

# 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](#).

1 December 2017

### SOM106012.E

Somalia: Treatment of members and supporters of the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) and suspected members and supporters of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) by authorities in Somaliland, including whether the authorities cooperate with the Ethiopian government (2015-October 2017)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. Overview of the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID)

The Justice and Welfare party [Ururka Caddaalada iyo Daryeelka (UCID)], is a political party in Somaliland (Al Jazeera 13 Nov. 2017; IRI [2005], 7; ISS 25 Oct. 2017, 3), led by Faysal Ali Warabe, who "has been opposition leader since the early 2000s" (Al Jazeera 13 Nov. 2017). According to a report on the 2005 Parliamentary Election in Somaliland by the International Republican Institute (IRI) [1], "only the top three vote-getting parties in the municipal elections [are] allowed to compete in the presidential election and all subsequent elections" (IRI [2005], 7). According to a report on the Somaliland 2017 elections published by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) [2] and authored by Omar Mahmood and Mohamed Farah [3], as a result of the 2012 local council elections, the three parties contesting the 2017 presidential elections are the ruling Kulmiye party, the UCID and "newcomer Waddani" (ISS 25 Oct. 2017, 3).

A 2015 report on state-building in Somaliland, co-published by the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) and Interpeace [4], explains that, according to the constitution of Somaliland, only three political parties can legally exist (APD and Interpeace Aug. 2015, 11). According to the same source, since 2002, the first three recognized parties were the United People's Democratic Party (UDUB), Kulmiye and UCID, and following the "2012 local council elections, Kulmiye and UCID maintained their status as official national parties, while UDUB was replaced by the Waddani party" (APD and Interpeace Aug. 2015, 17).

According to the IRI report, the UCID "presented itself as a party of intellectuals and professionals, bringing expertise from the West that could accelerate Somaliland's development and modernization" (IRI [2005], 15). According to the ISS report, the UCID leader, Faysal Ali Warabe, maintains strict control of the party, advocates for a welfare state in Somaliland, and is "staunchly anti-tribalist" (ISS 25 Oct. 2017, 7).

The report by the APD and Interpeace indicates that in 2010, following a disagreement between UCID leaders Faysal Ali Warabe and Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Cirro), the UCID broke into two factions, with Cirro becoming the chairperson for the new Waddani party, and the split "resulted in demonstrations, which sometimes turned violent" (APD and Interpeace Aug. 2015, 19).

#### 2. Treatment of Members and Supporters of the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) by Authorities in Somaliland

Information on the treatment of members and supporters of UCID by authorities in Somaliland was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the US Department of State's *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, the Somaliland government "banned opposition political rallies outside the official campaign window," but "did not impose any such restrictions on progovernment rallies" (US 3 Mar. 2017, 20).

An article by Somali Update, an independent English-language Somali news website (Somali Update n.d.), reports that two officials of the Waddani party were detained on alleged anti-Somaliland sentiments in April 2017 (Somali Update 22 Apr. 2017). The same source cites the Secretary General of Waddani Party as stating that the purpose of the arrest was to "humiliate them ... and this administration seeks to impose [a] dictatorship," as well as a member of the UCID as stating that it "signaled how President Ahmed Silanyo's administration is not tolerant [of] critical voices" (Somali Update 22 Apr. 2017). An article by the Somaliland Sun, an independent news website, reports that the officials were released in May 2017 despite a conviction, and shortly before their release, Waddani Party Presidential Candidate Abdirahman Irro [Cirro], addressing the arrests, stated that the arrests indicated that the "free fair Somaliland presidential elections slated for this coming November are untenable" (Somaliland Sun 30 May 2017).

A December 2014 article by the SomalilandPress [5], reports that an assembly of supporters in Hargeisa, welcoming UCID presidential candidate Jamal Ali Hussein's return from abroad, rerouted as a result of "heated arguments" with the police and "indiscriminating gunfire meant to disperse" party officials and supporters (SomalilandPress 16 Dec. 2014). The same source cites UCID spokesman Yusuf Kayse Abdullah as stating that "police intimidation [resulted in] dozens of our [UCID] supporters being injured and dozens more detained" (SomalilandPress 16 Dec. 2014).

### **3. Treatment of Suspected Members and Supporters of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) by Authorities in Somaliland**

Information on the treatment of suspected members and supporters of the ONLF by Somaliland authorities was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to a country policy note on Ethiopia by the UK Home Office, citing Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, the ONLF is a

separatist group based and operating in the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia - an area of the country with a large population of ethnic Somalis from the Ogaden clan. The stated aims of the ONLF have varied over time, but centre around defending the human and civil rights of the Ogadeni people, protecting the region's natural resources from perceived exploitation by the state, and ultimately the fulfillment of the Ogadeni people's right to national self-determination. (UK 9 Oct. 2017, 25)

A September 2010 article by the BBC reports that Somaliland forces surrounded "about 200" suspected rebels in the mountainous region near the border with Ethiopia, and that the suspected rebels had left behind documents suggesting they belonged to the ONLF (BBC 13 Sept. 2010). The same source further states that "Somaliland has previously helped the Ethiopian government in its fight against the ONLF" (BBC 13 Sept. 2010). In a September 2010 article, Reuters reports that the ONLF, in response to claims of Somaliland's forces surrounding ONLF rebels in Somaliland, denied that any ONLF forces were in Somaliland, saying that no ONLF units operate outside Ethiopia (Reuters 14 Sept. 2010).

### **4. Somaliland and Ethiopia Inter-Government Relations**

Information on Somaliland and Ethiopia inter-government relations was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a Lecturer at the Institute of Anthropology at Leipzig University, who has published articles on conflict and identity in Somalia, stated that

Ethiopia is an important patron of Somaliland. It helped to keep stability and peace in Somaliland since the mid-1990s and whenever there is a serious political crisis in the area (e.g., between Somaliland and Puntland) Ethiopia is involved as mediator. Ethiopia needs stability in northern Somalia, to be able to control its region 5 (Ogaden region) and to keep the ONLF in check. If Somaliland or Puntland were to crumble and violence or chaos would arise in northern Somalia, the border between this area and eastern Ethiopia would be open for guerillas, Islamists etc. to transverse, infiltrate, smuggle and hide (in northern Somalia). A stable Somaliland and Puntland guarantees some order in eastern Ethiopia as well. Ethiopia is also an important economic partner of Somaliland. Much of the goods imported or exported via the port of Berbera come from or go to Ethiopia. ... Ethiopia has a liaison office in Hargeysa, which functions as an unofficial embassy. Somaliland

citizens can, as far as I know, get visas for Ethiopia there. There is lots of travel of individuals between Somaliland and Ethiopia. (Lecturer 17 Nov. 2017)

In a 2009 report on human rights and democracy in Somaliland, Human Rights Watch describes the relationship between Somaliland and Ethiopia as being a relationship "premised to a large degree on close cooperation on matters of security" (Human Rights Watch July 2009, 43). The report further states that Ethiopia is the only country to maintain a significant diplomatic presence, and that "the Somaliland government has on numerous occasions arrested Ethiopian citizens the authorities in Addis Ababa believe are linked to insurgent groups and handed them over to the Ethiopian government without due process" (Human Rights Watch July 2009, 53-54). The report further states that there is no extradition treaty with Ethiopia, as Ethiopia "does not recognize Somaliland's independence and therefore cannot enter into any treaty with it" (Human Rights Watch July 2009, 43).

According to a 2012 report titled *Persecuted in Ethiopia: Hunted in Hargeisa* by the Oromia Support Group (OSG), a "non-political organisation which attempts to raise awareness of human rights violations in Ethiopia" (OSG Feb. 2012, 2), and published on the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat website [6], due to Ethiopia and Somaliland's economic and security interdependence,

political opponents of the Ethiopian regime are at risk in Somaliland. Although there is no extradition treaty, as Ethiopia does not recognise the state of Somaliland, a security agreement was reported by the ONLF to have been signed in a Dire Dawa hotel in November 2009. General Abraham Wolde-Mariam of the Ethiopian Security Service signed an agreement with the commanders of Somaliland's armed forces, police and intelligence services, that opponents to the Ethiopian government would be arrested and handed over. (OSG Feb. 2012, 25)

The same source also states that "[r]efoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers from Somaliland, known or suspected to be supporters of the ONLF or OLF [Oromo Liberation Front], has been continuing since 1996" (OSG Feb. 2012, 40).

A 2016 article by the SomalilandPress quotes an Ethiopian diplomatic envoy to Somaliland as stating that "[a] highly appreciable common understanding has created [the need for] fighting terrorism and counter-terrorism, control of the activities of human trafficking and other criminals [by] exchanging the information with all concerned Somaliland authorities on [a] regular basis." (SomalilandPress 12 Nov. 2016)

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 International Republican Institute (IRI) is "a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide by helping political parties to become more issue-based and responsive, assisting citizens to participate in government planning, and working to increase the role of marginalized groups in the political process – including women and youth." (IRI n.d.)

[2] The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) is an African non-profit organization with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal which focuses, among other fields, on peacebuilding, conflict and governance. ISS provides "timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society" (ISS n.d.).

[3] Omar S. Mahmood is a researcher with the Institute for Security Studies' Addis Ababa Office, and Mohamed Farah is the director of the Academy for Peace and Development in Somaliland (ISS 25 Oct. 2017, 24).

[4] Interpeace is "an independent, international peacebuilding organization" that was "established in 1994 by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace" and supports "locally led peacebuilding initiatives in more than 21 countries" (Interpeace n.d.). The Academy for Peace and Development (APD) "was established in 1998 as a research institute in collaboration with Interpeace", and has "mainly focused in peacebuilding using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. The organization has brought together representatives from different sectors of society to identify priorities in the process of rebuilding Somaliland." (APD n.d)

[5] According to their Facebook fan page: "Somalilandpress is an independent news portal published from Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. It is one of the few English sources from the region. We are dedicated to present news objectively and present each side fairly." (Facebook n.d.)

[6] "The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) is a unit co-located within the Danish Refugee Council [DRC]'s regional office (Horn of Africa and Yemen) in Nairobi, Kenya. The RMMS' work is guided by a multi-agency Steering Committee, currently consisting of the IOM [International Organization for Migration], UNHCR, DRC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), INTERSOS, IGAD [the Intergovernmental Authority on Development] and the EU delegation to Kenya" (RMMS n.d). The RMMS "reinforces data and information collection and sharing, research, analysis and aims to positively impact migration and refugee policies throughout the region" (RMMS n.d.).

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Academy for Peace and Development; Somaliland – Official in Canada; Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Hargeisa.

**Internet sites, including:** Al-Jazeera; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; ecoi.net; Factiva; International Crisis Group; Harar24 News; Hiiraan Online; Horn Affairs; *Jane's Intelligence Review*; The National (Somaliland); Netherlands – Dutch Council for Refugees; Norway – Landinfo; Pambazuka News; *Political Handbook of the World*; Progressio; Rift Valley Institute; Somali Commentator; Somaliland Informer; Somaliland Today; UN – Refworld; WardheerNews.

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