



Horn of Africa Peace and Development Center
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

WHICH WAY SOMALIA: CONTINUED ANARCHY OR PEACE?

The Horn of Africa Peace and Development Center is a non-profit making organization established to work for the achievement of peace, democracy, stability, respect for human rights and rule of law, and socio-economic development in the African region comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Southern Somalia is, again, at an important cross-road with, on the one hand, opportunities for positive action and, on the other hand, continued suffering of the Somali people who have endured so much from the unending anarchy that has prevailed in that sub-region for too long.

The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia as well as the election of another transitional federal government headed by Sharif sheikh Ahmed should facilitate a unique opportunity for Southern Somalia to embark on a fresh path of peace, stability, democracy and development. However, such a positive development could occur only with a collaborative action by Somali leaders who ought to be more dedicated to the interests of the Somali people than their own narrow objectives of gaining political power at any cost.

The ground realities are, however, such that, in fact, a rival extremist group, Al-Shabaab, has taken control of much of the areas in the South vacated by the Ethiopian army, including Baidoa, the seat of the Transitional Parliament. The question, therefore, that looms large is whether Somali leaders will sink into another destructive turmoil including the possibility of a second Ethiopian invasion resulting from a possible second declaration of a jihad by Somali extremists.

In view of the above circumstances, our Center fervently calls on:

- *The Transitional Federal Government to extend its hands of friendship to all Somali opposition elements, especially Al-Shabab, to form a meaningful coalition through an effective reconciliation process for the benefit of the Somali people in general;
- *All Somali leaders to advance the interests of the Somali people by facilitating peace and stability within Southern Somalia as well as with the neighboring areas and countries by forming a collaborative federal government for a period of two years within which a national constitution should be drafted for approval by the Somali people who should exercise their right of electing their leaders in a free and democratic process;
- *The democratically elected leaders to engage in negotiations with the people and leaders of Somaliland, and Puntland with a view to forming a Somali Federation and, thereafter, consider the establishment of a confederation with Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia;

- *The neighboring countries, especially Eritrea and Ethiopia to cease their proxy conflict in Southern Somalia and, instead, positively support the advent of peace, stability, and prosperity in the sub-region;
- *Those countries that currently fuel the deadly conflict in Somalia through financial and military assistance to the contending parties, divert their resources for the urgently needed socio-economic development needs of the Somali people;
- *The international community including the African Union, the Arab League, the European Union, the United Nations and all concerned governments as well as non-governmental organizations to help Southern Somalia in its desperate hour of need for stability, peace, democracy and socio-economic development.

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