

URGENT ACTION

FREE JOURNALIST JAILED FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

On 17 August, plain-clothed security officers arrested Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul, a journalist with Kaab TV and staff member of a local media advocacy organization, Somali Journalists Syndicate. The arrest took place a day after he released a story about alleged misappropriation of European Union funds meant for training officers from the Somali police. On 25 September, he was charged with “bringing the State into contempt” and for “circulating false and tendentious news”. He was transferred to the Mogadishu Central Prison on 28 September where he remains detained. The Somali authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul and drop all the charges against him.

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

Attorney General of the Federal Republic of Somalia

Sulayman Mohamed Mohamoud

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Copies to: Police Commissioner, Sulub Ahmed Firin

Email: info@police.gov.so

Your Excellency,

On 17 August, plain-clothed security officers arrested **Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul**, a journalist with Kaab TV and the secretary of information and human rights of the Somali Journalists Syndicate, a local media advocacy organization. The arrest took place a day after he released a story about the alleged misappropriation of European Union funds meant for training officers from the Somali police.

On 19 August, he was produced at the Banadir regional court where a judge granted a police request to hold him for seven days pending further investigations. During his detention, officers from the Criminal Investigation Department confiscated and searched his two phones to access the sources for his reporting. On 25 September, he was taken to the Banadir regional court and charged with offenses under the overly broad and outdated Somali penal code including “bringing the State into contempt” and for “circulating false and tendentious news.” During the hearing, the judge accepted preliminary objections raised by his lawyers that journalistic work cannot be criminalized, and that Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul could not be charged with offenses under the penal code but asked the prosecutor to instead accuse him of offences if any under the media law. He was transferred to the Mogadishu Central Prison on 28 September where he remains detained.

Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul’s prosecution stems from his work as a journalist. His prosecution for simply doing his job is a blatant violation of his right to freedom of expression and press freedoms, as guaranteed by regional and international human rights instruments to which Somalia is a state party. Detaining a journalist like Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul, who is working to hold the government to account – both through his reporting and advocacy, sends a chilling message to journalists, human rights activists, and anyone else who dares to express peaceful dissent against the Somali government.

I call on you to use your authority to immediately and unconditionally release Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul and drop all the charges against him. Pending his release, he must be granted regular access to his family, any healthcare he may require from a qualified medical practitioner and a lawyer of his choice.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul operates in Somalia, a country that has been in conflict for over 30 years. Military operations by Somali government and foreign troops- including the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the US military against Al-Shabaab, continue to take a toll on civilians. All parties to the conflict continue to violate international human rights and humanitarian law. Civilians have been indiscriminately killed by Somali and its allied forces during clashes with Al-Shabaab, as well as in the crossfire of interclan violence which continue to occur in some pockets of the country.

Ove the years, the right to freedom of expression has been severely suppressed in Somalia. Journalists and other media workers were beaten, harassed, intimidated, threatened, and subjected to arbitrary detention, including by the police, military and other government officials. Authorities continue to restrict access to information and to suppress media freedom. Authorities also raid and temporarily close media outlets to prevent or discourage coverage of news events and as retaliation for their critical reporting. In the past five years, more than 12 journalists have been killed. There is often no accountability for these violations.

The current government continues to curtail media freedom. For instance, in December 2022, it issued a directive to local news outlets to submit all content for approval before airing. On 8 October 2022, Somalia's Ministry of Information issued [a directive](#) prohibiting "dissemination of extremism ideology messages both from traditional media broadcasts and social media".

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 December 2023

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul (he/his)