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Annalena Waa Aar (Annalena the Lioness): A Poem

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Annalena Tonelli (02 April 1943 – 05 October 2003) was an Italian lawyer, educator and healthcare worker. She was a larger than life social activist who crisscrossed the Somali peninsula setting up schools and health care centers. Annalena was awarded the prestigious UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award in June 2003.[1]

The late Annalena Tonelli
Photo credit: Wikipedia

Annalena was shot and killed in her tuberculosis hospital compound in Borama, Somaliland, by an alleged Islamist gunman. This martyrdom ended the life of one of the most prominent humanitarian workers in the Horn of Africa; Annalena served the Somali people for thirty-three years. I composed this Somali poem to immortalize her memory in the Somali psyche.

Annalena Waa Aar	**Annalena the Lioness**
Annalena Tonelli	Annalena Tonelli
Inantii Ilaahoo	The daughter of God
Baqdin aan aqoonoo	Was fearless
Soddon iyo saddex sano	For thirty-three years
Ayay Bariga Africa	She served the Somalis
Soomaali u adeegtoo	In East Africa
Hiil iyo hooba	She gave and supported us
U hurtay nafteedii	She sacrificed her life
Jacaylkeenna awgiis	Because she loved us
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena-deenu	Our Annalena
Forlì ayay ku dhalatoo	Was born in Forlì[2]
Nabad iyo caano	Peace and milk
Iyo cimilo suubban	A good weather
Ehel iyo axsaab jecel	Loving friends and relatives

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[1]United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2003-04-15). "Italian Woman Wins Nansen Refugee Award for Work in Somalia." https://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3e9c172d7&query=annalena%20tonelli (accessed 31 October 2021).

[2]Forlì, Italy, is a Northern Italy municipality situated in Emilia-Romagna city. Forlì is the capital city of the province of Forlì-Cesena.

Iyadoo intaas heli Eebbe yaa u yeeroo	She had all these God called her
Soomaalida u baahan In ay garab istaagto Annalena waa aar Way noo adeegtaye	To support the Somalis Who needed her help Annalena the lioness Has aided us all
Annalena ugub bay Weligeed ahaydoo Reer ma ay lahaynoo Soomaali oo idil Ubadkeedi weeyaan Waana sababta ay abid Ay noo difaacdo Addin iyo afkeedaba Uunku nooga baqayay Annalena waa aar Way noo adeegtaye	Annalena never had Any biological children She was not married But all Somalis Are like her own children This is the reason She always defended us With word and deed Other people knew this Annalena the lioness Has aided us all
Annalena hiilkeed Ma buunbuunin aniguye Xasuuqii Wagalla ee Ay askarta Keenya Soomaalida Wajeer ay Arxandarro u laayeen Iyadaa ka gubatoo Gurmad wayn u fidisoo Arap Moi ka eri Keenya Annalena waa aar Way noo adeegtaye	I am not exaggerating How Annalena assisted us The Wagalla massacre[3] When the Kenyan soldiers Massacred en masse The Somalis in Wajir Without any mercy She aided the victims Moi expelled her from Kenya Annalena the lioness Has aided us all
Annalena hiilkeed Haddiii ay tacliin tahay Cunto iyo cabitaan Ama caafimaad guud Sharci iyo aqoontiis Innaga baahideeneey Ay haqabtireeysay Lacag innama waydiin Abaal iyo warkiis daa Annalena waa aar	Annalena supported us With education With food and water With healthcare With legal defense She met our needs Everything we needed She did not ask for money She did not demand thanks Annalena the lioness

[3]Wagalla massacre was an inhumane butchery of about 5,000 ethnic Somali Kenyans in Wajir Country by the Kenyan army on 10 February 1984. President Daniel arap Moi unceremoniously expelled Annalena Tonelli from Kenya. Annalena was the only Kenya-based expatriate who openly aided the victims of the massacre and sought justice for them. The President of the Republic resented Annalena's advocacy for the victims.

Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena ila arag	Learn Annalena with me
Rachel Jones buug ay	In the book by Rachel Jones[4]
Uga hadashay aarka	She wrote about the lioness
Aan ka tiriyay maansadan	This poetry is for that icon
Inkastuusan koobayn	The book does not cover
Howlihii ay qabatay	Everything she did
Ama noloshi aarkaas	Or the life of that lioness
Waa qoraal iftiimiyay	The book illuminated
Qiimihii ay lahayd	Her importance to us
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena awood badan	Annalena the powerful
Mid aan waaban iga dheh	She was decisive
Cadceed iyo cudurba	No heat or illness
Amnigoo xumaada	Or worsening security
Iyadoo la weeraro	Or attacks against her
Afduub lagu kaxaystana	Or that hostage taking
Marna kama ay waabin	Could even stop her
In ay noo adeegtee	From assisting us
Miyaan Eebbe soo dirin?	Is she not Godsent?
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena hooyadeen	Annalena our mother
Waqooyi Bari kuma ekayn	She served beyond Northeast[5]
Xamar kaba adeegtay	She served in Mogadishu
Itaal intay u helaysay	To the best of her ability
Ma iloobin Markana	She did not forget Merca
Ka furtay iskuulo	She opened schools there
Ka aflaaxday arday badan	Many students graduated
U hiilisay Beledweyn	She supported Beledweyn
Dhibaatana ku aragtay	Though she suffered there
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena ildheeridi	Annalena was farsighted
Cuduro aad u halis badan	Some deadly diseases
Qaaxadu ay tahay mid	Like tuberculous
Aydhis uu ka mid yahay	And AIDS as well
Yay daryeel u fidisoo	She treated them all
Iskuul kuwa dhegaha li'i	She opened in Borama

[4]Rachel Pieh Jones. *Stronger Than Death: How Annalena Tonelli Defied Terror and Tuberculosis in the Horn of Africa*. Plough Publishing House, 2019.

[5]Northeast Kenya encompasses the Somali Region of Kenya

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Wax ay ku barteen	School for the deaf
Ay ka fulisay Borama	So they could be educated
Illaa iminkuu furan yahay	That school is still open
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena-deennii	Our Annalena
Waxaa dilay ardaal wayn	Was killed by an idiot
Al-Shabaab uu soo diray	Sent by Al-Shabab[6]
Siday ilo ay sheegeen	According to some sources
Ummad aad u badan buu	That murderous idiot
Doqonkaas indhaha tiray	Has blinded a nation
Ma in dhiig la daadshaa	Once cannot please God
Eebbe loogu dhawaadaa	By shedding innocent blood
Ibliis yaaba hagayee	But Satan was leading him
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena iminkadan	Annalena right now
Aakhirey jirtaayoo	Is in the Here-After
Way shahiidday iyaduye	She is indeed a martyr
Eebbe yay la joogtaa	She is with God
Innagaa agoon ahoo	But we are orphans
Hooyadeen la aasaye	Our mother is dead
Anfariir ku nooloo	We are still bewildered
Uur xumo la joognee	We are living with heartache
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all
Annalena inantaadi	We miss Annalena
Eebbow waan tebaynaa	O God, she is your daughter
Iyadoo kaleetaan	No one like her
Ebid noo imaanine	Has ever come to us
Haddii adi ad doonto	If it is your will
Amarkaaga ay tahay	If that is what you want
Annalena oo kale	Send to us, God
Noo soo dir Eebbow	Someone like Annalena
Harjad aan illownee	So we can be reinvigorated
Annalena waa aar	Annalena the lioness
Way noo adeegtaye	Has aided us all

[6] Al-Shabab is a violent Somalia based Islamist group

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About the author

Aweis A. Ali, PhD, is a missiologist, a poet, and an authority on the persecuted church in the Muslim world with special expertise on the Somali Church. He came to the Lord in Mogadishu in 1986 through the SIM ministry. Aweis was a co-pastor of a house church in Mogadishu, Somalia, in mid 1990s when 12 of its 14 members were martyred for their faith.[7] Aweis, an ordained elder, has been ministering in the Muslim world since 1993; he has lived and served in world areas that include the Horn of Africa, East Africa, West Africa and the United States. Aweis earned a B.Th. degree from the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa; an M.Div. degree from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri; and a PhD from Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi. Aweis' PhD thesis is titled, "Persecution of Christians and its Effect on Church Growth in Somalia." Aweis is the author, editor or translator of 10 books and a dozen articles. He is the founder and the Series Editor of the annual *Maansada Masiixa* (Anthology of Somali Christian Poetry.) Dr. Aweis can be reached at amazingwisdom@gmail.com.

[7] The names of the martyred believers from the Medina House-Church are: Liibaan Ibraahim Hassan, Ahmed Ayntow Gobe, Saleban Mohamed Saleban, Isma'el Yusuf Mukhtar, Mohamed Aba Nur, Ali Kusow Mataan, Mohamed Abdullahi Yusuf, Nurani Madey Madka, Khalif Dayah Guled, Bashir Mo'alim Mohamud, Prof. Haji Mohamed Hussein, and Mohamed Sheikdon Jama.