



Somalia: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 September 2011

COI regarding the current situation in Somalia, including the drought and severe humanitarian situation

A report from *IRIN News* published in September 2011 states:

“Al-Shabab insurgents have prevented thousands of people fleeing famine-struck parts of Somalia from reaching humanitarian assistance in Mogadishu, trucking them instead to a makeshift camp 50km south of the capital, where aid is severely limited.

"These were people who were going to Mogadishu in search of help. Instead they were brought here," said a Mogadishu-based journalist, who visited the K50 camp, where some 45,000 people now live in inadequate shelters amid the rising threat of disease and hunger.

"They have become pawns. I don't think they understand why they are not getting the same attention as those in Mogadishu," he said, requesting, like almost everyone who talks about Al-Shabab, not be identified by name.

While hundreds of thousands of people in Mogadishu have access to food and other humanitarian assistance - despite a rise in militia-manned checkpoints - insecurity prevents many international aid agencies from reaching places outside the capital, even those as close as K50.

One aid worker in the city told IRIN that Al-Shabab was stopping the displaced from reaching the city “for two reasons. One, they don't want people to abandon their area of control. Two, they don't want to be seen as unable to help the needy and their leaving is a vote of no-confidence in the group.” (IRIN News (6 September 2011) *Somalia: Insurgents divert famine IDPs from aid*)

The situation report from the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* notes:

“According to UNHCR, the number of people fleeing their homes in Somalia is decreasing. [...]

The reason for this decrease appears two-fold. First, donations from the Somali diaspora and mobilisation by local and host communities in July and August to assist the affected populations during the month of Ramadan may have enabled people to remain where they were. Added to this, international and local humanitarian organisations are now better placed to deliver aid to famine affected populations in the regions of Bay, Gedo, south Bakool and Hiraan, particularly in areas along the Kenyan and Ethiopian borders. This has helped to reduce pressure on Mogadishu as a destination to seek aid. Second, UNCHR is receiving reports that Al Shabaab is continuing to place restrictions on the movement of people in areas under its control, particularly

the movements of men, most notably in the Lower Shabelle and Bay regions. This has prevented large population movements, especially from Lower Shabelle, into Mogadishu.

[...] By August/September, almost all regions of southern Somalia could face famine. FSNAU is expected to release new information on malnutrition in southern Somalia soon." (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (30 August 2011) *Somalia Famine & Drought Situation Report No. 11*)

A report from the *UN News Service* published in August 2011 states:

"Dadaab is now home to more than 400,000 registered refugees, nearly all of them Somali, with an estimated 70,000 people having arrived in the past two months as conditions in their homeland rapidly deteriorate.

The UN has formally declared a state of famine in five regions in southern and central Somalia, and the number of people in need of food aid and humanitarian assistance across the wider region is more than 12 million.

Ms. Amos noted that the number of refugees arriving at Dadaab, which is being expanded to accommodate the influx, has fallen in recent weeks.

But she added that many children are still arriving in a state of severe malnourishment." (UN News Service (14 August 2011) *At world's biggest refugee camp, UN relief chief calls for more aid for Somalis*)

The *International Committee of the Red Cross* states in a report published in July 2011:

"The severe drought, with below average rainfall in most parts of southern and central Somalia since the last deyr rainy season (from September to November 2010), has hit a population already exhausted by years of armed conflict, previous dry spells and economic crises.

Hundreds of thousands of people displaced within Somalia are searching for shelter and food. The majority live in the open or in makeshift camps. They represent a heavy burden for the host communities that share their scarce resources with them. Most of the displaced do not have anything left to sell and are therefore unable to buy food. As a result, malnutrition rates are usually even higher among displaced people than among the general population.

In addition, the absence of international humanitarian organizations, many of which have stopped their activities in southern Somalia since early 2009 because of security constraints and restrictions imposed by local authorities, has added to the hardship.

The ongoing armed conflict, which intensified further with a new offensive at the beginning of the year, mainly in Mogadishu and along the Kenyan and Ethiopian borders, prevents many of the displaced from returning to their home areas. Thousands are crossing the borders every week.

"The current situation is the result of a long-standing crisis that has pushed people to their limits," said Olivier Humbert-Droz, the deputy head of the ICRC delegation for Somalia. "Without any aid, it's bound to get even worse in the coming weeks." (International Committee of the Red Cross (22 July 2011) *Somalia: a population exhausted*)

A report from *IRIN News* published in March 2011 states:

"One in three people in Somalia needs humanitarian assistance as a severe water crisis, linked to the La Niña weather phenomenon, takes hold across much of the country after failed seasonal Deyr rains and amid continuing armed conflict. Prices of cereals and water in many areas have soared.

Here are some facts and figures about this crisis, culled from a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Security and Nutritional Analysis Unit.

The population of Somalia is 7.5 million; of whom 2.4m people require humanitarian assistance, a 20 percent increase over the last six months:" [...] (IRIN News (March 2011) *Somalia: A crisis in numbers*)

The *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* notes under General Information:

- 4 million people, or 53% of the Somalia population, are in crisis countrywide - an increase from 3.7 million people in July; 3.3 million are in need of lifesaving assistance. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Of the 4 million in crisis, 3 million people are in the southern regions of Somalia, a 7% increase from 2.8 million in July; 2.6 million of them are in need of lifesaving assistance. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- 750,000 people are famine-affected, a 66% increase from 350,000 in July (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Hundreds of people are dying every day due to the famine in the southern regions; at least half of these are children. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Potential cholera, Malaria and Measles outbreaks could exacerbate the situation leading to more deaths in the coming rainy season from October - December. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Famine has now been declared in Bay region of Somalia, the sixth area along with southern Bakool, parts of Middle Shabelle, Lower Shabelle, IDPs in the Afgooye Corridor and IDPs in Mogadishu. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Without large-scale interventions, famine will likely spread to agropastoral and riverine areas of Gedo, the Jubas, and Hiraan, the Shabelles and Hiraan regions over the coming four months. (FSNAU/FEWSNET)
- Emergency conditions will persist well into the first quarter of 2012. (FSNAU/FEWSNET) (United Nations Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs (5 September 2011) *Somalia Key figures on Somalia - 05 September 2011*)

The *US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices* published in April 2011 notes in the introduction:

“Despite security and capacity problems, the TFG continued to focus on human rights. It designated a human rights official in the Ministry of Justice and a Focal Point for Human Rights and Child Protection in the Office of the Prime Minister and participated in international efforts to encourage better human rights practices. The human rights situation in al-Shabaab and allied extremist-controlled areas deteriorated further during the year. Absence of effective governance institutions and rule of law, the widespread availability of small arms and other light weapons, and al-Shabaab's increased enforcement of extremist societal norms contributed to a worsening human rights situation, particularly in Central and South Somalia.

Human rights abuses included arbitrary killings, kidnappings, torture, rape, amputations, and beatings; official impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; and arbitrary arrest, deportation, and detention. In part due to the absence of functioning institutions, perpetrators of human rights abuses, mostly in al-Shabaab controlled areas of Central and South Somalia, were rarely punished. Denial of a fair trial and limited privacy rights were problems, and there were restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement. Discrimination and violence against women, including rape and female genital mutilation; child abuse; recruitment of child soldiers; trafficking in persons; abuse of and discrimination against clan and religious minorities; restrictions on workers' rights; forced labor; and child labor were also problems.

Members of extremist antigovernment groups, and the al-Shabaab terrorist organization, some of whose members were affiliated with al-Qaida, committed an increasing number of egregious human rights violations, including killings of TFG officials and civilians; kidnappings and disappearances; attacks on journalists, aid workers, civil society leaders, and human rights activists; restrictions on freedom of movement; and displacement of civilians. In an August 10 media release, the UN Independent Expert (UNIE) on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia listed as human rights abuses: "summary executions, including beheadings of innocent people, amputations, flogging, whipping, forcible marriage of young girls to militiamen, use of civilians as human shields, imposition of the strictest dress code on women and prohibition of the use of public mass media, and the bans imposed on listening to music and public gathering, all with lack of due process." (US Department of State (8 April 2011) *Somalia: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2010*)

The *Amnesty International* annual report published in May 2011 covering events of 2010 notes under the heading 'Displacement':

“Fighting, insecurity and poverty displaced some 300,000 people during the year. According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, 1.5 million Somalis were internally displaced in the country at the end of the year.

In January, fighting between al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam on the one hand, and Ahlu Sunna Waal Jamaa on the other, in the city of Dhusamareb in central Somalia and the city of Beletweyne in the Hiran region caused the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians.

In Mogadishu, some 23,000 people were displaced within two weeks as a result of the Ramadan offensive. Many joined settlements for displaced people along the Afgoye corridor outside Mogadishu, which hosted about 410,000 people with little or no access to humanitarian aid. From September onwards, thousands of displaced people in Afgoye were reported to have been forcibly evicted following acquisition of land by businessmen.

On 19 and 20 July, the Puntland authorities forcibly removed some 900 internally displaced people mainly from southern and central Somalia to the Galgadud region.

Civilians continued to flee to neighbouring countries. Despite the risks related to conflict and violence, Somalis were deported back to southern and central Somalia by Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and European countries, including the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. In October, fighting between pro-TFG forces and al-Shabab in Belet Hawo, on the border with Kenya, displaced some 60,000 people. Between 1 and 2 November, 8,000 civilians who had fled into Kenya near the town of Mandera were ordered to return to Somalia by the Kenyan authorities. On 4 November, Kenyan police moved them further inside Somalia.” (Amnesty International (13 May 2011) *Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 – Somalia*)

The introduction section in the *Human Rights Watch* report published in January 2011 notes:

“The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), supported by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), lost control of further territory to opposition groups in Somalia in 2010, with bitter fighting imposing a significant toll on civilians, especially during an upsurge of attacks in August and September. Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, the militant Islamist groups that spearhead the opposition, consolidated control over much of south-central Somalia, where the population experienced relative stability but also increasingly harsh and intolerant repression, in the name of Sharia law. A humanitarian crisis exists across the country. Humanitarian agencies have limited access due to ongoing insecurity, and armed opposition groups threatened humanitarian workers, journalists, and civil society activists with attack.” (Human Rights Watch (24 January 2011) *World Report 2011 - Somalia*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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UK Home Office
US Department of State