The Somalia NGO Consortium condemns in the strongest terms the repugnant attack on civilian health workers in Somalia this week. Their abduction and killing is a horrendous affront to the whole Somali community and profoundly distressing to non-government organisations, who stand in solidarity with the colleagues of the deceased and all health workers in Somalia.

“We express our deepest condolences to the families, friends and communities of every person killed in yesterday’s attack,” said Nimo Hassan, Acting Director of Somalia’s NGO Consortium. “We extend our support to the organisations that employed the seven health workers. There is no justification for violence of this kind; we are grieving with all affected.”

Non-government organisations in Somalia work to deliver protection, assistance and opportunity to people affected by conflict, insecurity and natural disaster. More than a third of Somalia’s population is in need of development or humanitarian assistance to alleviate suffering and promote resilience in the context of protracted conflict and recurrent natural disaster. Many need it even more urgently in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, where millions of people face heightened risk due to displacement, lack of water, congested living conditions and extremely limited health facilities.

Non-government organisations in Somalia are committed to supporting Somali communities to navigate their way through the multiple crises affecting the country, to protecting communities and to maintaining services to the most vulnerable populations. We call for an independent investigation into these attacks and lawful actions to hold those responsible to account. We will not allow the brutality of a few deter our efforts to reach many, and we call for the complete support of all actors, national and international, to ensure the safety of health workers and the communities they support.

Notes for editors:

• While details have not yet been confirmed, we understand that at least seven Somalia national health workers and one civilian were abducted from an NGO-supported health clinic in Gololey, in the Balcad district in Middle Shabelle on Wednesday, 27 May 2020. Their bodies were subsequently discovered after what are reported to have been brutal killings.
• Somalia represents one of the world’s most complex and longstanding crises. 5.2 million Somalis are currently in need of some form of humanitarian or development assistance, 2.6 million (close to 20 per cent of the population) are currently displaced from their homes.
• Covid-19 arrives to Somalia in the midst of multiple, interlocking crisis. In recent weeks, widespread flooding has swept through urban and rural areas, killing 16 people, destroying agricultural land and damaging critical infrastructure. More than 400,000 Somali people have been displaced by the flooding, creating additional risks for the spread of the Covid-19 virus and other communicable diseases.
• Somalia currently reports two health workers for every 100,000 people, among the lowest figures in the world and just 8 per cent of the global average of 25 health workers per 100,000 people. Against a backdrop of flooding, Covid-19 and a worsening hunger crisis, the safety of health facilities and workers is absolutely critical to the wellbeing of whole communities.
• Between January 2016 and February 2020, Somalia recorded 40 national and international aid worker fatalities.

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The Somalia NGO Consortium is a network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working together to improve international aid coordination and raise the presence and profile of NGO representation within the aid coordination structure for Somalia.