



Committee to Protect Journalists



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Sulayman Mohamed Mohamoud,
Attorney General,
Federal Republic of Somalia, Xamarweyne District,
London Road,
Mogadishu, Somalia.

CC: HE. Abshir Mohamed Ahmed, State Minister for the Presidency, Federal Republic of Somalia
HE. Daud Aweis Jama, Minister of Information, Federal Republic of Somalia
HE. Abdirahman Yusuf Omar, Deputy Minister of Information, Federal Republic of Somalia

Dear Attorney General,

We, the undersigned human rights, and press freedom organizations, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the arbitrary arrest, detention and persecution of Mr. Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, Secretary General of Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), and call for all charges against him to be dropped immediately. We also call on the Somali government to end all threats, harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists and civil society actors in Somalia.

During the last few months, Mr. Mumin has suffered violations of his human rights including arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair trial rights, and restriction of his right to freedom of expression. To this day, he faces ongoing threats and persecution from Somali authorities because of his work as a journalist and for advocating for the right to freedom of expression.

We urge your office to drop all charges against Mr. Mumin. Continuing his prosecution not only casts a chilling effect on media freedom and journalism, but it also significantly contributes to the closing civic space in the country.

As you are aware, Mr. Mumin has been released on bail for the second time following his arbitrary arrest and detention by Somali authorities. He was initially arrested on 11 October 2022 by officers from the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA). Mr. Mumin's arrest came a day after he, along with directors of four other media organizations, raised concerns that on 8 October directive from Somalia's Ministry of Information that "prohibited dissemination of extremism ideology messages, both from traditional media broadcasts and social media," could restrict legitimate free speech. He was detained at Godka Jilaow, a NISA detention facility in Mogadishu where he was repeatedly denied access to a lawyer and his family. On 13 October 2022, he was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) of the Somali Police Force after which he was brought to Banadir Regional Court and accused of violating Article 219 (bringing the nation or state into contempt), Article 321 (instigation to disobey laws), and Article 505 (non-observance of an order by the authorities) of the Somali Penal Code. On 16 October 2022, the court granted him bail and ordered his case to be heard in 45 days.

On 18 October 2022, Mr. Mumin was re-arrested by NISA officers at Aden Adde International Airport as he prepared to travel to Nairobi for medical reasons. The Banadir Regional Court found that Mr Mumin had violated bail terms by attempting to travel out of the country, even though his bail order contained no explicit travel restrictions and ordered his renewed detention. While in detention, he developed multiple health issues including severe kidney pain, severe allergies that affected his eyes, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He was again released on bail on 22 October 2022 under conditions that he would not travel out of the country or speak to the media until the conclusion of his case. On 28 November, the Banadir Regional Court issued summons for Mr Mumin to appear for a hearing scheduled for 4 January

2023.

On 12 October, Somalia's Ministry of Information issued a statement claiming that Mr. Mumin was being held on security related charges; the police charge sheet of 16 October however stated that he was arrested for "publicly disobeying a government directive and holding a press conference that criticized the directive." This discrepancy reinforces our concerns that Mr. Mumin has been solely targeted for his media advocacy work.

Since Mr Mumin's arrest, the authorities have continued to seek to silence him and frustrate his efforts to promote media freedoms. On 15 November 2022, officials from the Ministry of Information met with representatives of media advocacy organizations including SJS, Somali Media Organization (SOMA), and the Somali Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists (SMSJ). The ministry officials offered to drop all charges against Mr. Mumin provided that: 1) Mr. Mumin quit all media advocacy work and end all criticism of authorities, and 2) that the group of media advocacy organizations issue an apology to the Ministry of Information and change their position on the 8 October government directive. Mr. Mumin and the media advocacy groups rejected these unacceptable demands.

All charges against Mr. Mumin should be dropped immediately and unconditionally. To do otherwise would allow for the continuation of violations of both domestic, regional and international human rights law, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and fair trial standards. Beyond this, the persecution of Mr. Mumin by the Somali authorities has a chilling effect on journalism and civic space throughout the country. Independent media plays a vital role in informing people about public affairs and enables effective monitoring and scrutiny of government action at all levels. Among others, media freedom helps the public to remain informed about critical issues, including on security, government policies and exposes abuses of power and human rights violations. Mr. Mumin's case is part of a wider trend of ongoing attacks on journalists by successive governments in Somalia.

We urge the Office of the Attorney General and all Somali government officials to work towards creating a safe and empowering environment for Somali journalists and activists to operate and freely exercise their human rights. The first step towards achieving this goal is to immediately drop all charges and end the intimidation, harassment, and persecution of Mr. Mumin.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International
ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Human Rights Watch
International Press Institute (IPI)
PEN International
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights