

the Somaliland authorities arbitrarily closed the independent Universal TV and Star TV stations. The Minister of Information ordered local television cable providers to remove the two stations from their receivers and revoke their licences. Universal TV was targeted for allegedly failing to broadcast Independence Day celebrations and events as demanded by the authorities, and Star TV owners said they were targeted for airing reports and analysis on the condition of a detained former air force pilot, Fouad Youssouf Ali, in neighbouring Djibouti. In August, the Information Ministry issued arbitrary fines of SOS127,500,000 (US\$15,000) and SOS42,500,000 (US\$5,000) on Universal TV and Star TV respectively. Star TV paid the fine and resumed operations, but Universal TV remained closed as of mid-December.

In June, Abdimalik Muse Oldon, a journalist, was released from Hargeisa Central Prison after spending over a year in prison for criticizing the President on Facebook. He had been arrested and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison in 2019 and charged with “spreading anti-national propaganda” and “disseminating false news”. He was released following a presidential pardon.

1. Somalia: Zero accountability as civilian deaths mount from US air strikes (Press release, 1 April)
2. “We live in perpetual fear”: Violations and abuses of freedom of expression in Somalia (AFR 52/1442/2020)
3. Somalia: Authorities must immediately release journalist Mohamed Abdiwahab Nur (Abuja) (AFR 52/2649/2020)
4. Somalia: Internally displaced people surviving by “the grace of God” amidst COVID-19 (Press release, 21 July)

SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa

Head of state and government: **Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa**

The use by security forces of excessive and lethal force increased during the COVID-19 lockdown. At least 115 people died in police custody. Incidents of gender-based

violence soared. The asylum system failed those most in need; immigrants and other non-nationals were subjected to xenophobic social media campaigns. COVID-19 put health workers at particular risk of infection due to the lack of PPE, while women’s access to sexual and reproductive health services was restricted. Children faced significant inequalities and hardship in the public education system. Millions of people did not have access to safe drinking water; and lockdown placed an additional burden on women having to walk long distances for water.

BACKGROUND

The President continued to take a lead in national and regional efforts to resolve political instability and address the need for human rights reforms in Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

The Commission of Enquiry into State Capture continued to hear testimonies in relation to allegations of corruption and other abuses of power known as “state capture”, during former President Zuma’s rule. Jacob Zuma was removed from office in 2018 by the African National Congress (ANC).

On 15 March the President declared a National State of Disaster in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which, in turn, invoked the Disaster Management Act (2002). A national lockdown was imposed on 27 March which threatened to undermine rights to freedom of movement and association, and was eased in August.

The President established a ministerial team to investigate allegations of corruption connected to COVID-19-related procurements, including PPE and food aid, which was allegedly distributed by ANC-aligned politicians in a way that favoured certain communities.

The pandemic forced several media houses to close, cut down on staff or cut salaries due to the pandemic’s effect on advertising revenue.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

In March, during lockdown, the authorities deployed around 76,000 officers of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and police officers onto the streets to enforce lockdown restrictions. Widespread reports of their use of excessive, and sometimes unnecessary, lethal force against the population quickly emerged.

The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), an official oversight body, received 828 complaints of police misconduct between 25 March and 5 May. They included 16 deaths in police custody; 32 deaths as a result of police action; eight incidents of rape by police officers; 25 reports of torture in custody; and 589 assaults.

On 7 April, South African Police Service (SAPS) officers fired rubber bullets at homeless people living in a camp at the Strandfontein sports grounds in Cape Town when they protested against their poor living conditions, including lack of food.¹

In August, police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at protesters who had gathered peacefully outside Parliament in Cape Town to mark the first anniversary of student Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder and to protest the soaring levels of gender-based violence. Eighteen protesters were arrested. Uyinene Mrwetyana had been raped and killed in Cape Town by a male post office employee.

Unlawful killings

Elma Robyn Montsumi, a 39-year-old sex worker, died in suspicious circumstances in custody in Mowbray police station in Cape Town, four days after being arrested on 9 April on suspicion of possessing drugs. The police claimed she had committed suicide and the IPID said they were looking into the circumstances of her case. No one had been arrested in connection with the case by the end of the year.

Collins Khosa died on 10 April in Alexandra, a township north of Johannesburg

city, after he was assaulted and brutally beaten by members of the SANDF and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department. Collins Khosa's attackers claimed he had violated lockdown rules when they found a half-consumed glass of beer in his yard. The authorities had banned alcohol during lockdown.² On 19 August, the Military Ombudsman found that SANDF officers implicated in the killing had acted "improperly".

Between 29 August and 1 September, the IPID arrested three police officers and charged them with the murder of Nathaniel Julies, a 16-year-old disabled boy, on 26 August in Eldorado Park, south of Johannesburg. He was allegedly shot by police officers after he refused to answer their questions.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence continued to soar and the rate was nearly five times higher than the global average. The President described the increase as "a war" against women. Reports of rape and sexual assault increased by 1.7% in the first quarter of the year, with more than 42,000 rapes reported in 2019-2020 and almost 144 sexual offences committed every day. Such violence increased during the lockdown period and within the first week, police had received over 2,300 complaints. Twenty-one women were reportedly killed in June alone, including Tshogofatso Pule, a 28-year-old pregnant woman from Roodepoort town, west of Johannesburg, who was found hanging from a tree with multiple stab wounds. A man was charged with her murder and he was awaiting trial at the end of the year.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

During lockdown, medical and civil society organizations documented complaints relating to the lack of availability of, or access to, sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion.