

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SOM 019/005/2009

EHAHRDP: Protection of journalists in Somalia must be prioritised as another key journalist is killed

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) condemns the targeted killing of Mukhtar Mohamed Hirabe, Director of Radio Shabelle- one of the leading independent radios, on Sunday 7th June in Bakara Market, Mogadishu, by two gunmen, and calls on all actors involved in the conflict to offer human rights defenders, and most particularly journalists, the protection which they require to carry out their vital work.

Somalia is at present one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Mr Hirabe is the fifth journalist to be killed in 2009 alone in Somalia and the third victim of a targeted killing this year. He had in fact been severely wounded in February 2009 in the very same market, currently under the control of the Al-Shabab militias, in an attack which had resulted in the death of another key journalist, Mr Tahlil Ahmed, who was the Director of Radio HornAfrik, another of the country's key independent radio stations.

Baabul Nor Mohamed, a Somali Journalist currently in exile, described to EHAHRDP how “ *The killing of such a well respected journalist, someone always willing to give a voice to the most marginalised groups in Somalia, will leave a void in Somalia*”.

In the attack which cost Mr Hirabe his life, another journalist of Shabelle Radio, Ahmed Omar Hashi 'Tajir', was also shot at by the gunmen and severely wounded. Mr Hashi is currently receiving treatment in Mogadishu but has informed EHAHRDP that he has been receiving threatening calls warning him that next time he would not escape alive.

EHAHRDP seeks to offer its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mr Hirabe whilst calling on all key actors involved in the conflict to bring an immediate end to the continued targeting of defenders by offering them the protection which they require.

“First and foremost, all those involved in the conflict must immediately end their attacks on journalists. Secondly, the government as well as the international community, notably the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, must establish an independent and impartial inquiry into the killing of Mr Hirabe, amongst others, and ensure that those responsible are held to account “ says Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of EHAHRDP. “Such measures aimed at tackling the well entrenched culture of impunity in Somalia will be crucial to bringing an end to decades of violence and lawlessness”.

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

