

EDITOR'S NOTE

As we welcome another year in the life of *Bildhaan*, I want apologize for the relative delay in the appearance of this volume. The major reason for this is my absence from St. Paul between April and the end of October. As many of you may have heard, the political party *Hiilqaran* put me up as a candidate for the presidency of the Somali Republic. I was not successful but it was, on all accounts, an instructive experience—one worthy of an article or two in the future. For now, suffice it to say that I found an opportunity to bring my accumulated insights from scholarly thinking and studies and civic activism alluring enough to have entered the fray.

The immediate reaction, after the election, is to congratulate the members of the new national parliament (I am one of them!), the new president, the new prime minister, and the members of the new government. To be sure, the monumental problems that had turned what once was an enviable African republic into a hell-gate for the past quarter of a century are too numerous to line up here. But some do stand out right away: material and civic crises—two layers of the continuing catastrophe. The most basic are the intersecting security, environmental, economic, demographic, and cultural calamities. These are singularly underscored by the nearly 650,000 refugees of all ages in dreadful camps in northern Kenya alone and hundreds of thousands more who are internally displaced; widespread food insecurity; and massive joblessness (perhaps as high as 75 percent). The second layer is the combined crises of civic belonging, state and governance, and national leadership. In one sense, to successfully address the first depends, to a large extent, on how Somalis overcome the acute challenges of the latter, particularly the pivotal issue of competent and legitimate leadership. The Somali people and their friends around the world await with eagerness what the new time brings.

I have a few important and relevant announcements to make. First, it is my great pleasure to welcome Professor Catherine Besteman of Colby College, in Waterville, Maine, as a new Associate Editor. A superb and energetic anthropologist, her published works are not only on Somalia but also reach topics in other regions of the continent and beyond. Her first book, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery*, was so revelatory of hidden contradictions in Somali history, material existence, and culture that it ignited a necessary and fierce

debate that continues to this day. In this issue, we include a new piece by Professor Besteman that is part of her ongoing research.

Second, we bid farewell to Dr. Mohamed Abdi Mohamed (Gandi) whose other engagements in Somalia have become too burdensome for him to continue to serve on the Board. We thank him for his support of *Bildhaan*.

Third, it is with the heaviest heart that we publish two brief but moving eulogies of two of the most unforgettable Somalis who have passed away recently. Mohamed Hashi Dhamac (Gaariye) was a prominent *Abwaan* whose compositions have met the highest discriminating standards of the Somali literary tradition. As I pen these notes in late and frigid December, the grieving for Gaariye spans across the Somali communities in the Horn of Africa and around the world. He is now in the eternal company of such greats as Hussein Aw Farah, Abdillahi Sultan "Timacaade," Hassan Sheikh Muumin, Halimo Khalif, (Magool) Ares Isse, Abdillahi Qarshe, Abdi Mahamoud, and Faduma Qassim Hilowle. The other notable compatriot who is no more with us is Maryan Omar Ali. I was fortunate to have had an opportunity to interview her for the pages of this journal (Volume 9), as she struggled with a vicious breast cancer. Maryan was most authoritative when it came to Somali songs composed and sung through the ages. Her outstanding collection, now in the hands of Professor Lidwien Kapteijns of Wellesley College, is second only to the decaying and partially looted, but still precious, archive at Radio Mogadishu. Both deaths are a painful societal loss but their legacies will be of incomparable value for many decades to come.

Fourth, after fifteen years as my executive assistant and a Macalester employee, Margaret Beegle has left the Institute for Global Citizenship (IGC). Margaret has been an extraordinary colleague from the inception of *Bildhaan* and the preparation of every volume for release. There is no way to do justice to Margaret's splendid contributions and the care she has continuously applied to sustain the journal, including this volume. From careful editing and proofreading, corresponding with authors, to watching over the budget, Margaret has been magnificent. My hope is that she will still be part of the journal.

Fifth, some exciting news: Professor Abdi Ismail Samatar (a member of the International Advisory Board) has been elected by the membership of the African Studies Association as the learned society's president for 2012–2013. Professor Samatar has been a devoted member of the ASA for over twenty-five years. We congratulate him for this major

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honor from his peers, and wish him well during his tenure in leadership of the Association.

Finally, after eighteen years as a dean at Macalester, I have stepped down from the leadership of the IGC and will return to the International Studies Department next academic year. *Bildhaan's* new home will be the I.S. Department. Please, keep the articles and your support coming.

