There was a significant 89 per cent increase in civilian casualties in March, primarily the result of a series of IED attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu between 22 and 28 March. No death sentences were pronounced or executed in March, and arbitrary arrests and/or prolonged detention decreased slightly compared to February. The Puntland Media Council was established on 26 March, as required by Article 20 of the 2014 Puntland Media Law. Four IED attacks causing 66 civilian casualties occurred in Mogadishu between 22 and 28 March. Four civilians were injured in an airstrike conducted by unidentified aircraft in AS-controlled areas in Jubbaland. One child was killed and 19 others were wounded when an UXO exploded in an IDP camp in Puntland.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND OTHER PROTECTION ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>KILLED</th>
<th>INJURED</th>
<th>RAPED</th>
<th>ABDUCTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total casualties: 175, from February

AS: 61%, from February

Arbitrary arrests and prolonged detention: 12%, from February

AS-related abductions: One, compared to 78 in February

No death sentences issued or implemented

SUMMARY

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- Although no new cases of arrests related to freedom of expression were recorded this month, serious charges were brought against a blogger who posted criticism of the government on his Facebook account, and a poet who expressed support for Somali unity, both in Somaliland.
- The blogger was charged with offences for subversive or anti-national propaganda and offending the honor or prestige of the Head of State, and faces up to five years’ imprisonment if convicted.
- The female poet is being prosecuted for anti-national activity of a citizen abroad, and for bringing the nation or the State into contempt.
- The Media Council in Puntland was established on 26 March, and is responsible for accrediting journalists, developing media standards, promoting ethics among journalists, and handling public complaints against the Puntland media.

ARBITRARY ARREST AND PROLONGED DETENTION

- Arrests: 34, including 21 in Puntland and 10 in HirShabelle.
- Eighteen individuals (including one woman) accused of involvement in terrorist-related crimes were arrested by state security forces in Gaalkayo, Mudug region and detained for 14 days without being charged or brought before a court.
- HirShabelle police arrested ten businessmen in Gamboole village, 50 km west of Jowhar town, Middle Shabelle region. AS had reportedly ordered the men to attend a meeting to discuss the payment of taxes, although the meeting had not yet occurred. The men were released without being charged.
- A civilian male, arrested on 9 March on suspicion of being an Al-Shabaab member, is being detained in Kismaayo at the Fiat center operated by the Jubbaland Intelligence and Security Agency (JISA).

*Due to security constraints, HRPG is sometimes unable to verify information on casualties, and the figures reported should be considered as the absolute minimum.*
Key human rights concerns in Somaliland include violations of freedom of expression, excessive use of force by the police and poor detention conditions, the latter due in part to lack of knowledge and capacity within the custodial corps. As such, prison monitoring has been critical to identifying capacity development needs for prison personnel. Following a series of assessments of five prisons in Somaliland, UNSOM conducted a two-day human rights training for 32 custodial corps (including ten women). The training aimed at enhancing the role of custodial corps officers in ensuring respect for inmates’ human rights, in line with international principles, with an emphasis on the implementation of Somaliland’s Prison Law and accountability standards. The training was conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court of Somaliland.

UNSOM also organized two workshops attended by 150 participants, following the enactment in December 2017 of the Police Law that provides an opportunity to address a wide range of human rights violations attributed to police forces. Members of the Parliament, civil society, local councilors, legal practitioners, custodial corps, and the Somaliland National Human Rights Commission discussed the role of Somaliland Parliament in the implementation of the Police Law. The participants also deliberated on how to make the Parliament more accountable for and responsive to specific human rights issues, such as freedom of expression, and minority and women rights.