

**To:** Prime Minister H.E. Abdi Farah Shirdoon of Somalia

**CC:** H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President Federal Republic of Somalia

H.E. Abdikarim Hussein Guled, Minister of Interior and National Security

H.E. Abdullahi Ilmoge Hersi, Minister of Information, Posts, Telecommunications and Transportation

H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President Federal Republic of Somalia

Hon. Prof. Mohamed Osman Jawari, Speaker, Federal Parliament

H.E. Michele Cervone, European Union Special Envoy for Somalia

**H.E. Bart Ouvry, Ambassador of Belgium to Somalia**

H.E. Etienne de Poncins, French Ambassador to Somalia

**H.E. Andrea Mazella, Ambassador of Italy to Somalia**

**H.E. Javier Herrera Garcia-Canturri, Ambassador of Spain to Somalia**

**H.E. Matt Baugh, United Kingdom Ambassador to Somalia**

**Date:** 24 October 2013

**Subject:** **Rescind arbitrary eviction order of Shabelle Media Network and end attacks on independent media**

24 October 2013

Mr. Prime Minister,

Over twenty international organisations working for press freedom are writing to you today to ask you to intervene to rescind the order of eviction sent by the Ministry of Interior to the Shabelle Media Network on 20 October.

Evicting these journalists will put their lives in danger.

This letter from the Ministry comes as a strong surprise as Radio Shabelle's occupancy of this former Somali airline building is based on an agreement between the Ministry of Transport of the former Transitional Federal Government and the Shabelle Media network, allowing the latter to use the building until 2015.

This summons for eviction, which is not justified on any legal grounds, appears therefore as an arbitrary and disproportionate decision from the Ministry of Interior and should be revoked.

Furthermore, this decision can have a direct nefarious effect on freedom of information. Putting Radio Shabelle in the streets will not only prevent the media from broadcasting and ensuring its public information mission. It will also put the journalists and all the staff of Radio Shabelle in immediate and real physical danger.

As you know, Radio Shabelle seeks to publish free and fair information, and to accurately describe the situation on the ground while avoiding political or religious exploitation of their network.

Targeted by the radical Islamic militia Al-Shabaab and Hibzz al-Islam, unfairly accused of serving foreign interests, it has paid a very heavy human tribute over the past years because of its commitment to provide free and independent information to the Somali population, losing ten journalists to violent attacks since 2007.

The government of Somalia should endeavour to protect such a valuable resource.

Mr. Prime Minister, this attempt by the Ministry of Interior to gag independent media is only the latest in a series of intimidations. Only recently the Ministry of Information, Posts, Telecommunications and Transportation also submitted summons for the editors of the radio station. This same Ministry is currently

responsible for the lease of Radio Shabelle's building and would have the power to stop this eviction.

These repeated efforts to weaken Radio Shabelle and the representatives of the independent media are not worthy of a democratic society and undermine Somalia's progress towards rule of law.

You are well aware that being a journalist in Somalia is a truly dangerous occupation, as shown again by the latest gun attack on 22 October against the Universal TV journalist, [Mohamed Mohamud Timadde](#). The attack has been strongly condemned by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has commanded the "magnificent job" of journalists in Somalia and urged them "to keep up their courageous activities."

The Somali government has shown it is aware of these difficulties and has committed, through various national and international texts, to protect journalists and freedom of information:

- The Somali provisional constitution guarantees, in article 18, freedom of expression and of opinion. As such, Radio Shabelle should not be punished for having exercised its constitutional right.
- Somalia is also a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the primary global human rights treaty guaranteeing freedom of expression.
- More recently, Somalia committed, in 2011 to implement several recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review concerning protection of the media, of which I will only quote one: "To put an end to all practices that threaten the right to freedom of expression, including threats against journalists and media outlets."

The eviction of Radio Shabelle clearly constitutes such a threat.

We ask of you, Mr. Prime Minister, and of the Federal Government of Somalia, to honour the national and international commitments taken towards the Somali people and the international community to defend freedom of expression and information by respecting and protecting Radio Shabelle and the independent voices in the media.

We unite our voices to actively request the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Information, Posts, Telecommunications and Transportation to stop this eviction process – that amounts to persecution of independent media – by rescinding its order immediately.

Sincerely,



Reporters Without Borders

National Union of Somali Journalists

Adil Soz - International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech

Africa Freedom of Information Centre

Aliansi Jurnalis Independen/Alliance of Independent Journalists

ARTICLE 19

Bahrain Center for Human Rights

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression

Centre for Independent Journalism - Malaysia

Freedom Forum

Freedom House

Independent Journalism Center - Moldova

Initiative for Freedom of Expression - Turkey

Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information

International Press Institute

International Publishers Association

Media Foundation for West Africa

Media Institute of Southern Africa

Observatorio Latinoamericano para la Libertad de Expresión (OLA)

Pacific Islands News Association

Pakistan Press Foundation

Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms - MADA

International Federation of Journalists Asia Pacific