H.E. Nur Hassan Hussein
Somali Prime Minister Office
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Brussels, 7 October 2008

Excellency,

I write to you on behalf of the 30 million members of Education International (EI) in 171 countries to express EI’s extreme concern about the lack of decisive and effective measures to guarantee the provision of education in Somalia.

In the southern and central regions of the country -- including the capital -- the education system has collapsed. Most schools are either closed, have been turned into army bases or are being raided. Some classes continue in the midst of gunfire because teachers do not want to let ignorance prevail.

Teachers are singled out for harassment and arrest as they struggle to provide an education to the young in Somalia. A number of teachers, students and administration personnel have been killed or wounded while at the school premises or on their way to school. In September, teachers, students and education personnel have decided to go on strike for three days starting 2 September, to complain about the deliberate targetting of schools by various groups, including the Somali government forces and Ethiopian troops.

Despite the difficulties, local communities have pooled their resources to rebuild schools and send their children to be educated. Many teachers volunteer their services while doing other jobs to sustain themselves.

Excellency, on behalf of its member organisation, the Somalia National Union of Teachers (SNUIT), EI respectfully asks that the provision of education be a priority of the Somali authorities and that schools be recognised as safe sanctuaries. EI also requests that the authorities investigate into the killing of innocent teachers and students and bring those found responsible to justice. In addition, EI insists again on the fact that trade unionists and civil society activists live with constant fear. EI urges you to guarantee the security of trade union activists.

EI would welcome a positive response on these requests, and will, in the meantime, continue to monitor the situation in Somalia.

Sincerely yours,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

Copies sent to:
- Somalia National Union of Teachers (SNUIT)
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)