to appoint all members, mostly civil servants and colleagues close to the leadership of the Federal Ministry of information. In addition to undermining press freedom, this violates the media law passed by parliament and signed by former president.

Thus, independent media managers have warned of the dire consequences of the government's illegal and abusive decision, which if it becomes effective may result in:

A- That the government revokes the license of any media outlet that rejects censorship and becomes its mouthpiece channel.

B- That any journalist who criticizes the government should have his journalist license revoked.

C- That any media house or reporter broadcasted news of the opposition or critics of the government will be fined heavily which may cause the media to close its doors and go off air.

Therefore, we request the president of the Federal Republic of Somalia HE Hassan Sheikh Mahmud, to intervene and stop the government-appointed National Media Council which is grossly contrary to the media law.

Also, we also call on the Lower House and Senate Committees in charge the Information and Communication to interfere since this can cause the Somali Media to lose its rights to exercise the press freedom enshrined in the Somali constitution.

Finally, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the unlawful establishment of National Media Council which was blindly approved by the Council of Ministers. It was supposed to be an exclusive body that is included all sides which as the independent media houses, civil society, and organizations defending press freedom and the rights of journalists in Somalia.

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