

Exclusive Interview with Hon. MP Dahir Jesow on the El Ali Meteorite: A Sacred Stone Stolen from a Community and a Country



Member of Parliament Amin Dahir Jesow

Conducted by Horn Afrik News Agency for Human Rights (HANAHR)

<https://hanahr.net/exclusive-interview-with-hon-mp-dahir-jesow-on-the-el-ali-meteorite-a-sacred-stone-stolen-from-a-community-and-a-country/>

By: HANAHR Human Rights Monitoring

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Date: June 14, 2025

HANAHR: Honorable MP Dahir Jesow, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. We're here to discuss a matter that has shaken not only the scientific community, but also the very cultural roots of the El Ali community—the El Ali Meteorite, known locally as Shiid Birood. First, do you personally, and your constituents, believe the meteorite and its impact site should be preserved and protected, rather than cut up and sold?

MP Dahir Jesow: Absolutely. This meteorite, Shiid Birood, is not just a scientific specimen—it is sacred to the people of El Ali. For generations, it has stood as a spiritual symbol, a point of reference in poetry, oral traditions, and community dances. The locals have long regarded it as a celestial gift, not just a rock. My constituents and I firmly believe that the site should have been left intact and developed into a cultural heritage site open to researchers, educators, students, and visitors—rather than exploited, stolen, and sold. Its desecration is not only a violation of cultural dignity, but also of Somalia's constitution.

HANAHR: Do you consider the meteorite and its impact site a national treasure of the El Ali community and Somalia, and a matter of international cultural and natural heritage?

MP Jesow: Without question. The El Ali Meteorite belongs to the Somali people—especially the El Ali community, whose ancestors have safeguarded it for centuries. It is a geological, historical, and spiritual marvel. Somalia, in cooperation with international bodies like UNESCO and the International Union of Geological Sciences, should have acted to preserve it. The removal of the meteorite is a theft of our heritage—akin to the looting of sacred artifacts during colonial times.

HANAHR: Journalists often say, “follow the money.” Can you tell us what you and your constituents know about how the meteorite was removed, transported to Mogadishu, and then sent to China?

MP Jesow: Yes, and this is where the story gets dark. Initially, a local truck driver, whose story has been ignored by authorities, transported the meteorite under pressure. His account, which I personally verified, is credible. He was later ambushed in what we now know was a well-coordinated assassination, in collusion with certain government figures and the Kureym Mining Company due to conflict of interest. The driver knew everything about the story of the robbery of the meteorite by Al-Shabaab militias on behalf of Kureym company.

Kureym, which had no legal license prior to the incident, was hastily legalized ad hoc through a murky administrative process—essentially post-factum to launder the theft. The meteorite was taken from El Ali to Mogadishu under cover of night, and within weeks it had vanished—shipped to China, facilitated by government insiders. The entire process was cloaked in secrecy and shame.

HANAHR: Do you have knowledge of who received payment for the meteorite, when, and where?

MP Jesow: There are credible reports—though heavily censored and uninvestigated—that individuals in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources, certain security officials, and foreign brokers were involved. Payments were made in cash and through untraceable transfers. The driver of the truck, in fact, was forced to abandon the truck itself as part of the cover-up. To absolve himself, he sold the vehicle and sought refuge. Sadly, his side of the story was redacted even from respected publications like *Meteoritics and Planetary Science*, where terms like “smuggled” and “secretive” were deliberately removed.

There has been no transparency on the transaction. We have no documentation of ownership transfer, no export permits, no revenue reported. This was a cultural looting operation, not a legal trade.

HANAHR: What are the current encumbrances and investments made on the meteorite, its site, and the Kureym Mining Company?

MP Jesow: Kureym now claims commercial interests in the El Ali region, backed by a few officials who are attempting to retroactively validate the company's involvement. They have laid claims to mineral exploration rights under fraudulent pretenses. The people of El Ali have not benefited at all but died for defending their cultural rights —no revenue, no consultation, no compensation. Instead, they live with trauma, their sacred stone gone, their voices silenced and their community members killed and left under the brutal rule of Al-Shabaab without access to humanitarian aid.

HANAHR: The J. Paul Getty Museum, like others, insists on acquiring only artifacts with clearly documented provenance. Has any such documentation been produced regarding the El Ali meteorite?

MP Jesow: None has been made public, and I strongly doubt any exists. Any serious museum or collector should be aware that this meteorite is stolen property. There are no legal export licenses, no documentation of ownership, and no consent from the local community that owns it and culturally attached to it. It was smuggled. The legitimate ownership claims and cultural ties by the El Ali community would invalidate any attempted sales abroad or exported to abroad for sale at first instance. In Somalia's constitution, it is made clear that every natural resource or minerals found in a certain region or district belongs solely to them before it belongs to the state.

HANAHR: Somalia's 2012 draft Constitution outlines clear protections for cultural heritage. Do you and your constituents support these principles?

MP Jesow: I do, wholeheartedly. And so do my constituents. Article 31 makes it the responsibility of the Somali state to protect and preserve historic objects and cultural sites. This includes Shiid Birood meteorite. The government has failed not only to protect the site, but actively participated in its desecration and robbery in an obvious collaboration with Al-Shabaab militias who allegedly received more or less 400.000 € . It's a constitutional failure.

HANAHR: What should happen next? What are you, your constituents, and your government willing to do to reclaim and protect this sacred object?

MP Jesow: First, we demand an independent investigation into the role of the state in this blatant violation of Indigenous peoples cultural rights. Second, we call for international cooperation to return the meteorite to Somalia or a safe place where it can be kept Museum for public visit that generates income for El Ali district. Third, we urge UNESCO to declare El Ali's impact site a protected heritage zone. Finally, the Somali government must apologize to the El Ali community, and re-establish legal safeguards against similar thefts. The community must be included in every step forward—they are the rightful stewards.

HANAHR: Lastly, many say no meteorite in history has been so deeply tied to the cultural and spiritual life of a people as this one. Do you agree?

MP Jesow: I agree with all my heart. The El Ali meteorite is not just space rock—it's a part of the El Ali soul. It was quoted in lullabies, sung about in traditional dances, and sacred and revered for centuries. The El Ali community did not see it as a commodity, but as a gift from the skies. Its removal is a wound we are still healing from. But our people are resilient—and we will not stop until justice is done.

HANAHR: Thank you, Hon. MP Jesow, for your bravery and truth-telling.

MP Jesow: Thank you. The world must hear El Ali's story—not just as a meteorite incident, but as a human rights and cultural heritage violation.

HANAHR Note: The cultural dispossession of the El Ali meteorite raises urgent questions of indigenous rights, transparency, and post-conflict governance.

As MP Jesow's testimony shows, this is not merely a scientific issue—it is a humanitarian one. The voices of the El Ali people, long ignored, must now lead the global dialogue on cultural restitution.

By – Hinda J. & Ahmed M.

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