



Tony Loparco  
Director  
Special Investigations Unit  
5090 Commerce Boulevard  
Mississauga, Ontario L4W 5M4  
By fax: 416-622-2455

Chief Charles Bordeleau  
Ottawa Police Service  
P.O. Box 9634, Station T  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1G 6H5  
Email: BordeleauC@ottawapolice.ca

August 2, 2016

Dear Mr. Loparco and Chief Bordeleau,

Amnesty International is writing this Open Letter to you regarding the case of Abdirahman Abdi. Mr. Abdi is a 37 year-old Somali-Canadian man who died on July 24<sup>th</sup> following an altercation and alleged beating at the hands of two Ottawa Police officers. It has been widely reported that Mr. Abdi was well known to suffer from serious mental health problems.

We recognize that the case is being investigated by the Special Investigations Unit and the Ottawa Police Service's Professional Standards Section. It is vital that those investigations be thorough, transparent and impartial.

Questions have been asked by Mr. Abdi's family and friends, the Somali community and numerous organizations as to whether Mr. Abdi's race played a role in how his case was handled, including how the two officers responded to him and the nature of the force they used. Those questions arise at a time of heightened sensitivity and tension with respect to concerns about racism and policing in a number of high-profile cases in the United States, but also a number of individual cases and longstanding concerns about profiling and carding in Canada.

Retired Ottawa deputy chief of police Larry Hill is quoted in today's media, indicating that it is unlikely that the SIU will consider whether racial bias played a role in Mr. Abdi's death. We realize those comments are not offered on behalf of either the OPS or the SIU. However, coming in the wake of comments from the Ottawa Police Association that it is "inappropriate" to suggest racism played a role in Mr. Abdi's treatment, Amnesty International is compelled to urge that you ensure that the question about potential racism, implicit and explicit, does indeed receive close attention in your respective investigations.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve  
Secretary General

**National Office:**

312 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9  
Tel: (613) 744-7667 Fax: (613) 746-2411  
info@amnesty.ca

**Toronto Office:**

1992 Yonge Street, 3rd floor, Toronto ON M4S 1Z7  
Tel: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103  
toronto@amnesty.ca

**Vancouver Office:**

Suite 430, 319 West Pender, Vancouver, BC V6B 1T3  
Tel: (604) 294-5160 Fax: (604) 294-5130  
vancouver@amnesty.ca