

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/somalia-journalists-harassed-arrested-in-28-03-2011,39900.html>

Africa - Somalia

Freed

Two journalists freed in Mogadishu, two others still held in north

31 March 2011

Two journalists who were wrongfully arrested by the National Security Agency in Mogadishu on 27 March – *Radio Shabelle* manager **Abdirashid Omar Qase** and news director **Abdi Mohamed Ismail** – were released unconditionally yesterday.

Shabelle Media Network, which owns the station, thanked all those who condemned the detention of their employees and paid tribute to the courage of the many Somalis who demonstrated on the streets of Mogadishu in protest.

In a statement, the media company said: “Regardless of threat and acts of bullying that we are facing from those oppressing independent reporting media operating in Somalia, Shabelle Media network are committed to continue flying the flag of independent journalism in Somalia.”

As previously reported, two other journalists, **Liban Abdi Farah** and **Mohamed Abdinur Hashi**, are being held in the northern regions of Puntland and Somaliland. Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities to free them at once.

29.03.2011 - Interior minister demands apology in exchange for release of two journalists

Somali interior minister Abdishakur Sheikh Hassan (picture) is demanding a public apology from Shabelle Media Network, the owner of *Radio Shabelle*, as a condition for the release of two of its most senior journalists who have been held for the past 48 hours. The minister wants it to apologise for a [radio programme](#) on 22 March that questioned the competence of the transitional government’s president, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed.



AFP

Reporters Without Borders is appalled by this “disgraceful and unacceptable” blackmail. It betrays not only the transitional government’s hypersensitivity and inability to tolerate criticism but also a desire to indirectly control the editorial content of independent media. The two *Radio Shabelle*

journalists are not bargaining chips and must be freed at once.

Radio Shabelle manager **Abdirashid Omar Qase** and news editor **Abdi Mohamed Ismail** were arrested by the National Security Agency (NSA) on 27 March. [More information](#)

Their detention has been widely criticised. Those protesting include the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), the Reporters Without Borders partner organization in Somalia, which has called for their immediate release and urged the transitional federal government to respect freedom of expression and media independence.

Respected for its professionalism and courage, *Radio Shabelle* has always maintained its editorial independence despite pressure from both the government and the Islamist militias. Five of its journalists, including two of its managers, have been murdered since 2007. It was awarded the Reporters Without Borders – FNAC Press Freedom Prize last year.

28-03-2011- Journalists harassed, arrested in Mogadishu, Somaliland and Puntland

Reporters Without Borders is baffled by the hostility that the authorities are showing towards journalists. Two members of privately-owned *Radio Shabelle* were arrested yesterday in Mogadishu, while two other journalists have been held in the northeastern region of Puntland and the northwestern region of Somaliland for more than a week.

The press freedom organization calls for the immediately release of all four journalists and a halt to their persecution.

“The transitional federal government is doing nothing to encourage the work of the media in a country in which the constant fighting is already the source of a great deal of danger for reporters and the intolerance of the Islamist militias makes their work even more dangerous if not impossible,” Reporters Without Borders said.

“The authorities are supposed to enforce law and order but instead they are now posing an additional threat to journalists by intimidating them and carrying out abusive arrests without any legal grounds.”

On the orders of the ministry of information, posts and telecommunications, the National Security Agency (NSA) summoned *Radio Shabelle* news editor **Abdi Mohamed Ismail** on 24 March for questioning about a report critical of the transitional government's president, Sheik Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. When Ismail finally went to NSA headquarters with *Radio Shabelle* director **Abdirashid Omar Qase** yesterday, both were immediately arrested and are still being held.

No official reason has been given for their detention. Information obtained by Reporters Without Borders suggests that they are not being fed and are not being allowed to receive visits. They are also reportedly being denied access to a lawyer.

Meanwhile two journalists were harassed by soldiers in Las Anod, in the breakaway northwestern territory of Somaliland, on 22 March because of reports deemed to be defamatory. **Mohamed Abdinur Hashi** of *Somali Channel TV* was arrested while **Mohamed Shaqale** of *Universal TV* managed to avoid arrest and has since been in hiding. His laptop, camera and voice recorders were confiscated by the military, which is still looking for him.

Liban Abdi Farah of the *Somali Broadcasting Corporation (SBC)* was immediately arrested by police when he went to the site of a bomb explosion in Galkayo, in the semi-autonomous northeastern region of Puntland, on 19 March. He is being held at police headquarters, where his relatives have been able to visit him but not his colleagues.

Under Puntland's judicial system, he should have been taken before a judge within 48 hours, but

that has not yet taken place.

Photo : AFP
