



# Human Rights Centre Quarterly Report on the Situation of Media in Somaliland

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**Human Rights Centre**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1 Introduction.....	4
1.2 Recommendations.....	4
2.1 Detentions.....	5
31. Cases.....	7
About Human Rights Centre.....	8

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This quarterly report on media covers from 10<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Human Rights Centre issues a report every four months on the situation of media in Somaliland. In last four months 11 journalists were detained.

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017, the Minister of Information Osman Sahardid, warned the media not to report on any issue related to a military base that was granted by Somaliland government to the United Arab Emeritus. The Minister spoke after the Parliament in a joint session approved the United Arab Emeritus to establish a military base at the port town of Berbera.

Table A: Number of detentions in each region.

	<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of Detentions</b>
<b>1</b>	Hargeisa	7
<b>2</b>	Sool	1
<b>3</b>	Awdal	1
<b>4</b>	Saahil	1
<b>5</b>	Sanaag	1
<b>6</b>	Togdheer	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the government of Somaliland

- Stop criminalization of the media and halt detention and trial of journalists;
- Allow opening of new media houses and transfers of media houses to new owners;
- Lift the ban from the suspended newspapers of Hubsad, Codka Shacakba and Haatuf<sup>1</sup>;

### To the judiciary

- Stop applying the Penal Code against journalist and apply the Press Law and Somaliland constitution;

### To the civil society organizations

- Support Somaliland journalists and media houses in tackling arrests and criminal prosecutions ;
- Support decriminalization of media and advocate for the banned newspapers.

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<sup>1</sup> Haatuf was closed down on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and still on ban.

## 2.1 DETENTIONS

From 10<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 11 journalists have been detained in Somaliland. Below is the details of the cases.

1. **Khadar Saleban Maah,**
2. **Mohamed Abdilahi Warsame**

Khadar Saleban Maah, Universal TV, and Mohamed Abdilahi Warsame of Togaherer news website were detained in New Hargeisa Police Station on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The two reporters were reporting a people who gathered at Hargeisa Municipality main office along with members of the Hargeisa Local Government Council to complain about a land dispute. The two journalists were released at the same day.

3. **Abdi Muridi**

Abdi Muridi Ajax, a comedian and host of a satire television program called Faaliyaha Qaranka<sup>2</sup> of Universal TV was arrested on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017. He was deported back to Mogadishu against his will.<sup>3</sup>

4. **Mohamed Adam Jama**

Mohamed Adam Jama, Universal TV reporter based in Garadag district of Sanaag region, was arrested on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017. He was released on 6<sup>th</sup> February. Mohamed was arrested after he reported allegations made by residents accusing the local police facilitation of contraband.

5. **Luqman Mohamed Farah, and**
6. **Abdirahim Ahmed Mahdi,**

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Luqman Mohamed Farah, Bulsho TV, and Abdirahim Ahmed Mahdi, Bulsho TV, were briefly detained in Haleeya, east of Hargeisa. They were covering drivers of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.universaltvsomali.net/topics/programmes/faaliyaha-qaranka>

<sup>3</sup> <https://goobjooge.com/dhageyso-ajakis-maareeyaha-oo-nin-madow-eh-malakul-mowd-loo-maleeyo-ah-ayaa-xiray/>

water tank truckers who were complaining about raised tax. They were released on the same day without charges.

#### **7. Abdimalik Mouse Oldoon,**

Abdimalik Mouse Oldoon, a freelance journalist, who was arrested on 15th February by the government over accusations that he supported and campaigned for a presidential candidate in presidential election that took place in Mogadishu on 8th February.

Abdimalik was arrested after he returned from Mogadishu. On 18th February he was brought to Hargeisa Regional Court which remanded him seven days in custody. On 26th February the court remanded him another seven days. His trial started 4<sup>th</sup> April and ended 5<sup>th</sup> April. The court set 8<sup>th</sup> April to pronounce its judgment.

The police accused Abdimalik of “offending the honour or prestige of the head of state”, “anti-national activity of a citizen abroad” and “publication of false news capable of disturbing the public order”, according to the charges submitted by the police.

#### **8. Mohamed Baashe Hassan**

On 20th February 2017, about 10:30pm local time, the police of Somaliland arrested Mohamed Baashe Hassan, a prominent journalist and author, who is currently the director of Star TV. Mohamed attended an event held at Maansoor Hotel Hargeisa to commemorate the Somaliland National Youth Day, which is the anniversary of 20th February 1982 when the military regime of Siad Barre cracked down students protesting against detention of educators. Mohamed was among the students who participated in the protest.

At the event, Mohamed expressed his discontent on the manner the government handled a military base granted to the United Arab Emirates to be established at Berbera. The police accused Mohamed inciting the public and disturbing the public order. He was released in 25<sup>th</sup> February on bail.

#### **9. Abdirahman Mohamed Ege**

Abdirahman Mohamed Ege, was briefly arrested on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Abdirahman was arrested on the order of the governor of Saahil region. He was arrested while he was filming a government owned land that was purportedly given to private citizens. He was not charged of any crime.

## **10. Mohamed Shaqale Omar**

Mohamed Shaqale Omar, a reporter for Somali Cable TV, was arrested on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017 in Laas Anod. He was released at the same day without charges.

## **11. Ali Idiris Farah (Hagjar)**

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017, Ali Idiris Farah (Hagjar), Star TV, was arrested in Sayla district of Awdal region.<sup>4</sup> He was arrested after he prepared a report on a building soil that is exported to Djibouti. The regional authorities and the owners of the company that exports the soil were infuriated by the reporting and detained the journalist before he even aired the news report. He was released on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 without charges. He was not brought to court during his detention.

## **3.1 CASES**

On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017 appeal court in Hargeisa upheld regional court decision that acquitted Cabdirashiid Nuur Wacays, chairman of *Hubsad* newspaper and Siciid Khadar Cabdilaahi, editor-in-chief of *Hubsad* newspaper. On 12th November 2016, Hargeisa Regional Court acquitted the two journalists who were accused of publication of false news and running unlicensed newspaper. The Office of the Attorney General appealed against the court decision and demanded the imprisonment of the two journalists. The appeal court rejected the request of the prosecution office, but upheld the suspension of the newspaper. The court ruled the Hubsad shall not be published until “pending registration process is fulfilled”. Both the Office of the Attorney General and the journalists appealed to the Supreme Court.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCFhTfEqSNY>

## About Human Rights Centre

Human Rights Centre (HRC) is a local human rights watchdog based in Somaliland. HRC was established in 2013. It is registered with the Somaliland government as a non-profit, non-governmental organization. HRC was formed to cover the need for documentation and advocacy for human rights to help maintain the gains in Somaliland's nascent democracy.

Human Rights Centre (HRC) strongly advocates for the freedom and independence of journalists and media houses. HRC issues press releases, holds campaign rallies and carries lobbying for the cause of journalists and media freedoms. HRC has been advocating for decriminalization of media and application of the Press Law. It provides legal aid to the journalists who are arrested or are under legal proceedings.

Human Rights Centre is governed by Board of Directors. The majority of board members are female human rights defenders including its deputy chairpersons and secretary general.

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