



Congressman Donald Payne

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Abusive Behavior in Puntland

In late October, the Puntland government arrested five men of Ogadeni origin. These men came to Puntland using Somali travel documents provided by Somali authorities in Yemen.

Puntland and Ethiopian security personnel, invited by Puntland authorities, interrogated the prisoners. One of the prisoners, Abdi Mohamed Hassan also known as "Abdi Teerso" was handed over to Ethiopian security. Another prisoner died while in custody. An elderly man from Puntland was arrested by Puntland authorities after he publicly criticized the government.

This is not the first time Puntland authorities have harassed, tortured, killed, and handed over men of Ogadeni origin to Ethiopian security. Over a year ago, two senior members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) were handed over to Ethiopian security by a Puntland minister. They came, with the permission of Puntland authorities, to discuss the murder of an elder.

In June 2009, I invited President Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud (Farole) of Puntland to testify before my Subcommittee on Somalia. After the hearing, I discussed a number of issues with him, including the targeting and the handing over of Ogadenis to Ethiopian authorities. I was assured then that this would not happen again and that the government would reach out to this community.

In an effort to resolve the recent detention of the five men, I called the President of Puntland to discuss my concerns and strongly urged him to release them without delay. I even proposed that the men be sent to another country where they will be safe. A week passed and nothing happened.

In mid-November, I met again with the President of Puntland and his Interior Minister in Kenya to urge them to release the three men still in detention in Puntland. Again, he pledged to find ways to pardon the prisoners. In fact, Puntland authorities are now threatening non-Puntland Somalis to leave some areas within 48 hours.

I strongly condemn this abusive and dictatorial behavior and demand the immediate release of the prisoners. I also call for those responsible for the killing of the prisoner and intimidation of Ogadenis to be held accountable, including senior officials who authorized these measures. Failure to act quickly on this matter will have serious consequences.

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