

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index SOM 013/ 005/ 2008

03 April 2008

KAMPALA: EHAHRDP/Net offers financial assistance to 20 Somali Journalists in exile

EHAHRDP/Net would like to announce that for the next three months it will be offering vital financial support to a group of 20 exiled Somali journalists, who fled Somalia as a result of the continued targeted attacks on journalists, and are now living in Djibouti and other countries in the sub-region.

The deliberate attacks on the media and on freedom of expression have forced many journalists to go into hiding or exercise self-censorship within Somalia; at least 9 journalists have been killed since 2007, scores of others have been injured, while at least 50 have fled Mogadishu in the past months and sought refuge in neighboring countries.

This particularly young group of journalists had been working at Radio Shabelle, HornAfrik or Radio Simba, the key independent media outlets. They initially sought refuge in Hargeisa, Somaliland, after having been subjected to threats and intimidations by all actors involved in the conflict which left them fearing for their lives. The Somaliland authorities threatened to deport them to Somalia in December 2007. Although this threat was never carried out, the journalists felt compelled to seek refuge in Djibouti and other neighbouring countries.

“Despite the continued harassment and risks which these journalists have faced in Somalia, largely as a result of their willingness to speak out against the human rights violations taking place in their country, they are committed to their work and cause. Thankfully they will now be able to pursue their work in relative safety” declared Hassan Shire, Chairperson of the EHAHRD/Net. “They are incredibly grateful for this opportunity and are determined to serve as spokespersons for their less fortunate colleagues as well as for the Somali population who continue to face daily human rights violations.”

EHAHRD/Net is very grateful to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which has also supported through EHAHRDP/Net a group of 21 Somali Journalist in exile in Nairobi last year, for their support; it hopes that, if the current human rights crisis persists, other human rights defenders and journalists from Somalia, both those forced to seek refuge abroad and those that continue to work within Somalia, will be granted such opportunities .

For further information, please contact:

Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at advocacy@defenddefenders.org or +256-775-141756.