

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 52/003/2005

UA 127/05

**Prisoners of conscience/ Fear of torture/
Incommunicado detention/ Possible extrajudicial execution**

18 May 2005

SOMALILAND Up to 100 demonstrators from the Gaboye minority group

Killed: Khadar Osman Dhabar (m), late 20s, married with 3 children

Following a peaceful protest up to a hundred demonstrators from the Gaboye minority group are held incommunicado without charge, either in Hargeisa central prison in the capital of Somaliland or in unauthorised and secret police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) detention centres where they are at risk of torture. They had been protesting at the shooting of Khadar Osman Dhabar by a police officer.

On 13 May, Khadar Osman Dhabar died in Hargeisa hospital of numerous bullet wounds after being shot on the night of 11 May in the street by a police officer. Details of the incident are still unclear but it seems that the shooting incident occurred when two police officers approached Khadar Osman Dhabar and his two friends in the Hawl Wadag area of Hargeisa. One of the police shot him, knowing the three were members of the discriminated Gaboye minority, against whom human rights abuses are frequently perpetrated with impunity.

Later on the 13 May, in an unprecedented and peaceful protest, a large crowd of Gaboye and sympathisers went to the central police station and president's office. They were calling for justice following Khadar Osman Dhabar's death and for their human rights to be respected. They were confronted by armed police who used live ammunition against the non-violent demonstrators, mostly shooting in the air and without causing any fatalities. However, they did beat and arrest several hundred demonstrators, including children and women. Many have now been released.

Other Gaboye were later arrested in police raids on Dami village on the outskirts of Hargeisa, where most live in harsh conditions. Many have fled or are in hiding, wanted by the police for alleged involvement in the demonstration, criticising the government and calling for protection of the human rights of the Gaboye minority. Amnesty International considers the detained demonstrators and others arrested later to be prisoners of conscience who are imprisoned on account of their peaceful opinions and defence of the human rights of the Gaboye minority.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gaboye is the collective name in Somaliland for different occupational minority groups (Musa Dariyo, Tupal, Madiban and Yibir) who number some tens of thousands of people and suffer severe discrimination in this nomadic pastoralist-based society. They are also found in Somalia. They experience exclusion on account of their occupations as hairdressers, metal-workers and blacksmiths, leather-workers and shoemakers, herbalists and ritual specialists – services they traditionally perform for the "noble" Somali pastoralist clans. They are customarily not permitted to inter-marry with the pastoralist clans and thus have no clan protection in the form of vengeance or compensation for murder or other crimes. They equally have little or no protection in the state system of administration of justice, which is controlled by clan members, and in practice have little or no access to education or other economic and social rights. Although attitudes to minorities are improving, with two seats reserved for minorities in parliament, and several Somaliland human rights organizations working with minority associations to defend their rights, the minorities benefit little from the human rights guarantees in the Somaliland Constitution and laws. Cases of arbitrary detention, kidnapping, rape, torture and killing of Gaboye with impunity are still reported in Somaliland as well as Somalia.

The self-declared Republic of Somaliland which is not internationally recognized, was established in 1991 after the overthrow of the Siad Barre government of Somalia. The north-western regions broke away to form Somaliland within the borders of the former British Somaliland Protectorate.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling for an impartial inquiry into the killing of Khadar Osman Dhabar and for the police officer responsible to be brought to justice if the killing is found to be unlawful;
- appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of the detained Gaboye demonstrators and others arrested later, for guarantees of their safety and that they are not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- appealing for the detainees to be allowed immediate contact with their families, legal representatives, medical doctors if needed, and representatives of humanitarian organizations;
- urging the government to establish an independent inquiry to investigate arbitrary violence and discrimination against the minorities, and ensure that members of minorities have access to justice and equal treatment before the law, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

APPEALS TO: There is no postal service to Somaliland and fax messages may be difficult. Copies of letters can be sent to the only diplomatic missions (not recognised) in UK, USA and Italy asking for them to be forwarded. Where possible please send appeals by email.

President

His Excellency President Dahir Riyaaale Kahin

Fax: +252 213 8324 or +252 252 3848

Email: sl_victory@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of the Interior

Mr Ismail Aden Osman

c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs or The Presidency (as above)

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Mr Ahmed Hassan Ali Assowe,

c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Presidency (as above) **Salutation: Dear Minister**

Commander of the Somaliland Police

Mr Mohamed Egeh Elmi,

c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Presidency (as above)

Salutation: Dear Commander

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ms Edna Ismail Aden

Fax: +252 828 3271

Email: slforeign@hotmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS:

UK: Mr Osman Ahmed Hassan, Representative of the Somaliland Government, Somaliland Mission, 102 Cavell Street, London E1 2JA, United Kingdom, **Fax: +44 207 717 1718**

USA: Mr Saad Sheikh Omar Nur, Representative of the Somaliland Government, Washington DC, USA, **Fax: +1 301 231 5990**

ITALY: Mr Muhiyadin Ahmed Abdi Gabose, Representative of the Somaliland Government, Corso Unione Sovietica 465, Torino, Italy.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 June 2005.