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SOMALIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS MURDER OF A PEACE  
ACTIVIST

Amnesty International condemns the recent execution-style killing of Somali peace activist, Elman Ali Ahmed, who seems to have been murdered on account of his peaceful opinions and his peace activities.

Elman Ali Ahmed was the victim of an apparently political killing in Mogadishu on 9 March 1996. He was shot in the back by three so far unidentified hooded gunmen near his home in the conflict-torn southern part of the city, which is controlled by General Mohamed Farah Aideded.

“Elman Ali Ahmed’s murder has sent a chilling message to Somalis desirous of peace and normality -- that *no one is safe*,” Amnesty International said today.

“Somali political leaders should give public guarantees that they will take all necessary steps to protect the safety of individuals and community groups in Somalia who are working for peace and human rights.”

Elman had previously received threats and had been planning to leave Somalia for safety reasons. At his funeral his family, evidently intimidated, simply appealed that no one should take revenge for Elman’s killing. A representative of General Aideded, whose sub-clan Elman was a fellow-member, condemned the murder and denied an allegation that General Aideded’s forces might have been responsible.

Elman Ali Ahmed, 42, was held in high repute in Mogadishu and among the international organizations working for peace, development and human rights in the disintegrated Somali state. A businessman with a vehicle repair-and-recovery service, he had established a technical training institute to rehabilitate young militia fighters with skills to turn to peaceful livelihoods. He was known for giving humanitarian assistance to orphans and street-children and contributing to reviving community facilities such as electricity and roads. He was a football enthusiast and manager of a winning team, where football matches provide a rare opportunity for people of all clans and factions in the divided city to come together peacefully.

Elman did not belong to any political faction and had been outspoken in criticising all political leaders for the continuing violence. He had actively promoted a culture of peace and reconciliation and, unlike many businessmen, went about unarmed. He leaves behind four daughters.

The Nairobi-based Somalia Aid Coordination Bureau paid tribute to him as a “tireless campaigner for peace”. The UN Coordination Team for Somalia said he was “the voice of the voiceless and fearlessly proclaimed peace for all Somalis. He refused to be deterred in his work by threats and paid the ultimate price for his convictions”. His murder had “silenced a voice of reason, reconciliation and peace”.

Amnesty International is calling on General Aideed, whose forces control the territory where the murder occurred, to conduct an impartial investigation, ensure that there is no impunity for those responsible for the crime, and work to develop effective mechanisms for preventing abuses and providing justice.

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### **STOP PRESS**

Amnesty International has learned with dismay of a stoning execution last week in Jowhar in central Somalia, 90 kilometres north of Mogadishu. Mohamed Ali Arran was convicted of raping a 15-year-old girl and sentenced to death by a recently established district Islamic court. This is the seventh stoning execution in the disintegrated former Somali Republic since 1991. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and throughout the world as a violation of the right to life and an extreme form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.