

## **Press release by the Somalia Human Rights Working Group on the occasion of International Human Rights Day**

10/12/2014

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, the Somalia Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), consisting of the EU, its Member States, Norway, Switzerland and the US, calls upon all Somalis and international partners to step up their efforts in promoting Human Rights in Somalia.

Over the last 12 months, steps have been taken in Somalia towards the safeguarding of human rights, including the creation of a separate, dedicated Ministry for Women and Human Rights and the introduction in Parliament of the Human Rights Commission bill and the Media bill. A National Action Plan against sexual violence was also endorsed. We look forward to the immediate implementation of these measures and urge the Federal Government of Somalia to be a driving force behind the Human Rights agenda. In addition, the HRWG urges the government to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Sexual exploitation and gender based violence remain among the most serious and frequent human rights violations in Somalia. Instances of sexual violence, often by men in uniform, do not seem to have declined and victims are reluctant to come forward in the face of intimidation and denial. HRWG is deeply concerned over allegations of sexual abuse by AMISOM and welcomes the commitments made in response to the Human Rights Watch Report "*The power these men have over us*". We also repeat our call to the Federal Government of Somalia to address violence against women and girls and to start implement the National Action Plan against sexual violence to end impunity, to take preventive and protective measures, guarantee due process and safeguard the rights of victims and persons at risk.

The Somalia Human Rights Working Group remains concerned about the horrific human rights violations that continue to take place in areas still under control of Al-Shabaab. The HRWG also notes that the responsibility to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law rests equally with all security and armed forces. The use of children in armed conflict (CAAC) and the fate of disengaged child-soldiers is a particular concern. The HRWG welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to get Somalia delisted from the annex of the UN Secretary General Report on CAAC and its assurance to expedite the ratification of the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) and additional protocols.

