

# **SOMALIA: Conditional presidential amnesty for a professor jailed for blasphemy**

*– On 29 January, two days after his release, Prof. Mahmoud Jama Ahmed-Hamdi called HRWF for help after spending ten months and seven days in prison*

On 30 April 2019, **Mahmoud Jama Ahmed-Hamdi**, a university lecturer in the Northern Somali city of **Hargesia**, capital of the breakaway-region of Somaliland in Somalia, was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for a Facebook post that authorities in Somaliland called “blasphemy.” He had been arrested on 21 March 2019.

In that Facebook post, **Ahmed-Hamdi** criticized the apathetic approach taken to drought in Somalia, where people pray to God instead of taking proactive steps to resolve recurring droughts. Ahmed-Hamdi said Somalis should learn from “advanced societies” such as in the United States and Europe and address drought by “making rain.”

Somaliland and large parts of Somalia have suffered from repeated droughts in recent years, a phenomenon many have connected to climate change. The droughts have killed millions of livestock in an economy dependent on livestock-exports, and have caused millions of people to be displaced and hungry. The **United Nations** has called for [\\$1.6 billion dollars in international aid](https://bit.ly/2vkl6Cs) to prevent hundreds of thousands of deaths. As of 2017, there were 1.2 million malnourished children in Somalia. (Source: Samaynta News: <https://bit.ly/3bmRPYs>)

***Posting on Facebook***

“The advanced countries make rain but we are still praying to get rain, although despite our prayers we are still suffering every year from drought.

The advanced countries, those we are considering that they are unbelievers and God hates them, live in prosperity even if God hates them. It means that they overcame God by knowledge and using reason.

So, we should learn and base our life on reason and knowledge, not on Myths”.

***Prof. Mahmoud Jama Ahmed-Hamdi, a secular Muslim***

Prof. Ahmed-Hamdi told HRWF:

“I am a secular Muslim. It means I am fighting to keep religion in the private sphere and the state away from the beliefs of its citizens.

I believe in the Quran, but that doesn't make sense, because no Somali can be a non-Muslim inside Somalia, so the religion of someone became important just when he can choose it.

I fully support freedom of religion and belief, including for the atheists.”

His story was first published by [Horn Cable TV \(https://bit.ly/3boRrIX\)](https://bit.ly/3boRrIX):

*A court in the region of Maroodi Jeex sentenced today (April 30 2019) to two years and six months in prison instructor Mahmoud Jama Ahmed, nicknamed “Hamdi.” He was found guilty of the crime of blaspheming the Islamic religion, as was confirmed to Horn Cable Tv by the judge of the Maroodi Jeex court who reached the verdict. The citizen who was found guilty spread these blasphemous writings on social media, particularly Facebook. Mahmoud Jama Ahmed Hamdi taught at one of the universities in Hargiesa. In 2012, he ran as a candidate from the opposition Wadani party in municipal city*

*council elections, although he did not win. Hamdi appealed his prison sentence, as was stated by the judge who gave the verdict. Hasan Galaydh, Horn Cable reporter, Hargiesa.*

**Prof. Mahmoud Jama Ahmed-Hamdi is under house surveillance.**

**In the name of religion or belief, he needs the assistance of secularists and believers of all faiths.**

**His email address is: [abuabdala15@gmail.com](mailto:abuabdala15@gmail.com)**