

## EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

### Public Statement

#### **EHAHRD-Net Index SOM 024/ 005/ 2008**

18th July 2008

#### **Kampala: EHAHRDP-Net condemns increasing targeting of members of the Somali human rights community and organizes evacuation of Eleven (11) activists**

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRDP-Net) is concerned about the current insecurity facing an increasing number of human rights organizations in Somalia, notably a number of its key partners amongst the Somali human rights community.

Most recently, the staff of the Coalition for Grassroots Women Organization (COGWO), a prominent coalition of women's rights organizations based in Mogadishu and member of EHAHRD-Net, received a series of death threats accusing them of being 'infidels' as a result of their efforts to empower women.

On 9<sup>th</sup> July, COGWO was amongst a list of organizations named in a threatening letter that was published and posted in several public places across Mogadishu. It is not yet clear who the authors of these threats are. Some of the other organizations threatened on the list are MSF Holland and Care among others.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008, a local F.M radio station in Mogadishu, broadcast an interview in which an anonymous interviewee threatened to kill COGWO staff members in particular and human rights activists in general. The organization also received a series of menacing emails notably one on the 15<sup>th</sup> July in which the Chairperson of COGWO, Ms Sharifa Adow, was personally threatened by whom they believe to be members of the Al-Shabab militia group.

These threats are of particular concern given the current climate, i.e. the recent harassment, kidnapping and targeted assassination of aid workers as well as peace and human rights workers that has greatly increased.

July alone has seen, amongst others, the killing of the head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Somalia, Osman Ali Ahmed and, more recently, the killing on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July, of Mohamed Mohamud Khayre, Deputy Director of Daryeel Bulsho Guud (DBG), a local humanitarian organisation. DBG was amongst the organisations named on the target list.

*“Over the past year, systematic attacks against journalists have become an everyday reality in Somalia; we are now witnessing a similar situation for other human rights defenders. It is becoming almost impossible for HRDs to carry on with their legitimate work in Somalia which further affects the already dire situation facing the civilian population. We are deeply concerned about the safety and security of our Network members and are keen to ensure that they receive the protection and support*

*which they need to continue their vital work whether in Somalia or in exile if need be”* said Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Other members of key human rights organisations notably of the Peace and Human Rights Network (PHRN) and Dr Ismael Jumale Human Rights Centre (DIJHRC), are currently also at risk as a result of an increasingly insecure situation in Mogadishu and the targeted threats against human rights activists.

Given this situation and fearing for the safety and lives of the eleven COGWO staff members, EHAHRDP has organized their evacuation from Somalia.

EHAHRD-Net appeals to the authorities of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG):

- To abide by its responsibility of ensuring the protection of human rights defenders and notably their right to life as stipulated in the Transitional Federal Charter and in numerous international human rights instruments to which Somalia is party;
- To investigate in an impartial manner the recent killings of human rights defenders and humanitarian workers;
- To ensure that those responsible for this killing are brought to justice and accorded a fair, independent and impartial trial.

EHAHRD-Net appeals to other key stakeholders

- To ensure that human rights defenders in dire situation receive the necessary emergency support they require and that those in exile are given the means to continue their legitimate and essential work.

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

- 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 in Somalia 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](mailto:mali@somaliembassy.co.ke)

Salutation: Dear Sir

For further information, please contact:

Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at [advocacy@defenddefenders.org](mailto:advocacy@defenddefenders.org) or +256-775-141756 or call Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, EHAHRD-Net Chairperson, directly on +1 905 626 0911