



## **Puntland Diaspora Forum 'PDF'**

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### **Press Release:**

#### **A response to Congressman Donald Payne's press release titled "Abusive behaviour in Puntland"**

The Puntland Diaspora Forum wishes to deny some of the assertions made in a recent press release, dated November 20, 2009 by Congressman Donald Payne of New Jersey, 10<sup>th</sup> District, who is also the Chairman of the House Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health. The Press release, we believe, was a hastily written document that was uniquely uncharacteristic of the esteemed Congressman's time tested diplomatic behaviour and was glaringly unfair in its criticism of the government of Puntland State of Somalia.

While PDF appreciates the great work that Congressman Payne and his Sub-Committee do on daily basis to improve the quality of life for millions of destitute Africans throughout the continent including many of our own in Puntland, and, has the highest regard for the esteemed Chairman and his staff, we cannot ignore the impact that any such hastily drafted criticism based largely on unsubstantiated allegations can have on the good image of our State. On the record, we have been assured by senior cabinet level officials in Garowe that no one was, in fact, handed over to Ethiopia whilst also confirming that one of the prisoners unfortunately passed away before he could be tried. The government also assured us that the remaining prisoners will soon be brought to justice and will be set free if found innocent.

It must be noted the people of Ogaden are a close kin of the people of Puntland and are, needless to say, free like any other Somali, to move, trade, and live in Puntland without fear of persecution and infringement to their civil liberties and human rights. PDF sincerely wishes to send its condolences to the families of the deceased and call upon the government of Puntland to give due compensation to his closest of kin should it be established by a court of law, that he was innocent of the allegations that led to his initial imprisonment. It must also be noted that Puntland cannot be a hideout for run-away fugitives, criminals, religious fanatics, subversives, and terrorists nor serve as a base from which to launch attacks of any kind against neighbouring or distant countries.

PDF supports the position of the Puntland government regarding the safety and security of the State and calls upon Congressman Payne and all other responsible leaders to consider the difficult circumstances that Puntland State finds itself as a relatively peaceful oasis in the middle of a troubled region. We also call upon the government of Puntland to make every effort to make the lives of the peace-loving majority of the Ogaden residents, tourists and/or traders in Puntland even more comfortable in the future.

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