



U.S. judge awards \$15 million to Somali torture victim

G. Redd at 9:34 AM ET 8/22/13

A judge for the [US District Court for the Southern District of Ohio](#) [official websites] on Tuesday [awarded](#) [CJA press release, PDF] \$5 million in compensatory damages and \$10 million in punitive damages to a victim of torture at the hands of a Somali military colonel some 25 years ago. Judge George Smith [determined](#) [JURIST report] in November that constitutional law professor Abukar Hassan Ahmed was arbitrarily detained by Colonel Abdi Aden Magan's subordinates for three months in 1988. The [Center for Justice and Accountability](#) (CJA) [advocacy website] filed a [lawsuit](#) [CJA materials] on behalf of Ahmed in 2010, when Magan was residing in Ohio. This is the largest amount ever awarded in a US court for the torture of one individual by another, but since Magan has left the US it is uncertain whether Ahmed could ever actually receive any damages. Ahmed currently serves as an adviser to the president of Somalia.

US courts have recently supported international torture victims in several suits. In August the [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia](#) [official website] [awarded \\$21 million](#) [JURIST report] to seven Somalis in a separate CJA [lawsuit](#) [CJA materials] against former Somali prime minister [Mohamed Ali Samantar](#) [JURIST news archive]. The lawsuit, which started in 2004 and [made it to the US Supreme Court](#) [JURIST report] in 2010, alleged Samantar was responsible for the killing and torture of members of the Isaaq clan in Somalia throughout the 1980s under former dictator Siad Barre. In April 2011 the Virginia court denied a [motion to dismiss](#) [JURIST report] the lawsuit against Samantar, whose lawyers had argued for dismissal because the statute of limitations had expired and because the courts should not interfere in political matters. That February a federal judge had ruled that Samantar was not entitled to legal immunity from [civil lawsuits](#) [JURIST report], following the Supreme Court's 2010 ruling that the [Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1976](#) (FSIA) [28 USC §§ 1330, 1602 et seq. text] does not provide foreign officials immunity from civil lawsuits.

<http://jurist.org/paperchase/2013/08/us-judge-awards-15-million-to-somali-torture-victim.php>