

Newspapers shut down by Somaliland authorities

CPJ reports that police in Somaliland raided the Hargeisa offices of the independent Somali-language paper Haatuf and its sister English-language weekly, Somaliland Times, and suspended them indefinitely.



The front page of an old edition of Haatuf newspaper. A court on Thursday ordered the paper to be shut down. (Guleid Hussein). Image via CPJ

The police cited a court order that said the papers should be shut down for publishing false news and insulting officials, according to the same sources. Haatuf publishes six days a week. Local journalists and news reports suggested the closure was linked to a series of critical reports in the publications that alleged government corruption and the mishandling of finances.

Court authorities did not provide an appeal process for the papers' shutdown, local journalists told CPJ. By Somaliland law, court decisions are subject to appeal, according to Guleid Ahmed, a lawyer and chairman of Somaliland's Human Rights Center, a human rights advocacy group based in Hargeisa. Article 28 obliges the Somaliland constitution to give parties equal opportunity before the judiciary, according to a statement by the Human Rights Center. Article 32 of the constitution forbids acts that suppress the media, the statement said.

Other outlets shut down

The steps follow the shutting down of other news outlets. In February, authorities banned indefinitely the private U.K.-based broadcaster Universal TV from airing in Somaliland after it broadcast a comedy program that ridiculed the president, according to local journalists and reports. On 13 December, police raided and closed indefinitely the daily Hubaal citing a court order that claimed the publication promoted insecurity in the nation. The court did not allow for an appeal process, according to local journalists. Both outlets are still shut down.

"Judging by these steps to close several news outlets, the Somaliland government is headed toward one of the worst crackdowns on the press since independence," says CPJ East Africa Representative Tom Rhodes. "We call on authorities

to allow Haatuf and the Somaliland Times to resume publishing immediately."

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>