

**PRESS
RELEAS
E**

**JOURNALIST DAHIR ALASOW:
“SOMALIAN MINISTER GIVES FALSE EVIDENCE TO
AMSTERDAM COURT”**

Breda, 18 September 2017

The District Court of Amsterdam has rejected the demand of the journalist, Dahir Alasow, that the Minister of Information and Tourism of Somalia should no longer be allowed to call him a “blackmailer”. The journalist had brought preliminary relief proceedings against Minister Abdirahman Omar Osman for having accused him of blackmailing Somali politicians and businessmen with fabricated news.

Since 2007, the journalist – who lives in the Netherlands – has been writing critical articles about corrupt rulers, business people and terrorists in Somalia and publishes them on his news website www.waagacusub.com.

Last year, an English banker who is a friend of the minister claimed that his company was also being

blackmailed by Alasow. At the time the court of appeal in Den Bosch found that it is not plausible that the journalist was blackmailing politicians and business people with his articles.

The Somalian minister gave to the court in preliminary relief proceedings in Amsterdam exactly the same evidence, the authenticity of which the court of appeal at the time was unwilling and unable to decide on in preliminary relief proceedings. The journalist is said to have wanted to blackmail the pro-government owner of a radio station with negative publicity to the sum of ten thousand dollars.

According to Alasow this evidence is false: it is comprised of fabricated screen shots. Dozens of fake profiles of the journalist can be found on Facebook. Somalian rulers use them to harm his reputation. *“The Chinese party openly claims that dissidents are prosecuted for tax fraud. My client claims that the Somalian government silences critical journalists by claiming that they blackmail politicians with their articles,”* according to *mr. Peter Schouten*, the journalist’s lawyer.

The District Court of Amsterdam found that the Minister of Information had disseminated the untrue accusation that the journalist had been prosecuted and sentenced for slander. However, the court felt this was not enough to limit the minister in his freedom of speech..

Journalist Alasow: *“During the administration of this Minister of Information, responsible for media policy of the federal government, Somalia has become a permanent fixture in the top 5 countries where most journalists are murdered. Freedom of speech does not exist in Somalia. The new media law that the government is forcing parliament to accept will make it impossible for press organisations to remain independent. This law knows no source protection in a country where sources run a major risk of being arrested, tortured and murdered.”*

As counter-claim, the minister demanded that Alasow should be banned from publishing articles in which the minister is accused of having made a woman pregnant. Alasow offered the court the woman's testimony and DNA-evidence. In assessing this publication, the minister asked the District Court of Amsterdam to apply Somalian law. This is possible due to a European convention signed by the Netherlands ('Rome II') and a past ruling of the Supreme Court.

The lawyer, Schouten: *"In that case the court will ignore source protection because, under Somalian law, the journalist can be ordered to name his source. This takes away the last vestiges of press freedom in a country in which people are murdered for what they say or commit to paper."*

The court rejected the counter-claim of Minister Osman because it is impossible to establish in a single day whether the lawyer the minister sent to explain Somalian law is actually independent.

Dahir Alasow will lodge an appeal against the ruling. The journalist will also ask the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to initiate an investigation into malpractices of the Somalian government in order to harm the reputation of journalists with false evidence.

**End of press
release**