

PUBLIC

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8 December 1999

Further information on UA 254/99 (AFR 23/07/99, 28 September) and follow-ups (AFR 23/08/99, 18 October; AFR 23/09/99, 26 October) - Unfair trials / Prisoners of Conscience

DJIBOUTI Ali Meidal Wais, journalist
 Daher Ahmed Farah, journalist, opposition leader
 Moussa Ahmed Idriss, journalist, opposition leader and
 member of parliament

Ali Meidal Wais, Daher Ahmed Farah and Moussa Ahmed Idriss received a presidential pardon and were released on 7 December.

Ali Meidal Wais thanked Amnesty International, whose campaign he said had led to their release, together with the work of *Reporters sans frontières*, Reporters Without Borders, and other media associations.

Ali Meidal Wais and Daher Ahmed Farah had been convicted after an unfair trial of "spreading false news" (*diffusion de fausses nouvelles*), in connection with articles which appeared in the newspapers *Le Temps* and *Le Renouveau*. Both newspapers are now banned in Djibouti. The men's sentences were reduced on appeal to six months' imprisonment.

Moussa Ahmed Idriss, a co-director of *Le Temps*, had been convicted after an unfair trial of violently resisting arrest.

No further action is required by the Urgent Action Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Those participants who wish to do so may write a final letter to the President:

- welcoming the releases;
- asking that no-one should be imprisoned in Djibouti solely for expressing their non-violent opinions or beliefs;
- asking the government to review and amend any laws, for example those relating to the press and defamation, which could lead to the imprisonment as prisoners of conscience of journalists and other peaceful critics of the authorities.

President

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Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President