



For Immediate Release
February 23, 2012

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**SOMALI GENERAL AND COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES
LIABLE FOR WAR CRIMES**

Alexandria, Virginia. Today, former Somali General Mohamad Ali Samantar accepted liability before federal Judge Leonie Brinkema for torture, extrajudicial killing, war crimes and other human rights abuses committed against the civilian population of Somalia during the brutal Siad Barre regime. This draws to an end a seven year quest in the U.S. courts for justice for those harmed by General Samantar and troops under his command.

After the collapse of the Siad Barre dictatorship, General Samantar fled Somalia and then ultimately settled in Fairfax, Virginia where he has lived openly for the past fifteen years.

Samantar accepted liability in open court today and in the presence of survivors including the four plaintiffs:

- Mr. Bashe Abdi Yousuf, then a young business man who was arbitrarily detained, tortured, and kept in solitary confinement for over six years;
- Mr. Aziz Mohamed Deria, whose father and brother were abducted by Somali soldiers, threatened with execution, and never seen again;
- Mr. Buralle Salah Mohamoud, a rural goat herder, who was abducted and tortured by Somali soldiers, along with his two brothers, who were summarily executed; and
- Mr. Ahmed Jama Gulaid, then a Somali soldier, who was arbitrarily detained and shot by firing squad, but miraculously survived, waking up under the bodies of other Somali soldiers with whom he had served.

This is the first time that anyone has been held to account for the atrocities committed by the brutal Siad Barre regime in Somalia. General Samantar was the Minister of Defense and the Commander of the Armed Forces.

In the words of Steven Schulman of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, "Today, a strong message has been sent to former foreign officials who come to America after they are no longer in power - they cannot come to the U.S. and escape accountability for crimes committed against humanity in their home country. Today's developments are historic as this is the first time an official has been held accountable for the atrocities committed by the Siad Barre regime. Our clients showed great strength in pursuing this case and once and for all, justice has been served."

In the words of Center for Justice and Accountability Client Bashe Yousuf, "For many, many years, I have been looking for justice – for my day in court and not just for me personally, but for the thousands of people in Somalia who were tortured, and murdered. It has been many years and required a lot of patience, but today Samantar is finally being held accountable for ordering these horrific crimes. It is hard to put into words what this means for me and so many others who were impacted by the Siad Barre regime. It gives me great comfort that I can put this chapter of my life behind."

This case was filed by the Center for Justice & Accountability in 2004 and was litigated by CJA and pro bono co-counsel from Akin Gump.

About Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA):

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 transitioning from periods of abuse.

About Akin Gump:

Founded in 1945, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, a leading international law firm, numbers more than 800 lawyers in the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Akin Gump was named one of the top pro bono practices by Law 360 in 2011.

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