

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/somalia-call-for-voice-of-peace-director-s-24-04-2012,42347.html>

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Africa - Somalia

Arrests and violence

## Call for Voice of Peace director's "immediate and unconditional" release in Puntland

24 April 2012

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Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities of the semi-autonomous northeastern region of Puntland to immediately release radio *Voice of Peace* director **Awke Abdullahi Ali**, who has been held in the region's capital, Bossasso, for nearly two months. Ali has not been charged although, under the law, no one should be held for more than 48 hours without charge.

At the same time as it urges Puntland's authorities to stop harassing journalists, Reporters Without Borders is also concerned about media freedom violations in the breakaway northwestern region of Somaliland and in the southern part of Somalia, especially the capital, Mogadishu.

"We call for Ali's immediate and unconditional release in the absence of any legal grounds for his arrest and continuing detention," Reporters Without Borders said. "Ali should be freed for humanitarian as well as legal reasons, as his state of health is worsening by the day. We also urge the authorities to allow the station to reopen."

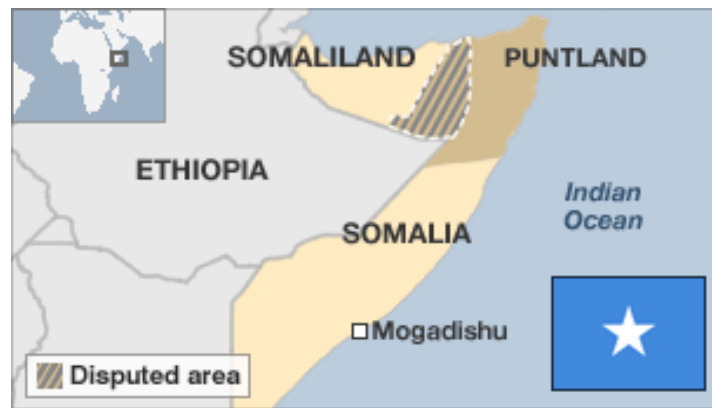
The station has been closed indefinitely since Ali's arrest on 3 March and the seizure of its computers and sound equipment after it broadcast an interview with the spokesman of the Islamist militia Al-Shabaab, which has been fighting Puntland's security forces in the Bossasso suburb of Gal-Gala. The interview angered the authorities, although a government spokesman was also interviewed so that the opposing viewpoint could be represented.

After publicly defending Ali, fellow journalist **Abdiweli Hassan Gooni**, the Puntland coordinator of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), was arrested at his Bossasso home on 13 April and was interrogated about his articles condemning Ali's unjustified detention. Gooni was finally freed on 16 April after being held for three days in the most appalling conditions.

### Arbitrary detention and banishment in Somaliland

The situation is hardly any better for journalists in Somaliland, where three have been detained in the past month. The latest was *Somalifat TV* reporter **Mohamed Shaqale**, who was arrested in Las Anod, the capital of the Sool region, on 19 April after spending a month in hiding while soldiers searched for him. His computer, camera and recordings were all seized and, when released on 22 April, he was expelled from the region. He is now in forced exile in Puntland.

**Ahmed Ali Farah**, a reporter for *Royal Television* and *Somali 24*, was arrested in Las Anod on 31 March and freelancer **Abdisamad Keyse** was arrested when he went to visit Farah in prison four days later. They were released on 19 April after being held for two weeks without being charged. Banned from remaining in Las Anod by the Somaliland authorities, Farah has been forced to base himself in Taleh (Taleex), a town 175 km to the northeast.



According to the local media, journalists are being harassed because of their coverage of last December's Khatumo conference, at which local politicians and traditional tribal leaders proclaimed the new autonomous state of Khatumo, formed by three regions – Sool, Sanaag and Cayn – located between Somaliland and Puntland.

Both Somaliland and Puntland claim Sool as their own and the Somaliland authorities are trying to exercise close control of any reporting coming out of the region. In particular, it seems that they are trying to intimidate, harass and interrogate any journalist who attended the independence conference.

### **Mogadishu – capital torn by violence**

Ten days before [the national theatre bombing in Mogadishu](#) that left many dead and wounded, including badly injured journalists, *Shabelle Media Network* journalist **Muhaydin Hassan Mohammed** sustained a gunshot injury to his chest in a murder attempt near his home in the Mogadishu district of Wadajir on 25 March.

Fearing for his safety, Mohammed subsequently fled to Nairobi, the capital of neighbouring Kenya, after receiving further threats.

In its 2011 annual roundup, Reporters Without Borders classified Mogadishu as one of the world's ten most dangerous places for journalists.

With a total of 29 journalists killed since 2007, Somalia continues to be Africa's deadliest country for media personnel and is ranked 164th out of 179 countries in the 2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

Photo : Somalian prisoners in the breakaway northwestern region of Somaliland (Simon Maina / AFP)

Credits Somalia's map : BBC

Photo : Muhaydin Hassan Mohammed (Shabelle Media Network)

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