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## **FORMER SOMALI NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE CHIEF** **FOUND LIABLE FOR TORTURE**

(COLUMBUS, OHIO, November 20, 2012) –

Today, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio found the former investigations chief of the Somali National Security Service (NSS), Colonel Abdi Aden Magan, liable for the torture and arbitrary detention of constitutional law professor and human rights advocate, Abukar Hassan Ahmed. The court's decision in *Ahmed v. Magan* is historic in that it is 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.

Today's judgment holds that Colonel Magan is responsible for Professor Ahmed's arbitrary detention, torture, and cruel treatment at the hands of NSS officers, who acted on Colonel Magan's orders. In his ruling, Judge Smith found that that Professor Ahmed was detained, subjected to cruel treatment, and tortured by NSS officers under orders from Colonel Magan. Professor Ahmed bears lasting physical and psychological scars from his torture to this day. After the Siad Barre regime collapsed in 1991 Colonel Magan fled the country and sought safe haven in Ohio. This civil case was filed under two federal statutes, the Alien Tort Statute (ATS) and the Torture Victim Protection Act, by the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) and *pro bono* co-counsel Latham & Watkins, LLP on behalf of Professor Ahmed.

For Professor Ahmed, a former Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience, the decision comes after years of seeking recognition and redress for the torture he endured while wrongly and arbitrarily detained and tortured for his insistence on promoting human rights. After the fall of the Siad Barré regime in 1991, Professor Ahmed spent about twenty years searching for Colonel Magan and was shocked to discover that the man who had interrogated him and ordered his torture was living comfortably in Columbus, Ohio.

In the words of CJA client Professor Ahmed, "The court's decision today is of great consequence not only for me but also for the many other Somalis who were tortured or even killed by NSS officers. In order for Somalia to heal after 20 years of military rule, it is essential to confront and hold accountable individuals like Colonel Magan." Professor Ahmed is a legal adviser to the New Somali Government, participating in drafting the Somali Human Rights Bill and working to ensure that the new government's laws comply with human rights.

"Today's judgment sends a clear message that torturers will not find safe haven in the United States," said CJA Staff Attorney Kathy Roberts, adding, "The decision not only acknowledges Colonel Magan's crimes against Professor Ahmed, but it also sheds light on the role of the security services in suppressing dissent against the Barré regime. This marks a crucial step in the march against impunity for those who committed serious human rights abuses during that dark chapter of Somalia's history."

Christina Hioureas, an attorney from Latham & Watkins added: "We are proud to partner with CJA on this important case. We are honored to represent Professor Ahmed, a bold individual, who had the

courage to stand up to the man responsible for his arbitrary detention and brutal torture. We are thrilled with the Court's decision to hold Mr. Magan accountable for the atrocities he committed in violation of international law. We could not be more pleased with such an excellent result for our client.”

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.

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For additional information about the case, please see CJA's website: [www.cja.org](http://www.cja.org).