



**HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER**

*Speaking for those who are not heard*

# ANNUAL REVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE 2022



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# Table of Contents

<b>FOREWARD.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VIOLATIONS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND PROTEST.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>POLITICAL TENSIONS IN LASANOD RESULTING IN DEMONSTRATIONS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>DETENTION OF OPPOSITION PARTY MEMBERS AND LEADERS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SUSPENSION AND/OR CLOSURE OF MEDIA HOUSES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>DETENTION AND PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>POLICE BRUTALITY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>THE CONDITIONS OF IDP's IN SOMALILAND.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>DAAMI CAMP.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>ABOUT THE HRC.....</b>	<b>17</b>

## **FOREWARD**

As chairperson of the Human Rights Centre, I am pleased to present our annual review of the general situation of human rights in Somaliland. The Human Rights Centre stands for defending human rights based on the Constitution and international human rights law. Throughout this year, we documented human rights abuses and incidences in Somaliland. This annual report is grounded on our gathering of evidence and aims to provide information and insight that is lacking due to the discourse in our local politics and emphasizes a greater need for the strengthening and protection of human rights in the country.

As such, the trend of human rights in Somaliland is in a sadden state. Somaliland has not improved its human rights record since the beginning of our advocacy work in the country. All the evidence gathered has shown that the government and institutions are not positively changing. Any act of civil disobedience results in subjugation, repression, and suppression of the general public. Therefore, I reiterate the call for action and daily commitment to the protection of human rights in Somaliland by all. First and foremost, the work of human rights in Somaliland is rooted in the fight for liberation after the brutal dictatorship that separated Somaliland and Somalia, collectively working to create a stated based on the power of the people, for the people. However, the actions of the government contradict this premise and the vision in which the independence the Somaliland people fought to envision, create, and establish the constitution. As such, we are actively hoping for improvement and change of human rights in Somaliland as I believe commitment to justice requires all of us.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Human Rights Center thanks the dedicated volunteers, members, staff, journalists, and those in the justice sector who made this report possible to be published. We are grateful to all of them and appreciate their helpful contributions and support. We thank the organizations who collaborate and take part in creating advocacy within our organization. The Human Rights Centre is also grateful to the individuals interviewed who shared with us their experience and stories detailed in this report. We thank you for granting us your time and allowing us into your homes to include your voices in this report.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the annual coverage of human rights issues and is based on the organization's monitoring and documentation of human rights in Somaliland in 2022. The report is a result of the daily documentation, interviews, and review of official documents. Data results indicated by Article 19's Global Expression Report shows Somalia based Freedom of Expression as Highly Restricted on the GxR expression category. While there is a lack of information indicated by Somaliland, the mapped graph shows the area of Somaliland as highly restricted as well.

According to a research initiative, Varieties of Democracy<sup>1</sup>, data shows that attacks on freedom of expression are often the first steps of democratic regression and in the end followed by the erosion of democratic institutions. The trajectory that Somaliland is experiencing currently is a downward trend, starting with restrictions on journalists covering topics relevant to civil society, intimidation and harassment of journalists, internet shutdowns the country experiences during times of tensions, the suppressions of protests regionally, and the lack of accountability in answers for the mass arbitrary arrests in the political stalemate due to the postponement of elections and the deaths of citizens during the armed protests, and shut down of media houses in Somaliland without due process of law, and creating a politically polarizing environment and creating fragile institutions and then finally the undermining of elections, failing to hold a presidential election this November 2022. Since these events have occurred, we've seen a democratic decline in our institutions, most notably the long-term extensions of the Guurti and the President. Authorities in Somaliland are setting negative benchmarks, clashing with the constitution and international obligations, as well as an absence of a strong and operational mechanism to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. Somaliland authorities have conducted raids on offices of independent media houses such as BBC Somali and BBC media Action, as well as illegal sanctioning of obscene amounts of fine on CBA TV and MMTV<sup>2</sup>, of which there is no transparency or money trail.

This report highlights the increasing crackdown on media, dissent voices, and opposition parties. In this year, the Human Rights Centre has recorded 278 people arrested for cases related to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://akademie.dw.com/en/global-expression-report/a-61664054>  
accessed December 2022

<sup>2</sup> Charges brought against MMTV, and CBA TV were shared with Human Rights Centre for the purpose of advocacy

freedom of expression. This includes 48 journalists and 21 opposition party members. 209 people were arrested for protesting in June and August 2022 due to the postponement of the presidential and political parties' association elections that were meant to be taken place in November 2022, peacefully protesting while the Somaliland police used excessive force and firearms in Burco and Hargeisa, along with demonstrations that have occurred in LasAnod on December 27, 2022, due to the extrajudicial killing of Abdifatah Abdullahi. These people were arrested without due process and targeted for expressing opinions and exercising their right to demonstrate for the political future of the country.

The report also demonstrates:

- Police impunity, arrests without court warrants, beatings, and politicization of security forces to crackdown on opposition figures, journalists and citizens. Police have used excessive force on the public and unnecessary excessive beatings.
- Prevalence of gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination with no legal protections. The Sexual Offences Act enacted has been rejected, stagnated in legislative proceedings and there has been no further progress as to drafting, implementation or legislation of further acts of protection.

Journalists remain the primary target of the government. As recently as April 2022, crackdown on journalists covering the prison incident at the Hargeisa Central prison paved the way for indiscriminate police behavior and impunity. Eyewitnesses detailed police brutality, destruction of property and equipment and a lack of procedural awareness by the courts and police during the arrests. Journalists arrested were charged with a levy of charges, stipulated by the Somali Penal Code, of which were:

- Anti-national propaganda
- Publication of false news,
- Anti-national propaganda
- Non-observance of orders of authorities.

However, as Somaliland has declared independence from Somalia, the articles applicable in the Somali Penal Code contradicts the constitution of Somaliland. The articles are also outdated and do not take into consideration the advancement of technology or amended laws that guarantee

freedom of expression established by the framers of Somaliland. Actions related to freedom of expressions violations committed in Somaliland often result in arbitrary detention and arrest.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the government of Somaliland:**

- Reinforcement of legal frameworks to ensure that the rights of citizens, journalists, and independent media are protected.
- Carry out meaningful police reform on the grounds of the constitution and internationally accepted standards. Demilitarize and de-politicize the police and subject the police to the jurisdiction of civilian courts
- Establish an independent oversight committee
- State agencies should refrain from conducting propaganda campaigns on official state business
- Promote legal safeguards to strengthen democratic processes in Somaliland
- Police reform is a must and legislation should be developed and strengthened for enforcement purposes.
- Impartiality of the executive, judicial, and legislative bodies is a must and necessary
- Police should and must release statements for every arbitrary arrest, unless it is for national security
- Separation of powers within institutions is a must and should be upheld, as established by the Constitution.
- Expand the monitoring, documentation and collection of GBV database.

### **To the Judiciary Branch:**

- Implement the Sexual Offenses Act, so that legislation can be enforced to prosecute perpetrators
- Refrain from hearing cases against journalists so that charges are criminalized, stop remanding journalists targeted by the government for intimidation and harassment

- Introduce meaningful reform aimed to stop the ever-reaching arm of the executive
- Stop the Ministry of Information, National Guidance, and Culture from interfering and allowing them to close media houses.
- Uphold the right to liberty and fair trial practices as enshrined in the constitution.
- Stop the interference of clan mediation for rape cases and other discriminations against women and girls.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Human Rights Centre periodically monitors and documents human rights abuses and violations, verifying and cross-reference evidence recorded on our database. Monitors in the six regions of Somaliland actively research, monitor, report and collect information and evidence so that we can report and advocate for change while challenging the country's landscape to correct violations. We work on establishing proven and consistent methods based on information gathered from various sources and field- based research regularly. We conduct field investigations, detailed interviews and information from primary and secondary sources at the center of our advocacy.

Our advocacy is based on gaining verifiable information to report incidences by utilizing our database, prosecutor's office, Criminal Investigation Department, and the court to gain reliable information to bring into being an accurate picture of what occurred or repeated incidences such as arbitrary arrests and detentions of journalists, opposition members, and dissents. Challenges to gaining access to police and prison stations are granted by the courts, given permission by the Brigadier of the Custodial Corps, and as such interviewing detainees is done without privacy and sometimes under duress for consideration of their safety, as evidenced by the interviews conducted with opposition members while in Maandhera prison.



## BACKGROUND

Somaliland is an unrecognized country located in the horn of Africa, often considered the beacon of democracy, due to its relative stability, democratization process and state-building process after a brutal atrocity. Upon declaring reunification with Somalia on 26 June 1960, the military regime of Somalia conducted a campaign of what is considered genocidal tendencies, thus paving the way for Somaliland to declare restoration of their independence in 1991. During the process of regaining independence, Somaliland ratified their constitution, creating a bicameral legislative organ, a judiciary and executive branches of presidential system. However, in its infantile stage for state-building, Somaliland's process to be a fully democratic nation has faced challenges, such as delayed elections and extensions of terms, redefining what is the democratic process in each election. No election has ever been held on time, along with a steady decline of democratic processes, such as rule of law, lack of separation of powers, and politicization of the independent bodies of the country. The Guurti have never been re-elected since 1997. Human rights and freedoms are not realized if democratic processes are in a weakened state, thus creating challenges to uphold those rights across the board. As such, repressive laws are created, criminalizing the rights of journalists, citizens and media houses. As these oppressive laws are created, they remove vital protections needed for women, independence of media, and creating a platform where freedom of expression is subjugated. Since the Media Bill was drafted in 2004, it has been gutted, removing the establishment of an independent committee, and criminalizing journalists and free media in Somaliland. By its very nature, evidence correlates linkage between human rights situation and the democratic status of Somaliland. Democratic institutions are key drivers of human rights compliances, of which Somaliland has seemingly neglected in this administration.

This annual report focuses on political and civil rights. It is based on incidences documented by the Centre since January 2022. The overall situation of human rights and the protection of human rights has deteriorated and calls for Somaliland government to reconsider its policies, recommit its duty to protect and serve the citizens of Somaliland as established by the constitution along with recommendations for change and the way forward that we hope can be contributed to a meaningful impact for democratic development in the country.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VIOLATIONS**

Freedom of expression is protected by Article 32 of the Somaliland Constitution, which incorporates Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights into Somaliland law. Freedom of expression is deemed to be one of the essential foundations of a democratic society within the meanings of international human rights law, and that it is a fundamental pillar of democratic processes. However, that is not the reality in Somaliland. Human Rights Centre documented the arrest of 278 overall, while 209 people have been arrested for freedom of expression incidences perpetrated by the government. These include Facebook posts, protests, and demonstrations that have occurred in the country due to the untimely election process and other social grievances. Dissenting voices, critics of the government, and public demonstrations documented emphasize government overreach. In overreaching, the subsequent actions followed are the censorship and crackdown of journalists, crackdown on disseminating and accessing information, and suspension and or closures of media houses. Facebook posts are often used by the government to arrest and detain individuals without proper procedure showcasing how common this practice is<sup>3</sup>, including court warrant for their arrest, and rule of law while in detention.

### **Freedom of assembly and protest**

Protests held by the Opposition party occurred on June 9<sup>th</sup> and August 11, 2022, resulting in mass protests and demonstrations across Hargeisa, Burco, and Erigavo to protest the political stalemate of the presidential and party elections which were to be held on November 13, 2022. The stalemate ultimately led to a term extension for both President Muse Bihi and Guurti. According to Article 32 subsection 2, Somaliland guarantees every citizen the opportunity to organize and participate in any peaceful assembly and demonstration without government interference. Furthermore, the protests led to mass arrests of the opposition party members and

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews with detainees, journalist, and opposition conducted by Human Rights Centre in a calendar year

citizens alike. Both events produced record arrests, police brutality where Somaliland security forces opened fire on unarmed civilians using illegal force and live ammunition such as rubber bullets, unlawful civil procedures, and diminishing the role of rule of law. The August 11, 2022, record shows that five people died, however, accountability for the deaths and investigation of both events conveyed a broken system in Somaliland, in which there is no answer to the parties responsible for the deaths or the commands given in which armed fire or weapons were utilized against demonstrators. Independent Investigations by the Somaliland parliament<sup>4</sup> of both protests yielded no real answers for the deaths of citizens, nor accountability and transparency in the use of force and ammunition. The Human Rights Centre collected and cross-referenced multiple sources to create a comprehensive list verifying and documenting arrest records, records of injuries, and death numbers. We've compiled these lists from our monitoring sources in the six regions of Somaliland, along with information collected from the courts and police sources to verify the information received. Further infringing on the rights of the citizens, Somaliland government used telecommunication networks to cut off internet from the public. The shutdown of internet services restricts freedom of expression for citizens, censoring the ability to get information.

## **Political Tensions in LasAnod resulting in demonstrations**

Abditafatah Abdullahi Abdi (Hadrawi) was a member of the Waddani Party who was assassinated in LasAnod on December 26, 2022. Abdifatah's assassination contributes to the long list of assassinations and disappearances that occur in the city of LasAnod, the region of Sool. Shortly after, protestors took to the streets of LasAnod to publicly address the assassination. All the same, during the protest Somaliland security forces opened fire against unarmed civilians. According to records we've received, 8 people died initially at the start of the protests, and 2 people died from succumbing to their injuries, adding to the total of 10 people that have died overall during the days the protest lasted, 28 wounded and transferred to hospitals around the city and 59 people arrested for taking part in the demonstrations, exacerbating the tensions in the region with the presence of security forces. However, those that were arrested

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<sup>4</sup> Report published by the Somaliland Parliament Standing and Ethics Committee

were transferred to Maandhera prison and were released on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Sources have informed the center that internet services have been disrupted since January 1, 2023, violating the rights of citizens in the city by disrupting their right to receive and access information. To further conflate the tensions in the city, disappearances and assassinations that occur in LasAnod are ever addressed as for the causes, reason or the parties responsible by authorities in Somaliland.

## **Detention of Opposition party members and leaders**

Opposition members and leaders arrested during the demonstrations were transferred to Mandhera Prison, outside Hargeisa regional court's jurisdiction and Baaki, in Awdal region three days prior to the August 11, 2022, demonstrations. Human Rights Centre were given permission for visitation purposes by the Hargeisa Regional court, in which the process took two days to be granted permission and access to the accused opposition members and leaders. On the account of the opposition members and leaders, most were arrested by officers without uniforms therefore, they did not know who was arresting them, nor did they show any identification on their personnel. They were held and tortured in jails around the Hargeisa areas before being transferred to Mandhera Prison. They recounted a series of torture, and beatings including rib cage injuries, knee wounds, and physical assault by police batons<sup>5</sup>. Some members and leaders have mentioned night terrors and trauma-related anxiety due to the nature of their arrest and detention. When inquired if they received medical attention and care, it was a unanimous no, violating their dignity and right to receive humanitarian care. Nevertheless, they received first aid care from the prison's clinic days later. When they raised the matter of medical care, they received while in Maandhera, accounts detailed by the members showed that they were visited by individuals wearing white coats with masks, whom they could not identify nor affiliated with any legitimate agency. The members and leaders believe the masked individuals were sent to scare, threaten, and intimidate them while in detention, raising concern for more trauma endured. They did not have access to their medications for gastric/acid reflex issues and high blood pressure, which most accused complain of. Of the 14 individuals arrested, 12 had injuries and

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<sup>5</sup> Interviews conducted by Human Rights Centre from the opposition members in June 2022

health issues concerning the Human Rights Centre of the wellbeing of detainees in the hands of the police of Somaliland. Opposition members and leaders were in prison from June 9th until July 5, 2022. They were released based on a presidential pardon. The arrest of opposition members and leaders totaled 21 by the end of the postponement period of the presidential elections.<sup>6</sup>

## **Suspension and/or Closure of Media houses**

Arbitrary arrests related to freedom of expression have risen exponentially, the government has closed three media houses. The closure of BBC Somali and BBC Media Action violates the freedom of media guaranteed by the Constitution of Somaliland and international human rights law and undermines freedom of media as enshrined by the constitution. Following the closure of BBC Media Action, five staff members were also arrested and released the following day on July 25, 2022. Local television house CBA Tv<sup>7</sup> was also suspended on 07/09/2022, based on an alleged license issue. The article used to impose the fine against CBA TV is 45 of the Media ACT NO: 27/2004, however it is a non-existent article, as the whole draft of the act contains 32 articles. While this is not the first occurrence in Somaliland with the closure of media houses, it limits the independence the work of the media and journalists to freely operate within the country.

## **Detention and persecution of Journalists**

Criminalization of journalism is on the rise in Somaliland<sup>8</sup>. In the past year alone, Human Rights Centre has recorded a total of 48 arrested for freedom of expression violations. Monitoring conducted by the Centre has seen a broad crackdown on journalists following the prison incident in Hargeisa in April 2022, where 17 journalists were detained covering the clash between inmates and guards. Additionally, evidence exhibited following the prison incident, and the two demonstrations that occurred in the country in June and August 2022, shows Somaliland police forces use tactics and methods that violate and are in contradiction to the country's Constitution.

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<sup>6</sup> List was shared with the Centre indicating the numbers of opposition party members arrested

<sup>7</sup> The charge sheet from the Marodijeex Regional Court.

<sup>8</sup> Based on data collected by the Centre since its inception.

Methods such as torture, beatings, use of a physical force with weapons, and intimidation to force confession and information without a lawyer present as an attempt to silence and censor the work of the media in Somaliland, as detailed by eyewitness sources. Repeated incidents involving journalists continues to be high. While the 2004 Media Act protects journalists at large, the fact remains that they work in a hostile environment that persecutes them for being critical of the government or merely reporting on issues within the country. Somaliland Constitution states that subjugation of the media is prohibited, and oftentimes, journalists are detained without court approved warrants. Legal frameworks such as the constitution and Somali Penal use outdated articles, most of which criminalizes gaining journalists gaining access to information as it considers slander and defamation and does not take into consideration how far technology has come since the drafting of the Somali Penal code in 1961. In total, seven journalists were prosecuted and sentenced. Their crimes were related to license issues and anti-nationalism slander or propaganda.

Jamal Ibrahim Mohamed is a freelance journalist who was arrested in Hargeisa on 6/2/2022. He was interrogated by CID, released and then was arrested again on 8/2/2022. He was remanded twice by the courts, was not charged with a crime nor prosecuted. However, He was detained on 8/03/2022 and sentenced to a fine of 2 million Somaliland shillings on 31/03/2022 by Hargeisa Regional Court.

Ahmedqani Jama Xirsi Tulux was arrested on 14/03/2022, prosecuted and was charged with articles 215 and 238 of the Somali Penal Code. He was sentenced to one year in prison and fined 1 million Somaliland Shilling.

Mohammed Abdi Sheik Ilig and Abdijabbar Mohammed Hussein were incarcerated for 82 days after the Hargeisa Central Prison incident after being charged with “subversive or Anti-National Propaganda and Publication or Circulation of False, Exaggerated, Or Tendentious News Capable of Disturbing Public Order” by the Somali Penal Code. They were released by presidential pardon.

Abdirahman Mohamed Adami, a reporter of Horyaal TV in Erigabo and Jabir Saeed Duale, a reporter of Eryal TV in Erigabo are accused of circulating false, exaggerated news by the government. They were arrested on 17/10/2022, released on bail on 18/10/2022. Their case is still ongoing and pending after interviewing people from Fiqifuliye, a district town in Sanaag

region. However, the complaints argued by the individuals they interviewed were against the Military commander of the district. Part of the conditions of their bail is that they are not allowed to travel outside of Somaliland.

The graph below shows where the most violations of arrests occurred in the regions of Somaliland for journalists:

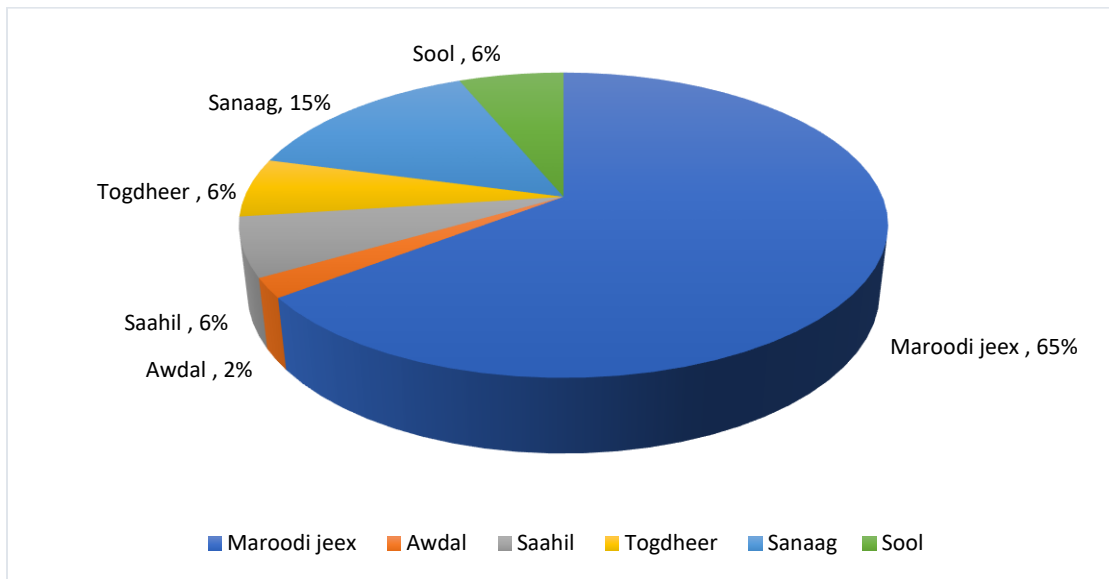


Figure: Journalists' detentions per regions

### #Case study

Mohammed Ilig was arrested, covering the prison scuffle that occurred on April 13, 2022. He was charged and tried along with two other journalists. Authorities arbitrarily detained Mohammed Ilig, on charges related to spreading slander and anti-nationalist propaganda, along with licensure issues. Subsequently, he was released on July 2, 2022.

Though he was released, Mohammed Ilig received an order from the Ministry of Information, National Guidance, and Culture, where they imposed an exuberant amount based on his license. According to the Penal Code, the amount for license issues is estimated around 2-5000 Somaliland Shillings. Nevertheless, due to the summons and police confrontation at his place of work, Mohammed Ilig paid a fine of 10,000 USD. The Ministry of Information, National Guidance, and Culture's actions undermine the judiciary balance in the country, as the Minister does not have the jurisdiction to ban media houses.

## POLICE BRUTALITY

Across the cities of Somaliland, Citizens have taken to the street to voice their opinions about the political future of the country in two different demonstrations, along with protesting the extrajudicial killings that occurred in LasAnod on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, there was a clash between government forces and demonstrators from the opposition party and civilians in Hargeisa. Somaliland authorities created an unprecedented action that transgressed against democracy and human rights. Somaliland security forces have opened fire at protestors on June 9<sup>th</sup>, August 11<sup>th</sup>, and December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022, demonstrations with tear gas and rubber bullets. Documentation by the Centre reveals consistent police brutality during arrest and at detention facilities, at times using unlawful methods of detaining and forcing confessions out of journalists, opposition members and leaders, and civilians during times of tensions as the case has been since the prison incident in Hargeisa in April 2022. To conflate matters worse during cases covering police brutality, the Police Act of 2017 established an oversight committee and bans the use of bullets against unarmed citizens. However, the Police Act was amended within a year, and has since not been legislated for or against. The impunity with which police conduct military operations in Somaliland results in indiscriminate loss of life, due to the lack of discretion when it comes to force or other contingency plans to subdue protestors for most of the time. Somaliland constitution states “NO person may be denied his/her freedom in a manner that is not in accordance with the law.”<sup>9</sup> However, that is not the case. Any individual that would like to exercise their right to protest, demonstrate, and have an assembly faces harsh restriction from the gathering for any sort of gathering. Apart from indiscriminate use of excessive force against civilians, Somaliland police arrest citizens, journalists, and opposition members without court warrants and are the main factors contributing to pro-longed pre-trial practices, dragging cases due to insufficient evidence or lack thereof, and ignoring fair trial processes. Somaliland police have used excessive force causing bodily harm and other forms of brutality while the individual is in their custody, violating their rights and dignity of the individual. Human Rights Centre

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<sup>9</sup> Article 25 subsection 1 of Somaliland Constitution



documented cases such as in the recent case against Ahmed Mohamed Abdi (Ahmed Daud), whose trial is still ongoing.

### **#Case study**

Mohammed Muse Abdi (Galaydh) is a senior ranking member of the Waddani Party and as a result of the actions of the police during the June demonstrations against police forces, had extensive damage to his eye that resulted in him receiving surgery.

## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

Gender-based violence is prevalent and highly rampant in Somaliland. Solutions to curbing sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape have seen little to no legislative efforts. Civil society organizations and women's empowerment groups have collectively called for government intervention by passing and implementing the Sexual Offenses Act and reforming the culture of gender issues in the country. However, patriarchal behaviors have become so entrenched in the culture of Somaliland that it restricts and limits the development of gender equality in Somaliland. Most cases of sexual gender-based and other predatory behavior requires medical attention and are transferred to Baahi-koob, an organization in charge of recording data and statistics of rape sent to the government. Rape is often conflated with fornication when cases are brought to court according to the laws applicable, thereby making the cases difficult to convict. Oftentimes, rape cases do not see the light of court system, as they're usually mediated through the Xeer (customary law) system, which often neglects and retraumatizes victims. The customary laws often do not punish and hold the perpetrator accountable, as the clan system is the fallback to pay compensation to the victim. Challenges such as accurate reporting of rape cases is also problematic as there is no centralized database, therefore record keeping of rape cases could fall into double reporting by different organizations. However, civil society organizations are paving the way in which to care for victims, finding alternative routes for seeking justice, equipping

women with knowledge on getting through their trauma and creating pathways to seek justice with the support of others and encouraging them to find justice through the legal sector is oftentimes complex and creates a challenge for many to navigate for a plethora of reasons.

While the Centre focuses on advocacy for creating change through different methods, including lobbying for the sexual offenses bill, and recommitment to the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>10</sup> Somaliland Pledge to follow, specifically SDG+16. Human Rights Centre refers victims and those seeking help for victims to other organizations better equipped to provide services. Human Rights Centre advocated for a 16-year-old victim from the city of Caynabo against a police commander. While we were able to provide referrals for the victim to other organizations, the building of our case for her was broken down by collusion from other individuals, through the amalgamation of the law systems in place. Interference and mediation as experienced in this case will not be the last nor is this case the first where justice was circumvented through other means. Follow up of the case shows the police commander had not been tried through the military court for misconduct and has since been transferred to a jail in new Hargeisa. Cases such as this is needed for the Police<sup>11</sup> Act to be passed, implemented, and enforced for such impunity to decrease and the use of the military tribunal for misconduct in office.

## **THE CONDITIONS OF IDP's IN SOMALILAND**

According to figures by the Somaliland National Drought Committee in a press conference by the chairperson in January 2022, over 800,000 people in the country experience food insecurity and water shortages and will impact approximately 1,200,450 people over the next four months.<sup>12</sup> This humanitarian crisis is further conflated by hyperinflation. However, the humanitarian crisis in Somaliland has exacerbated population displacement. IDP's are not often provided protection by the state due to the lack of legal mechanisms put in place. Laws that should be legislated to make

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<sup>10</sup> Somaliland has pledged to follow the SDG+16 agenda 2030

<sup>11</sup> The police Act was gutted and has been left to the legislative process, which accounts for accountability and trying misconduct through military court.

<sup>12</sup> January press conference by the National Drought Committee Chairperson:

<https://www.horndiplomat.com/2022/01/15/somaliland-says-drought-affects-over-810000-people-in-somaliland/>

sure that IDP's are severely missing from the agenda of the Somaliland parliament as well as the safety and security of the individuals in the camp. Disputes over land ownership<sup>13</sup> continue to be a problem in Somaliland, overcomplicating matters further. Local organizations and humanitarian aid organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council are in the country to provide basic human needs. However, the sole responsibility of the IDP's and treatment of its civilians are designated to the Somaliland government to provide policy which will allow them the protection and security they need, as well as other shelter issues. To accurately collect data, The Human Rights Centre visited three IDPs in Hargeisa, located in Istanbul A and B, and Daami. For the aim of our report, Human Rights Centre conducted focus group discussions for assessment purposes, and separately interviewed a total of 80 people<sup>14</sup> in Istanbul. We were able to have a focus group discussion with Sheik Mohammed, member of the committee of Daami, committee chairperson and the deputy chairperson of Daami to discuss the challenges minority residents face in Somaliland. Most of the camps are located and situated in areas that are inaccessible to the residents for government services.

The discovery of the visits highlights the dire conditions in which residents live, the lack of government involvement in access services such as health care, sanitation, water, protection, and food, amongst other challenges such as the camp location and building structure of their houses. Istanbul A and B are in the Moalim Haruun district. According to the group discussion, Istanbul consists of approximately 480-500 families.

The land the residents live on is owned by a private owner<sup>15</sup>, who has used threats, dogs, and chains to evict the residents over the past couple of months. Their traditional house<sup>16</sup> was dismantled by the owner using rented gangs and dogs to displace them out of his land<sup>17</sup>. The traditional houses do not protect the residents from any weather conditions, such as rain, during the heating season or cold seasons in Somaliland, or windy conditions, thereby creating further challenges for the residents.

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<sup>13</sup> NRC advocacy meeting; HLP sub-working group

<sup>14</sup> Interviews conducted by HRC staff, monitors, and volunteers in Hargeisa on 07/08/2022

<sup>15</sup> Information compiled during the interviews revealed Istanbul A ownership

<sup>16</sup> Buul in Somali.

<sup>17</sup> Interviewees were displaced from Istanbul A.

Due to the location of the camp, the residents face extreme weather conditions, which leads to health issues for the residents, namely pneumonia, and excessive colds, without no clinics or pharmacy location nearby the camp. Residents would have to drive into town to get medication, for which they do not have the money, nor funds allocated for transportation. Transportation is expensive for the residents to seek job opportunities; therefore, they're forced to rely on each other and share whatever food, water, and coal they find<sup>18</sup>. The many challenges facing residents are consistently lacking proper sanitation, schools, water, access to clinics, and access to the police to report complaints or for safety from outsiders who cause them problems or harm. According to the residents, they've not received help from local organizations or government agencies for many of the challenges. However, they were given a few blankets and dishes to relocate, as well as a guard for protection. As stated by the residents, member of Parliament Barkhad Baatun gave the residents water and visited them to ask about their wellbeing and the condition of the camp.

## Daami camp

Daami IDP is located outside the district of Hargeisa. It is an urban settlement composed of two parts. According to Sheik Mohammed, the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the Daami committee, there are 3000 households. Most of the residents are from the marginalized clan group, Gaboye. Gaboye people already face many challenges and discrimination for being from a minority clan. Nonetheless, economic challenges prevent the residents from having an income source that doesn't rely on begging, thereby limiting the choices of economic prosperity. Apart from the difficulties of being in an IDP area, the committee have mentioned that security is an imperative aspect for them, as they are usually targets of crime by outsiders. As stated by the committee, SGBV issues such as rape or sexual assault are a low number. However, suicide attempts and suicide are increasing in the camp. This is a critical issue that requires immediate attention and is contrary to the protections provided by the Somaliland Constitution. Within the last quarter of the year, more and more suicide attempts have been committed by those vulnerable and marginalized in Somaliland. As always, research and documentation showcase little effort to determine the cause, or the discourse to investigate these factors by government authorities.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, 7 August 2022 Istanbul IDPs Camp resident



## **ABOUT THE HRC**

The Human Rights Centre (HRC) is a non-profit organization established in January 2013 with the aim of contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights in Somaliland. HRC was founded by lawyers who are inspired by the Bill of Rights in the Somaliland Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is registered with the Somaliland government as a non-profit-making and non-governmental organization. HRC was formed to cover the need for documentation and advocacy on human rights to help maintain the gains made by Somaliland's nascent democracy. The central policy of the Human Rights Centre is creating and fostering a culture of voluntary human rights activism where committed human rights defenders with passion contribute to the protection, promotion, and realization of human rights.

### **Our Mission**

For Somaliland, a place where human rights are protected, promoted, respected, and fulfilled.

### **Our Vision**

Human Rights Centre exists to defend and protect the rights of human beings.

### **Our Values**

We uphold the values of honesty, justice, and integrity for all. We aim to work with transparency and accountability, commitment, and discipline. We encourage creative participation understanding the need for sustainability and respect for all. We will continue

to strive for impartiality and independence while placing great value on confidentiality. We also appreciate the importance of volunteering which forms the foundations of our organization.

### **Areas of Operation**

HRC helps and works for the people of Somaliland. It focuses on vulnerable people, women, the poor, minority clans, and victims of human rights abuses. HRC directs most of its attention to abuses committed by the state. The areas HRC works on include, but are not limited to, police brutality, freedom of media and expression, sexual and gender-based violence, illegal detentions, the death penalty, and freedom of assembly.