

**CAGEPRISONERS**

# THE HORN OF AFRICA INQUISTION

The latest profile in the War on Terror







## About Cageprisoners

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Cageprisoners is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which operates as a human rights NGO. The organisation seeks to work for political Muslim detainees, specifically those interned as a result of the 'War on Terror' and its peripheral campaigns, by raising awareness of the illegality and the global consequences of their detention. By promoting due process, the vision of the organisation is to see a return to the respect of those fundamental norms which transcend religion, societies and political theories.

Cageprisoners comprises of an advisory group which includes patrons, seasoned activists, lawyers, doctors and former detainees. From the group, a board has been elected which oversees the strategy and management of the organisation and its employees. By working in such a way the working environment of the organisation can constantly be reviewed in light of its aims and objectives.

# CAGEPRISONERS

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## Foreword by Moazzam Begg

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After the 9/11 attacks in America the British government detained 17 foreign nationals in Belmarsh prison. Most of them were men of North African and Middle Eastern backgrounds. Eleven of them remained in prison for over three years without charge or trial whilst others were put under control orders. In January 2005, senior law lords ruled that the men had been discriminated against on the ground of nationality or immigration status and that such treatment could not have been meted out to British citizens. Following the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 attacks the government introduced new policies and legislation which further undermined civil liberties and more blatantly targeted Muslim communities, following the logic that the men responsible were not only mostly of South Asian origin but, that they were all Muslim. Two weeks later, the failed 21<sup>st</sup> July attacks were also attributed to Muslim men, this time originating from the Horn of Africa

Shortly after this the head of British Transport Police, Ian Johnston, stated that, “We should not waste time searching old white ladies. It is going to be disproportionate. It is going to be young men, not exclusively, but it may be disproportionate when it comes to ethnic groups.” Despite the assurance that some government ministers later made that the Muslim community would not be singled out for police scrutiny, Mr. Johnston’s words have continued to ring true for anyone who happens to *look* like a Muslim. Since Islam is a religion and not a race this has proved to be one of the most controversial and quite ludicrous measures employed by the government in trying to tackle terrorism. Worse still, the latest community feeling the brunt of the most draconian legislation in the history of Britain are the Somalis – most of whom have fled severe hardship to seek sanctuary in the UK.

It is not just that scores of men and women from this community have been detained and questioned at ports of entry and exit in the UK or elsewhere or received veiled and direct threats of imprisonment, deportation and harassment from the intelligence services for refusing to spy on their own community. What has been occurring in the Horn of Africa over the past five years with regards to rendition, kidnap, false imprisonment and torture – with the complicity and knowledge of the intelligence services of the UK and US – disturbingly mirrors similar practices carried out in Pakistan and Afghanistan immediately after the launch of ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’.

This new report by Cageprisoners highlights the cases of some of the young men profiled in the UK as well as the wider picture of internment and mass arrests in the Horn of Africa. It is based on primary source material and exclusive testimony by the victims themselves.

[Moazzam Begg – Director]

## Introduction

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A consequence of the War on Terror (whether intended or not) has been the dramatic increase in xenophobia and racism against those considered to be Muslim in their origin. The use of profiling as a technique has found widespread implementation in domestic policies as government agencies seek to expose plots of international terrorism.

Immediately after 9/11, it was those with origins in the Middle East or Indian sub-continent that were detained for the most part due to profiles that international security experts considered to be involved with 'Islamist' violence. Over the years the focus of 'the' profile changed according to circumstances – British born Pakistanis were particularly targeted after the 7/7 bombings.

The climate of profiling was exacerbated by statements from the former British Home Office Minister, Hazel Blears, and also the former Chief of British Transport Police, Ian Johnston – both unreservedly declared that people of a 'particular description' would be profiled by the police. This policy was mimicked in the US when in 2007, the secretary for US homeland security, Michael Chertoff, called for travel restrictions to be placed on British citizens who had descent from Pakistan –the alleged personification of the terrorist profile.

Since 2007, a new profile has emerged, that of Muslims who are from, or linked to the Horn of Africa. Although the US had already sent the Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa to be stationed at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, in 2003, operations to counter suspected terrorism in the region only really began with the invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia at the end of December 2006.

The Ethiopian-Somali conflict much like the US-Afghan one became one of the main fronts of the War on Terror. The result of the conflict was that witnessing of policies and procedures lifted directly from US operations in Afghanistan. The use of secret detention, abuse, rendition flights and use of the term 'enemy combatant' were all implemented in dealing with terrorist suspects. The result of the Ethiopian action was very similar to what took place under US actions, the widespread abuse of men, women and children who had been unlawfully detained.

Like elsewhere in the War on Terror, abuses of human rights were not limited to the arena of conflict, but rather manifested and continue to manifest themselves in different ways. For some, the identity of being Somali has become enough to be watched, while for other, merely wishing to travel to the Horn of Africa lends itself to suspicion. Also the mechanisms by which individuals are abused or intimidated vary greatly, whether it be through the security services disguising themselves as postmen or by detaining an entire people due to their ethnicity.

*The Horn of Africa Inquisition* is the latest report by Cageprisoners to highlight the way in which the War on Terror has impacted profiled communities. Based on the testimonies of those who have been affected, the report seeks to provide an overview of the way in which the War on Terror has criminalised those from or even associated with the Horn of Africa.

[Asim Qureshi – Executive Director]

## Ethiopian-Somali Conflict

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*The biggest problem that we have as far as we refugees from Somalia are concerned in Dadaab area, is that we are over 100,000 refugees per camp. For 17 years we have been confined to these areas and we cannot move anywhere else.*

*We used to move between ourselves, but after the war in Somalia which we are not party to, the closest to which we are is 200km at the border. The government of Kenya has put the restriction on us that we cannot move from one camp to another, we cannot trade between ourselves, we cannot travel to see our relatives in other camps. We are in a large prison. This is an abuse of human rights – it is just like Guantanamo Bay.*

*Just imagine 100,000 people confined in a small space, they cannot move even 1km from their area.*

*Look at it, I will just describe you the kind of prison we are in. Just imagine people with children, wives and elders who are confined in one place and they are numbering massively. Even if one becomes sick, they cannot travel to Garissa which is something like 80km away where there is a general hospital. You cannot have the freedom to get there. We came here to seek refuge like any other refugees in the world. In other countries in the world refugees have been given rights along the lines of the UN rights given to refugees, but all of this is missing from us. Even after 17 years we do not have a single paper. We are just in a very big prison!*

*[Chairman of the Hagdera Refugee Camp]*

### Interned Somalis

Profiling is not a new phenomenon, the process has been used in order to detain large swathes of individuals from one particular ethnicity or race. During the Second World War, Japanese Americans were interned in large numbers with the excuse of national security.

Kenya has taken a similar approach with its resident Somali refugee population, many of whom fled during the civil war. The War on Terror gave the Kenyan government the perfect excuse to intern the Somalis at the start of the Ethiopian Somali conflict. Despite not having been in the country for many years, and having lived peacefully in Kenya, the fear of terrorism brought in an oppressive interment regime against the refugees.

According to refugee, Halima Ma'ala Abdi:

*I have been a refugee for 17 years. Obviously we will thank the Kenya government for allowing us to be in their country. Yes when we had a problem in our country there was a civil war, we ran away, and that bullet that was sent to kill us, they saved us. So we thank them. Having thanked them for saving our lives, on the other hand, they have taken away our basic rights. They have allowed us to leave, but at the same time to have your rights taken away, imagine being confined in one place!*

*The Kenya government despite giving us a safe haven – they do not treat us like humans.*

*We are aware of a number of people who were sent back to Somalia over claims of terrorism by the Kenyans. We had very many people who came from the war to seek refuge, but they were turned back forcefully – without giving them any help. There were other people who were taken to Nairobi, they were trying to seek refuge but they were called terrorists and arrested. We were aware of this and feel bad about it happening.*

*We are in prison here – we cannot go anywhere – we cannot do anything.*



*My name is Nur Aden Durrow I am a refugee from Dadaab.*

*I left Hagdera refugee camp to look for someone who was mad. I went to Liboi, the Kenyan/Somali border on 17th February 2007. I was arrested on 20th February 2007. I registered with the police that I was leaving to do this, and they granted me permission. The person I was looking for had gone wandering – he is still missing.*

*I was told that I am a terrorist and that I possess weapons. They realised they had nothing on me after confining me without reason and so had to release me.*

*They had been to my house and had ransacked it without a search warrant. Without informing anyone. Even they did not have the courtesy to inform the UNHCR. I have been kept for seven days in the dark – all that time the ATPU were questioning me.*

*They said that I had been working with the UIC and I told them that how could I work with people who I was not living in the same country since 1992! I have been Hagdera refugee camp – so how can I help a country I have run away from. I am someone well known in that area, they know what I am up to. The CID in the local area said that I was innocent.*

*I have never committed any crime, be it even a small one. They took me by force to court, it was funny that they took me to court to charge me with being unlawfully present in Kenya!*

*I was being kept unlawfully in Kenya, contrary to the Immigration Act – despite being a refugee since 1992.*

*[Nur Aden Durrow, Refugee in Hagdera Camp]*

## Mass Arrests

Kenya became the recipient of further refugees on the out-set of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict as many foreigners fled into neighbouring Kenya. Due to the high state of alert in Kenya, the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) had been commissioned to detain anyone connected to the Somali conflict or indeed any suspicious individuals. What ensued was the mass arrest of hundreds of individuals whether they were coming across the border from Somalia or indeed were already in Kenya.

The nature of counter-terrorism operations in Kenya resulted in a very wide net being cast in order to detain suspected terrorists. A policy of profiling individuals who seemed suspicious due to their ethnicity or their presence in Kenya had the inevitable consequence of many abuses taking place. In one case, a Christian grandmother was detained by the ATPU for simply having had business dealings with Arab men.

*They then asked us about Hassan and Ahmed – we told them that they are in the other room. Neither of the two can express themselves in English or in Swahili – which is why we had brought Kamilya – to act as an interpreter. We knocked on their door and Hassan opened. The security went in and they checked everything. They could find nothing – their documents were clean. I know their documents were clean because I put up the money for their visa initially as they did not have US dollars, I gave them \$100 – they took for Kamilya \$50 for 3 months, they took \$20 each for transit and gave me the remaining \$10. They had booked their return for the 11th and so were only going to be in the country for 3 or 4 days.*

*They then took us to Nairobi and we arrived at 3pm in the afternoon where we were taken to the Anti-Terrorism police station run by the Anti-Terrorist Police Unit (ATPU). By this time they had started calling us all sorts of names in order to pretend that they had caught some terrorists. A terrorist I questioned to myself, how could they call me a terrorist? I am a Christian, and a grandmother, what kind of terrorism would I do? I suspected that because Ahmed and Hassan were Arab, they assumed that they were terrorists, even though I know them to be good people, and because of that consider me one.*

*[Millie Mithounie Gako, detained in Malindi]*

The presence of Arab men within the country was enough for the ATPU to make an arrest, detain them and their colleagues in secret and eventually deport without any due process. Ethnicity was not the only profile marker to be raised by the ATPU, religion also played a key role. With the fear of terrorism and the neighbouring conflict, religious figures began to be harassed as the Kenyan authorities made assumptions about the promotion of fighting in Somalia within their own borders.

*My name is Mahmoud Adam Salat, I am a teacher at Al Faruq Centre which has over 300 orphans and I am the Imam of Masjid Sunnah here in Garissa.*

*When I was doing my normal work I heard that the police were looking for me here in Garissa. After the three days of these rumours – as I was coming out of my house I found a police vehicle. They told me they were looking for me and that I should accompany them to the police station. This was on the 17th January 2007.*

*There was apparently a young man who had told the police that he had been fighting alongside the Union of Islamic Courts who alleged that 14 people including him were recruited at the Masjid Sunnah mosque and were given money to go and fight. They asked me to verify that. I told them that this was not true and I had never heard anything like it. They told me that the young man had not given my name, but had given the name of another Imam called Omar. They wanted me to help them find these Imams. I said I did not know anything.*

*They asked me if I knew Al Qaeda, if they had ever been to my mosque, if they had every tried to do any recruiting there. I answered everything to the negative. I told them that I am a Kenyan and I have never been outside of Kenya and I do not know what you are talking about.*

*One the following morning, they took me to court, I was told that I and others had recruited young men to fight with the UIC.*

*For seven days I was kept in jail while I awaited their further investigations. After the seventh day after the police could not produce any evidence, they had to release me at the bond of 200,000 shillings. After several summons to the court, they have finally said they have nothing on me.*

*[Mahmoud Adam Salat, Imam Masjid Sunnah]*

The brief period of stability in Somalia had seen the migration of many western Muslims to the country in order to study their religion and settle. On the onset of aggression by the Ethiopians, those families from western countries were advised by their Foreign Ministries to make their way to Kenya and the safety of the embassies there. Among the few large groups that made their way across the Kenyan border, a group of four British men who had gone to Somalia to study were detained and subjected to secret detention and rendition. Thinking that they would be helped by the British government, instead as British Muslims in Somalia, they were profiled as suspected terrorists and interrogated under conditions of secret detention.

*This time the woman [MI5 agent] did most of the talking. She asked me to go through my entire story again. She asked me questions about my religion, my beliefs, whether I had given my allegiance to any group. She asked me if any of my friends were extremists. I told her no and she said that she did not believe what I was telling her. I told her that she would have to accept it as it is the truth. She said to me that I and Hamza Chentouf had made up a story.*

*The woman agent asked me what I thought about 9/11 and 7/7. I replied that both of those events were wrong as innocent people had been killed. She replied sarcastically and then she said that she did not believe me.*

*The woman agent told me that her stay in Nairobi was limited and that she would soon have to return to the UK. She told me that she was the only person who could help me, but that I would have to cooperate with her. She told me that if I told her what she wanted to hear, I would be on the first plane back to the UK, but if I didn't come up with the information she wanted, I would stay here forever. I told her that I would like to come home but that I could not give what she wanted.*

*Francis [one of the agents] asked me if I had heard about all the people being sent to Somalia, and if I*

*knew about Guantánamo Bay.*

*[On a third questioning by MI5] Francis sat down with me at the coffee table. She had a notepad and a folder. She asked me if I had thought more about what she had said to me. She said that I was not cooperating with her. She talked about my family and asked me what I wanted to do when I went home. When I answered her she replied that it would be difficult for me to do these things from a cell.*

*She asked me if I would ever tell anyone about her when I went back to the UK. When she said this she sat back with her arms crossed in front of her. I thought she sounded frightened when she said that.*

*Francis then asked me if I would come and work for her. I replied that if I heard anything that would harm anyone then I would tell her anyway. Francis asked me for more names and addresses of people that I knew. I told her that I could not remember any.*

*Francis asked me about which mosques I visited and which tapes I listened to. She then said to me that this was the last time I would ever see her.*

*[Mohammed Ezzouek, rendered to Somalia]*

The four British citizens were not alone in their secret detention, citizens from other countries including Sweden and the United States were also part of the same group that were being kept in secret, then rendered back into Somalia before being placed on rendition flights to Ethiopia. For all of them, their governments were more concerned with their detention as suspected terrorists than they were for the wellbeing of their nationals. Except for the US, not one individual from the group of westerners that fled from Somalia to Kenya was ever charged with any crime either in Ethiopia, Somalia or their countries of origin.

Kenya's policy of using the various profiles of suspected terrorists led to the mass rendition and unlawful detention of hundreds of individuals particularly during 2007. The ramifications of these detentions was that security services around the globe began to become alerted to anyone who hailed from, or travelled to the Horn of Africa. Such associations have created a new profile, those travelling to, or being ethnically from that region – of course – this is nearly always those who are Muslim.

## The Horn of Africa Inquisition

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When the War on Terror started in Afghanistan and began to become associated with Pakistan, especially following the 7/7 bombings, British born Pakistanis became the ultimate profile of the suspected terrorist. The conflict in Somalia has produced a new profile which is now following the Somali community wherever they travel. Governments in countries all over the world know that Somalis are incensed with what happened to the Union of Islamic Courts and so an assumption has been made that they will turn to violence abroad.

Over the last two years there has been mounting evidence that particularly in the western world, Somalis are being harassed by security agencies over any possible involvement they have with Somalia. Particularly in the case of those who are religious in the devotion to Islam, there has been an extended effort to make difficult the lives of these men.

### Kentish Town Youth Workers

A group of naturalised Somalis having grown up in the UK worked as part of a youth group in Kentish Town, London helping young people to deal with their problems. After the conflict in Somalia ended with Ethiopia in early 2007, the men began to be harassed in various ways simply due to their ethnicity. All of the men have suffered difficulties in their travel without evidence being brought before them to show why they were stopped.

## Aydarus Elmi

In 2007 Aydarus Elmi returned to the UK after having studied in Egypt for two and half years. In May 2007 he married a US citizen. On a trip to the US in November 2007 with his then pregnant wife, he was stopped and questioned at Chicago O'Hare airport and then refused entry into the US, despite having a perfectly valid explanation for this visit. On their return to the UK they were questioned by UK security officials, their questioning turned quickly from investigating into the reasons they were rejected from the US to using questions relating to Elmi's profile.

*I remember there was a lady there at Heathrow airport and a man. The man came to me and asked me questions, where are you from? Do you know why you got sent back? I said no I do not know why I got sent back I was just there a few months ago, two months ago and they said ok no problem they took my passport and they took my wife's passport. At the same time my wife spoke to me after they had a conversation with us, they asked her questions what do you do? What's your background and the same normal procedures then they gave me back my passport, they said okay no problem and we don't know why you got sent back ourselves*

*I went home, the next day a guy called me and said we'd you like to meet you at Charing Cross Police Station I said okay no problem. I'll be there around one o' clock, two o' clock is that okay? They said yeah sure no problem we'll be there. I went to Charing Cross Police Station, they took me. a woman was there first. there was a man there he shook my hand he said come to the office I said yeah no problem. He open the door, we sat down together, then a woman walked in the room and she asked me. the man started asking me, what's your name? Tell me the procedures, what happened in America, why you got sent back? And everything. so I explained the same details*

*There was a lady there, she was just listening to what I was saying and looking at me and then she asked me what's your name? So she got involved in the conversation as well and she started asking me what background are you? What tribe are you? What's your father's name? What's your mother's name? And what's your sister's name? How many of you in your family? All sorts of questions, then she asked me about Somalia and me personally I grew up here all my life in London and I don't know much about Somalia, and she asked me do you know this tribe, that tribe? So she knew. I thought hold on a minute this lady knows more about the whole country of Somalia more than I do, she done her good research I said I don't deal with Somalia, I really don't know much about that kind of stuff.*

**Abshir Mohammed**

As with the other men from the Kentish Town youth group, Abshir Mohammed had studied the Arabic language in Egypt at the Al Fajr centre in Cairo. In July 2008 he went to Egypt again, having returned to the UK, in order to attend his brother's wedding. On his arrival in the country he was detained for 16 hours and interrogated about his previous movements in the country and why he had returned. It was on his return to the UK that he was stopped at immigration by UK security officials.

*A man and lady then approached me and explained that they were from MI5 and requested that I step into another room with them. The lady then immediately asked me what happened. I replied that nothing happened, I was trying to come back into the UK when I was stopped and approached by them. I then mentioned that maybe I had been stopped because of Egypt. She then asked what happened in Egypt which I proceeded to explain – I wasn't sure if they were playing some kind of game with me as they probably already knew. She then asked me other questions about Somalia, whether or not I prayed, why I prayed, which mosque I prayed in, etc. She then asked if I knew of Finsbury Park mosque – I replied that of course I had heard of it due to the TV and so when she asked if I had ever prayed there I replied no as I had never been there.*

*The lady went out of the room and came back in and explained that she knew why I was having trouble with my passport. She said that there was only one person who could help me and this person had very good links but only he could help me. She requested that I go and sit back down with my family while I wait for this man. Before I sat down I asked her whether or not I had to wait, and that is when she threatened me by saying that they could keep me there through terrorism legislation. I said to her that I was there because she said they could help me, but that I was quite obviously tired and so threats were not necessary.*

*I got tired of waiting and so I went to sleep on the seats. Eventually the man came and he woke me up – he took me aside again. He rolled up his sleeves and I began to think to myself that this is really serious. He then began to speak to me very slowly saying, "Abshir, this is very serious, and I am going to speak with you very clearly and very frankly." I was just about to speak when he said that he wanted to finish. At that moment I felt very threatened and thought they were going to try and put me away for life despite not having done anything wrong. He said that basically they knew I had committed or suspected that I had committed terrorist activities abroad. I was stunned and said excuse me. I gathered myself together and said to him, "Listen, I went to Fajr Centre in Egypt in order to study Arabic, renowned all over, even non-Muslims study there." He said, "Look, if I want your CV I can get it, I want to know who you are as a person and what your aims were in wanting to go, and you know your links?" I explained that I work for a youth organisation that in fact had encouraged me to go and study this course. He said that was fair enough but that really we would need to meet on another day. He then said that we would need to meet again in order to sort out these issues, otherwise I would find it very difficult to go to America or Yemen. I said that I didn't even want to go to those places, fine I have some family in Yemen but I had no real desire to go at all. He then asked if I was in to cricket to which I replied no. He then asked about football to which I said no, but then said, "Look this isn't the time to talk about football, you guys are calling me a terrorist, so either charge me or is this just suspicion?"*



## Abshir Ahmed

In very similar circumstances to Abshir Mohammed, Abshir Ahmed was stopped at UK immigration, this time it was after he had travelled to Saudi Arabia in order to perform minor pilgrimage (Umrah). Previously during his studies in Egypt, his flat had been raided by the Egyptian authorities but they found nothing of concern and released him immediately due to his official registration with the Al Fajr Centre. Having been already informed of the treatment that was given to his friends at immigration while he was in Saudi Arabia, he prepared himself for similar treatment on his return.

*The officer began his conversation by saying that this was the first time he had ever seen anything like this, he kept on asking why I was so angry. I explained that I was not angry, but that I was pissed off at the fact that they had stopped me at that moment. He said let us get to the point – this is where he asked me where I had just come from. I explained that I had been to Umrah at which point they requested that I go with them to another room. In this room there was another officer from Scotland Yard and both of them began to ask me further questions relating to my travels and other routine questions. Then they began to ask me about where I prayed, what I thought about the situation in Somalia, if I was for or against the government, who I wanted in office in Somalia. I answered all their political questions the same way, I explained that I was for anyone who could bring peace and stability to the region. He kept on making reference to another person in relation to my questioning – he would say things like: there was another guy here the other day, he was Somali just like you but he was a bit fundamental, he was a bit extreme, he was saying he was pro-mujahideen, jihad, that there had to be Shari'ah law. I said whoever that was, that was his opinion, I had my own views and I was simply pro-peace for the region.*

*They told me that I had to give them my phone as it was interfering with the equipment in the office.*

*I questioned them by asking whether or not I had to give them the phone.*

*As soon as the two officers were done, they searched my bags and then said, as far as Scotland Yard is concerned the interview is finished but that they had a female friend who wanted to talk to me. She first congratulated me on being married and then said she was working for MI5. She said Abshir, basically we know exactly what you have done – she was trying to intimidate me. She said, basically we know what you have done and we are warning you – at this point I decided that I needed to write things in more detail. I asked her to repeat everything she was saying so that I could write it down properly. Due to this, she began to stutter a lot and lost her confidence. I then said that before anything else, I wanted to see her badge. She said that she didn't feel that producing her badge was necessary, however I was insisting that she do so. She showed me her badge, her name was Catherine but at the moment I cannot remember her surname. I had to request her a second time for her badge as I wanted to see her badge number and again she was trying to stop me from looking by saying that it was not necessary. I said to her that it was absolutely necessary and said that I wanted to see it now. She showed me her badge again but had her number covered with her thumb and so I told her to remove her thumb so that I could write it down properly which she did.*

*She then tried to take the initiative in the conversation by saying that they knew I had gone to Egypt and that I was involved in extremism. I then asked what it was that I was involved with to which she replied, I think that we both know Abshir. I kept on requesting that she explain as the last I was aware, I had gone to Egypt to study. She kept on saying that they knew everything that I had done and that they were going to make things hard for me. She saw I was writing everything down and I could see that it was making her uncomfortable. I asked her if she was threatening me to which responded that I was a big boy. All she kept on saying was that every time I would try and travel in the future, they would make things very difficult for me.*

## Mohammed Nur

Unlike most of his friends, Mohammed Nur was not stopped at a port by UK security officials, he was visited at his home. In August 2008 he was at home leaving for work when there was a knock on his door.

*Just before I was leaving for work, there was a knock on my door and all I heard was someone claiming to be the postman. I went to the door thinking that there might be a heavy package or something and so I went to open it.*

*As soon as I opened the door the man pulled out a badge and said, "Mohammed, I need to speak with you. I'm from the police and this is an emergency and we really need to talk." I was thinking that something had happened to my brother who lived two minutes away. The man then introduced me to his colleague and explained that the colleague would speak to me. The other man showed me his badge and explained that he was from MI5 - I immediately asked him what he was doing in my home and he stated that he was there because they believed I was involved in extremist activities. I asked for evidence of how they could suspect that I was involved in such activities and who had told them and all he would say was that they had reasons to believe so. I categorically stated to them at that time that I had never been involved in extremist activities when the policeman jumped in and said that it depended on what I understood to be extremism and how they understood it. I said fine, define extremism to me to which he replied that basically it was going abroad to study extremist materials, training to be an extremist and eventually taking your own life for extremist purposes. I got angry and said, "WHAT! The only reason I went abroad to Egypt was to study Arabic. Now if you consider that to be an extremist activity then fine, I am an extremist." He said no, that would not be an extremist activity but then changed subject completely. He asked me if I played football to which I said yes but then said let us get back to the conversation.*

*The MI5 agent then came back into the conversation and said, "Mohammed, for your own benefit, it is best that you cooperate with us. You travel regularly, if you want to travel more, then I suggest you cooperate as we have very good connections all around the world. Any country that you go to, we can give you problems. If you don't want those problems, then I suggest you cooperate with us." I then said that there was no way I was going to cooperate when I did not even know what I did. I said that if they explained to me what I had done wrong then I would be more than willing to help, however they said that they could not discuss that. They then said that if we were to meet in three days time, they would be able to tell me why they were interested in me. I made it very clear at that moment that either they tell me right now what they had or I would not be meeting with them again. They then got up to leave the house and claimed that they would call me in three days despite me not giving them my number.*

## Mohammed Aden

The second time that MI5 used the postman technique was with Mohammed Aden who they visited within days of Mohammed Nur. Also a student in Egypt he had never had any trouble travelling to or from the UK, however MI5 paid him a visit in order to suggest that travel for him would no longer be an option. Unlike with Nur, Aden's harassment continued after the initial visit.

*One morning there was a knock on the door by the postman. My wife was awake and she told me to answer the door. Half asleep I went to open it not thinking about what had happened to Mohammed Nur. I opened the door slightly and the man said to postman, but as soon as he said this he moved to the side and a man and woman from MI5 were standing in front of me. They said, "Hi Mr Aden, we are from MI5, can we have a moment of your time?" I was totally shocked and stopped there, I was completely angered at the fact that they had lied to me in order to get my door open.*

*Before they could say anything else, I angrily told them that how dare they come to my home first thing in the morning and lie to me in order to get me to open the door when I had respectfully opened it for who I thought was a postman. The replied to me by telling me to hold on. They said basically they would cut straight to the point and explained that they believed I was involved in terrorist activities and criminality, underground behaviour. Again I was shocked, I told them I didn't know what they were talking about. When I expressed myself strongly that they had gone the wrong idea, one of the agents called me by a different name. In the middle of the conversation he said, "Ok Mr Yusuf." I told him what the hell are you talking about, who is Mr Yusuf. I literally ran back to my bedroom and grabbed my passport, I then showed them that it said Mohammed Aden, not Mr Yusuf. The agent didn't even move, and the lady began to smile.*

*I began to get very angry, I asked her what was so funny, but she didn't respond.*

*The agent then spoke again and said that if I did not cooperate with them, they would make my life very difficult, they wouldn't allow me to travel or do anything. I simply said, "Fine, do whatever it is you want to do, just get out of my face." After that I couldn't go back to sleep and kept wondering what all of this was about.*

*Before the agents left, I requested that they show me their identification. They are famous for simply flashing their badges and so I told them that I was not happy with what they had done and requested that they show me their details properly. The policeman then stepped in and said that only he could show me his ID, he then said to me that as for his colleagues, he advised that I not request it of them. After an argument for about a minute, the women eventually showed me her badge but then pointed to some kind of barcode which I took down - I wasn't finished though, I also took down their physical descriptions as well.*

**Mehdi Hashi**

The youngest of the friends, Hashi has been through the entire range of harassment beginning with his time in Egypt. His case shows that even as late as 2009, the UK security agencies are still operating with partners abroad in order to profile and harass those associated with the Horn of Africa. Mr Hashi after being raided by Egyptian police for an expired visa that had two weeks spare for renewal the chance incident was soon disfigured into accusations that he had associations with terrorist groups. Mr Hashi has from then received unwarranted attention by British security services and suffered repeat interrogations, persecution and intimidations to remain silent and not travel. The basis for his de facto 'guilt' has been nothing other than his ethnicity and religion as evident from the questions asked.

*So, when I was arrested [in Egypt], I was in prison for 11 days..That's how I felt at the time, that they are trying to make me admit something, to make me say it first. I was speaking to the embassy they were trying to ask me why I was here, "The Egyptian authorities are telling us something else." And when they actually realised that I was completely confused about the situation, bearing in mind I was only 16, they go to me, "Well, the Egyptian authorities are saying that you have links to Al-Qaida and other terror networks, specifically the Chechen mujahedeen and also the mujahedeen in Caucasus. I didn't know what 'Caucasus' was. They said that you've actually trained as well, you done training with them, extremist training."*

*They deported me; I think it was for terrorism. After like a year, or a bit less than a year, I decided to go Syria to continue with my studies. When I came back, I came back at Heathrow airport. I was stopped by two police officers. They were asking like, "Why did you go there? Did you want to go to Iraq?" and "What do you think about..?" They asked me scholarly questions about religion and jihad and suicide bombing, for example, they would*

*ask me about the Palestinians. Then afterwards they took my DNA and my fingerprints and they told me that we are putting this on a Terrorism Database, they had me under the Terrorism Act 2000. Sch 7.*

*My grandmother was quite ill, she got very ill and my mother booked a ticket for me on April the first to go Somalia (Khassasa) and it was through Gatwick airport, so when I went there they stopped me again. While one was searching the other started asking questions. This time its direct questions, "What do you think of jihad, suicide bombings." Questions about these people in those mosques.[Then Richard] came over and goes "Mahdi Hashi, Hi my name is Richard." This is most likely the same guy that came to Mohammed Nur in his house. My name is Richard and I'm from MI5 and he showed me his badge quickly, the famous flash. He goes, "Listen let me give it to you straight. We suspect that you're going to Somalia for extremist purposes. You're not going for your family and stuff. Because you have extreme associates." and he mentioned, "Mohammed Nur" "Abshir Mohammed" and "Abshir Ahmed", and others.*

*He goes, "Because of your extremist friends we suspect you're an extremist yourself. We hope that we're wrong, you know we hope so, but we have reason to believe that you're extreme. We hope that we're wrong." After that he threatened me, "We warn you not to get on that flight for your own safety." I'm like, "What you trying to say to me, what's happened?" I'm thinking like he's going to arrest me in Djibouti, and torture me, might wanna take me to Morocco like Binyam Mohamed, that story. So I'm like, "Are you telling me not to get on that flight?" He said, "I'm not telling you not to get on that flight but it would be better for your own safety if you didn't. But it's your choice mate."*

*I got to Djibouti when the police grabbed me. When I spoke to some of them properly on the level, He said, "We don't know why you're here but we've been told to keep you here. It's coming from the government and its coming from your government"*

The profiling of the Kentish Town Youth Workers has resulted in serious ramifications for the men. Constantly they feel as if they are being watched and that they are being criminalised for actions that they are not aware of. The difficulty in the way that they have been treated is that they have no actual means of defending their honour and innocence. Due to the secretive nature of the visits by MI5 and the detention loopholes at ports, the police and MI5 have been able to harass them without the presence of a solicitor.

The irony of the situation is that the men spend their time at the Kentish Town Youth Centre in order to help young people with their problems and become decent citizens, yet their plight only highlights that there is no space for individuals such as them to be a part of the system.

## Foreign Nationals Detained in Tanzania

The pervasive extent to which America's War on Terror has reached is demonstrated by the story of betrayal of three friends of international citizenry: Abu Talib (Ali), Muhammad ibn Muazzam and Umar. The former two British citizens and the latter a German citizen left for a safari holiday in Tanzania only to be stopped, threatened with violence and extrajudicial detention.

*[Ali] We were in Tanzania, it was a surprise to us. We would be followed through like a yoyo; back and forth, follow us here and follow us there. At one stage we were put into an office. Then we were told to come out of the office. And the main lady there, she was the head of security. When we reached there she came out and said to us, "You are rejected; go back on a plane. The plane you came on, go back on it." The reception lady came to us and said, "Look! You can't come in the country." Then frustration started to flow all over the area alongside threats. I heard from one individual, "Don't let us use physical harm". And the second individual came face to face and said, "Look! If we have to be rough with you we have to." Then the airport hall started to fill up with the staff. We were threatened by the staff grabbing something that we will be getting a beating. And one of the police officer actually held a stick as if we were going to be beaten.*

Both British and Dutch authorities were complicit in their detention in a joint venture. They were not only threatened with violence at the airport for not returning despite their arrangements and a lack of explanation. In Tanzanian detention they were held for days in inhumane conditions, only to find out from their Tanzania captors that their own governments were the instigators. MI5 vivaciously spearheading the operation. Once released from Tanzanian sovereignty, they returned to the UK but with a stopover in Netherlands first.

They fell to both the Dutch and the British in a barrage of questions that ended in revealing nothing except that their captors wanted a false confession. Second best to a false confession was 'evidence' of fitting the racial profile of a 'terrorist'.

*[Talib] On the way back [home], Emanuel [our Tanzanian guard] came to us as if nothing had happened. He said, "You know it could be the British, your government who were the reason for your rejection." We were in a MAJOR shock.*

Two men approached me one was from Dutch intelligence and the other was MI5 called Nick. He came in and introduced himself and then he said, "Look Abu! I am going to tell you what has happened and why you were sent back. I am going to tell you exactly why WE are doing this to you." Yes he said WE and said that we are MI5 and we have a suspicion about your travel. He said, "I know that you came here to join the fight in Somalia." I said, "No, we never ever thought about this." But he said that he has his suspicions that we intended to go to Somalia. Eventually he said to me, "Ali you have come out clear but we will be watching you at every step, at what you do." He also said, "Look Ali you are a very bright individual but you have got mixed up with the wrong crowd. Whatever you believe in try to fix that." he tried to teach me to fix my belief and about what was going on inside me. It was all about his suspicion. *[Muhammad] He pointed out his finger at me and said to me, "Don't try to play smart and lie on my face. Don't try to fool me. YOU WANTED TO GO TO SOMALIA." He just wanted to force it out of my mouth that, 'I intended to go to Somalia'.*

The three were then harassed again when they arrived in the UK, however this time the interrogation turned to their religion. Umar faced questioning about his beliefs including what he thought about Jews, which places of worship he has visited and whether he was a Sunni or Shia.

After racial profiling fails to produce any evidence of terrorism comes self-policing through intimidation.

In what seems to be the implementation in practice of a proposal by British parliamentary ministers to criminalise the British public believing in a Caliphate, theological law, freedom of thought concerning homosexuality, Palestinian rights and an anti-war stance (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/17/counterterrorism-strategy-muslims>), the three were questioned on almost all of these issues to ascertain their 'guilt'. These 'Ministers' questions' were clearly given the same gravity as the bombing of 7 July 2005 and the incidents of 11 September 2001. The racism of their questioners was also very evident in their questions as well as the interspersed comments about Muslims and Islam compared to dogs and terrorists.

*[Umar] Then they asked me what I think about the Jews. They asked me if I was Muslim and then I had to explain how I came to Islam. Then they asked me whether I was Sunni or Shia. Then he asked me again how I felt about the Jews. I told him as a joke that my parents had a dog but he does not like me. To that he responded that may be because you have converted to Islam that the dog does not like you. I asked him if he was being racist.*

*[Talib,] During my interview, at one point, he said, "It's funny how Muslims are terrorist but terrorists are not Muslims." So he made a comment that all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists cannot be Muslims.*

*[Talib] All the time he was trying to put words into my mouth. He said, "What do you think of the British troops in Afghanistan?" But I did not react to it. He wanted me to react and go with it. Then he asked my opinion about Jews. Then he started saying that they believed that we wanted to go to Somalia for training. They wanted to put words into our mouth and wanted to force us to say that we wanted to go to Somalia.*

*[Muhammad] he said to me, "Muhammad, what do you think of 7/7?" Then he said, "Ok, and what do you think of war in Afghanistan?" Then he asked me of my opinion about Jews, just as he had asked others. He wanted to know about my background, my aqeedah (creed). He started saying this and that and he said that they had been keeping a close eye on me and kept threatening.*

*[Umar] During the interrogation the MI5 guy told us that our details have been given to the secret services of all the Muslim countries, and to CIA. They also told me that we will not be able to travel to any Muslim country. My father [in Germany] told me that they had threatened him that they could have just kept me in custody and could have told him that I had an accident.*

*[Talib] the MI5 guy Nick had said to me as well that our details will be passed to the secret services of the whole world. They were framing us for no reason whatsoever.*

The situation of the three men is not dissimilar from the tactics that were used against the Kentish Town Youth Workers. The same process of using situations that are outside of recognised due process to detain and interrogate which have the result of being tantamount to harassment. The only reason these three men were detained and questioned was due to their presence as British Muslims in Tanzania – it had little or nothing to do with the threat of international terrorism and so they were profiled for merely being in the Horn of Africa.

## Abu Omar

Abu Omar, is nineteen years old and of Lebanese descent. Due to his friendship with British individuals who had been the victims of detention without charge and rendition in Kenya, he found himself drawing the ire of airport officials on any foreign travels he made, including to his homeland in 2007. In 2009, he travelled to Kenya to experience wildlife via safari but the friend's house he was staying in was surrounded by armed police, who arrested him at gunpoint and threw him roughly into the back of a van. Abu Omar was held for intensive questioning for four days and deprived of basic amenities or any legal representation. After a harrowing ordeal he was eventually returned to the UK and again questioned, this time by the MI5. He was left in the airport without money, barefoot and his clothes in bin liners. He returned home. His friends have reported being harassed to provide information about him.

*I was told if I was to speak to him, the next time I'd be speaking, I'd be, "Speaking to the angels." Meaning that they'd kill me, "Or to your virgins." That was what they were saying. I was taken for interrogation. "So you came here to blow yourself up? Because of your seventy two or seventy three or whatever the f\*\*\* they are virgins". "My friend, let's get to the story: you come here, you plan to blow up the Kenyan people. You're a terrorist, you're an Al-Qaeda member." "We believe you've been to Afghanistan." "Listen, we have pictures of you in Afghanistan, in Chechnya, in Iraq, in Somalia." As I looked at him, he kept throwing many names Abu Ahmad, Abu this, Abu that...lots of names. "We're telling you: you used this name in Afghanistan, and you used this name in Iraq, and you used this name in Somalia, this name in Israel..." All the questions were coming from the UK. "What would you feel if I was to come over to you now and squeeze your balls?"*

*"You don't exist. You have to understand this. You know the 'War on Terror'? You've heard about this?" "Yeah, you people, you have no rights." He goes, "You don't exist. In our world, you don't exist. We can do and take you as we will."*

*And he threw a mobile at me. "So you recognise this mobile? It's got your fingerprints." Then that's when my face went red, because now I thought, "They've stitched me up, they've set me up." Then he goes, "It's made calls to Bin Laden". "You were planning to attack a supermarket. One called Nakona." Nakona is very famous there, and according to him, "It's an Israeli supermarket." That's what he said. "You've come to hit Israelis and the Israeli Embassy. The phone here, this phone, has phoned Bin Laden to confirm that the mission is almost accomplished." The man even said to me, "This is the MI5 in Kenya." That day they were very violent with us. They had had enough.*

*When I got in there, there was the second white woman, because there was a woman on the Monday and Tuesday - they said that she was from the British Embassy and she was there to see us, but she never interacted with us. She said to me, "I am from the British Consulate." She was very interested in how my family knew that I was arrested. That was her main priority now. She wasn't interested in my health, or food just, "Who knows?" I felt like I was being interrogated by her. When I arrived in the UK literally ten to thirteen big white built men came on the plane with suits. They escorted us off the actual aeroplane and they explained themselves, "We are MI5." Took my fingerprints, took pictures. The way I was dealt with was not nice to be honest. It's like I felt I was a man with no rights. They just left me at the airport like that.*



## Mohamed Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

Ahmed's case highlights the process by which racial profiling culminates in life changing consequences as his victimisation has resulted in being placed under a pre-emptive control order. Mohamed Ahmed is a Somali, who, along with many family members, left the misery of civil war to seek better prospects in Britain in 1992. Ahmed missed his homeland, where his mother and several siblings remained, so he left to visit them in the northern region of Somaliland in the summer of 2006. However, violence soon flared up in the southern region of the country, with major implications for the entire region. On his subsequent return to the UK, he found himself and his friends subject to increasing levels of surveillance as his ethnicity and background made him of continued interest to intelligence services.

*So in Dubai they stopped me for a couple of hours, and they just made me sit there and just wait and then they let me go. I went home. I started to realise that there was one guy following me but he wasn't English. There would be a Volvo or a Saab. One day it would be a Volvo at the same time that just kept going past again and again. An Indian police officer came and took pictures. He made it very clear he wanted to take pictures of us without giving us our rights or anything like that. They just wanted to quickly take them, because I think they're not allowed to take pictures or anything. Not in stop and search. Yeah, that's why he did it so quickly. And from then it just started becoming bigger and bigger, more and more times, nearly every single day I realised that they were following me, and I came out of my house and started thinking. They never approached me directly.*

*I know the brothers that got arrested in Nairobi that time. I've known them for a couple of years, and even after they got arrested,*

*I still see them from time to time, and I still call them up, 'How are you doing?' I think that's where the suspicion is. But I think now being Somali is a big thing because of what's happening there.*

*Once I went to Nairobi - it was 2007. I just went there for a holiday. I put my passport down, he opened it and closed it. He never put anything in the system. He just said, "Come with me." They were asking me what mosques I went to, who I hang around with in the UK, what's my ideology. Did I know any other people that'd been arrested for terrorism or other crimes. Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada and all that. They were asking questions about the UK specifically. They were asking if I knew Abu Hamza or Abu Qatada, or if I had been to Finsbury Park Mosque. My tribe. And then they were asking me about Somalia. They were asking me about that tribe. The main tribe in southern Somalia is called the 'Hariye'. Do I know this person or that person. They said, "Faisal Abdullah." They were saying to me, "You've been in Somalia in 2006." And then they were just suggesting other things. They were suggesting I was there to meet Faisal. That's what they were saying.*

<sup>1</sup>The name has been changed to protect the identity of the detainee

## Conclusion

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In the US led War on Terror, the mechanisms of abuse are varied as factors such as origin from, and association with, the Horn of Africa have become criminalised. The Chairman of Hagadera Refugee Camp tells of human rights abuses on the basis of racial profiling in what he terms Kenya's Guantanamo. Mass arrest is another violation as the case of Christian grandmother Gako and Durrow highlight. Both are victims of racial stereotyping by Kenya's Anti-terrorism police – the former because of doing business with Arabs. There are witnesses who testified that there were people escaping with their lives from Somalia only to be forcibly sent back by Kenyan authorities while others were spirited to Nairobi. The religious dimension of Kenya's racial profiling is highlighted by the case of Salat who was accused of terrorism on the basis of assumptions about his religious convictions.

Westerners have also fallen foul of Kenya's American war on terror as the account of British citizen Ezzouek informs. Ezzouek was questioned concerning his faith by the MI5 in secret detention under threats of indefinite incarceration in Kenya, Somalia or Guantanamo. It is evident that the MI5 considered the answers he gave concerning his faith comparable to the questioning they gave him about the incidents of 7 July 2005 and 11 September 2001. Elmi, Hashi, and Magag were all subjected to questioning about their 'tribe' by UK agents. All those questioned by UK agents were all asked about Somalia, their religious practices and the places of worship and some report being threatened with indefinite detention, however this time under British draconian laws. Ahmed was also questioned by Scotland Yard's terrorism department about where he worshipped and Somali politics and like Salat and Aden was stereotyped on the basis of the security services' apparent interactions with other individuals unconnected except by race, ethnicity and faith.

Talib, Muazzam and Umar, two British and one German citizen respectively summarise the extent of racial profiling and disregard for citizenry as despite their nationalities were threatened with violence and held extrajudicially in Tanzania at the behest of the MI5 and subsequently questioned on European soil by Dutch and British intelligence in an attempt first to extract a false confession; second, to use answers to race, ethnicity and religion as substitutes for a false confession; and finally, threatened into self-policing through harassment. This attempt at proxy regulating of behavior also appears in Ahmed's case. Ahmed was warned that if he travelled again they, *'Would make it very difficult for him.'* In what amounts to a clear attempt by security agents to get Ahmed to police himself as well as the case of Nur who was warned not to travel because they have, *"Very good connections around the world"* and that, *"We can give you problems."*

The questions being asked in the interrogations of British citizens by the MI5 or British security services parallel too strongly to a proposal by ministers to discriminate against the British population for their beliefs concerning alternative forms of governance, theological law, homosexuality, Palestinian rights and war. The original Prevent Violent Extremism strategy has morphed into what is now being regarded as a Prevent Extremism strategy – that somehow a Muslim's anti-war sentiments are probably linked to international terrorism.

We recommend that governments who have taken up racial profiling in their arsenal of counter-terrorism measures should desist this practice by banning the use of profiling in the face of overwhelming evidence of its ineffectiveness. As most racial profiling happens at lower decision making levels, governments officially banning the use of racial profiling will have little effect against the stereotypes and prejudices that produce the environment in which it can operate unchecked.

The remedy to such policies should be a paradigm shift in counter-terrorism from that of 'terrorism as war' to 'terrorism as a crime' which needs to be negotiated in order to render the use of the rule of law, its mechanisms and methods, effective. In the case of the UK we can prevent what is becoming Britain's own inquisition by undermining the very conditions the Spanish Inquisition thrived in: a situation where society is divided by racial profiling and the majority remain silent if not part take of the treatment of the minority because of a *false consciousness* that that treatment is forever confined to a part of our society that is separate from ourselves.

## Recommendations

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The War on Terror so far has failed to account for the grievances that many Muslim feel around the world. Due to the application of draconian counter-terrorism measures, Muslim communities have come under a sense of victimization and criminalization which has been exacerbated by the use of profiling as a technique.

It is important that the discriminatory policies that profile the Muslim community should end. To that effect, Cageprisoners recommends:

1. The government should repeal all counter-terrorism legislation including the use of control orders, lengthy pre-charge detention and deportation orders which contravene the principle of *non-refoulement*.
2. The government should also stop its PREVENT programme and concentrate its efforts on redressing grievances within Muslim communities. Cageprisoners understands that Muslims in the UK would respond much better to knowing that their frustrations were being understood and responded to, rather than those frustrations being used to profile them and arbitrarily criminalise them.
3. The technique of profiling is counter-productive and thus its use should be stopped immediately. The disproportionate way in which Muslims are stopped at ports in the UK and around the world does not do anything but engender further frustration and give credence to the suspicion of discrimination.

Although these recommendations are short, we feel at Cageprisoners that they will go a long way in reversing the dangerous trends of the War on Terror.







**CAGEPRISONERS**