

Declaration by Affiliated Unions of Federation of Somali Trade Unions



We leaders representing ten affiliated unions of Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU), meeting at the head office of the federation in Mogadishu, today 28 September, adopt the following Declaration:

We have come together to exchange views and consult about developing threats and attempts to destabilize the federation by external forces. We believe these threats and attacks are well-targeted and well-orchestrated work of highly sophisticated individuals.

We are suspicious that these attacks are politically motivated, and are intended to intimidate and threaten FESTU and its elected leadership. Everybody knows that FESTU has become a political target not only from our unscrupulous employers and despotic authorities, but also from those who can't see the progress recorded by the federation and its unions.

We are here more united, stronger, and more confident under the executive committee elected at the National Congress of the Federation on 12-13 March. We refuse to relinquish our independent and democratic trade union federation because workers must continue to play a central role in addressing the many challenges facing our country.

We are appalled by death threats against elected leaders of the executive committee of the federation while the trade union officials has been seeking the improvement of working conditions.

Over the last two weeks, anonymous callers have threatened the life of four executive committee members whose vocal support for the rights of workers, their push to win collective bargaining agreements, and their militancy to remain independent have made them a target. Callers informed union leaders they will be eliminated "if you did not leave Mogadishu" or "sign union resignation letter", if not you "organise your burial white dresses because we are going to kill you".

Today, a bomb was buried at the entrance gate of FESTU headquarters; probably it was buried last night. The bomb was removed and handed over to police. It was not coincidence with threats and planned meeting of leaders of affiliated unions. This was another act of coercions.

We are convinced that external forces have been planning to undermine and weaken FESTU and its affiliates since April 2013. Among these forces were keen to demoralize continued growth of FESTU, weaken federation's determination to mobilise workers and society more broadly behind an agenda of social transformation for new Somalia. Especially we consider these attacks clear bid to kill emergency and growth of Somali trade unions.

The external forces set on-going plans, financed individuals who have never been in a union let alone to have a role in this federation. External forces encouraged use of fraudulent emails in addition to using FESTU's logo, letterheads and business cards. They have plans to support holding conferences / meetings in the name of FESTU so that these individuals to wilfully and illegally misrepresent FESTU and misinform our members and trade union community. We

deplore these fraudulent and unofficial activities as pure theft of organisational property. We warn members and partners our total disassociation. We will shame and name external forces behind these senseless activities.

We remain unshaken and we will defend ourselves in the same manner we defended workers during organising and mobilisation of unions.

We were taken aback by vitriol spewing attacking the person of the FESTU General Secretary Omar Faruk Osman over the stance taken by the federation with regard to its independence and none-alignment with political parts. Attacks were personalised yet Omar Faruk Osman is NOT FESTU but merely a face of the organization but behind that face there are 10 fully fledged affiliates who are members of the federation and executive committee that collectively make decisions.

We would also wish to confirm to the workers for whom FESTU primarily exists that FESTU through its current leadership as elected in March 2013 will continue to champion the interests, rights and cause of the workers without fear or favour. In so doing, FESTU shall remain independent and neutral. We say to the workers do not allow detractors to sway you and to lead you astray.

Our communities still suffer criminal violence, with the capital city in particular under attack from deadly violence, the rape and killing of children, women, intellectuals, human rights defenders and bombings. We call on all our people to unite against the elements behind these attacks, and on the government to take decisive action to protect our people.

The federation and its unions will be taking extra-ordinary measures to make sure that our offices and leadership are safe and protected. We hope that the police will act on this latest incident, but we are slowly losing faith in their ability to do so.

We pledge to campaign to the last ounce of our energies against on-going intimidation and harassment of our labour leaders and members.

We will continue to fight for workers rights. We will continue to demand a living wage for the workers of Somalia.

Nabadiino (Peace)

Adopted & signed by:

1. Ibrahim Ahmed Salah, President, Somali Transport Workers Union
2. Abdi Aden Guled, Senior Vice President, National Union of Somali Journalists
3. Abdiqani Barkhad Abukar, General Secretary, Somali Telecommunication & Post Workers Union
4. Abdirisak Adan Arab, President, Somali Agriculture and Food Workers Union
5. Abdiaziz Ahmed, Secretary, Somali Maritime, Fisheries & Port Workers Union
6. Mohamed Hassan, General Secretary, Somali Hotel and Catering Workers Union
7. Samira Alas, General Secretary, Somali Nurse Workers Association
8. Mohamed Arab, General Secretary, Somali Tailors and Textile Workers Union
9. Jama Abdulqadir, President, National Electricity Workers Union of Somalia
10. Farah Dahir Hussein, General Secretary, Somalia Construction Workers Unions

Done in Mogadishu this day September 28, 2013