

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF deploras stoning of child rape victim

Nairobi, Kenya 4 November 2008 - The UN Children's Agency, UNICEF, has described last week's stoning of a 13 year old Somali girl as 'deplorable.' The girl, Aisha Duhulow, was stoned to death in a stadium of spectators in Kismayo on 27 October 2008 after having been found guilty of adultery. However, reports indicate that she had been raped by three men while traveling on foot to visit her grandmother in the war-torn capital, Mogadishu. Following the assault, she sought protection from the authorities, who then accused her of adultery and sentenced her to death.

"This is a tragic and deplorable incident" said UNICEF Representative for Somalia, Christian Balslev-Olesen, "A child was victimized twice – first by the perpetrators of the rape and then by those responsible for administering justice."

The incident highlights the extreme vulnerability of girls and women in Somalia, for whom violence and discrimination are intensified by the effects of chronic conflict and displacement. Sexual and gender-based violence is commonplace in Somalia and the vulnerability of girls and women is further exacerbated through gender inequalities in access to essential social services.

"Authorities and institutions of civil society have a role to play in supporting and protecting the rights of every child," said Balslev-Olesen, "However, this incident demonstrates how much work remains to be done to advocate for and protect the rights of girls and women in Somalia. UNICEF is committed to promote the status of females and we will continue to work with local authorities and partners to reduce the risks to them through the promotion of girls' education, HIV prevention and support to services for survivors of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence."

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