

In praise of Somali women: A poem in honour of international women's day

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Saturday, March 12, 2011

While her brothers are away playing
She helps her mother
While her brothers prepare to eat
She is cooking their meal
While her brothers are out making mischief
She is busy helping her neighbours.
She is a girl. A Somali girl.

While her husband is away
She is tending to her children
While her husband is eating jaad
She is bathing her children
While her husband is shouting and screaming
She is teaching her children
While her husband sleeps
She is studying.
She is a wife. A Somali wife.

While the men fight
She is making peace
While the men disappear
She is providing a living for her family
While the men talk
She delivers
While the men demand
She gets by quietly
While the men are visible
She lives in their shadow.
She is a mother. A nations mother.

Somali women, piracy is especially harmful to the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of Somali society. Your important role as caretakers and providers for your families is made more challenging by pirates. These criminals bring greater social unrest and economic difficulties to your communities and your families. Their activities are interfering with international trade and can slow food shipments during the current food crisis, making it more difficult for you to feed your children.

They recruit your husbands, sons and brothers for their illegal activities and put them in harm's way. This deprives you and your children of needed support if they are killed or captured, and it exposes men and boys to a lifestyle of alcohol, drugs and prostitution.

These same pirates feel entitled to your daughters and sisters and seek to entice them into their immoral world with promises of money and security. A woman's life with a man involved in piracy is filled with the insecurity and danger that accompanies alcohol and drug use and the sexual exploitation of women. Marriage to a pirate provides no protection to women as these disreputable men tend to abandon their wives and children, leaving them without support and vulnerable to further exploitation.

Somali women, you are being most affected by the evils of piracy. Use your unique and critical role in Somali society as the nucleus of the family to protect yourselves and your children by discouraging involvement in pirate activity.

If you have information on pirate activity that you would like to report, please call NATO Shipping Center at 00 44 1923 956 574. Your call will be answered in English.”