



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 45th regular session

Item 5: Interactive dialogue on the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (*reprisals*)

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Madam President, Madam Assistant Secretary-General,

We thank you for your presentation and the light the Secretary-General's report sheds on both individual cases and patterns of intimidation and reprisals. In a number of countries, punishing those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with the UN human rights system is a deliberate policy designed to silence human rights defenders. As the report indicates, "repeated incidents can signal patterns" of reprisals. Two African countries are found in that list of shame: **Burundi** and **Egypt**.

We also deplore the fact that **South Sudan** is mentioned in the report for illegal acts committed by the National Security Service (NSS) and military intelligence.

Madam President,

We wish to draw the Council's attention to an unresolved case. In **Djibouti**, Kadar Abdi Ibrahim has been subjected to ongoing reprisals for his participation in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) pre-sessions on his country, in April 2018 in Geneva. Two days after returning home, Mr. Abdi Ibrahim was briefly detained and had his passport confiscated by agents of Djibouti's Information and Security Service (SDS), who raided his home.

Two and a half years on, despite having taken action with the Prosecutor, the Ombudsman, and the National Human Rights Commission, his passport remains in the hands of the SDS – according to state interlocutors, it is even held by the Presidency. Mr. Abdi Ibrahim has been unable to leave the country since. Djibouti's continued presence in the report highlights one of the Horn of Africa's human rights and civic space crises.

We urge authorities of Djibouti and the abovementioned countries to cease all acts of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society actors who seek to cooperate with the UN human rights system.

Thank you.