

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ARRESTED IN DJIBOUTI

On 9 February, Jean-Paul Noël Abdi, the president of the Djiboutian League of Human Rights (la Ligue djiboutienne des droits humains, LDDH), was arrested after he investigated and reported on arrests following recent student protests in the Republic of Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa.

The National Police arrested **Jean-Paul Noël Abdi** on 9 February and he was taken to the police headquarters located in Djibouti City (Djibouti-Ville).

Later on the same afternoon, he was brought before the Prosecutor General (Procureur de la République) who charged him with participation in an insurrectional movement ("participation a un mouvement insurrectionnel") under articles 145 and 146.4 of the Penal Code. The charges carry a possible 15 year jail sentence and a fine of seven million Djiboutian francs (around 40,000 USD). He was then transferred to Gabode Prison, Djibouti City.

On 5 and 6 February, Jean-Paul Noël Abdi recorded and shared information about alleged arbitrary arrests following student protests in Djibouti City. He had also tried to visit the students in detention. Another Djiboutian human rights defender has also reported the arrest of at least seven opposition party members, from the Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development and the Union for Democracy and Justice.

Student protests took place on 5 February and were in response to a low pass rate this year and the quality of the education system. Local sources believe that the protests have become increasingly political. The international media has reported civil unrest and low-level violence, including rock throwing and looting.

Presidential elections are scheduled for April 2011. Opposition parties refused to take part in the 2005 and 2008 elections because their demands for changes in the electoral process were not met.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in French, English or your own language:

- expressing grave concern that human rights defender, Jean-Paul Noël Abdi, has been detained on charges of participating in an insurrectional movement, apparently for investigating and reporting on arbitrary arrests following the recent student protests;
- urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all Djiboutian human rights defenders can work freely and independently and with the full protection of the state.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 MARCH 2011 TO:

President of the Republic

Ismail Omar Guelleh
Palais Présidentiel
BP 6
Djibouti Ville
République de Djibouti
Fax: 00 253 35 50 49

**Salutation: Your Excellency / Dear
President**

Minister of Justice

Mohamed Barkat Abdillahi
Ministre de la Justice,
BP 12
Djibouti Ville
République de Djibouti
Fax: 00 253 35 54 20

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Public Prosecutor
Maki Omar Abdoukader
Fax: 00 253 35 69 90
Email: likmik@caramail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The political space in Djibouti is dominated by the People's Rally for Progress (RFP) headed by President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who won a second term in 2005. In 2010, the Djiboutian parliament voted in favour of amending the constitution to allow the President to run for a third term.

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