Coalition of Somali Human Rights Defenders CSHRD

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CSHRD Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Country/Region/District: Somalia (Hirshabelle State / El Ali District)
Indigenous Peoples Concerned: El Ali Indigenous Community
Submitting Organization: Coalition of Somali Human Rights Defenders (CSHRD)
Date: 15 February 2026

I. Summary of the Case
The El Ali meteorite (Shiid Birood) is a culturally significant object that rested for centuries within the territory of the El Ali Indigenous community. The community exercised collective possession and cultural use over the meteorite.

In early 2020, the meteorite was forcibly removed from its impact site. Credible reports indicate that community members were killed while resisting the extraction. The removal occurred without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and amid armed conflict.

Subsequent narratives falsely described the meteorite as a new discovery, despite evidence of longstanding Indigenous possession. Licensing and export documentation reportedly contained false coordinates and misclassification.

II. Legal Recognition of Indigenous Lands and Resources
Somalia lacks effective legal recognition of Indigenous peoples' customary land and resource rights. There is no mechanism for demarcation or titling of Indigenous territories, facilitating dispossession and violence.

III. Demarcation and Titling
No formal demarcation, cadastral registration, or title exists for the El Ali community's territory or the meteorite site. Customary tenure systems remain undocumented and unprotected.

IV. Competing Interests and Protection
Commercial actors pursued international sale of the meteorite while denying Indigenous ownership. State institutions failed to investigate killings, enforce cultural heritage protections, or ensure FPIC.

V. Obstacles and Risks
Barriers include lack of legal recognition, insecurity, irregular administrative practices, and absence of protection mechanisms for Indigenous land defenders.

VI. Recommendations
CSHRD urges:
1. Independent investigation into killings and violations linked to the meteorite's removal.
2. Recognition and restitution of the meteorite as Indigenous cultural heritage.
3. Legal reform to recognize Indigenous customary land and resource rights.
4. Guarantees of FPIC and protection for Indigenous land defenders.

5. Protect Human Rights Defenders and Scientists fighting for the indigenous rights in Somalia

References / Sources

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