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World Press Freedom Day Event: Memorial plaque dedication for Ali Nur Siad

BBG CEO and Director John F. Lansing

John F. Lansing, Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining the
BBG CEO & Director Broadcasting Board of Governors and Voice of America on
this solemn occasion.

Thank you Chairman Weinstein for joining us today.

Also joining me for today's program are Kelu Chao, VOA's
Programming Director and Negussie Mengesha, VOA's Africa
Division Director.

Just three days ago, on Monday, April 30, we learned of
the senseless murders of three journalists from the BBG
family in a suicide bomb attack in Kabul, Afghanistan.

They are Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Free
Afghanistan journalists:

Sabawoon Kakar

Abadullah Hananzai, and

Maharram Durrani, who was to join us this month.

As RFE/RL reported, it was the worst toll ever among media
workers in a single attack in the country. That same day
our DG7 partner, the BBC Afghan service, lost a reporter
as well.



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We will dedicate permanent plaques to honor the sacrifice of our RFE/RL journalists at a near-future date. For today, it is enough that we can look on their images and thank them for their service.

Let us have a moment of silence in remembrance of these lives lost.

[silence]

Today is World Press Freedom Day, a day that gives us all a chance, at least once a year, to

- assess the state of press freedom globally;
- re-state our commitment to press freedom; and
- most importantly, honor our journalists who died doing the jobs they loved.

One decade ago, we dedicated a memorial wall, just down the corridor here, in tribute to our fallen colleagues.

At this time last year, we unveiled a new wall, the one you see behind me. We rededicated it to the 14 names and faces of those who gave their lives in the line of duty.

Today, a 15th name is added: **Ali Nur Siad**.

While on assignment for VOA, he was killed in a deadly terrorist attack in Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 14, 2017.

The attack was Somalia's deadliest terrorist attack ever. Some Somalis describe it as their 9/11.

Ali Nur was a freelance Somali cameraman working alongside VOA Somali reporter **Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulle**.



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The two journalists had just interviewed the Somali Justice Minister about an education program for prisoners. They then went back to their office space at the Somali Red Crescent Society in Mogadishu to begin editing the tape.

Abdulkadir briefly stepped out of the building to retrieve something from his car. Then a truck bomb detonated.

Ali Nur was killed inside the building. **Abdulkadir** was wounded in the attack.

Ali Nur was born in Jamame town in southern Somalia, not far from the ocean coast.

He took camera training at a media institute in Mogadishu. His brothers said he loved being a cameraman and was always showing his videos to journalists in Mogadishu to get their advice.

In 2004, **Ali Nur** started work as a freelance cameraman. In 2017, he began teaming up more regularly with VOA reporter **Abdulkadir**.

Ali Nur was survived by his wife **Naimo Nur Gedi**, pregnant at the time, and two children.

Ali Nur showed commitment and passion for finding the truth in the face of extreme danger. He found honor in his work and made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of the truth. And for that, we honor him.

The men and women of the BBG work around the world and around the clock to provide accurate and independent news and information.



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And in many cases, they are working in some of the most closed and dangerous societies in the world, where often it is a crime to even be a journalist.

Because of this, some of our journalists, some of *you* and others, are *targeted* for doing what undemocratic regimes fear most—reporting facts and empowering civil society with objective information.

Over the past year, our journalists have experienced intimidation, threats, disappearances, physical attacks, and sadly, also death.

I continue to be in awe of your resilience and strength.

Despite the attacks and restrictions, you remain resolute, and continue to deliver valuable information in media-restrictive environments around the world.

Today, I want to restate my commitment to defending the fundamental principle of press freedom as a human right and a universal priority.

Many thanks to all of you for your commitment and your passion for finding and telling the truth.

I now would like to invite Kelu Chao to say a few words.