

Africa's Curse Descends on Somaliland:

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Is Somaliland's brave attempt at democracy foundering? The international community has refused recognition of Somaliland and condemned it to its own fate. The African Union and the UN refuse to understand that the people of Somaliland have decided to reclaim and restore their sovereignty. Forcing them to join an increasingly barren and violent Somalia will be futile.

Isolation has its cost with the current Somaliland President, Riyale alarming Somaliland's peace with a thirst for power at any cost. He appears to be blind about the damage he is about to commit on his own country. Riyale like so many African Dictators before him would prefer to hang onto power than respect the fragile institution of democracy that Somalilanders have managed to eke out over the past 18 years.

Knowing he would have probably been not elected, he has postponed two elections and now threatens a third attempt. Rather than adopting a moral and dignified way in which to pass on power from which, who knows, he may well have been re-elected if not this time then the next, he has decided not to respect the law of the land.

Bravely, there have been recent calls by some members of the Somaliland Parliament for President Riyale's removal from office through impeachment. The massive rallies that took place in Hargeisa, Berbera, Burao, Erigavo, Las Anod and Borama are testament to the serious constitutional and political crisis Somaliland is now facing. President Riyale is exercising an excessive and illegal power that will undoubtedly cast a shadow in the minds of those few in the world who support Somaliland's quest for

recognition. Some of the illegal maneuvers Riyale has unleashed on Somaliland so far include:

- His deliberate actions to stay on in office beyond his term
- His support of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Somaliland's decision to disregard the voter registration list which in any democratic country would be considered criminal.
- His unilateral decision to expel Interpeace, the agency responsible for the democratization and electoral process
- The cancellation of a planned visit by a group representing the donor countries that assist Somaliland on democratization process
- The continued harassment, intimidation and arrest of journalists at a critical time of elections and human rights abuses as reported by the Human Rights Watch which was released on 13 July, 2009

Should he succeed, his unlawful activities will undoubtedly set back the cause of Somaliland's recognition and crush the dreams of Somalilanders. Clearly Riyale has departed from reason and rationality and is on the verge of destroying what Somalilanders have achieved in the past 18 years. Who knows perhaps this is his ultimate goal? His behavior, mirroring other unscrupulous African leaders like Mugabe's '*my way or the highway*' is deplorable and should not be tolerated by the Somaliland population.

It most likely could be the end of any chance of Somaliland's quest for recognition and could well lead to instability and serious consequences if Riyale does not respect the electoral law of Somaliland. Once Somaliland is destabilized, the dramatic contrast between Somaliland and Somalia will no longer exist. Once Somaliland is weakened, the Islamic fundamentalists could well move in rapidly and overthrow all its peaceful efforts of the last 18 years. Somaliland will then undoubtedly be just another captured

pawn for the forces of darkness. Al- Shabab, the Jihadists and their hunters will continue their fight just as in Somalia to the South, Afghanistan or Iraq.

I hate to depict a gloomy picture of what could happen in the next few weeks, but like many Somalilanders, I am seriously worried about the country's future if Riyale gets his way.

A call for an action.

The brave members of Somaliland's Parliament who called for Riyale's impeachment and removal from the office should not allow this depressing picture to be realized. They should not rest until Riyale is forced to step down or allows the voter registration released. They should make sure that the international observers and Interpeace are back in the country so that a free and fair election takes place in September. This is the time Somaliland needs responsible leaders to step in and save the country from Riyale and the external forces who are waiting in the shadows. Somaliland elders have saved Somaliland before – they must do it again.