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Africa - Somalia

Illegal sentences

Absurd jail terms passed on newspaper's owner and its editor

25 June 2014

Haatuf, a Somali-language newspaper based in Hargeisa, the capital of the breakaway northwestern territory of Somaliland, has had a tough time this year. It has been raided by the police and prevented from publishing. And now its owner and editor have been given illegal jail terms.

A Hargeisa court today sentenced owner **Yusuf Abdi Gabobe** and editor **Ahmed Ali Egeh** to three years in prison on charges of spreading false information and defaming government officials. It also fined them 25 million shillings (4,000 US dollars) each and withdrew the licence of Haatuf Media Network, the group that publishes *Haatuf* and the English-language paper *Somaliland Times*.

"The authorities are breaking their own laws by giving these journalists jail terms because press offences are no longer punishable by imprisonment in Somaliland, so these sentences break the record for absurdity" said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk.

"This is a witch-hunt against journalists who just did their duty to report the news. The sentences are illegal in every aspect and we therefore call on the Hargeisa courts to quash this conviction."

Gabobe and Egeh [were arrested for the first time](#) on 11 May and were released on bail 17 days later. Gabobe was jailed again on 14 June, but not Egeh, who reportedly went into hiding after the sentences were announced today.

Publication of *Haatuf* was [suspended in April](#) after it published reports about alleged embezzlement by the energy and interior ministers.

Somalia is ranked 176th out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
