

Urgent Appeal

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KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net welcomes the renewal of the mandate on the Independent Expert on Somalia whilst calling on key actors to take concrete steps to re-enforce the mandate

EHAHRDP-Net along with key partners in Geneva has worked persistently in recent Sessions of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to ensure that the human rights situation in Somalia is placed at the top of the Council's agenda.

The issue has received greater attention; nevertheless this Session, which saw the renewal of the Mandate of the Independent Expert on the Human Rights Situation in Somalia, confirmed that prolonged efforts aimed at ensuring concrete support from key stakeholders and ensuring that political dynamics within the Council do not undermine these initiatives, will be necessary if some of the key objectives at the heart of EHAHRDP's work are to be reached.

Unlike the mandate of the Independent Expert on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which was discontinued during the 7th Council Session as a result of opposition to its renewal by the African Group and the Congolese delegation, the mandate of the Expert on Somalia has been maintained.

Nevertheless, in spite of ongoing attempts to secure its re-enforcement, notably by granting it key reporting and monitoring capacities, the final outcome of the 10th Session of the Council saw its renewal for a mere 6 months instead of the traditional year, and has also limited its mandate to technical cooperation and capacity building.

This is once again proof of the necessity for advocacy efforts to persist notably to ensure that the apparent support, particularly of the EU countries, for a strengthened human rights presence convert into concrete developments on the ground.

As a result of this partial success EHAHRDP-Net will seek to maintain its efforts both at international and regional level in order to see a range of developments take place in the coming months.

First and foremost EHAHRDP will continue to work hand in hand with its partners in Geneva to ensure that a Special Panel on Somalia will be held during the June Session of the Council. The Panel will bring together a strong and committed group of high-level panellists and will produce a set of very concrete recommendations aimed at ensuring a strong monitoring and protection presence on the ground and identify measures that key actors and stakeholders will need to commit to.

EHAHRDP firmly believes that this human rights presence should be under the auspices of the UN and notably of the Office of the High Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR), and will continue to lobby the OHCHR's for it to establish a full field presence.

The failure to stand up to efforts aimed at undermining the Somali country mandate is baffling given the gravity and extent of the human rights violations on the ground. It also reveals a disregard by the international community to its responsibilities to offer protection to national human rights defenders on the ground that continue monitoring and speaking out about the mass violations, despite the threats both to their work, safety and even lives.

“Key stakeholders have begun to acknowledge the need to pay greater attention to the human rights situation in Somalia and the need for significant monitoring of both past and present abuses. Nevertheless in order to bring about significant changes on the ground and in particular in order to tackle the prevailing impunity, actors will need to move beyond words and take concrete measures in the field of monitoring and protection of human rights and human rights defenders and on issues of accountability.” said Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network. *“EHAHRPD will continue to place the issue of the Human Rights situation in Somalia and in particular the fight against impunity at the heart of its work.”*

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