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Somalia must end impunity for killing of media workers

The Somali authorities and the international community must act to end impunity for the killing of media workers Amnesty International said today, following the deaths of two journalists in separate incidents in the capital Mogadishu at the weekend.

Yusif Ali Osman, a former veteran journalist and official in Somalia's Ministry of Information, was shot dead in the Dharkenley district of the capital on Sunday morning by two young men reported to have been wearing school uniforms.

Another journalist, Mohamoud Ali Keyre (Buneyste), was reportedly killed by stray bullets during a fight between government troops in the Yaqshid district of the city that same afternoon.

Yesterday's deaths bring to 10 the toll of media workers killed in Somalia since December 2011. Not a single person has been brought to justice for the killings of journalists in Somalia this year, nor in previous years.

"Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) should urgently open and complete thorough investigations into the killings of all journalists and media workers in the country, bring the perpetrators to justice, and ensure that it responds to the continuing threats on journalists' lives," said Bénédicte Goderiaux, Somalia researcher at Amnesty International.

"The TFG however has shown no willingness to address the killings. The international community should establish an independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate and document crimes under international law committed in Somalia, including the killings of journalists.

Yusuf Ali Osman used to be the Director of the government-run radio station Radio Mogadishu before he started working for the Ministry of Information.

The Islamist armed group al-Shabab has reportedly claimed responsibility for his death, calling him an enemy working for the TFG.

The killing of Mohamoud Ali Keyre came four days after members of the TFG signed the National Security and Stabilization Plan, which among other issues is meant to address the lack of discipline and chain-of-command in the TFG security forces.

Mohamoud Ali Keyre used to work for radio station Radio Hamar (Voice of Democracy) but in recent years worked for Somali websites based in Kenya's capital Nairobi.

Their deaths follow a string of other recent killings of media workers in Somalia.

Earlier this month, popular comedian Abdi Jeylani Malaq 'Marshale' was shot dead by two men armed with pistols as he entered his home in the Waberi district of Mogadishu.

Although the motive for his killing remains unclear, Abdi Jeylani Malaq 'Marshale' had produced and broadcast satirical programs for the Somali Radio Kulmiye and Universal TV, and had previously received death threats from al-Shabab.

In May, Radio Daljir reporter Farhan Jemiis Abdulle was shot dead by two gunmen in Galkayo in Central Somalia.

On 1 August a draft Provisional Constitution for Somalia was approved by the National Constituent Assembly in Mogadishu - one of the steps agreed between the Somali transitional authorities and the international community to end the transitional period in the country.

Amnesty International urged the current and future Somali authorities to take all the steps necessary to make the right to life and the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press a reality – rights guaranteed in the Provisional Constitution.