

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

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Geneva: Tackle impunity through police reform and protection of HRDs

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) will call for urgent police reform throughout East Africa as a key step in the fight against impunity at a panel event being held today at the UN Human Rights Council.

Mr Hassan Shire, Executive Director of EHAHRDP, will in his opening remarks call on specific attention to be drawn to human rights defenders (HRDs) working on issues of police reform, extrajudicial killings and the question of impunity in general, given the significant challenges and threats these defenders are currently facing throughout the region.

“ Any discussion on how to ensure effective and sustainable reform of the policing and justice system in Kenya and throughout the region cannot take place without taking into account the reality facing defenders working on these issues; it is therefore essential to find ways of supporting their work and strengthening their protection and security” Mr Shire will say.

The need for strong political will by the relevant authorities will also be highlighted whilst Mr Shire will commend the decision by the Kenyan government to acknowledge in their remarks to the Council yesterday, the problem of extrajudicial killings in their country.

Today’s panel event forms part of a series of activities organised in parallel to the release of the report by the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial and Summary Executions, Professor Philip Alston.

In fact, in a joint-statement made to the plenary session at the Council following the presentation of the report by Professor Alston, yesterday, Mr Sam Mohochi, the Executive Director of the IMLU, EHAHRD-Net’s Kenyan focal point, called on the Council to enhance the mandate of the Special Rapporteur notably in light of the support that the mandate offers to HRDs working on these issues on the ground.

“The SR can through country missions, recommendations and follow-up play a role in helping to transform the general misconception on behalf of key members of the authorities (police, military, judiciary..) of the work and role of human rights reporting. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur can serve as a greatly needed bridge between those working on issues of accountability and the reform of the judicial system and key actors within the authorities bent on bringing about these greatly needed reforms” said Mr Sam Mohochi.

The panel event will take place **today from 15h-17h in Room XX of the Palais des Nations.**

For more information please do not hesitate to contact Mr Hassan Shire, Executive Director of EHAHRDP on + 41 7933 758 75 or Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on + 256 775 141 756 or advocacy@defenddefenders.org