

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SOM 013/005/2009

28th May 2009

Kampala: Continued fighting in Somalia and attacks on HRDs undermine hopes of peace

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Somalia continues to be of utmost concern, notably as a result of recent attempts by the new interim government, established under the 2008 UN-brokered Djibouti peace agreements, to put an end to the Al-Shabab Islamic militia insurgency.

In spite of these continued violations, of which the civilian population are the principal victims, human rights monitoring on the ground is increasingly scarce; key national human rights actors are time and again impeded from doing their work as a result both of the generalised violence and targeted attacks and the international community fails to put in place the necessary instruments and presence for systematic and independent monitoring to take place.

Somali journalists continue to be at the forefront of attacks on human rights defenders having been targeted at one time or another by all the warring parties. This year alone three journalists have been killed in Somalia. In February 2009 Said Tahlil Ahmed, Director of radio HornAfrik, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Mogadishu on his way to a meeting which had been called for by Al-Shabab. The most recent victim was, Abdirisak Warsameh Mohamed of Radio Shabelle, who was killed on 22nd May 2009, whilst on his way to Radio Shabelle, during intensive fighting between the government forces and Islamic insurgents in Mogadishu last week.

As a result of the increasingly smaller national human rights community and the absence of a permanent international presence, impunity continues to prevail and those responsible for significant human rights violations, from the Transitional Federal Government(TFG) Forces, to the Ethiopian Troops(that officially withdrew in December 2008), to various insurgent groups, not held to account.

And yet much of the international support and assistance that is being sent to Somalia continues to be given, almost unconditionally, to some of the very forces committing these abuses without any form of accountability being put in place.

“It is time that the international community finds new and innovative ways of dealing with the conflict in Somalia as the present methods are clearly failing” says Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) *“ First and foremost there must be a concerted effort on behalf of key actors and institutions in the field of human rights, notably the UN Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, to establish a permanent presence in Somalia which can carry out human rights monitoring and can help to establish*

independent and impartial accountability mechanisms which will be able to try all warring parties.”

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project(EHAHRDP) hopes therefore that the forthcoming Human Rights Council session will lay the groundwork for a more complete session on Somalia in September 2009 and will see the international community give human rights in Somalia the attention and support it requires.

For more information please contact Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on +256 775 141 756/ advocacy@defenddefenders.org