



Joint Petition by YUSOM & Somali Journalists for Human Rights [SJHR]

Petition: Ignoring Low Level of Awareness on Youths Issues and Human Rights in Somalia

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

YUSOM and SJHR, two local organizations have noted dwindling or low level awareness on youths issues and human rights in Somalia.

Over the years, there has been downscaling awareness situation in the country with regard to the above matters especially in the last few years-from 2013-2017.

This is coupled with shrinking space for youth and local human rights organizations in the country.

Problems noted:

The problems which youths face include:

1. **Unemployment:** lack of job opportunities worsened by the absence of job creation opportunities. No one is bothered in job creation programs unlike the past when NGOs and humanitarian entities were engaged in such initiatives.
2. **Lack of civic education:** awareness programs were allocated funds in the past but currently, NGOs focus mainly on droughts and emergencies. Awareness programs mainly on the development of civic education in the country were long forgotten. Whenever, there are calls for funding, awareness programs are not given allocations but mostly funds for emergencies-food items and NFIs.
3. **Human trafficking:** The lack of motivation among youths together with all the other causes mentioned herein lure youths in the country to expose themselves to human traffickers who take advantage of their vulnerability.
4. **Illiteracy:** Educations like health services has been downscaling over the years due to exhausted funds for learning equipments and incentives for teachers in schools. Schools were shut for this very reason.

5. **Lack of life skills:** similarly, life skills are not taught widely, such as tailoring, fine arts, mechanical skills and wiring, computer skills and ITC.
6. **Lack of access to government services:** bureaucratic impediments do exist at different levels when it comes to accessing services and job opportunities with the government ministries and authorities. Also, NGOs decreased funding skills projects for the youth over the years. The organizations that lobby for those programs for the youths are kept aside. For instance, we have been trying to woo for funding for these noble projects from donors and foundations and at UN level but all in vain.
7. **Lack of morale from the government & the international community:** the government appeases al-Shabaab youths to come back and abandon their extreme in humane treatments against the civilians. However, at the same time, those very youth who are not in al-Shabaab themselves lack opportunities for personal development and living with self-esteem in the country. It can be counterproductive. If opportunities are not created for the youth let alone for them to abandon the group, more might join adding fuel into the hostility and the disparity in the country.

Human rights issues facing youths and the other vulnerable groups:

1. **Shrinking human rights space all over the country:** the number of human rights organizations declines as many human rights organizations cease to function due to various reasons. They include lack of funding, lack of motivation and so on.
2. **Torture:** human rights and youth activists are tortured by different groups in the country because of who they are and the work they do. This forces them migrate or opt to be silenced by the hurdle.
3. **FGM:** Female Genital Mutilation is still a challenge in the country. Despite efforts that were made in the past, currently the practice is still widely practiced because of low level of awareness against it. Almost all the children born –female children are being subjected to the painful practice. It is harmful to the future of our girls and women because they suffer during sexual intercourse, during menstruation and during child delivery. It can cause ill health, displeasure and even death.
4. **Denial of education and other necessary services:** many children lack the opportunity to go to school or learn because of various reasons including school closures due to lack of remunerations for teachers and school staff, lack of fees by parents, child labor and so on.
5. **Lack of dignified means of livelihood:** Youths face proper means of livelihood. They don't have dignified means of livelihood. There is high rate of unemployment in the country. Job creation through informal sector and the formal sector is lacking.

6. **Killing and injury:** Youths are killed for no apparent reasons-extrajudicial killings because they are associated to one group or another while they are innocent. Sometimes they are injured or wounded while innocent.
7. **Displacement:** youths are among the populations displaced by conflicts and droughts in the country. In Somalia, there are about 1.2 million IDPs according to UN estimates most of them vulnerable groups including the youths.
8. **Misappropriation of funds meant for youth and human rights protection by some NGOs and authorities:** humanitarian organizations combine efforts or pull together the voices of all civil society organizations including youth and human rights organizations when calling for funds from the international donors but once they funds are gotten, youth and local human rights organizations are forgotten and their share of funds misappropriated, a bad practice which hampers our work for our beneficiaries which rely on our projects which we can hardly sustain due to limited resources.
9. **Funding disparity:** Local organizations including youths and local human rights organizations are not funded except a handful of them. Most of the funds are pocketed by international organizations which are not used for the intended purposes but for administrative costs of those organizations hence denying both local organizations and target beneficiaries of funds dry! They buy big vehicles and live large convening meeting after meeting and conference after conference discussing non-existing efforts while vulnerable people perish. They also do assessment after assessment as victims of droughts and other adversities decay.
10. **Bureaucracy within the donors and within the humanitarian fraternity:** funds are not released in time. It is tied with tons and tons of applications in the name of proposals which bear no result but end up in rejection whoever applies. It is only given to major organizations very often through scratch my back, I scratch yours! Local organizations are left behind often being taken to circles for nothing. Sarcastically the very local organizations that were muzzled from donor funds collected from well wishers all over the world can be told to fill forms and assessment surveys which hold no water being told that they are technical staff. This is not mockery of the essence of humanitarian work only but also bureaucracy of the highest order. If you entrap young organizations, do you think you want to do good for humanity?
11. **Lack of political, social and economic participation:** youths in Somalia are rarely involved in political, social and economic opportunities in the county. They can hardly join the government; they cannot find loans and other income generating opportunities. Youth credit efforts are not empowered.

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In the past , there have been funds set aside for the protection of human rights and the mitigation of the plights of the youths, but over the years that decreased tremendously due to various reasons including selfishness and greed at donor, humanitarian fraternity and stakeholders' levels.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Creation of jobs. As in the past, youths should be given opportunities for employment within NGOs and other institutions.
- ✓ Awareness programs must given allocations in terms of funds. As in the past, awareness programs should be given more allocations in terms of funding through relevant channels such as youth-led organizations.
- ✓ Human trafficking can be curbed in the country through improved justice and through material and morale support to the youths and other vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Education should be improved through funding
- ✓ Services such as water and healthcare should be improved too. Health has been downscaling during the recent years with 8.5% in 2015 and 2016 according to UN statistics. This is the lowest since 2008. Clinics and hospitals are closing down for this very reason. Funds are less and mostly don't reach target hospitals. Funds should be channeled to us, as we are trustworthy organizations concerned only for the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Local youth and human rights organizations should be empowered through funding; most of them are long forgotten by the international community; we appeal the generosity of the international community to salvage our organizations and initiatives through humanitarian gesture.

For more on this,

Kindly communicate to Yusom through email address: info@yusom.org and SJHR through email address: info@sojohur.org