



# DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

## UN Human Rights Council – 48<sup>th</sup> regular session Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on Somalia Oral statement

*Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi*

Madam President, Madam Independent Expert,

We thank you for your report, welcome your benchmarking effort, and welcome the Council's ongoing work to assist the Somali authorities in fulfilling their obligations, support independent actors in the country, and scrutinise the human rights situation.

In this regard, we welcome the development of a robust resolution that reflects developments in Somalia and renews the Independent Expert's mandate. We call for its adoption by consensus.

Human rights challenges remain tremendous. As you [reported](#), Madam Dyfan, these challenges cover all areas of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, while the political, constitutional and electoral crisis continues to create a climate of uncertainty. Insecurity continues to plague the country. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the violence.

Changes in laws, policies, and practices are indispensable. They include holding those responsible for violations to account, operationalising institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, and fully reviewing the Penal Code. In our UPR statement, we stressed that the amended Media Law 2020, which unduly restricts freedom of expression, should be revised. Effective work by special prosecutors for the killings of journalists and violence against women and girls is vital.

Supporting a free and independent civil society and creating and maintaining an open [civic space](#) should be a priority for all public and political actors.

Madam Dyfan:

What is your assessment of the state of civic space in the country and of the impact of political tensions over civic actors' enjoyment of their rights?

Thank you.