

## PRESS RELEASE

### Legislative elections in the Republic of Djibouti: Call for prudence

---

In the Republic of Djibouti whose government has been in power for over 35 years, opponents, trade unionists, human right defenders and citizens are the victims of a brutal repression which intensifies at the eve of every election. During the April 2011 presidential elections which saw the President Ismael Omar Guelleh reach his third mandate, the outcome of this repression was the heaviest in the history of the country: several thousands of young demonstrators were killed, and hundreds of others were arrested and held for months.

In this context and facing a disastrous social situation, six political parties of the Djibouti opposition have decided, for the first time in ten years, to participate in the legislative elections of February 2013 rather than to boycott them. Daher Ahmed Farah, spokesperson of the coalition of six parties that came together as the USN ("Union pour le Salut National), decided to end his decade of exile in Europe to return to his country and mobilise the voters. As soon as he arrived in Djibouti last January, Daher Ahmed Farah was jailed. Under pressure from popular protest and from the international community, he was later released.

Since the beginning of the electoral campaign, the situation is completely unheard of in Djibouti where, for the first time, the population has dared to go out of the streets in masses to demand change. This Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the last campaign meeting of the pacific opposition was to be held. Facing the scale of the citizen mobilisation of these past weeks, the regime multiplied provocations and threats to forbid the holding of this meeting. An irresponsible act which could of course be of heavy consequence in terms of security.

By principle and under the threat of seeing the situation become worse in the country and in an already unstable region, the European Union cannot accept to close their eyes to the many violations committed towards human rights in Djibouti, in the name of the defence of its own strategic and commercial interests. The European Union is the first donor towards Djibouti. By deciding to reinforce its presence in the country, it also made the formal commitment to reinforce its demands in terms of human rights. It is today that it has to show the Djiboutian and European populations that it will hold its word.

For now, we express our fears facing the increasingly specific threats which weigh down on certain opponents and in particular on the spokesperson of the pacific and democratic coalition of Djibouti opposition, the belgo-djiboutian Daher Ahmed Farah, around whom the vice seems to be tightening in the last couple of hours. We are also calling upon to European Union to be attentive to the way the elections of this Friday 22 February 2013 and to the development of the situation once the results are known.



**Ali DEBERKALE AHMED**

*Representative of the USN to Belgium and the European Union*

Contacts :

[alideberkale@gmail.com](mailto:alideberkale@gmail.com) / +32 471.211.432 / +475.22.66.05 / +32 2 851.85.53