

Somaliland court jails journalist for 18 months

The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned the conviction and sentencing of Somaliland journalist Mohamed Adan Dirir during a one-day trial held without the journalist's lawyer.



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A regional court in Hargeisa sentenced Mohamed on October 8 to 18 months in jail on charges of criminal defamation and publishing false news, and fined him one million Somaliland shillings, the journalist's lawyer, Mubarik Abdi Ismail, and Abdikarim Saed Salah, owner of *Horseed News*, a news website that Mohamed works for, told CPJ. Mubarik said that the journalist, who has been in custody since September 16, plans to appeal.

Mubarik told CPJ that the courts [did not inform him](#) or the journalist's family of the court date and they learned of the conviction only after Mohamed, who is an editor for the online news portal *Horseed News* and owner of the news website *Saylactoday*, was sentenced.

The charges are linked to articles Mohamed allegedly wrote on sites including [Gabile Media](#), in which he accused a group of private schools in Hargeisa of misconduct and corruption, Guleid Ahmed Jama, chairman of the non-governmental organisation Human Rights Center in Somaliland, [told CPJ](#) after the journalist's arrest.

"Mohamed Adan Dirir should never have been prosecuted in the first place and the manner in which this trial was carried out is unjust," said CPJ Africa program coordinator Angela Quintal in New York. "Authorities should overturn the journalist's

conviction on appeal and release Mohamed immediately."

Mohamed's trial had been scheduled for October 5, but the court postponed it because the judge had to attend a wedding, Guleid told CPJ.

The presiding judge in the case, Ahmed Dalmar Ismail, told CPJ that he informed Mohamed and the journalist's lawyer of the new court date. Ahmed, who is president of the Hargeisa Regional Court, said that he permitted Mohamed to represent himself on October 8, which is allowed under Somaliland law.

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