



United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

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On Human Rights Day, UN Special Representative appeals to Somalis to end human rights violations and abuse

Nairobi, 09 December 2008 – December 10th marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR). At the core of this Declaration are the rights to dignity, freedom and justice for all.

In commemoration of this landmark occasion, celebrations are taking place world wide. Though the UDHR marks its 60th year in existence, Somalis are yet to enjoy the rights enshrined in the Declaration.

While piracy off the Somalia coast has gained world focus, it should not overshadow the grim reality of millions of Somalis living in extreme poverty exacerbated by conflict and insecurity. Atrocities such as killings, torture, rape, indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations, threats and intimidation, continue unabated. The rights to food, water, education and health—taken for granted in some parts of the world—are constantly undermined and violated. Millions are refugees, others have been displaced and more are in need of emergency assistance. Figures have continued to rise year after year since 1991.

Those who risk their lives to provide assistance to the civilian population and to expose abuses—human rights defenders, journalists, humanitarian and aid workers —have themselves been targeted through abductions, torture and murder.

“On this, Human Rights Day and the 60th anniversary of the UDHR, I especially appeal to all Somalis to take urgent measures to stop these violations and abuses and to the international community to help end impunity,” said UN Special Representative for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah.

“The leaders of all parties and groups involved since 1991 must take responsibility and be held accountable. Punishing the perpetrators of human rights abuses and protecting the vulnerable in their communities are universal obligations.

“I welcome the recent agreement by the Transitional Federal Government, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia and representatives of Civil Society to set up a Joint Working Group on Justice. Looking at ways of addressing impunity should remain at the top of the Somalis’ agenda. Impunity is the enemy of peace and reconciliation. Neither can exist without justice,” Mr. Ould-Abdallah said.

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