



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney
Director of Community Relations
(612) 664-5611
email: jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov**

News Release

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Federal jury convicts two Rochester, Minnesota, women of providing material support to al-Shabaab

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court, a jury found two Rochester, Minnesota, women guilty of providing material support to al-Shabaab, a designated terrorist organization. Following a ten-day trial, the jury convicted Amina Farah Ali, age 35, and Hawo Mohamed Hassan, age 64, both naturalized United States citizens from Somalia, of one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a terroristic organization. In addition, Ali was convicted of twelve counts of providing material support to al-Shabaab, while Hassan was convicted of two counts of making false statements to authorities. Ali was detained by authorities following today's verdict. Hassan was also detained but will be shortly transferred to a half-way house.

The evidence admitted at trial established that the defendants provided support to al-Shabaab from September 17, 2008, through July 19, 2010. Specifically, Ali communicated by telephone with al-Shabaab members in Somalia who requested financial assistance for al-Shabaab. Ali, Hassan, and others raised money for al-Shabaab by soliciting funds door-to-door in Somali communities in Minneapolis, Rochester, and other cities in the U.S. and Canada. In addition, the defendants raised money by participating in teleconferences that featured speakers who encouraged donations to support al-Shabaab. Ali also raised funds under the false pretense that the funds were for the poor and needy.

Ali and others then transferred funds to al-Shabaab through various money remittance companies. Ali and others used false names to identify the recipients of the funds in order to conceal that the funds were being provided to al-Shabaab. The indictment lists twelve money transfers directed to al-Shabaab by Ali.

The defendants and others committed several overt acts in order to carry out the fund-raising conspiracy. For example, on October 26, 2008, Ali hosted a teleconference during which an unindicted co-conspirator told listeners that it was not the time to help the poor and needy in Somalia; rather, it was time to give to the *mujahidin*. Ali and Hassan recorded \$2,100 in pledges

at the conclusion of the teleconference. On February 10, 2009, Ali conducted another fund-raising teleconference during which she told listeners to “forget about the other charities” and focus on “the jihad.”

On July 14, 2009, the day after the FBI executed a search warrant at her home, Ali telephoned her primary al-Shabaab contact, saying, “I was questioned by the enemy here . . . they took all my stuff and are investigating it . . . do not accept calls from anyone.” In addition, when Hassan was questioned by agents in an investigation involving international terrorism, she made false statements.

For their crimes, the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of fifteen years in prison for conspiracy. Ali also faces a potential fifteen years for each count of providing material support, while Hassan faces a potential eight years for each count of making a false statement. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Michael J. Davis will determine their sentences at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey S. Paulsen and Steven Ward of the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department’s National Security Division.

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