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FEDERAL COURT AWARDS \$15 MILLION IN DAMAGES TO CJA CLIENT FOR TORTURE

COLUMBUS, OHIO, August 20, 2013 – Today in Columbus, Ohio, U.S. Federal Judge Mark Abel awarded *\$5 million in compensatory and \$10 million in punitive damages (for a total award of \$15 million) against former Somali Colonel Abdi Aden Magan*. In 1988, Professor Abukar Hassan Ahmed was arbitrarily detained by Colonel Magan’s subordinates. On Colonel Magan’s orders, Professor Ahmed was shackled in an excruciating position in a squalid prison cell for nearly 24-hours per day for three months. There, he was brutally tortured and subjected to cruel treatment on Colonel Magan’s orders by lieutenants under his command. Nearly 25 years after his torture, Professor Ahmed has finally found justice in a U.S. court.

After discovering that his torturer resided in Columbus Ohio, in April 2010, Professor Ahmed, a former constitutional law professor and human rights advocate in Somalia, contacted the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) and filed a case against Colonel Magan for torture, cruel treatment, and arbitrary detention.

On November 20, 2012, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio found the former National Security Service (“NSS”) investigations chief liable for torture, cruel treatment, and arbitrary detention. This judgment was historic in that it was the first judgment ever in a court of law to hold a member of the notorious and widely feared Somali NSS accountable for human rights violations committed under the brutal military dictatorship that ruled Somalia for 20 years, the Siad Barré regime. Attorneys from CJA and *pro bono* co-counsel Chadbourne & Parke, LLP and Latham & Watkins, LLP presented evidence at the hearing on May 30, 2013 to assess damages.

At the hearing, Professor Ahmed told the court: “I knew that justice was not only national, justice is universal. If you are black, you need justice. If you are white, you need justice. If you are yellow, you need justice. So everybody needs justice. It is universal.” He elaborated, “*Maybe for other people it doesn’t seem so simple, but for me it is very simple: Because, first of all, I am a man who always seeks justice. But this time, I don’t seek only my justice, but I seek justice for other people also: Because I call them the silent victims of torture - in Somalia or in other countries. And those people also must have justice, but I also want justice for myself. That’s why I want to come to the United States to have the justice that I couldn’t have in my country.*”

Christina Hioureas, Senior Associate with Chadbourne & Parke’s Public International Law practice group, said, “Professor Ahmed’s case against Colonel Magan has brought to light a dark chapter of Somalia’s history, but his life story also reveals a new chapter of Somalia’s bright future. As the Legal Adviser to President of Somalia, Professor Ahmed is continuing to promote freedom and human rights, drafting the new constitution and human rights bill and training young lawyers and judges to build this emerging democracy from the ground up after the collapse of a brutal military dictatorship.”

In fact, on **October 11, 2013**, in recognition of his persistence in promoting human rights and the rule of law, Professor Ahmed will receive the **International Bar Association’s Annual Human Rights Award**. It is awarded to one individual each year, who, through personal endeavor in the course of legal practice, has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion, protection and advancement of the human rights, particularly with respect to the right to live in a fair and just society under the rule of law.

CJA Staff Attorney Nushin Sarkarati said, “Professor Ahmed is a true human rights advocate, a man who even after being tortured, refused to remain silent. He continued to teach constitutional law and human rights law in a country whose constitution was decimated by the military dictatorship. His testimony not only taught us about the brutality of the Siad Barré regime, but the relentless will of a man who believes in rule of law and justice.”

“By standing up to his torturer and bravely recounting in open court the horrors he lived through, Prof. Ahmed yet again demonstrated his undying courage,” said Katya Cronin, an associate at Latham & Watkins.

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries in transition from periods of abuse.

Chadbourne & Parke is an award-winning international law firm, which includes a globally recognized team of Public International Law & International Dispute Resolution lawyers who have extensive experience in advising and litigating in relation to all aspects of public international law and related domestic court proceedings. For additional information on Chadbourne & Parke, please visit <http://www.chadbourne.com/pil/>.

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For additional information about the case, please see CJA’s website: www.cja.org.

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