

Legal Fee Row Over Somalia Peace Talks

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A row is simmering between a Nairobi law firm and the Government over Sh5.7 million payment for its services during the recent Somalia peace conference.

Naikuni, Ngaah and Company Advocates says it will go to court if the money is not paid immediately, adding that it developed and compiled a draft charter for the process, but was paid only Sh300,000.

"The document was to be one for setting up governance and democratic ideals and processes in terms of structures and policies for the Somalia government for the initial four years," its officials say.

In a letter dated October 15 and addressed to attorney-general Amos Wako, lawyer Lucas Naikuni said Kenya's special envoy to the talks, Mr Bethwel Kiplagat, contracted his firm in July, last year. Mr Wako, he said, would be sued on behalf of the ministry of Home Affairs and Mr Kiplagat.

The Government, he noted, paid the Sh300,000 on July 26 "with the promise that the balance would be settled in due course." A voucher attached to the letter shows that money was for legal consultancy.

The talks which started in Eldoret on October 2002, reached a climax last month when President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected interim president and sworn in in Nairobi.

Mr Koech described the process that culminated to the election of President Yusuf as all inclusive.

He thanked Igad members and the international community for sustaining the peace process.

Mr Koech asked the international community to recognise and continue supporting President Yusuf's government.

The minister called for a waiver of outstanding arrears owed to the AU by the new Somalia to facilitate its entry to the organisation.

President Yusuf thanked Kenya for its central role in the Somali peace process and urged the international community to support his new government.

The AU's chairperson Alpha Omar Kotare assured President Yusuf of the organisation's support.

Foreign Affairs ministers for Ethiopia and Djibouti and Kenya's ambassador to Ethiopia Boaz Maya were among the dignitaries at the function.