

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/somalia-three-journalists-held-for-06-01-2015,47447.html>

Africa - Somalia

Arbitrary detention

Three journalists held for reporting possible Ebola case

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Reporters Without Borders calls for the release of three radio journalists who have been held without charge since their arbitrary arrest in Mogadishu on 3 January for reporting the existence of a possible case of the Ebola virus in the Lower Shabelle region. Their independent radio station, Radio Risaala, has also been closed on the orders of the authorities.

The three journalists are *Radio Risaala* director **Mohamed Abdiwahab Abdullahi**, editor **Mohamed Kafi Sheik Abukar** and reporter **Mohamed Abdi Ali**. They were arrested after broadcasting an interview with an inhabitant of Mulo Sharay, a town in Lower Shabelle, about the possible Ebola case. At a press conference later the same day, health minister Ali Mohamed Mohamud categorically denied the existence of any Ebola case in Somalia. Two other journalists with a privately-owned radio station were arrested in Mogadishu's Waberi district the next day while covering a suicide bombing that killed five people. *Radio Goobjoog* programme director **Mohamed Salaad Osman** and reporter **Ibrahim Haji Yusuf** were held for several hours without ever being told why.

"We condemn these five arbitrary arrests and the closure of an independent news outlet, which constitute flagrant violations of freedom of the media and information, Reporters Without Borders deputy programme director Virginie Dangles said. We urge the authorities to free the three journalists still held without charge and to allow Radio Risaala to resume broadcasting. Journalists must be able to work freely, inform their fellow citizens and express public concerns without being threatened with jail as soon as they show an interest in public interest subjects of a sensitive nature."

These arrests, which are indicative of the current climate of great tension for the Somalia media, came just two days before the trial of four Shabelle Media Network journalists was due to resume yesterday but was adjourned in the absence of the defence lawyers. Two of the journalists, *Radio Shabelle* editor Mohamed Bashir Hashi and *Sky FM* director **Mohamud Dahir**, have been held since August on charges of inciting violence, defaming the president and "endangering the Somali state's integrity, independence or unity." The last charge carries a possible death sentence. The other two, Shabelle Media Network owner **Abdiimalik Yusuf Mohamud** and *Radio Shabelle* editor-in-chief **Ahmed Abdi Hassan**, who are charged with incitement to commit crimes and break the law, were released provisionally on 21 October.

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