

Somali journalists trained to survive captivity

The International News Safety Institute (INSI) and its Somalia partner, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), has provided safety training to 48 Somali journalists and other media staff in Djibouti.

Since 2007, Somalia has become Africa's most dangerous country for journalists and the world's deadliest place for media professionals outside Iraq.

Somali journalists, editors and cameramen participated in two two-day workshops held in the capital city of neighbouring Djibouti. Seven of the participants were women. The first workshop took place from 20 to 21 June 2008 and the second from 24 to 25 June 2008.

The training addressed various safety issues including personal safety, pre-deployment planning, conflict management, dealing with hostile crowds, surveillance awareness, first-aid skills, building security, detentions and captivity survival. The training engaged journalists in discussions and practical exercises on medical emergencies, how to respond to different forms of attacks, and other risks that journalists face.

The participants came from Mogadishu, Baidoa, Garowe, Galkayo, Beledweyn, Jowhar and Bardhere, the main towns of Somalia. Trainees came from all types of the media industry such as print, radio, television and online. Freelancers were also included.

A Mogadishu reporter said, "Even when there is fighting going on, I have to go to work because otherwise could be fired. My boss told me once that a fighting day is a normal life day so I must be at the office." Participants shared their own experiences of working in different regions of the country.

The workshops are part of a one-year national project including a Somali Safety Information Coordinator based in Mogadishu and three safety trainings. The first one was held in Hargeisa between 31 July and 1 August 2007 and trained 25 journalists. In total 73 Somali journalists and other media workers have been trained.

"This safety training will help reduce the risks that Somali journalists and other media workers face while they carry out their professional duty," said Omar Faruk Osman, NUSOJ Secretary General.

The workshops were organised two weeks after the assassination of the Vice President of the National Union of Somali Journalists Nasteh Dahir Farah, who was trained at the first safety training in Hargeisa.

Participants of the two workshops paid emotional tribute to Nasteh Dahir Farah and condemned this act of senseless and brutal murder.

The project is supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Endowment for Democracy, International Labour Organisation and Vikes Organisation of Media, Communication and Development.

Source: National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)

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