



JOINT STATEMENT

United for Defending Freedom of Expression: Somali media and journalists' associations sign a historic MOU with Bar Association

MOGADISHU, Somalia 27 May, 2020 – The Somali media fraternity this week signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Somali Bar Association to unconditionally defend the rights of the journalists and press freedom as well as to provide legal awareness for the professional journalists and media houses in Somalia.

The signing on the MOU came after a meeting on Thursday May 21, 2020 between the representatives from Somali Media Association (SOMA); Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS); Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA); the Somali Media Women Association (SOMWA) and the members of the Somali Bar Association in Mogadishu. These lengthy discussions also agreed the formation of a strong network to collectively defend the freedom of expression and that of the press in the country.

In the meantime, both sides have appointed a four-member Ad hoc committee to coordinate the technical wise and to work on the way forward in the formation of the network on behalf of the media houses, journalists unions and the Bar Association.

“The Somali Bar Association is pleased and honors to partner with the independent journalist associations and media houses in their quest to defend their rights through legal representation. We declare our unconditional commitment to protecting human rights including the freedom of expression and the press freedom and advocating for the constitutionally guaranteed rights while on the other hand educating media and journalists about their rights and responsibilities,” said Avv. Dahir Mohamed Ali, the Secretary General of the Somali Bar Association, the largest association of the country’s professional lawyers.

“Somalia is possibly heading to an election period where the threat of legal action is constant and high. Currently journalist Mohamed Abuuja is held incommunicado with access to a lawyer. Covid-19 has also brought legal challenges against journalists and media houses. It is indeed of a high importance for our journalists and media to have this great partnership with the Somali Bar Association,” said Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, the Secretary General of [Somali Journalists Syndicate](#) (SJS), a journalists’ trade union representing professional journalists countrywide.

“We welcome the signing of this MOU with the Bar Association as it is very key to the defense of the rights of our media houses and our journalists. This is an

important advance toward the protection of the freedom of speech in Somalia during this critical time,” Mohamed Abduwahab Abdullahi, the Secretary General of the [Somali Media Association](#) (SOMA), an association of the independent media houses that represents 38 radio stations across Somalia said.

“The agreement signed between the Somali Bar Association and the Somali media and journalists representatives is the first one in its kind in Somalia and it is my hope that this partnership will strengthen the capacity to defend the press freedom and the freedom of expression in the country,” said Hassan Ali Gesey, Chairman of the [Somali Independent Media Houses Association](#) (SIMHA), another key organization that represents independent houses in the country.

“This MOU today signed in Mogadishu has a special significance for the defense of the rights of the Somali women journalists who are always subjected to underreported violence,” Maryan Seylac, the Executive Director of the [Somali Media Women Association](#) (SOMWA), a women’s media rights organization based in Baidoa, the capital of South West of Somalia.

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