

Somali journalist arrests condemned: rights group

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA: Somali journalists and rights groups on Tuesday condemned the arrest of two colleagues and the closure of a key television station by the government.

Security forces raided the independent Universal TV in the capital Mogadishu on October 2, colleagues said, describing how the station was taken off the air a day after it broadcast a debate on the role of foreign forces in Somalia.

Regional director Abdullahi Hersi and producer Awil Dahir Salad were both arrested.

"We condemn the way the office of Universal was closed and the journalists arrested," Somali journalists' union chief Mohamed Ibrahim said.



Image via [123RF](#)

The internationally-backed government in Mogadishu is protected by the 22,000-strong African Union Mission in Somalia, AMISOM, with troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

The force is battling the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Shebab Islamists. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called on the government to "stop this arbitrary harassment of journalists and respect freedom of the press."

Somalia is one of the most dangerous countries for reporters to operate, and media watchdog Reporters Without Borders

ranks it just eight places off the bottom of a list of 180 countries for press freedom.

The information ministry has said it is liaising with security forces to secure the release of the journalists.

Universal TV, which has its headquarters in Britain, was previously taken off-air in August in the southern Somali Jubaland region, the CPJ said.

Source: AFP

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