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HTUR/FW

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Systematic intimidation of Somali trade unionists

Mr. Prime Minister,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents more than 175 million workers through its 305 affiliated organisations in 151 countries and territories, hereby strongly protests the recent intimidations, on behalf of your Minister of Labour, of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ). The NUSOJ is affiliated to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), and its Secretary General is also President of the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) and Secretary General of the ITUC-associated Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU).

According to information received by the ITUC, on Wednesday 16 November, the Somali Minister of Labour had instructed the Director of his Cabinet to write to the Somali Criminal Investigations Department (CID), to report "illegal activities" of Somali trade unions, in order for criminal investigations to be initiated. This follows the armed robbery of the NUSOJ offices, against which the ITUC protested on 3 June 2011, and another raid, without a warrant, on the same offices on the morning of Sunday 13 November.

During this last raid, two armed police officers entered the NUSOJ premises and detained Organising Secretary **Abdiqani Sheik Mohamed**. They took him to the office of the CID in Mogadishu and illegally detained him for about 90 hours.

Then, on Saturday 26 November, Abdiqani Sheik Mohamed was summoned for inquiry by the CID. On Tuesday 29 November, we were informed that the interrogations were still going on. At 10 am that day, a delegation of NUSOJ leaders, members of Somali Parliament as well as a number of civil society organisations, went to the CID office in support of Mr. Abdiqani. The only one who was allowed in, was NUSOJ Vice-President **Abdi Aden Guled**, who is also the editor-in-chief of the Somali newspaper "Xog Ogaal".

When he was allowed to leave the CID office a little bit later, Abdiqani Sheik Mohamed declared that he had been asked more than 300 questions about the NUSOJ, its officers and their activities. The interrogating officer had stated that he was carrying out criminal investigations into the trade union, and ordered Mr. Abdiqani and Mr. Abdi Aden to hand in union documents so that the CID could decide what to base its criminal charges on.

M. Prime Minister, the ITUC has repeatedly written to the Somali authorities, especially during the the past six months, to protest against the very serious and systematic violations of basic trade union rights. To our dismay, we note that the Somali TFG is imperturbably continuing its anti-union harassment and intimidation. Trade union officials face constant harassment by TFG officials in what can only be perceived as an orchestrated effort to terminate Somalia's labour movement.

In this latest string of events, union offices were raided without a warrant, a trade union leader was illegally detained and interrogated under the clear assumption that legitimate trade union work is a direct cause for criminal charges, and internal union affairs were interfered with on behalf of the Minister of Labour. These facts all constitute very serious violations of trade union rights, as enshrined in the ILO's Conventions 87 (on Freedom of Association) and 98 (on Collective Bargaining). The ITUC is extremely disturbed about the consistent politicised actions against NUSOJ members and its leadership to thwart them from carrying out their legitimate activities.

We therefore urge you to take the necessary measures in order for the interference, harassment, travel bans, intimidation, threats and violence against NUSOJ officials to be immediately stopped, so that they can resume their legitimate trade union activities without fear for their safety or their lives. Should your government fail to do so, the ITUC will not hesitate to take up this matter with the ILO, which will further tarnish your country's image in the international community.

We look forward to your reaction in this very serious matter.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary