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## **Ending Piracy and the Worst Humanitarian Crisis Require Political Solution**

**Fairfax, Virginia, USA, 15 October 2008:** Though the United Nations Security Council (SC) welcomed the August 9 signing of the Djibouti Agreement reached last June by Somalia's Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and a faction of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), that international body has failed to make good on its promise to enforce the agreement and deploy a replacement peace keeping force in Somalia.

In the meantime, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated steadily while media and the international community are focused on the drama and the romanticism of piracy in the high seas.

According to John Holmes, the top United Nations humanitarian official to Somalia, the conditions in Somalia are worse now than at any time in recent history: "...the situation has now reached unprecedented desperate levels; even in the context of Somalia over the last 18 years."

The United Nations Food Security Analysis Unit estimates that there are now more than 3.25 million people affected (43 percent of the total population of Somalia), and these people will need humanitarian assistance at least until the end of the year. According to the same source, the above figures represent an increase of 77 percent since January 2008.

To make matters worst, the U.S. foreign policy toward Somalia continues to pursue short-term goals while ignoring the underlying and persistent causes of the worsening situation in Somalia—the Ethiopian occupation. In an article titled *US Policy Risks Terrorism Blowback in Somalia*, journalist Jim Lobe warns that the "United States counter-terrorism policies and support for the Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government in Somalia have helped create an increasingly desperate humanitarian and security situation in the East African nation."

Ken Menkhaus, a Somalia expert at Davidson College in North Carolina, supports Mr. Lobe's view. In an Associated Press piece published on September 24, 2008, Mr.

Menkhaus concluded that the "...crisis over the past 18 months is exceeding even the worst-case scenarios dreamed up nearly two years ago, when troops from neighboring Ethiopia arrived to oust the Islamic Courts. The nature of the crisis is much more dangerous now...the level of indiscriminate violence is worse than at any time."

There is an undeniable consensus among the experts on the Somali political crisis. They overwhelmingly agree that Ethiopia is part of the problem, and that its presence is the major contributing factor for deteriorating security and political instability.

Menkhaus bluntly states: "If your principal interest is quelling the political violence, then an Ethiopian withdrawal will help. That will take away the principal grievance."

The silence of the international community is tantamount to support for these ongoing atrocities committed by the Ethiopian occupying forces. This is particularly egregious since the United Nations and United States provide financial and diplomatic support to the TFG, which is responsible for committing these atrocities along with Ethiopian troops

The Somali Diaspora Network (SDN) calls upon the United National Security Council to immediately respond to the plight of the Somali people by taking the following actions:

- Immediately intervene to end the bloodshed, displacement of civilians, and further destruction;
- Put pressure on the Ethiopian government to immediately withdraw all its forces from Somalia without precondition or delay;
- Facilitate an all-inclusive dialogue among warring groups. Rather than, bringing in more forces to fight for peace, the UN Security Council should focus on efforts to bring all sides of the conflict together to avoid the isolation of other stakeholders.
- Bring to justice those who ordered or implemented the massacre and the forced displacement of civilians

**ABOUT SOMALI DIASPORA NETWORK (SDN)** – SDN is a grass-roots organization committed to advocate on critical policy matters pertaining to Somali-American interest and issues of concern through communication and information sharing, raising public awareness, and educating the public and government officials.

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