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« TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE »

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An Open Letter to H.E Ismail Omar Guelleh President of Republic of Djibouti

YOUR EXCELLENCY
MR ISMAIL OMAR GUELLEH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI

We, FIDA, are writing this letter, as representatives of all Afar Diaspora Organizations around the world, to express our grave anxiety and deep concerns about your ethnic cleansing policy against the Afar people as well as planting your own ethnic group members in Afar ancestral homeland in the districts of Dikhil (Baakerre, Shekayto), Arta (Lac Assal), cities of Tadjourah and Obock. We also terrified by the recent horrifying and arbitrary detention, unlawful arrests, illegal imprisonments, politically motivated extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and gross human rights violations committed by Djibouti security and military personnel against the civilian populations of Afar ethnic group in the districts of Obock, Tadjourah and Dikhil.

MR PRESIDENT

We were gravely shocked and frustrated to learn that the national army of Djibouti, which is supposed to protect civilians, have deliberately committed arbitrary detentions, unlawful arrests, systematic killings and human rights violations against civilians in general and the arrest **Vice Sultan of the Sultanate of Tadjourah, Mr. Shehem Ahmed HOUMED**, 2 clan leaders from Syaru: Badoul Gohar Badoul and Mohamed Ahmed as well as mass arrests of women, young people, elderly persons and tribal leaders, who are allegedly suspected of being sympathizers of the FRUD in particular. Those who remain in detention in Gabod prison and other detention facilities and those who forcibly disappeared have been subjected to gross human rights violations such as extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment. They have been arbitrarily arrested and unlawfully imprisoned by the regime due to their ethnic origin, the peaceful expression of their political opinions, and due to groundless allegation of being supportive of the FRUD in their armed and political campaign against the regime.

MR PRESIDENT

The arrest of **Vice Sultan Shehem Ahmed HOUMED** who is a traditional Afar authority is not only illegal and unacceptable, but it is a serious matter that undermines the very foundation of the existence of Djibouti, based on coexistence between the Afar and Somali. By this act, you are trying to destroy the cultural and traditional foundation of Afar society. In general, imprisonment of Vice Sultan of Tadjourah, the tribal leaders, women, youth, the elderly and others is a clear violation of fundamental freedoms and democratic rights and their subsequent abuse violates universal standards of human rights. Discriminatory acts of your government against Afar civilians are in violation of fundamental freedoms and democratic principles. The authorities must



do justice to the Deputy Sultan and release all other persons who have been arrested because of their ethnicity and their political views.

MR PRESIDENT

We are profoundly concerned for the welfare and wellbeing of detainees, prisoners and members of their families in the Northern parts of the country, particularly **Mr. Mohamed Ahmed aka Jabha** who has been in prison since 1 May 2010 and tortured by all your service (army, security and police) without trial nor lawyer and is often held incommunicado and prevented from all basic rights. He is sick without care, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed aka Jabha is a political prisoner. We call for his immediate release and the release of family members of FRUD fighters arbitrarily detained.

MR PRESIDENT

As you well know, since 1991, the Afar people in the Northern parts and South west parts of the country have been under economic blockade by your government. The blockade on the Afar populated regions where the presence of NGOs is prohibited is immoral, illegal and cowardly and it is utterly unjustifiable. Collective punishment is illegal under international law. It amounts to a crime against humanity and genocide because your regime intended to intentionally starve the Afar people and to eliminate them systematically. This immoral siege or blockade has led to chronic and widespread social and economic hardship, suffering, physical harm and systematic violations of human rights of the Afar civilians.

We firmly believe that the humanitarian situation and human rights in Afar areas of the country will continue to deteriorate in the absence of a just and equitable solution to the crises that has lasted since 1991. The full implementation of the 1994 and 2002 Peace Agreements signed between the FRUD and the Government is a prerequisite to bring the two protagonists to find a political solution to the crises. This will establish a state of law, a national state for good governance and a democratic system based on social and economic justice, guaranteeing respect and promotes the human and democratic rights for all citizens of this country.

We condemn, in the strongest terms possible, the continuing and increasing incidence of human rights violations, including murder, rape, assault, persecution and imprisonment of Afar civilians by the government of Djibouti due to their ethnic identity, political opinions and for being members of a particular socio-political group.

We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners detained and imprisoned.

We demand that those responsible for unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture, rape, arbitrary arrests and other abuses against the Afar civilians be held accountable and brought to justice

We demand belligerent parties (FRUD and Government) work towards finding an acceptable political solution to the current crisis by honoring previously signed agreement between the Government and the FRUD.

We demand the Government of Djibouti ceases, with immediate effect, all military aggression against innocent Afar civilians in the two districts of the country. We demand an end to the grave violations of peoples' rights, in particular, the forced displacement of civilians, sexual violations including rape and kidnapping of girls and women, and ask that international relief organizations to be allowed immediate and unconditional access to the Afar populated regions of Dikhil, Obock and Tadjourah to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the needy Afar civilians.



We call on the Government of Djibouti to respect the inherent dignity, and the equal and inalienable rights, of all citizens of Djibouti according to the rule of law and to stop its unlawful blockade on the Northern parts of the country, letting the people move freely in their localities.

We call on the Government of Djibouti, as a signatory member of the United Nations, the African Union Human Rights Conventions and other international human rights instruments, to respect, commit and adhere to the standards laid down in these universal human rights documents.

We inform you that in parallel we call on:

- **The** United States, France, the European Union, Japan and China which have military bases in Djibouti, to end their complacency to you by closing their eyes and observing silence on atrocities and violations of human rights that amount to a crime against humanity in violation of international conventions;
- **The** international community to provide international protection to the Afar people, because they are in danger because of your political marginalization, blockades, killings, arbitrary arrests, rape and torture, which lasted since the independence of the country.

We recommend that warring parties (FRUD and government) work towards finding a political solution acceptable to the output of the current continuing crisis since 1991 by addressing the root causes behind the conflict.

Please accept, Mr. President, the expression of our cordial greetings.

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE
LA DIASPORA AFAR (FIDA ASBL)

