

Somalia: UN rights office concerned over draft law that would curtail press freedom
By UN News Centre
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19 July 2013 – The United Nations human rights office today expressed concern over a draft law in Somalia that would require journalists to reveal their sources and prevent them from disseminating information against Islam or Somali traditions.

“We urge the Somali authorities to review the draft in order to ensure its conformity with international human rights standards,” the spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), Rupert Colville, [told](#) reporters in Geneva.

“We are particularly concerned that the draft legislation contains vague language and extremely broad categories that could easily be used to curtail freedom of expression, for instance requiring media not to contravene or disseminate information that is against Islam, or Somali traditions or traditional ethics,” he said.

The draft law also requires journalists to reveal their sources if published information stirs up public sentiments, and would suspend journalists and other representatives of media organizations accused of violating the media legislation.

Mr. Colville said the Somali Government had promised to organize broad consultations prior to the law’s enactment. However, the draft media law was submitted and adopted by the Council of Ministers on 11 July and will now be submitted to the Somali legislature and later to the President. This process is estimated to take less than two months, leaving insufficient time for wide-ranging consultations to take place to improve the law.

OHCHR said it is also concerned about the composition of the proposed regulatory body, the National Media Council, and the selection process for its members, neither of which guarantee its independence.

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