



## Press Statement

### **Bill Criminalising Sexual Offences approved by the Council of Ministers in Somalia**

*“This is the most comprehensive Bill on sexual crimes... I have seen anywhere.”* (President Judge Vagn Joensen of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.)

**Mogadishu, 30 May 2018:** It is with great enthusiasm, respect for the tireless work of our colleagues in Somalia and pride in what we have achieved that Legal Action Worldwide congratulates the Somali Council of Ministers in adopting the Sexual Offences Bill.

This Bill is the first piece of legislation in Somalia which criminalises a wide range of sexual offences including rape, gang rape and sexual assault. It prioritises the protection, rights and needs of survivors of sexual violence; comprehensively criminalises all sexual offences; provides clear sentencing guidelines for judges; re-enforces human rights already guaranteed to all Somalis under the Provisional Constitution; and it transforms the current procedure for taking sexual offences cases in Somalia, which leaves most survivors without tangible legal avenues for accessing justice.

The Bill was drafted by Somali legislative drafters from Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), working on the request of and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development. LAW congratulates the current Minister, the Honorable Deqa Yasin, for her tireless efforts in advocating for the Bill and for this important victory.

LAW’s Executive Director, Antonia Mulvey, welcomed the adoption of the Bill before the Council of Ministers as “an important step in the right direction to protecting the rights of victims of sexual violence and ending impunity for such crimes”.

The citizens of Somalia are now two steps away from the protection and empowerment offered by comprehensive sexual offences legislation. The Bill now moves to the Lower House of the Federal Parliament who will debate and vote on the Bill. If it passes that vote, it will move to the Upper House. We urge the members of the Federal Parliament to give priority to the adoption of this important Sexual Offences Bill.

**About Legal Action Worldwide (LAW):** LAW is a unique non-profit network and think tank of human rights lawyers who provide creative legal assistance to individuals and communities who have suffered from human rights violations and abuses in fragile and conflict-affected areas. These people are those who often have the greatest need for protection and assistance but are also those who have the least access to legal resources.

Since its establishment, LAW has focused on regions experiencing conflict, such as the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, and on key themes, such as sexual violence and accountability for security forces. LAW is registered in Somalia, has a presence in Mogadishu, and established the Somali Legal Aid Network.

**For more information:** <http://www.legalactionworldwide.org/somalia-2/sexual-offences-bill/>

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