

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT MOHAMED SIYAAD

BARRE

[Somali Manifesto I]

Somali Elders

Horn of Africa

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This issue of *Horn of Africa* was "in press" when, by some timely contact, we received the following document. Signed by more than 100 wise men, intellectuals, elders, notables and spiritual leaders, the document is entitled "Somali Manifesto I," thereby implying that other "manifestos" of similar nature and intent are to follow. We received it in two versions: one in elegant Somali, the other in English. We presume that it was fast written in Somali, with considerable thought and reflection, then hastily translated into English because: a) the prose of the Somali version is by far superior to the English equivalent and b) the authors' names and signatures are attached only to the Somali version. Whatever the circumstances of its inception, there can be no doubt that it is a significant document, and that its title of "**manifesto**" was deliberately chosen by the authors to underscore that significance. To begin with, the signatories constitute many Somali personalities still remaining inside the country- elder statesmen (like **H.E. Mr. Aadan Abdullah Osmaan; former president of truly democratic Somalia**), seasoned politicians, intellectuals, and "senior figures" – selected, apparently, to represent numerous ethnic, religious, class and political interests in the country. Addressed, in the manner of a petition, to General/ President Mohamed Siyaad Barre, the document does not mince words. It outlines, in painful, lacerating language, the political, economic, physical and spiritual horrors that have been inflicted upon the Somali people in 20 years of "reign of terror" by aging dictator, General Barre. The brave authors of this document, admirably, do not hesitate to call evil things by their names. As such, they are to be commended not only for their rare candor but also for their singular courage, given that they possess no physical protection against a tired, frustrated tyrant who has increasingly grown erratic, unpredictable and therefore "dangerous not only to his own health but to the health of anyone within his reach."

The contents of the "manifesto" are self-explanatory and require no exegesis on our part. We think, however, that we, "the Somali Diaspora," are morally obligated: a) to publicize and disseminate the signatories' names to all international human rights bodies in order to ensure their physical safety to the extent possible, b) to express, immediately and forthrightly, our solidarity with them c) to aid them, morally and materially, in their difficult circumstances and d) to help implement, with all due speed, the concrete and visionary proposals

offered by them in order to realize their recommendation of a "Conference of National Reconciliation and Salvation" to be held in a safe, neutral venue.

To: General Mohamed Siyaad Barre
President of the Somali Democratic Republic
Mogadishu

Subject: [Recommendation Aimed at Bringing About National Reconciliation and Salvation](#)

We, the undersigned elders, who took part in the national struggle for independence – sultans and chiefs of the Somali Communities from the various regions, religious leaders, businessmen, intellectuals and others – strongly and unanimously feel that we can no longer remain passive spectators, nor ignore the duties and responsibilities that we owe to our people and our country, both from Somali and Islamic points of view, given the sufferings, the bloodshed and the incalculable loss of life and property that our people have suffered for so long; as well as all the consequent unforeseeable and negative repercussion and risks that these may result *vis-à-vis* our national integrity and security.

Among others things, we are deeply disturbed by:

THE CIVIL WAR:

- A The civil war ranging between the government forces and the opposition movements which has caused unlimited disaster to our motherland, not only militarily but also politically, economically, socially, morally, and materially- to the point of making us feel ashamed of ourselves as Somalis as well as being made pessimistic about our future.
- B The killings of tens of thousands of innocent civilians including: the aged, women and children as well as the destruction and looting of their properties.
- C The fleeing of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes because of fear for their lives which compelled to seek refuge in other countries like Ethiopia and Kenya.

The destruction and looting of major cities and towns including: Hargeisa, Burao, Shiekh, Erigavo, Buhodle, Galkaio, Galdogob, Do'ol, Wargalo, Hilmo and its surrounding hamlets, Afmadow, Liboya and Bada'de. To our shock and dismay, most of the wells and water reservoirs on which, because of the and nature of our land, the very existence and the life of the nomads and their livestock so much depend were deliberately destroyed as punitive measures.

LACK OF SECURITY AND RESPECT FOR LAW

The lack of security and respect for the law in the country have reached such proportions that there is hardly any Somali citizen, or a foreigner who sleeps at his house at present without fear for the safety of his own life, his family and property.

In addition, as a result of the regime, divide and rule policy, a widespread tribal feuds and hooliganism have taken and are taking an unlimited toll in almost every region throughout the country, causing great losses to life and property, and the disruption of trade, transport and communication as well as the sowing the seeds of disharmony among brotherly communities- thus endangering the peaceful co-existence of Somali communities.

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In its twenty years' rule, the present regime has succeeded in monopolizing power in the domains of politics, economy and security. In the process, the people lost all their basic freedoms and role in the participation of the affairs of their own country. What is well known to all is the regime's arbitrary practice of throwing thousands of innocent citizens to prisons simply because they 'happened to comment on certain government policies or decisions which seemed to them unjust; worse still, others were jailed for the mere suspicion of being members or sympathizers of the opposition. Thousands of citizens have suffered years of imprisonment under cruel living conditions without proper food, water, light, health care, bedding etc. for periods up to 17 years. Many were tortured and others died while still in detention without any formal charges against them or due process of law. We cannot help but note, hereby, in a combination of shame and irony, that under the European colonial rule, the ordinary Somali enjoyed the right to *Habeas Corpus* whereas he has been arbitrarily deprived of such rights as a citizen by the regime as early as October, 1969 with Decree Law No. 64. In this case, comparing the record of the present regime to that of the British and Italian colonialism, doesn't independence mean less freedom to the ordinary Somali citizen? We must say, that in light of the kind of treatment the present regime has normally subjected to the Somali people for the past twenty years, many Somalis cannot help but sadly say that: "things were better under colonialism!"

No one can deny the fact that the present regime's human rights violation against the Somali citizen has become so notorious for so long to have reached such a point whereby Somalia has been listed as one of the four or five countries worse violators of human rights in the whole world by Amnesty International, African Watch and other human rights Organization.

GOVERNMENTAL MALADMINISTRATION

All Somalis as well as foreigners interested in Somali affairs are fully aware of the fact that government mismanagement and public maladministration have reached such a low and shameful point that the present regime is normally characterized with unconstrained corruption – from top to bottom – tribalism, nepotism, tyranny, injustice and inefficiency to the point where one cannot help but ask whether there is any national sense of responsibility in those who are supposed to govern the Somali people.

Public administration, from the center to the regional and district levels, and all public services that were intended to provide the basic foundations for the life of

the people throughout the land, such as maintenance of law and order, protection of life and property, public health, basic education, water and electricity, transport and communication and the economic system, have practically ceased to function.

The Somali Commercial and Savings Bank, practically the only bank in the country, as a result of the monopoly introduced by the regime, now refuses or is unable to cash, strangely as this may sound, the very circular cheques and other credit papers that it previously issued to its customers with savings and bank accounts. This adds to the painful misery of poor citizens who now cannot get their own little savings so badly needed for the daily survival of their children. In addition, the far-reaching serious economic losses suffered by the Somali traders and business community with a large deposits who cannot get their capital out of the bank in order to conduct their normal business transactions. This is bound to consequently have negative ill-effects and incalculable losses to the whole national economy, which Somalia can ill-afford.

The Somali Commercial and Savings Bank has practically closed its doors to all customers for the past eight weeks as of March 15, 1990. It is now widely believed that the bank is totally bankrupt and in fact is thirty billion shillings in the red. This has resulted from political, tribal interference and unbearable pressures on the management of the bank from the highest circles of the government who facilitated easy credit to the tune of hundreds of millions of shillings to the wives, sons, daughters, brothers and other relatives, as well as tribesmen and other political favorites of the governing echelon. Most of these loans are irrecoverable, since they were guaranteed by any assets or equities.

Another issue that is of particular concern to us and so deeply distresses us is the case of the National Army and the extent to which it has been reduced to an instrument to monopolize power and serve the political and tribal interests of the regime. It has also been used as an instrument of oppression of the Somali people.

The high purpose for which the National Army was created by the first freely elected government was to defend our national sovereignty and to serve our national interest as a professional body, above political, tribal and personal interests. The Somali people had very high hopes in the National Army and gave their limited resources, paid a high price by giving its creation a top priority over badly needed social and economic developments.

Contrary to any sense of justice, the regime has placed its own political power and tribal interest above that of the whole nation by corrupting the army and involving it in party politics and tribal interests and promoting the officer corps on the basis of political and tribal loyalty as opposed to the traditional promotional system based on "professional merits" as it used to be in the past, under the command of the late General Da'ud Abdulle Hersi during the democratic civilian government prior to October, 1969.

The irresponsible, egoistic and power hungry instrumentalization of the National Army in order to maintain dictatorial power and tribal interest has reduced the National Army to the point where it has lost all inspect and credibility in the eyes of the Somali people. It has now practically disintegrated into tribal factions, sadly and painfully as this may sound to all sensible Somalis.

ECONOMICAL DISASTER

Today there is no doubt that hunger and misery have been felt in every Somali house except in those of the very few privileged ones. The entire national economy is in shambles. As a result, tens of thousands of Somalis have fled the country to the outside world in search for survival.

Unfortunately, the bulk of emigrants are the educated and the skilled laborers whose skills and expertise the country would need most to remedy the present national chaos.

The economic situation puts the existence of state at risk. It has already reduced the Somali people to the humiliating condition of being international beggars.

This is an end-product of the dictatorial regime's mismanagement and corruption as well as the arbitrary imposition of Marxist Economic system contrary to our Islamic beliefs and cultural heritage. This philosophy has now been universally acknowledged as a failing system as demonstrated by recent events in Eastern Europe. By comparison, it is worthwhile remembering here that prior to the military take-over; Somalia had a national reserve fund of over sixty million dollars, plus a sum of stand-by hard currency capable of covering all import requirements for the whole country for four months.

To sum up, the present disastrous and tragic situation in which we find ourselves locked in is the end-product of twenty years of dictatorial rule and mismanagement by the present regime. The regime has arbitrarily deprived the Somali people of their fundamental rights for self-determination as well as the participation in the national decision-making process, affecting their own lives, families and future.

According to our considered opinion, only a replacement of the present regime by a care-taker government will get us out of the present mess (and the sooner we admit the reality the better) and will pave the way for a political settlement and peaceful solution to our most critical issues. This caretaker government must enjoy the respect and the confidence of the Somali people in general. The sooner we recognize the God given rights of the Somali people to freely choose their own government at every level, the better.

After all, once European Colonialism has left for good is there any Somali who has any right to rule, colonize, or worse still enslave other Somalis by force? We do take note of the fact that lately the regime has been publicizing its willingness to abandon the present one-party rule, and its readiness to make changes in its own constitution in order to provide for its replacement with a multiparty democratic system, in time for a new political election in 1990.

However, the grim truth is that the Somali people have for the past twenty years become utterly tired, disillusioned and skeptical of the usual political rhetoric and empty promises that they have been subjected to and can no longer be deceived. If the regime seriously means business, it should immediately take concrete, clear-cut and tangible steps regarding constitutional changes, the introduction of a multiparty democratic system and free political elections under the close monitoring of independent observers from the Muslim World and Western democracies.

In order to dissipate all doubts and suspicions, why not allow the widest possible popular participation by duly chosen representatives of the Somali people, in order to realize the proposed constitutional, political and electoral goals?

It seems to us that because the present regime has been accustomed to a total monopoly of political power for more than two decades, it is unable to appreciate the vital importance of popular participation in the political process. On the other hand, it is as clear as day light, to all concerned, that the present regime by itself alone no longer commands neither the power nor the ability to lead us from the present danger, without the concerted effort and full backing of the Somali people as a whole.

To give certain credibility to the proposed constitutional and democratic changes, the first step needed is to abrogate immediately all the repressive laws as well as all the institutional "apparatchiki" (NSS, the Hangash or Military Intelligence, the Dhabarjebinta or Military Counter Intelligence, Koofiyad-Casta- Red Hats or Military Police, Barista Xisbiga- Party Investigators, Guulwadayaal- Party militia etc) such as:

- 1 Law No. 01 of 10 January, 1970- power of arrest.
- 2 Law No. 03 of 10 January, 1970- creation of National Security Court.
- 3 Law No. 14 of 15 February, 1970- creation of National Security Services.
- 4 Law No. 54 of 10 September, 1970- National Security.
- 5 Law No. 64 of 10 October, 1970- the abrogation of the right to Habeas Corpus.
- 6 Law No. 67 of 01 Nov. 1970- Socialistic Defence.
- 7 Law No. 38 of April, 1972- judicial powers to the Military Supreme Revolutionary Council.

At the same time, the old penal laws of the land, code No-5 of 16 December, 1962 and the penal procedure No. 1 of 10 January, 1963- enacted by the former democratically elected Somali Parliament- should be immediately restored enforce entirely.

After having suffered oppressive dictatorship for more than two decades, the Somali people now feel heart-fully thirsty and hungry to re-acquire their fundamental freedoms and national dignity. Therefore, if the regime is honestly serious enough about its declared intentions of restoring democratic pluralism, then the best test case would be the immediate abrogation of all the above mentioned Marxist inspired oppressive laws, thus restoring forthwith, to the

Somali people, their sacred rights to basic freedoms such as: freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom to travel. It may well be worth remembering of the various prominent Somalis who after having suffered detention without trial for well over a decade have subsequently been placed under travel restrictions.

Considering the fact that the regime is now trying very hard to improve its lost image and credibility inside and outside the country, what better means can there be to achieve its own goals than the immediate abolition of these repressive laws and the restoration of basic democracy?

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND SALVATION CONFERENCE (NRSC)

First Priority of the NRSC is to:

- 1 Put a stop as quickly as possible all the blood that has so sadly and so painfully been shed in most parts of Somalia;
- 2 Restore law and order, peace and stability through the country;
- 3 Find a political solution to the widespread civil war being fought.

CREATE A TRUE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM BASED ON THE CONSENT OF THE SOMALI PEOPLE

We believe that it is indispensable to call the Conference of National Reconciliation and Salvation according to our traditional "Shin" system of the most popular political, tribal, religious and business leaders from all regions of Somalia- leaders who enjoy the full respect and confidence of their local and national constituents- to convene on a neutral ground as early as possible preferably in Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Italy.

In order to prepare the ground and make sure that such a vital "shir" gets well organized, we propose that a 13-member committee, called the Committee For the Preparation of the National Conference of Reconciliation and Salvation, composed of the following personalities, who in our opinion possess all the necessary qualifications required for such a delicate task of national importance, be immediately created:

The Signatories of the Document

1. Mr. Adam Abbdulle Osman (First President of the Country)
2. Shiekh Mukhtar Mohamed Hussein (Former President of the National Parliament)
3. Dr. Ismail Jumale Osoble (Lawyer and Ex-Minister of Information)
4. Haji Muse Boqor (Ex Minister of Interior)
5. Dr. Mohamed Rajis Ahmed (Lawyer, Former Member of Parliament)
6. Mohamed Abshir Muse (Commandant of Somali Defence Forces 1958-60 Ex-Commandant of Somali Police Forces 1960—69)
7. Sultan Dulane Rafle Guled
8. Mohamed Shiekh Ahmed Muse Ex-President of Supreme Court
9. Garad Abdiqani Garad Jama
10. Haji Jirde Hussein Duale

- 11 Haji Ali Shidde Abdi (Ex-Vice President- Somali Youth League Ex-Ambassador)
12. Shiekh Sharif Sharafow
13. Shiekh Ibrahim Suley

The duties and the responsibilities of the Preparatory Committee would be as follows:

1. The organization, preparation of the agenda and the procedural rules of the conference;
2. The selection and invitation of all conference participants and the arrangements of all meetings required, making sure that all communities are fairly represented;
3. Consultations with any one, or party who may have useful contribution to make, inside or outside the country;
4. Conduct and oversee all necessary discussion with the government and the opposition groups, with the principal aim of laying the foundation for a peaceful political solution to the present crises;

Participants in the Conference for Reconciliation and Salvation:

- 1 Representatives of the governing party with full authority;
- 2 Representatives of all opposition groups with full authority;
- 3 Leaders, representing all regions in Somalia, who enjoy the full confidence and respect of their people;
- 4 Most prominent religious leaders and intellectuals of national standing;

The Principal aims of the conference on National Reconciliation and Salvation:

- 1 Stopping the blood-shed amongst Somali brothers and the restoration of law and order, peace and stability to the country;
- 2 Reaching a common agreement on the basic principles governing the new Somali constitution;
- 3 Reaching a political agreement on the timetable and the best electoral procedure for holding free elections e.g. for a new parliament, a new president, new regional and district councils, necessary reforms on public administration, the economy, public services and the armed forces.
- 4 Formation of a caretaker government to be charged with the responsibility of carrying out the final decisions and agreement arrived in the conference.

Finally, we earnestly hope that your Excellency will agree with us on the gravity of the present situation and the unprecedented danger facing our nation. Hence there is an absolute need on the part of every sensible citizen everywhere to put national interest first and concentrate all their efforts- moral and material resources- in safeguarding our motherland.

We, therefore, trust that you will give our proposal the maximum attention and most careful consideration as well as the urgency that the present national crisis objectively calls for in order to save our national integrity and honor.

THE COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND SALVATION

Signatories' names in the order they appeared in the document:

1. Haaji Aadan Abdulle 'Ismaan
2. Sheekh Mukhtar Mohamed Hussein
3. Haaji Muuse Boqor
4. Dr. Ismaa'iil Jim'aale
5. Dr. Mahamed Raajis Ahmed
6. Mahamed Abshir Muuse
7. Dr. Huseen Haaji Bood
8. Suldaan Turki Suldan Hussein Haile
9. 'Ali Shiddo 'Abdi
10. Sheekh Muudeey
11. Haaji 'Ismaan Ahmed Robble
13. Haaji Baynah Barre
14. Ahmed Mahamed 'Abdulle
15. Mahamuud Yuusuf Aadan
16. Prof. Ibraahim Mahamuud Abyan
17. Dr. Mahamuud Jaama Afbalaar
18. Haashi Weheliye Maalin
19. Haji Kamaaludiin Haaji Ali
20. 'Abdulaahi Sheekh Mahamuud
21. Mahamed 'Ali 'Aateeye
22. 'All Mahdi Mahamed
23. 'Ali Huseen Gura'
24. Dr. 'Abdullaahi Ma'allin 'Abdulle
25. Boqor 'Abdulaahi Boqor Muuse
26. Mahamed Faarah Siyaad
27. Saalah 'Ali 'Abdulle
28. Dr. Hasan Dhimbil Warsame
29. Dr. 'Abdi'asiis Nuur Hersi
30. Mire 'Olaad 'Awaale
31. Baashi 'Ali Jaama'
32. Dr. 'Abdi Sheekh Aadan
33. Hersi Haaji Jaama'
34. 'Abdulqaadir Haashi 'Igaal Dholo-dholo
35. Aadan 'Umar
36. Dr. 'Abdirahmaan 'ilmi 'Igaal
37. 'Abdulaahi 'Umar Bootaan
38. Mahamed Si'iid 'Iyow Gentelman

39. Mahamed Diirriye
40. Dr. Sheekh 'Ali Mahamuud
41. Haaji 'Ali Geeddi Shirdoon
42. Khaliif Jaama'
43. Dr. Muumin 'Umar Ahmed
44. Yuusuf Jaama'
45. Dr. Ahmed Mahamed Darmaan
46. 'Abdi Haaji Yuusuf Shulu'
47. Haaji Ahmed Raage 'Abdi
48. 'Abdi Bullaale
49. Inj. 'Abdulqaadir Aadan 'Abdulle
50. Ahmed Ismaa'iil Boqor
51. 'Abdulqaadir Iimaan Aadan
52. Mahamuud Haaji 'Abdulaahi Qore
53. Hasan Haaji Mahamed
54. Dr. Mahamuud Muhumed Huseen
55. 'Abdulaahi Haaji Yuusuf 'Igaal
56. Dr. 'Abdi Mahamuud Mahamed
57. Jibrill Hasan Mahamed
58. Mahamuud Geeddi Mahamuud
59. Mahamed 'Ali Haashi
60. Ahmed 'Ilmi 'Ismaan
61. 'Abdi Iidle Chuuriye
62. Huseen Ahmed 'Abdulle
63. Ibraahim Rooble Warfaa
64. Faarah Warsame 'Ismaan
65. Ahmaday Sheekh Qaasim
66. 'Ali Iimaan Gadaw
67. Sheekh 'Abdirashid Sheekh 'Ali Suufi
68. 'Ali Mahamed Osbite
69. 'Abdulaahi Faarah Hoolif
70. Haaji Mahamuud Koogaar
71. Hasan Barre
72. Hasan Guureeye Kaarshe
73. Dr. 'Abdulqaadir Mahamed Abuukar
74. Mohamed Jaama' Geyre
75. Dubad Sugelle Mohamuud
76. Haaji M. 'Awaale Liibaan
77. Jaama' 'Ali Jaama'
78. Mhamaed Yuusuf Faarah
79. Yaasiin Guure 'Ali
80. Mahamed 'Umar Jaama'
81. 'Abdullaahi 'Iise Yuusuf

82. Mahamed Sa'iid Ismaa'il
83. Beeldaaje 'Ali Nuur Faarah "Bin Ja'eyl
84. 'Abdi Muhumud Aanin
85. Ahmed 'Abdi Daahir "Shell"
86. Mire'Ali 'Ismaan
87. Abshir Kaahiye Faarah
88. Haareey Qaasim Weheliye
89. 'Ali Muhumed Guuleed
90. Haaji Mahamed 'Abdulle Furre
91. 'Ali Mahamed ibraahim
92. Ahmed Sheekh Muhumed
93. 'Ali 'Alas Faarey
94. 'Abdi Muhumed Khayre
95. Haaji Ahmed Haaji Mahamed
96. 'Abdulaahi Huseen Maajoor
97. Salaad 'Ali Diini
98. Sheekh Abuukar Ma'allin 'Ali
99. 'Abdirashid Mohamud
100. Hasan 'Anshur Mohamed
101. 'Abdullahi Mahamud Matukade
102. Sa'iid 'Usmaan Keynadiid
103. Mahamed Haaji 'Umar
104. 'Umar Mahamed Guuled
105. Haaji Ahmed 'Ali Islaweyn
106. Haaji Faarah 'Usmaan
107. Muuse Yuusuf 'Ali
108. 'Abdihamiid Islaan Faarah
109. Faarah Osman Shiwaar
110. 'Abdirahmaan Sheekh Nuur