

VOICE OF SOMALI WOMEN FOR PEACE, RECONCILIATION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN MOGADISHU

We are deeply distressed by the latest outbreak of armed conflict in Mogadishu and the surrounding area, the worst fighting that Somalia has seen in more than a decade. After 16 years of civil war and armed conflict, the Somali capital region has not achieved the relative peace that has been established in other parts of the country. The recent ceasefire between the rival groups has been violated, and the UN-imposed embargo on arms has done nothing to stem the flow of weapons into the area.

As in most wars, the main victims are not soldiers or the militia, but innocent, defenceless people: children, women, the elderly and the disabled, from the many communities living in southern Somalia. The fragile infrastructure of these people's lives and the ecosystem of the region have been greatly affected by the war. The overcrowded, marginal living situation of the large numbers of people living in slums around the capital offers no protection against the highly sophisticated weapons that are being deployed, and because of the way the people are forced to live, even a single hand grenade can destroy the lives and homes of hundreds of people. Barricades set up by the fighting groups have prevented injured civilians from reaching what scant medical facilities are available.

Over the long years of lawlessness, anarchy and war, the reasons for the fighting may change, but the reality does not: the devastation continues and the same innocent people are suffering.

Our group, *Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights*, was formed to advocate for an end to war and to create the conditions for peace. As a group of Somali women and their allies living in Somalia and in various diaspora communities around the world, including in Canada, we say "Enough is enough!"

- We urge the warring groups to recognize the devastation the continuing violent conflict is causing and work to bring a speedy end to the war.
- We urge all the relevant international, regional and national actors to do everything in their power to bring an end to the violence. These actors include: the UN system, the African Union, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), International Islamic organizations, the Arab League, and the governments of the world.
- Most of all, we invite Somali women and peace-loving women and men all over the world to speak out and take action to bring this violent, senseless struggle to an end.

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