

IFJ calls for Somali media protection

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has urged the international community to help stop violence against media in Somalia after the murder of Muktar Mohamed Hirabe, director of Radio Shabelle in Mogadishu, who was shot dead by gunmen in the war ravaged Somali capital on Sunday, 7 June 2009.



The IFJ Executive Committee, meeting in Oslo, Norway from 6 to 7 June, passed a motion tabled by Omar Farouk Osman, general secretary of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), condemning Muktar's murder which brought the total number of journalists killed in Somalia in 2009 to five.

"The IFJ Executive Committee is deeply disturbed that, in the face of on going press freedom violations in Somalia and growing deadly attacks against journalists, no action has been taken by the authorities," said the motion. "The Executive Committee calls on all the international organisations and global institutions that advocate peace, human rights and democracy to break the silence and help bring an end to these heinous acts against journalists in Somalia."

The IFJ Executive Committee further supported NUSOJ request to establish an international commission inquiry to bring out the truth about these killings and expressed its full solidarity with - and support to - members and leaders of the National Union of Somali Journalists in their continuing efforts to end the rampant culture of impunity and bring to justice the killers of their murdered colleagues.

According to the National Union of Somali Journalists, two men armed with pistols fired at Muktar on Sunday as he was walking with his colleague Ahmed Omar Hashi (Tajir), news editor of Radio Shabelle, in Bakara Market. Muktar was shot five times in the head and died on the spot while Mohamed sustained serious injuries and is in a critical condition in hospital.

Muktar, 48, is the fifth journalist murdered in Somalia in 2009 and the third journalist of Radio Radio Shabelle to be killed in Mogadishu this year. He had received safety training from NUSOJ and INSI in June 2008 on how to report in hostile environment.

"Journalists are not victims of the conflict in Somalia," said Osman introducing the motion. "The murder of Muktar, an experienced, respected and popular journalist is another act of violence by those seeking to silence the media. Our colleagues who put their lives on the line every day to inform their communities and the world need protection."

Muktar's murder occurred on the first anniversary of that of former NUSOJ Vice President, Naster Daher Farah who was killed on 7 June 2008 in Kismayu.

Article published courtesy of IFJ.org

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