

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

2 October 2015

### SOM105305.E

Somalia: The Biyomal [Biimaal, Biyomaal, Biymaal, Biyamal] clan, including work, history, religious affiliation, location within the country, particularly Nus Dunya; the Rahanweyn [Rahanwen] clan, including location in the country; treatment of the Biyomal clan by the Rahanwen clan (2013- September 2015)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Overview of Biyomal Clan

Sources indicate that in Somalia, there are four majority "noble clans": the Darood [Darod], Hawiye, Dir, and Isaaq [Isaq] (EASO Aug. 2014, 43-44; Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11). According to sources, the Biyomal are a subclan of the Dir clan (ibid., 18; UN n.d.). A 2009 report published jointly by the Austrian Red Cross and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) states that the "'noble clans'" are nomadic-pastoralist and speak *Af-Maxaa-tiri* (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11). According to the same source, the majority of the nomadic-pastoral clans are "united by a common, mythological perception of direct lineal descent from the forefather Samaal [Samale] and the household of the Prophet Mohammed" (ibid.). Similarly, Forced Migration Online, a collection of resources "concerning the situation of forced migrants worldwide," coordinated by the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford (RSC n.d.), states that the four noble clan families belong to the lineage line of the Samale (RSC July 2003).

According to sources, the Biyomal are located in the Lower Shabelle Region of Somalia (Norway 18 Oct. 2013, 8; UN n.d.; Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 18) as well as in the Middle and Lower Juba areas (ibid.). Landinfo, Norway's Country of Origin Information Centre, cites research conducted by Ioan Lewis, a former anthropology professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) who focused his research on Somali culture (LSE n.d.), as stating that the city of Marka is the "traditional home territory of the Dir clan Biimaal" (Norway 18 Oct. 2013, 8). The same source states that "[i]n the coastal area, including the port towns of Marka and Barawe, trade and fishing are the most common livelihoods" (ibid., 9). Landinfo also notes that the Lower Shabelle is "one of the most fertile areas in Somalia" and that food production is "the predominant means of making a living" in the region (ibid.). The Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD report that in some areas, clans such as the Biyomal "live in pockets of groups and thus can be referred to as 'minorities' on the local level with some justification, but not on the global Somali level due to the fact that they belong to a strong clan-family" (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 14). According to the same source, in general, the same clans

can leave the area where they constitute a "minority" and receive protection where their clan is a majority (even though the notion of being "dominant" nowhere means full control, as there are always several clans, and "minorities" present in South Central Somalia). However, this often means that these groups are obliged to leave their local areas where they probably have been living for generations. (ibid.)

Information on the presence of the Biyomal Clan in Nus Dunya could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 2. Overview of Rahanwen Clan

According to sources, the Rahanweyn [also known as the Digil-Mirifle (EASO Aug. 2014, 44; Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD Dec. 2009, 11)] are a "minority" clan in Somalia (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 7; RSC July 2003). However, an article by Catherine Besteman, a professor of anthropology at Colby College in Maine, US (Colby College n.d.), published by the World Peace Foundation, an academic research institution affiliated with Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (World Peace Foundation n.d.), indicates that "[f]ew scholars include the Rahanweyn clan among minorities since the creation of [a Rahanweyn] armed militia in 1996 and the 2000 power-sharing formula where Rahanweyn were counted as equal to the other 3 Somali clans" (Besteman 31 Oct. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to an article published in the *African Languages and Culture* journal by Bernhard Helander, a former lecturer in cultural anthropology at Uppsala University, Sweden, whose research focused on Somali culture and society (Somalia Watch 3 Jan. 2001), the Rahanweyn Clan is composed of approximately 30 sub-clans of varying sizes, which share a sense of unity based on "their common forms of attachment to land, their combined reliance on agriculture and animal husbandry, the pride they have in their dialect, and to some extent, their shared forms of Islamic worship" (Helander 1996, 197). The Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD similarly state that the Rahanweyn are a "mainly sedentary agro-pastoralist people" (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11). According to sources, the Rahanweyn speak a language distinct from the majority Somali clans (RSC July 2003; Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11), known as *Af Maay-tiri* (ibid.). According to Helander, Rahanweyn clans contain "a high degree of adopted members" of other clans within their populations; some sub-clans of the Rahanweyn clan reportedly have a membership comprised of more "adopted members" than "original members" (Helander 1996, 197). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources state that Rahanweyn clans reside in the Bay and Bakool [Bakol] regions (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 13; UN n.d.) of the Lower Shabelle, as well as Gedo (ibid.). The Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD report that "since 1999, the Rahanweyn clans have increasingly gained control of their 'own' regions of Bay and Bakool in the inter-riverine area between the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Southern Somalia" (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 13).

## 3. Treatment of the Biyomal Clan

### 3.1 Treatment by the Rahanweyn Clan

Information on the relationship between the Biyomal and Rahanweyn clans was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. According to a report published by OODA Loop, a provider of "actionable intelligence, analysis, and insight on global security" (n.d.), the Biyomal and Digil-Mirifle both occupy the Lower Shabelle State of South-West 6 (OODA Loop 23 Mar. 2014). The same source states that "[t]he South-West 6 Digil-Mirifle leaders gained support from the Dir clan, especially the Biyomaal Elders in the Marka District of Lower Shabelle" and also that

[t]he Biyomaal Dir are in an awkward position, they have to support the South-West 6 to ensure their territories are under the Digil-Mirifle dominated Administration, as opposed to supporting the South-West 3, which would leave them to be part of the Hawiye dominated Shabelle State. (ibid.)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an Associate Professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, whose research focuses on Somali culture and society, also stated that "[m]any Rahanweyn groups in Lower Shabelle share the mistrust of the Biyomal toward the Hawiye-dominated FG [Federal Government] of Somalia and for that reason, have themselves sometimes embraced al-Shabaab as a counterweight to the government" (Associate Professor 2 Oct. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### 3.2 Treatment by Other Clans

According to sources, the Biyomal has engaged in conflict with the Hawiye clan (Associate Professor 2 Oct. 2015; UN 13 Oct. 2014, para. 17; Norway 18 Oct. 2013, 11). The Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD indicate that the Biyomal have faced "suppress[ion]" by the Hawiye and the Ogaden/Darood clans and have engaged in armed conflict with the Hawiye in the Lower Shabelle and Middle and Lower Juba areas (Austrian Red Cross and ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 18). IRIN similarly states that the Biyomal and Habargidir [Haber Gedir]

clan (a sub-clan of the Hawiye Clan) have fought over territories in the Lower Shabelle region on numerous occasions, "and while the Somali government has been able to mediate between the groups, a lasting ceasefire has never been achieved" (UN 11 June 2014). According to the Associate Professor, "most of the reported violence against, and oppression of, the Biyomal in recent years has been attributed to Habr Gidir forces (primarily Ayr sub clan) who seek to assert their supremacy over the district and port of Marka" (Associate Professor 2 Oct. 2015). A report published in October 2014 by the UN Security Council's Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea cites interviews with internally displaced persons in the Lower Shabelle revealing that between November 2013 and August 2014, the "killing of civilians, burning of homes and farms, rape of women, and population displacement, primarily concentrated around Janale, Marka and K50" occurred as a consequence of clan violence between the Biyomal and Habargidir (UN 13 Oct. 2014, para. 44). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014* also quotes the United Nations as stating that in the Lower Shabelle region, "conflict between Biimaal and Habar Gedir militias resulted in reports of abductions and killings every week in June and July" (US June 2015, 12). Sources indicate the following instances of violence between the Biyomal and Habargidir clans:

- According to the BBC, in December 2013, at least 20 people were killed and "scores ... sustained various injuries" following three days of fighting between the Biyomal and Habargidir clans over control of territory in the Lower Shabelle region (BBC 16 Dec. 2013).
- The Monitoring Group reports that in December 2013, "serious clashes" between the Biyomal and Habargidir clans occurred and "revenge killings occurred in several locations, leading to civilians driven from their homes, rape and other human rights violations" (UN 13 Oct. 2014, para. 32).
- The Monitoring Group further indicates that on 7 May 2014, Habargidir and Biyomal militias clashed at K50 and Ceel-Wareegow (*ibid.*, para. 37). The same source states that on 9 May 2014, "the Habar Gedir launched an attack against Biimaal militias at the outskirts of Marka" (*ibid.*).
- IRIN reports that in June 2014, armed clashes took place between the Biyomal and Habargidir clans who were "competing for control" over Somalia's southern Lower Shabelle region (UN 11 June 2014). According to the same source, during this outbreak of violence, 30 were killed and over 250 were forced to take refuge at the bases of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (*ibid.*).
- The UN Security Council reports that on 9 June 2014, "a group of Habar Gedir clan militias wearing SNA [Somali National Army] uniforms reportedly entered Marka and forced the local Biimaal administration to flee" (UN 13 Oct. 2014, para. 39). The same source states that the Biyomal "suffered 35-40 civilian casualties, including women and children, and private homes and property were looted" (*ibid.*, para. 40).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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