

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Somalia (Somaliland/Puntland): Amnesty International condemns bomb attacks in Hargeisa and Bossaso

Amnesty International condemns a series of suicide bomb attacks carried out mid-morning on Wednesday 29 October in Hargeisa, Somaliland and Bossaso, Puntland.

In Hargeisa witnesses reported more than 20 people were killed and more than 30 injured when three separate cars simultaneously drove into compounds housing President Dahir Riyale Kahin's private residence, the UN Development Programme offices, and the Ethiopian consulate, with the last location suffering the worst of the damage and the greatest number of casualties.

The government of Puntland has not released numbers of those killed or wounded in two attacks on government facilities in Bossaso that reportedly took place at approximately the same time as the attacks in Hargeisa, but it appears at least several were killed and others injured.

The UN office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs has confirmed that two of its national staff died in the attack, and 6 others were injured, two seriously. At the UNDP office in Hargeisa one staff member described shock and fear after witnessing the aftermath of the explosion that reportedly killed a local security officer and a driver. One of several vehicles used in yesterday morning's attack had forced entry through the security barrier in front of the UNDP offices after security guards refused to open the gate.

While kidnappings and other forms of armed violence against civilians have increased in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in northeast Somalia in 2008, as well as piracy along the coast, similar violations have been rare in self-declared independent Somaliland.

No one has claimed responsibility for Wednesday's bombings which resemble attacks on Somali, Ethiopian and international authorities and other civilians routinely waged in south central Somalia since Somalia's Transitional Federal Government backed by Ethiopian forces claimed power in December 2006.

Amnesty International condemns all deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, which are clearly prohibited under international law. Amnesty International calls for prompt and impartial investigations into Wednesday's deadly attacks, and calls on Somaliland, Puntland and TFG authorities to ensure that those responsible are held accountable according to international standards of justice without application of the death penalty.

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