**Somalia: Rape, Impunity and Human Rights Violations in Somalia**

September 10, 2015

AllAfrica.com

http://allafrica.com/stories/201509161982.html

*Sexual violence continues to increase in Somalia following the recent impeachment against the president, which caused political instability and a crackdown on IDPs around the capital city.*

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network) is strongly condemning the recent ruling of a Somali Court against a 15-year old rape victim which encourages a culture of impunity, especially in cases where government officials are involved.

The official, a presidential guard and a regular customer of the tea seller, lured the young girl to his house where he raped her. The young girl courageously reported the incident to her family who became subject to continuous threats by the perpetrator. Legal proceedings leading to the incarceration and investigation of the official by the Criminal Investigation Department were initiated. However, when the case went for trial, the court ruled in favor of the perpetrator. The official was acquitted based on fabricated witnesses who stated that the victim is his wife and they had so far kept their relationship from public.

SIHA is deeply concerned about security threats against civil society organizations in Somali, especially those defending the rights of vulnerable groups especially women and girls who were victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Sexual violence continues to increase in Somalia following the recent impeachment against the president, which caused political instability and a crackdown on IDPs around the capital city. The situation for civil society organizations has to date not been without challenges, however latest trends have shown that carrying out work as civil society actors is becoming increasingly difficult regarding the culture of impunity within the justice system of Somalia. Sources indicate that violations committed by government officials have been on the rise in recent months, but given their influence and political power, it is impossible to hold them accountable for the crimes committed.

SIHA is urging the international community to condemn and monitor the crimes committed with impunity against women and girls in Somalia.Incidents such as the one described above display the horrific reality of SGBV crimes in Somali and send a warning to human rights activists and civil society actors about their engagement in bringing justice to the victims in light of the pressing threats against victims and civil society actors.

Furthermore, SIHA urges the UN agencies, especially those concerned with the justice system and human rights to closely monitor law enforcement and the judicial system and take actions against those practices of impunity.

The Somali government should collaborate with the concerned civil society actors to improve the possibilities of legal actions, since forcing civil society actors to limit their scope of work will only further deprive vulnerable girls and women and especially victims of sexual violence from acquiring legal aid. Further the case clearly demonstrates challenges and the need to address the corruption and impunity within the government structures of Somalia.