**Aid worker in Somalia detained, not kidnapped: UN**

19 July 2010

Agence France Presse

The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) said Monday one of its local contractors was detained at a checkpoint in Somalia and not kidnapped as reported by his associates.

A colleague and a relative of Said Moalim Bashir had told AFP on Sunday that he was kidnapped at checkpoint between Mogadishu and Teredishe, a densely populated area outside the capital where thousands of displaced families live.

UNMAS said in a statement that he was not kidnapped but only "detained by the local authorities".

The area is controlled by Islamist insurgent groups who have in the past urged UN agencies to end their work in the country.

"The local authorities have been contacted and discussions are taking place to clear up the misunderstanding," UNMAS said in a statement.

It added that Bashir was in good health and that UNMAS was optimistic he would be released soon.

A relative told AFP Sunday that his vehicle was intercepted near a camp for displaced people by unknown gunmen who let the driver go.

Kidnappings, including of foreign nationals, are rampant in Somalia, a Horn of Africa country ravaged by cycles of devastating violence and largely controlled by Islamist insurgents.