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PETITION FROM MR. HASSAN ISMAIL AMPERGANIA AND OTHERS CONCERNING  
SOMALILAND UNDER ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85 and supplementary rules F and L  
of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council)

Note by the Secretariat: This communication was transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa.

To the members of the United Nations Visiting Mission.

We, the undersigned, people of the towns of Kaben, Bangini and Banbala (?) are being unjustly treated by the authorities which, when they were here before, took away our lands along the river in 1935 and gave them to their supporters. These lands have remained in their possession since that time.

In recent years we have been attempting to bring some wasteland under cultivation, irrigating it with water from the river by means of canals which for long ages belonged to our ancestors before us. On its return, the Italian Administering Authority for Somaliland closed off all the canals we used to irrigate our land; whenever the river water flowed through them it ran on to the fields of some of the former irrigators and these persons were arrested and imprisoned. The canals were closed and the people were compelled to open them by force in places where there was no need of water.

At the present time we have opened the gate to the canal for our lands, because we are starving and distressed and have been for three years. The authorities are threatening us with armed action - among them the Inspector of Agriculture. We are on the point of destruction, though no action is being taken against us just now; this is because of your presence here, but after you leave the authorities will undoubtedly do everything they can and institute proceedings against us. The Administering Authority is acting in the interests

of its supporters who have been in possession of our farms since 1935, when they took them from us by force. The present Administering Authority has decided that we are to be the slaves of their supporters and work for them, each of us doing a full day's work for not more than one-and-a-half somalos, and is therefore preventing us from doing any other work.

Your will certainly be aware that the Government here is run by men who belonged to the old Government, well-known Fascists, led by General Alberto Matsi, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani and His Excellency Romanelli. These three were promised by their former Government that if they won the Ethiopian war they would be given the land and the people as slaves. All that came to pass, and many Orders and laws were enacted by which the Government gave these three men the land and the people and kept its promise to them. It is certain that they have learned how to trample on the rights of the people. They are the present Government's administrators in the Lower Juba region of Somaliland: Rodolfo Graziani is in Italy and the land he took from the people is managed by his agent, the colonist Antonio Fantoni.

We beg you to investigate our case urgently and save us from destruction. The Administering Authority is not complying with the terms laid down by the Trusteeship Council. It is clear to us from article 14 that non-indigenous persons cannot own land in Somaliland without the permission of the Territorial Council in Mogadiscio, expressed by vote. The Administering Authority has now ordered the magistrates to give non-indigenous persons as much land as they want, in which they can do as they please, and they have issued to them title-deeds, documents of which we have never heard before now, said to be called "decretos". The foreigners say that the land has been theirs since 1935 and that these deeds or "decretos" attest in their favour. To this we rejoin that they took this land by force, along with the neighbouring farms, together with the plants and trees the fruits of which have been harvested by the people for decades. All this is contrary to justice and our enemies have been given the victory by the Administering Authority.

(signed) Hassan Isma'il Ampergania  
Absharo Sa'id Abdi Mohammed  
Makambra Ibrahim Khamis  
and twenty-one other signatures

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