# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALIST MUST BE RELEASED

**Journalist Abdimalik Oldon was arrested one year ago, on 17 April 2019, in Burao, northern Somaliland, for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Despite a country-wide release of prisoners to ease overcrowding in prisons and contain the spread of Covid-19, he continues to be arbitrarily detained by Somaliland authorities. He must be immediately and unconditionally released.**

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*President Muse Bihi Abdi*
*Somaliland Presidential Palace*
*Hargeisa, Somaliland*
*Email: goljanno99@gmail.com*

*Dear President Bihi,*

*I am concerned to learn about the continued arbitrary detention of Abdimalik Oldon at Hargeisa Central Prison, despite the pardon of 574 prisoners across Somaliland on 1 April 2020 to ease overcrowding in prisons and contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country.*

*Abdimalik Oldon was arrested on 17 April 2019 outside his home in Burao for criticizing President Muse Bihi on Facebook and was charged with "spreading anti-national propaganda" and "disseminating false news" and sentenced to three and a half years in prison.*

*Amnesty International believes that Abdimalik Oldon's detention and subsequent prosecutions were unfair and politically motivated. One of his lawyers, Mubarik Abdi Ismail, quit his role as defence lawyer in September 2019 citing intimidation, threats and harassment by Somaliland authorities. On 26 June 2019, Amnesty International witnessed police officers at the Maroodi Jeex Court harassing and trying to block Mubarik Abdi Ismail from accessing the courtroom where he was due to represent Abdimalik Oldon.*

*The arrest of Abdimalik Oldon was arbitrary, as it was carried out without warrant, thereby violating Article 25(2) of the Somaliland Constitution, which states that the police must attain a warrant from a judge before arresting and detaining individuals.*

***In light of the above, I urge you to:***

- ***Immediately and unconditionally release Abdimalik Oldon as his arrest and subsequent arbitrary detention violate his right to freely express himself under international human rights law;***
- ***Ensure that, pending his release, he has unhindered access to his families and lawyers and that he is protected from torture or ill-treatment. If contact visits are restricted due to Covid-19 preventive measures, they must be replaced with other means of contacting his family, by phone, video call or emails, for example.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdimalik was born in Somaliland. He is a journalist and a social media activist. He has a massive following on Facebook where he shares social, cultural, political stories. He advocates for human rights and is vocal on government policies. Mohamed Sadiiq Dhame and Jamal Abdi Muhamed were both sentenced and fined as punishment. Shortly after the first Urgent Action, they were released after paying their fines.

The autonomous Somaliland regional state has a horrible record of persecuting journalists and those expressing criticism of regional state government or President Muse Bihi has increased in recent years. In 2019, authorities raided and shut down at least three media houses, and arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted individuals perceived to be critical of government policies, including poets, journalists and opposition politicians. The Human Rights Centre, a local organization, said that 88 people, including 26 journalists, were arrested last year for exercising their rights to freely express themselves.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English, Somali
You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 3 June 2020
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFFERED PRONOUN: Abdimalik Muse Oldon** (his, him, he)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr52/0615/2019/en/

## ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Mohamed Ahmed Kahin
Somaliland Minister of Interior
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