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## Responses to Information Requests

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23 November 2017

### **SOM106011.E**

Somalia: Information on the Ogaden clan in Somaliland, including distinguishing features, locations, occupations and position in the clan hierarchy; treatment by the Somaliland authorities and by al-Shabaab (2015-October 2017)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### **1. Position of the Ogaden Clan in the Clan Hierarchy**

Sources indicate that the Ogaden [Ogaadeen] is a sub-clan belonging to the Darood [Darod/Daarood] clan-family (ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 12; Ambroso 2002, 9-10; Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017). According to a report on clans in Somalia by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), the Darood clan-family is one of the "noble clans," or "nomadic-pastoralist Somalis" (ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11).

The same source indicates that the Ogaden speak Af-Maxaa-tiri, which became the official language of Somalia after independence (ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 11). A report on the language situation in Somalia by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) similarly states, based on research by Marcello Lamberti [1], that the Darood dialects from western Somali areas, such as Ogaden in Ethiopia, "became the benchmark for the form of language in school textbooks and broadcasting" (Norway 22 July 2011, 9).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate a Lecturer at the Institute of Social Anthropology at Leipzig University, who has published numerous articles on conflict and identity in Somalia, stated that the genealogy of the clan is as follows:

Darood had several sons, among them Kablalah and Sede. Kablalah had two main sons called Kombe and Kumade. Sede had one important son called Marrehan. Kombe had several sons, among them Geri and Harti. Kumade had Abdi and Absame. Harti, the son of Kombe, had many sons, the most important were Majeerteen, Warsangeli and Dhulbahante. Absame, son of Kumade, had several sons, the most important were Jidwaq and Ogaden. So, here you have Ogaden. Genealogically speaking, the Ogaden clan is at the same level [as] Majeerteen, Warsangeli and Dhulbahante who dominate in Puntland (Majeerteen) and parts of eastern Somaliland (Dhulbahante and Warsangeli). They would be "cousins" (at a very abstract level). Marrehan [a famous clan that General Mohamed Siyad Barre belonged to] is genealogically speaking the "grandfather" or "grand uncle" of Ogaden (and Dhulbahante, Majeerteen and Warsangeli). It must be kept in mind that genealogies are abstract "maps" of kinship that systematize and summarize relations that are, by now, "historical." They relate back partly dozens of generations (hundreds of years) and cannot be taken as exact representation of "blood kinship". Still, they can be made meaningful in everyday life by concrete (living) actors. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017)

Sources indicate that the lineage more directly is as follows: Ogaden are part of the Absame, who are part of the Kumade [Kumede], who are part of the Kablalah [Kebalaleh], who are part of the Darood (Abbink

2009, 18-19; Ambroso 2002, chart 3.1; UN 2004, 5-6). According to sources, the Ogaden sub-clan further divides into lineages and sub-lineages (Abbink 2009, 18-20; UN 2004, 6). The Lecturer specified that the "Ogaden divides into Miyir Walal and Makabul. Miyir Walal divides into Bahale and Talomoge. Makabul divides into Reer Sa'ad and Makahil. Bahale, the son of Miyir Walal, has the sons Awl Yahan, Bah Geri and Zuber" (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017).

The same source added the following:

An Ogaden person living today would probably count some 15-20 forefathers up to the level of Mohamed Zuber. So in total, he/she would count between 25 and 30 generations back to Darod. But this kind of knowledge is spread variably among living Somalis. Some know the line of forefathers exactly and by heart, others only learned the main "nodal points" in their genealogy, and would not use it much, except when absolutely necessary to establish security or assistance to people in need. ... Ogadeen is a huge group with probably hundred-thousands members who reside over the whole Somali inhabited Horn of Africa. (27 Oct. 2017)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In a 2002 paper on clans and conflict in Somalia, Guido Ambroso, then a field officer at the UNHCR in Hargeisa, states that the Ogaden are "perhaps the largest Somali sub-clan," and have given their name to the ethnically Somali region of Ethiopia (Ambroso 2002, 9).

## 2. Distinguishing Features

According to the Lecturer,

[n]o physical features distinguish people who belong to different majority clans, including Ogaden. The main groups in Somalia (Darood, Hawiye, Isaaq, Dir, Rahanweyn) do not exhibit any specific physical differences. They intermix freely in different regions of the Somali territories and constitute what some might call "standard Somali" persons. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a Somalia Analyst at the International Crisis Group similarly stated that there are no distinguishing features of any Somali clan, except for minority groups (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017).

Sources indicate that there are differences associated with dialects between clans in Somalia (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017; Norway 22 July 2011, 7). According to the Somalia Analyst, the dialect differences mostly affect pronunciation of some words (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017). According to the Landinfo report, Ogaden dialects belong to the Northern Somali dialect group, which includes Ogaden dialects in the Darood sub-group, as well as Af-Ogaden in the Lower Juba sub-group, and Ogaden dialects Af-Abudwaq and Afabdallah in a possible northern Kenya sub-group (Norway 22 July 2011, 11-12).

## 3. Locations

Sources indicate that the Ogaden live in the following areas:

- Ethiopia (ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 12), in the Somali Region (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017; Ambroso 2002, 10)
- Southern Somalia, in Juba (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017; ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 12; Ambroso 2002, 10); and
- Regions of Kenya (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017; ACCORD 15 Dec. 2009, 12; Ambroso 2002, 10).

A map of the Somali clan families published by the Swedish State Secretariat for Migration that shows general geographic location according to the lineages, including of the Ogaden clan, is attached to this Response.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Lecturer at Leipzig University stated the following:

[Descendants of the Ogaden clan] dominate in Region 5 of Ethiopia [Somali Region] and in Southern Somalia and North-western Kenya. ... [The Ogaden] do NOT [emphasis in original] predominantly [reside] in Northern Somalia [Somaliland and Puntland]. Individuals have a presence in northern Somali towns like Hargeisa, Lasanod, Bosaso and possibly Garowe. But they do not traditionally reside there in larger numbers. In the past, in the first half of the 20th century, Ogaden had a sizable presence around Hargeisa [Somaliland's capital]. But this changed in the 1940s. Since then, Hargeisa is dominated by Isaaq. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017)

Without providing further detail, the Somalia Analyst stated that in Somaliland, the Ogaden are not numerous (31 Oct. 2017). According to Ambroso, in Somaliland itself, the main clan is the Isaaq [Isaq/Issak], which dominates most regions of Somaliland, with the Gadabursi clan located in Awdal, the Darood sub-clan Warsangeli [Warsengeli] dominant in Sool [Sol] and the Darood sub-clan Dulbahante [Dhulbahante] dominant in Sool and Sanaag [Sanag] regions (Ambroso 2002, 32-33).

Sources indicate that the Ogaden war [2] resulted in an influx of Ogaden refugees into northern Somalia (Wiafe-Amoako 28 July 2016, 231; Hoehne 2015, 41). According to Ambroso, after 1991, the Teferi Ber and Darwanji refugee camps in Ethiopia accommodated refugees from Somaliland, which included Ogaden returnees fleeing the advancing Isaaq-led Somali National Movement (SNM) (Ambroso 2002, 44).

In the same paper, Ambroso also states that the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991 resulted in a repatriation to Ethiopia of many Ogaden that had fled to Somalia, and many Ogaden returnees filled senior positions in the new regional administration [in Ethiopia] (Ambroso 2002, 47-48). According to a report on persecutions of minorities in Hargeisa, Somaliland by the Oromia Support Group (OSG) [3], large numbers of Ogaden Somalis also fled to Somaliland following the Ethiopian government's counter-insurgency campaign in the Ogaden region in 2007 (OSG Feb. 2012, 25).

Further information on the current number of Ogaden and their geographic locations in Somaliland could not be found within the time constraints of this Response.

#### **4. Traditional Occupations**

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Lecturer at Leipzig University stated the following:

Traditionally, Ogaden are often pastoral-nomads. They inhabit semi-arid lands from eastern Ethiopia to southern Somalia to northeast Kenya. Besides animal husbandry, Ogaden are known as traders. They operate in Region 5 of Ethiopia [Somali Region], but also have big businesses e.g. in Kismayo, the second-most important harbor of southern Somalia. Of course, at an individual level, and in "modern times" (since possibly the 1950s), one can find all kinds of occupations of Ogaden men and women. They can be teachers, university professors, clerks, soldiers etc.: in the urban milieu, traditional occupations hardly play a role any more. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### **5. Treatment by the Somaliland Authorities**

According to a book on the political evolution of Somaliland and Puntland by Markus Hoehne, a lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Leipzig (Hoehne 2015, 2), some of the Ogaden refugees in the Isaaq territories of north-western Somalia were armed by the Barre regime, and between 1981 and 1991, were engaged in the conflict between the Barre regime and the SNM (an Isaaq-based guerrilla movement) that killed many thousands of civilians in Somaliland (Hoehne 2015, 40-41).

A 2008 Human Rights Watch report on war crimes in Ethiopia's Somali Regional State states the following:

Tensions between certain Ogaadeeni sub-clans and Isaaq clan members are longstanding. Human Rights Watch received reports that ONLF [Ogaden National Liberation Front] [4] forces have regularly targeted traders belonging to the rival Isaaq clan. The ONLF views some Isaaq, including the authorities in Somaliland, as collaborating with the Ethiopian army and transporting food aid as contractors of the Ethiopian government and international relief agencies. (Human Rights Watch 2008, 103)

Without providing further detail, the report by the Oromia Support Group states that "refoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers from Somaliland [to Ethiopia], known or suspected to be supporters of the ONLF or OLF, has been continuing since 1996" (OSG Feb. 2012, 40).

According to the Lecturer,

[s]ome Ogaden sub-clans (like Mohamed Zuber) intermarry with some Isaaq clans (like Idagale). Both meet south of Hargeisa, in the borderlands between Somaliland and Region 5/Eastern Ethiopia. I am not aware of any official relation between Ogaden and the government of Somaliland - besides inter-governmental talks between the regional government of Region 5 (Ethiopia), which is headed by Ogaden, and the government of Somaliland. Such talks happen rarely; maybe occasionally to discuss measures to alleviate effects of periodic droughts or security issues; but the preferred discussion partner for the government of Somaliland is, in my eyes, the central government of Ethiopia. In Somaliland, Ogaden do NOT [emphasis in original] have any official function in government. They are not considered a 'resident clan' [and] they do NOT [emphasis in

original] have Somaliland citizenship. Socially, as I mentioned, and at an individual level, Ogaden persons can reside in Somaliland, intermarry with Isaaq and open a business in places like Hargeisa. But this is rather low profile and has nothing to do with an official stake in the government of Somaliland. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017)

The Somalia Analyst stated that in Somaliland, the Ogaden do not have any access to power, as many Ogaden in Somaliland are refugees (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017). The same source noted that there is a challenge for Ogaden in Somaliland as they have no legal representation, nor any representation in government (Somalia Analyst 31 Oct. 2017).

## 6. Treatment by al-Shabaab

Information on treatment of the Ogaden by al-Shabaab was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Lecturer,

[o]ne has to be careful not to unduly collectivise Somali people. ... The situation of an Ogaden born in Kenya is very different from the one of an Ogaden born in Kismayo from one born in Region 5. Those who reside in southern Somalia (e.g. around Kismayo) are much more exposed to Al Shabaab than the others. This means: at an individual level, an Ogaden from there might feel the urge or need or might be compelled to join Al Shabaab. An Ogaden from Kenya or Ethiopia might not have this exposure. Of course, someone who is ideologically drawn to Al Shabaab might join wherever he/she is, including the diaspora. But, in everyday life, those residing near or in Al Shabaab controlled areas are exposed much more intensively. There have been some Ogaden units in Al Shabaab in the past, one of them has been headed in the past by Madobe, the current president of Jubbaland, who changed 'hats' and is now in the government camp, cooperating with the USA special forces based near Kismayo. Ogaden in Al Shabaab will not be treated differently by Al Shabaab than other members. If they are loyal and dedicated, they will be treated well, in Al Shabaab terms: [this means being] paid for fighting, able to make a career within the movement, expected to die when necessary for the higher cause, [etc.]. (Lecturer 27 Oct. 2017)

An International Crisis Group policy briefing on al-Shabaab in Somalia published in 2014 also states that an Ogaden clan member, Ahmed Mohamed Islam "Madobe," from the Ras Kamboni militia, was named Deputy Emir of al-Shabaab in 2005 before becoming President of the Juba Interim Administration (International Crisis Group 26 June 2014, 6).

According to a report on South and Central Somalia by the EU's European Asylum Support Office (EASO), citing a report by Lifos, Swedish Migration Agency's expert institution for legal and country of origin information (Sweden 26 Oct. 2017), the Ogaden are divided fifty-fifty on support for al-Shabaab (EU Aug. 2014, 103-104). The International Crisis Group policy briefing states that "[i]n its own terminology, Al-Shabaab divides clans into *ansar* (supporters of the mujahidin) and *gaala lajir* (collaborators with unbelievers) (International Crisis Group 26 June 2014, 13). Without providing further detail, the same source indicates that "[t]he Ogaden and Ayr-Habar Gedir clans were originally *ansar* but became *gaala lajir*" (International Crisis Group 26 June 2014, 13). According to an article on al-Shabaab's capabilities published in a volume issued by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and written by Ken Menkhaus, a professor of Political Science at Davidson College who has published more than 50 articles and chapters on Somalia and the Horn of Africa, the Ogaden broke from al-Shabaab when the Ras Kamboni militia began fighting al-Shabaab following a dispute over control of Kismayo and turned to Kenya and Ethiopia as external allies (Menkhaus Feb. 2014, 4). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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.

### Notes

[1] The Landinfo report cites the following reference: Lamberti, Marcello. 1986. *Die Somali-Dialekte*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Publishing (Norway 22 July 2011, 9, 23).

[2] The Ogaden War occurred in 1977-1978 between Somalia and Ethiopia for control of the Ogaden region (Hoehne 2015, 41).

[3] The Oromia Support Group, citing the Australian branch, is an organization that "raises awareness of the human rights issues affecting the Oromo and other oppressed peoples in Oromia, Ethiopia" (Oromia Support Group Australia n.d.).

[4] The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) is a separatist rebel group founded in 1984 and fighting to make Ogaden an independent state (CFR 1 Nov. 2007).

## References

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Doctoral candidate in Somali Studies at University of Oxford; Ogaden Somali Community Association of Ontario; Somali-Canadian Association of Etobicoke; Somaliland Representative Office in Canada.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Denmark – Danish Immigration Service; eoi.net; Factiva; Freedom House; Google Scholar; Governance and Social Development Resource Centre Research Helpdesk; Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (Somalia); Human Rights Centre Somaliland; Institute for Security Studies Africa; McGill Library; Norway – Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Norwegian Refugee Council; Sweden – Swedish Migration Agency; Taylor & Francis Online; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld.

## Attachment

Sweden. 2015. Staatssekretariat für Migration. [Somali Clan Families](#). [Accessed 27 Oct. 2017]

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