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### **Somali Human Rights Day, 22 July 2006 – Message from Amnesty International**

Amnesty International again this year sends its warm greetings to human rights defenders and their supporters in Somalia on the occasion of Somali Human Rights Day.

We congratulate Dr Ismail Jumaale Human Rights Organization (DIJHRO) for organizing today's event in Mogadishu, in collaboration with the Peace and Human Rights Network (PHRN) and civil society organizations in different regions. We welcome the participation in this event of women's rights activists, journalists, youth groups, minorities, elders and members of various councils and professions, and other people of all walks of life.

Amnesty International wishes to express its concern and condolences at the loss of life of over 100 men, women and children, and injuries to hundreds more, in the recent armed conflict in Mogadishu. The Union of Islamic Courts has reportedly brought a long-desired peace to the city after years of violence, extortion and human rights abuses by the warlords. Amnesty International calls on the Union of Islamic Courts to publicly guarantee the protection of basic human rights and to recognize and support the legitimate work of human rights defenders.

To the human rights defenders who have survived this testing period of the last few months, we know you will be ready for the new challenges in building relationships of respect for human rights. The work you have been doing, despite the risks, must continue: spreading awareness of human rights, reporting human rights violations, protecting victims of abuses, and pressing for "no impunity" for perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations. Amnesty International supports your efforts. The gains you have made for civil society throughout years of extreme dangers and upheavals must be protected and consolidated for the sake of the security and fundamental freedoms of all citizens.

A new Network of Human Rights Defenders has been formed in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Together with a project coordinated by a co-founder of the Dr Ismail Jumaale Human Rights Organization, Amnesty International brought together 43 human

rights defenders from Somalia and all other countries in this region to a conference in Uganda last October. Defenders from the region, whatever the political environment in which they work, committed themselves to support each other impartially and vigorously in the struggle for human rights, which is universal and goes beyond any particular politics.

I conclude today's message of solidarity with all Somali human rights defenders to send you all our best wishes for your celebration of Somali Human Rights Day 2006.

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