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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 10: Inter-active dialogue with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia

SOMALIA: MORE REFORMS NEEDED TO ALLOW CITIZENS ENJOY THEIR FREEDOMS

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-eighth regular session
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madame President,

We thank the Independent Expert for her report on Somalia covering the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Amnesty International joins the Independent Expert in expressing concern regarding freedom of expression and media freedom in Somalia. We have documented¹ how freedom of expression and media freedom has deteriorated dramatically since 2017. We call on the Government of Somalia to allow journalists to do their work without restrictions, to operationalize the prosecutor for crimes against journalists and to revise the problematic provisions in the new media law, the penal code, and all other laws that impede freedom of expression and media freedom.

Amnesty International also joins the Independent Expert in expressing concern over the Government of Somalia's failure to make progress in addressing violations against women and girls during the period under review. We urge Somalia to immediately scrap the proposed "Sexual Intercourse Related Crimes Bill" and ensure that any law that is reintroduced prohibits all forms of violence against women and girls and is in conformity with international law and regional standards relating to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Madam President,

The Independent Expert has called on the Government of Somalia to improve access to integrated health and nutrition services by increasing the government budget allocation by 15 per cent as recommended by the Abuja Declaration². Amnesty International has documented³ how the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 exposed and exacerbated pre-existing broader structural issues facing the country's healthcare system. Now that Somalia is eligible for debt relief, we call on the federal government to allocate a sufficient portion of any debt relief proceeds and new grants to improving the right to health. Thank you.

¹ *We Live in Perpetual Fear: Violations and Abuses of Freedom of Expression in Somalia* (Index AFR 52/1442/2020), 13 Feb. 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR5214422020ENGLISH.pdf>

² *Situation of human rights in Somalia*, Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, UN. Doc. A/HRC/48/80, 14 July 2021, p. 71 <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/48/80>.

³ *"We just watched COVID-19 patients die": COVID-19 exposed Somalia's weak healthcare system but debt relief can transform it*, (Index: AFR 52/4602/2021), 18 Aug. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr52/4602/2021/en/>