

Public Statement

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KAMPALA: EHAHRDP/Net strongly condemns and regrets the targetted killing of prominent Somali journalist and partner Nasteh Dahir Farah

9th June 2008

EHAHRDP/Net is shocked by the recent killing of Nasteh Dahir Farah, Vice President of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) and correspondent for BBC and for Associated Press News Agency, who was shot dead by gunmen on Saturday on his way home.

NUSOJ, key partners of EHAHRD-Net, have reported the incident as being the result of a targetted killing. The gunmen are believed to be linked to Islamic insurgents.

The death of Mr Dahir marks a profound blow to human rights in Somalia given his willingness to denounce the persistent human rights violations despite the threats he had received on his life. His death also marks a personal loss to EHAHRD-Net. Mr Dahir was in fact one of key partners of EHAHRD-Net in Somalia and was amongst the 34 journalists who had attended a journalists' conference organised by EHAHRDP in November 2006 in Kampala.

This most recent killing further highlights that Somalia is at present one of the countries in the world where it is the most dangerous to be a journalist. Given that journalists are in many instances the sole voices continuing to condemn the daily human rights violations being committed they have been seen as a threat by all the warring parties- from the TGF forces, to the Ethiopian troops, to insurgents groups and most notably Al-Shabab.

The deliberate and systematic attacks on the media and on freedom of expression that have increased in Somalia over the last year have forced many journalists to go into hiding and exercise self-censorship within Somalia. Mr Dahir is the tenth journalist to have been killed since mid-2007, many others have been injured, while at least 100 have fled and been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

“The human rights situation in Somalia is deteriorating on a daily basis. Very few human rights defenders are still able to work in the current context and as a result these violations are often obscured. Mr Dahir was one of the few voices still willing and able to speak out. His loss will be profoundly felt. Such killings and violations on the right to expression and media cannot persist- they must be investigated and those responsible must be brought to justice. Ending impunity is more than ever key to bringing greater security and stability to Somalia. I hope that Mr Dahir’s

death will finally encourage relevant stakeholders to react” stated Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

EHAHRDP/Net would like to express its sincere condolences to the family of Mr Dahir as well as to his colleagues of NUSOJ.

EHAHRD-Net appeals to all warring parties- notably the TFG authorities, insurgent groups, in particular Al-Shabab, and the Ethiopian forces:

- To immediately bring an end to the harassment, intimidation, assault, arbitrary arrests and targeted killings of Somali journalists;
- To immediately halt repeated attacks on independent media sources.

EHAHRD-Net appeals to the TGF authorities:

- To investigate in an impartial manner the killing of Nasteh Dahir Farah;
- To ensure that those responsible for these flagrant violations of freedom of expression and media are brought to justice and accorded a fair, independent and impartial trial.

Finally EHAHRD-Net calls upon the UN, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and all other concerned international humanitarian bodies:

- To use their relevant mandates to ensure that Somali authorities desist from the ill-treatment of journalists;
- To ensure that independent and impartial accountability mechanisms which conform to international standards are put in place in order to bring an end to impunity and to ensure that those responsible for current and past violations are brought to justice.

All Network members are encouraged to write to the Somali authorities furthering this appeal.

Send appeals to:

The Somali Ambassador in Kenya, asking for them to be forwarded to Somalia’s President, Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed: TFG Ambassador, Mohamed Ali Nur,
PO Box 623-00606
Jabavu Road, Hurlingham
Nairobi, Kenya
Email: mali@somaliembassy.co.ke
Salutation: Dear Sir

For further information, please contact:

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