Somalia

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 211th session (Manama, 15 March 2023)

Amina Mohamed Abdi ©AMISOM

SOM-13 – Amina Mohamed Abdi

Alleged human rights violations

✔ Murder

A. Summary of the case

Ms. Amina Mohamed Abdi entered parliament in 2012; she was re-elected in 2016 and remained a member of the House of the People until her assassination in March 2022.

According to the complainant, Ms. Amina Mohamed Abdi was killed on 23 March 2022 as she left a polling station in the constituency of Beledweyne. Reportedly, a suicide bomber ran up to hug her and detonated his explosive vest, killing her and many others. According to media reports, the al-Shabaab jihadist insurgent group claimed responsibility for the attack, which was followed by another blast at the hospital of Beledweyne, ostensibly to ensure that all survivors taken there for treatment were killed. The then President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (also known as Farmajo), condemned the attacks and the then Prime Minister, Mohamed Hussein Roble, urged the security agencies to carry out an investigation into the murder.

The complainant claims that, despite the official position alleging that al-Shabaab was behind the murder, Ms. Abdi was in fact the victim of a State-sponsored attack due to her fearless efforts to investigate the disappearance of Ms. Ikran Tahlil, a young female civil servant who was allegedly killed by agents from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in June 2021. Several high-ranking officials, including former Prime Minister Roble, have publicly stated that the killing of Ms. Abdi was an attempt to disrupt justice in Ms. Tahlil's case. In September 2021, Prime Minister Roble had dismissed the NISA chief following Ms. Tahlil's disappearance, leading to tensions with President Farmajo, who proceeded to withdraw the Prime Minister’s executive powers.
Since the death of Ms. Abdi, the complainant asserts that a suspect has been identified and apprehended by the authorities. A man named Mohamed Abdi Nuur (also known as Dr. Fanah) has testified that he was tasked with organizing the attack by a regional deputy of the al-Shabaab armed group on behalf of high-ranking Somalian officials with links to the insurgency group. However, the complainant reports that the relevant segments of the video recording of that testimony have been removed. The complainant alleges that this was done to mislead the public into concealing the true mastermind of the murder as well as the collusion of certain State officials with al-Shabaab.

Somalia is facing an increase in violent armed attacks as part of a decades-long civil war against insurgent groups. In past cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the federal authorities have not been able to investigate the murder of parliamentarians due to structural challenges plaguing the country’s judicial system. The complainant is of the view that the justice system is not reliable due to the normalization of impunity for violent crimes and chronic corruption, and calls for an international investigation of the murder.

Following the May 2022 elections, there was a peaceful transfer of power in June 2022, raising hopes for a more democratic and peaceful future for the country. The newly elected President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, appointed Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre as Prime Minister. Both belong to the same party as Ms. Abdi, the Union for Peace and Development Party.

B. Decision

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. Condemns the brutal murder of Ms. Amina Abdi; stresses that this vicious crime must not be left unpunished and that all those responsible for Ms. Abdi’s death must be held to account in keeping with principles of accountability and human rights law; urges parliament – within the boundaries of the separation of powers – to help ensure that justice is done and thereby send a strong signal that the assassination of a parliamentarian will not be left unpunished; calls on the Somali authorities to do their utmost to ensure that justice is done; and wishes to receive information on any steps made by the authorities in that regard;

2. Regrets that the Somalian parliamentary authorities were not able to meet with the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians during the 146th IPU Assembly, despite the invitation extended by the Committee; and recalls in this regard that the Committee does everything possible, in accordance with its Rules and Practices, to promote dialogue with the authorities of the country concerned, and primarily with its parliament, so as to achieve a satisfactory resolution in the cases before it;

3. Acknowledges the efforts undertaken thus far to identify the culprits and try one of the suspects, an individual under the name of Mohamed Abdi Nuur, also known as Dr. Fanah, as reported by the complainant; is shocked by the testimony of the suspected organizer of the attack about the manner in which the attack was allegedly planned and carried out; is disturbed by allegations put forward by the complainant that certain high-ranking state officials are behind this vicious attack as a reprisal for Ms. Abdi’s advocacy for accountability in the case of the enforced disappearance of Ms. Ikran Tahlil; and wishes to receive the official views of the authorities on these allegations and to know whether the investigation into the murder is taking this lead into account;

4. Affirms that the IPU stands ready to provide assistance, if so requested, aimed at building the capacities of parliament and other public institutions to identify any underlying issues that may deter the resolution of this case and to rectify such issues, given the sizeable challenges faced by state institutions in Somalia and the recent efforts aimed at a transition towards peace and democracy based on the rule of law; requests the competent authorities to provide further information on how the IPU could best provide such assistance; and calls on the authorities to make use of the expertise of the United Nations special procedures, including the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, to ensure accountability in this case;

5. Requests the Secretary General to convey this decision to the relevant authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;

6. Requests the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.