

URGENT ACTION

FREE JOURNALIST JAILED FOR COVERING PROTESTS

Kilwe Adan Farah, a freelance journalist, has been in detention in the Puntland regional state of Somalia since 27 December 2020, when he was arrested after covering protests against government mismanagement of the local currency. He was charged with five offences, including “publication of false news and bringing the nation or the state into contempt”. Five days later, on 3 March, he was sentenced by a military court to three months in jail, despite the court noting that no evidence was presented before it to prove any of the allegations. The authorities must drop all the baseless charges against Kilwe Adan Farah and immediately and unconditionally release him.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of Puntland state, Somalia

Said Abdullahi Deni,

Email: President@plstate.so

Twitter: @SaidAbdullahiDe

Dear President Said Abdullahi Deni,

*I am writing to express concern about the continued detention of journalist **Kilwe Adan Farah**.*

Kilwe Adan Farah is a freelance journalist who has been in detention in the Puntland regional state of Somalia since 27 December 2020, when he was arrested by Puntland Intelligence Agency (PISA) officers a day after he covered protests in Garowe town, in Puntland's capital, against what demonstrators said was government mismanagement of local currency. On 27 February, a military court charged him with five offences, including ‘publication of false news’ and ‘bringing the nation or the state into contempt’. On 3 March, the same court sentenced him to three months in jail without any evidence presented to the court to substantiate the allegations- as noted by the court itself in its judgment. The court cited its discretionary powers to hold people considered to be a ‘danger to national security’. The prosecution, dissatisfied with the sentencing, filed an appeal on 4 March. Kilwe Adan Farah remains held at the Garowe Central Prison.

Kilwe Adan Farah is not alone. The authorities in Somalia's Puntland regional state have escalated their attacks on media freedom by intimidating, harassing and arbitrarily arresting journalists ahead of presidential and parliamentary elections. Kilwe Adan Farah's conviction – on unfounded and politically motivated charges – is part of an effort to silence him and deter him and other journalists from carrying out their vital work, in violation of their right to freedom of expression. The decision to try him, a civilian and journalist, in a military court is also a violation of international human rights law.

In light of the above, I urge you to drop all the baseless charges against Kilwe Adan Farah and immediately and unconditionally release him from detention. I also call on you to desist from harassing and intimidating other journalists, including by subjecting them to military trials in violation of international human rights law.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Authorities in Somalia's Puntland regional state have escalated their crackdown against journalists, including intimidation and arrests, as the country heads towards presidential and parliamentary elections. Kilwe Adan Farah, and [3 other journalists](#) -Ahmed Botan Arab, Abdifatah Abdullahi Farah and Ahmed Botan - have been arbitrarily arrested in Puntland's capital Garowe and the sea-side town of Bosaso in the past two and a half months in what is a worrying development for media freedom in the region as the country inches towards an election, which has been delayed.

Amnesty International has previously reported on [violations of freedom of expression](#) and media freedom in south central Somalia. As the country prepares for its upcoming elections, it is important for the authorities at both regional and federal levels to protect, promote and respect freedom of expression and media freedom.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 5 May 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Kilwe Adan Farah, he/him/his