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SOMALILAND

DETAINED CRITICS MUST BE RELEASED

Between 17 April and 1 May, Somaliland authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained journalist Abdimalik Muse Oldon, opposition youth leader Mohamed Sidiq Dhame, and Jamal Abdi Muhumed, an employee of the Ministry of the Interior. The three were arbitrarily arrested for posting on social media comments perceived as critical of the Somaliland government and public officials.

Journalist **Abdimalik Muse Oldon** was arrested by Somaliland police on 17 April from his hometown of Burao for criticizing the president of Somaliland on his Facebook page, and transferred to Hargeisa. He was formally charged on 6 June with spreading anti-national propaganda and disseminating false news against Abaarso School. Abdimalik is currently detained at the Hargeisa Central Prison.



Jamal Abdi Muhumed, an employee of the Ministry of Interior, was arrested at his office in Hargeisa on 24 April over his Facebook posts criticizing the effectiveness of police services in Somaliland. He was charged on 19 June for insulting the police and insulting a public officer. Jamal is currently held at the Hargeisa Central police station.

Mohamed Sidiq Dhame, the leader of the opposition Waddani party's youth wing, was arrested on 1 May at his home in Hargeisa. Mohamed was arrested over a Facebook post in which he criticized the state of emergency imposed on three districts in the Sanaag region. He was formally charged on 8 June with offending the honour and prestige of the president, and incitement to violence. On 27 June, the Hargeisa regional court found him guilty of offending the honour of the president and sentenced him to six months in prison. Mohamed is currently detained at the Hargeisa Central Prison.

The arrest of the three individuals is arbitrary, as it was carried out without a warrant. In so doing, it violated Article 25(2) of the Somaliland Constitution, which states that the police must attain a warrant from a judge before arresting and detaining any individual.

Please send an email to the authorities listed below. (There is no postal service.)

- * Draw their attention to the cases of Abdimalik Muse Oldon, Jamal Abdi Muhumed and Mohamed Sidiq Dhame, who are currently detained only for peacefully exercising their right to express their own opinions.
- * Call on them to secure their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience.
- * Urge the government to fully respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights to freedom of expression and personal liberty of everyone in Somaliland.

Write to

Attorney General Hassan Ahmed Aden

Email: hassmo12@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Minister of Interior Mohamed Ahmed Kahin

Email: a.y.kaahin@hotmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

President of Somaliland Muse Bihi Abdi

Email: goljanno99@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear President Abdi

Additional information

There has been an increase in harassment and intimidation of government critics and clampdowns on peaceful dissent in Somaliland since the current government took office in December 2017. The authorities have targeted poets and journalists, as well as anyone perceived to disagree with key state policies, or critical of public officials.

Somaliland's 2001 Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press but the 1964 penal code includes a number of vaguely defined and very broad criminal offences, including "offending the honour and prestige of the head of state, insulting a public officer or institution, or contempt against the nation, state or flag", which are punishable by up to three years' imprisonment.