

Journalist detained without charge in Puntland

Authorities in Puntland should unconditionally and immediately release journalist Omar Saeed Mohammed, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said this week.



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Police arrested Omar, who works for the news website *Horseed Media* and the privately owned Somali Cable TV channel, on August 6, 2017, in Garowe, the administrative capital of Puntland, a semi-autonomous region of Somalia, according to a witness, press freedom advocates, and [media reports](#).

Jama Deperani, a Somali Cable TV journalist who witnessed the arrest, told CPJ that police refused to provide any justification for the arrest, telling him and Omar only that they were acting on official government orders. They refused to say who had issued the orders, Jama said.

"The notion that police could arrest a journalist at any time, without charge, on the apparent whim of officials, can only have a chilling effect on media freedom in Puntland," CPJ Africa Program Coordinator Angela Quintal said from New York.

"Authorities should immediately release Omar Saeed Mohammed and stop detaining and harassing the media."

Mowlid Abukar, the general director of Puntland's Ministry of Information, and Abdirizak Omar Ismail, the vice minister of information, yesterday told CPJ that they did not know why Omar was arrested.

Mowlid said that the police would reveal the charges this morning. Mowlid and presidential spokesman Abdullahi Mohammed Jama did not respond to CPJ's phone calls and text messages requesting comment.

Faisal Khalif Barre, chairman of the Media Association of Puntland, a press freedom organisation, told CPJ that Omar [is detained](#) at a southern checkpoint in Garowe, without charge. Faisal said that the association had also contacted officials in the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Security, and that they all claimed not to know the reason for Omar's arrest.

Jama and Mohamed Osman, the online editor at *Horseed Media*, speculated that the arrest might be linked to a [Facebook post](#) Omar wrote alleging the involvement of Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali in a counterfeit money-printing scam.

Last month security forces in Garowe detained online journalist Ahmed Ali Kilwe for two weeks without charge after he criticised the president, [CPJ reported](#) at the time.

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