

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

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KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net congratulates its member NUSOJ on receipt of Democracy Tribute Award

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) would like to congratulate the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), one of its founding members, for the recognition that they have received at the World Movement for Democracy Assembly in Kyiv by the granting of the ‘Democracy Tribute Award’, on behalf of Somali Journalists.

The World Movement for Democracy (WMD) is a network of organizations and individuals whose work is dedicated to the promotion of democracy of which EHAHRD-Net is a member. The Democracy Tribute Award is given by WMD to organizations and individuals working to promote human rights and democracy throughout the world.

Through this award, WMD has recognized the commitment that NUSOJ has shown to the protection of Somali journalists. It also acknowledges the determination of all Somali journalists to draw international attention to the current human rights abuses being committed against their colleagues in Somalia.

The situation facing human rights defenders, in particular journalists, in Somalia has been rapidly deteriorating since mid-2007. Death threats, intimidations, arbitrary arrests, and targeted killings have become an everyday reality for many journalists remaining in the country. Nevertheless, the international community, and notably the international media, continues to largely ignore the situation, by focusing the little attention accorded to Somalia on humanitarian and more traditional ‘political’ concerns.

Through this award WMD also highlights the importance of ensuring the protection of human rights defenders and the protection of freedom of expression and media in the struggle for democracy.

“ As long as human rights violations against journalists persist in Somalia, as long as freedom of expression and media is violated, as long as the voices speaking out against these violations, and those committed against the civilian population, are silenced, and as long as a climate of impunity prevails, the restoration of peace and democracy, long hoped for by the majority of the Somali population, will not be able to take place” stated Mr Hassan Shire, Chairperson of the EHAHRD/Net, after having attended the Award ceremony.

EHAHRD/Net would like to express its gratitude to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a member of the Steering Committee of WMD, for having, through this award, once again shown its commitment to the protection of Somali journalists at a time when international attention to the human rights situation in Somalia continues to be largely inadequate. NED has offered, through EHAHRD-Net, financial support since 2007 to more than 45 Somali journalists currently in exile throughout the sub-region.

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