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SOMALIA'S POLITICAL

CRISIS DEMANDS DIALOGUE, **NOT FORCE**

A STATEMENT BY INDEPENDENCE HOUSE



12 MAY 2026

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Independence House urges all Somali political actors to step back from the current dangerous trajectory and commit, without preconditions, to genuine, inclusive dialogue before the constitutional deadline of **15 May 2026**; all parties must also take national responsibility for Somalia's governance and statehood.

The situation on the ground has deteriorated further since the May 10 protests. More than ten young activists have been arrested in Mogadishu as part of an ongoing crackdown. In a statement, police described the detained activists — the majority of whom are young social media activists and journalists — as a threat to national security. In the Dayniile district of Mogadishu, one person was shot dead and several others were injured as security forces mounted a heavy military response across the capital. Independence House condemns these actions in the strongest terms and calls for the immediate release of all those detained for peaceful civic activity.

The events of Sunday in Mogadishu, and intimidation and illegal arrest of young people are deeply alarming. The deployment of heavy security forces across the capital to suppress peaceful assembly, and whose people were seeking to exercise their constitutional right to protest, represent a dangerous conflation of political legitimacy with military power. Land grievances in Mogadishu — involving the documented forced displacement of thousands of families — are not a fringe concern. They are a central driver of public anger, and they cannot be addressed by armoured vehicles or overflights.

Independence House urges the government to be clear: foreign partners whose military and economic presence in Somalia has grown substantially in recent years should understand that their role is to support Somalia's stability and sovereignty — not to signal unconditional backing for any single political actor in a domestic dispute. Good offices, mediation, and humanitarian support are welcome. The projection of military force in the context of internal political dissent is not, and risks drawing close partners into a crisis that will outlast any current administration.

We recall that in April 2021, a similar standoff over a presidential term extension brought Mogadishu to the edge of full-scale armed conflict. It was resolved not through force but through political negotiation and compromise. The institutional memory of that near-catastrophe should inform the choices made in the coming days.

In furtherance of our calls, Independence House urges robust international community support for dialogue and more active engagement by both Somali civil society and the business community. There has been a noted silence from the business community. We call on business leaders to speak out, as every sector of society has a role to play in steering Somalia toward a stable and peaceful future. The government must open more doors for genuine talks. The President must be seen to be acting in good faith — and not merely buying time — with only two days remaining until 15 May, when the current presidential term expires. We emphasise maximum restraint by all security forces.

Independence House urges all parties to consider the following steps:

- The federal government should immediately halt forced displacement operations in Mogadishu and release young people detained for peaceful civic activity.
- Civil society actors and the business community should play a critical role that goes beyond merely responding to calls and participating in consultation meetings; they should engage in mediation between political parties and advocate for national interests. The business community's silence must end — its voice and influence are essential to finding a durable solution to the ongoing political crisis.
- The Somali Future Council should engage in talks without using the 15 May deadline as grounds to declare a parallel political structure, which would deepen rather than resolve the crisis.

- All parties should accept an independent mediation mechanism — whether through the Somali civil society or other actors— to facilitate an electoral agreement that carries broad legitimacy.
- Foreign partners and the international community, including those who have publicly welcomed the dialogue initiative, should use their good offices to actively facilitate talks between the parties, and make clear that external support — including military cooperation — cannot be a substitute for political consensus.

Somalia's people have endured too much to have their future decided by force.

ABOUT INDEPENDENCE HOUSE

Independence House is a nongovernmental and impartial organisation based in Mogadishu, Somalia, working to protect and promote civil and political rights, freedom of expression and democracy across Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Through research, investigations, public forums and publications, it advances democratic accountability across thematic areas including advocacy, legal aid, transparency, public outreach and gender equity — with the goal of building an inclusive and just Somali community where every voice is heard in decision-making.

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