Beat: Miscellaneous

Somali poet shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Mogadishu

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USPA News - Popular Somali musician and poet Warsame Shire Awale, who dared to satirize the Islamist militant group Al-Shabab, was shot dead Monday near his house in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, local authorities said on Tuesday. He is the eighteenth media worker to be killed this year.

Awale was rushed to Daru Shifa hospital but pronounced dead on arrival after he was shot by two unidentified gunmen near his house in Mogadishu. The poet, who worked for privately-owned Radio Kulmiye, had previously received threats for criticizing Al-Shabab for carrying out attacks on civilians. Monday`s murder came less than a day after Radio Shabelle journalist Mohamed Mohamud died at Madina hospital after also being shot by two unidentified gunmen near his house in the Wadajir district of Mogadishu on October 21. His injuries were initially not considered to be life-threatening, but his condition suddenly deteriorated on Saturday. He died at around 8:15 p.m. local time on Sunday. Awale is the eighteenth media worker to be killed in the African country so far this year, making Somalia the second-most dangerous place in the world for journalists behind Syria. The international community and various organizations have repeatedly called on Somali authorities to investigate the killings, but no one has been arrested for any of this year`s murders. "This country and its capital, Mogadishu, cannot continue to be abandoned to their fate, to the killers who are decimating civil society," Reporters Without Borders said on Tuesday. "If the international community has any influence over the new government, it must urge President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to ensure respect for UN Security Council Resolution 1738 on the safety of journalists." Nine of the eighteen murders this year have taken place in the past six weeks, including three in separate incidents in the seven days alone. The shocking figure is double the total for 2009, which was up until now the deadliest year on record for Somali journalists, according to Reporters Without Borders. Rupert Colville, a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on Tuesday also urged the Somali government to take urgent steps to protect journalists and other media workers. "[We urge them] to end the complete impunity that has been enjoyed by their killers," he said. "Each death should be properly investigated." Colville, speaking at a press conference in Geneva, added: "The role of the media is crucial as Somalia tries to get back on its feet, and the continued regular slaughter of the country`s journalists risks stifling the media`s ability to contribute to an improvement in law and order and good governance." In July, famed Somali comedian and media worker Abdi Jeylani Marshale was shot dead at his home in Mogadishu. It remains unknown who was responsible for the killing, but Marshale was well-known for making fun of al-Shabab. The group had previously threatened to kill him, forcing him to go into hiding in neighboring Somaliland for several days. Al-Shabab is the militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts which took over most of southern Somalia in the second half of 2006. Despite efforts from the Somali and Ethiopian governments, the group has continued its violent insurgency in southern and central Somalia.

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