



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 51st regular session

Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on Somalia

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Madam President, Madam Independent Expert,

We thank you for your report 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. We call for the adoption of a resolution that extends the Independent Expert's mandate by consensus.

Madam Dyfan,

We welcome the fact that you were able to visit not only Mogadishu, but also Baidoa, and the consultations you led. We also welcome your comprehensive benchmarking effort.

Like you, we welcome the successful completion of the electoral process and the peaceful transition of power. The objective for Somalia, however, remains the holding of a "one-person, one-vote" election.

Despite some positive steps and encouraging signals, human rights challenges remain tremendous. The humanitarian situation is alarming, including because of the impact of violence, insecurity, climate change, and locust infestation. Addressing food insecurity and the risk of famine in several areas of Somalia should be a priority for national, regional, and international actors.

As President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud assumes office, we highlight the importance of civic space. Defamation-related provisions of the Penal Code and other provisions unduly restricting free expression and other fundamental freedoms should be revised. Human rights defenders (HRDs) should be protected and impunity for attacks against them and journalists should be eliminated. Effective work by special prosecutors for the killings of journalists and violence against women and girls is vital. There is no path towards democracy and stability outside an open civic space and the rule of law.

Madam Dyfan:

How can you assist the authorities in prioritising the establishment of a national human rights commission?

Thank you.