



Somalia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 21 January 2010

Information on the current political situation

The *United States Institute of Peace* in January 2010 notes:

“Somalia has been without a central government since 1991. Since that time there have been 14 different efforts to establish a new government. In 2004, the TFG was established with support from the international community to revive national government institutions and establish control over Mogadishu. However, the TFG has never had effective control over the whole country” (United States Institute of Peace (14 January 2010) *International Engagement With Somalia*, p.2)

TFG is an acronym for Transitional Federal Government.

The December 2009 *CIA World Factbook* entry for Somalia, states:

“While its institutions remain weak, the TFG continues to reach out to Somali stakeholders and work with international donors to help build the governance capacity of the TFIs and work toward national elections in 2011” (CIA (22 December 2009) *World Factbook, Somalia*, Introduction)

TFI is an acronym for Transitional Federal Institutions.

This same report continues:

“...although an interim government was created in 2004, other regional and local governing bodies continue to exist and control various regions of the country, including the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in northwestern Somalia and the semi-autonomous State of Puntland in northeastern Somalia” (ibid)

Reviewing events of 2009 *Human Rights Watch* in January 2010 notes:

“Somalia’s people continue to endure one of the world’s worst human rights catastrophes. Hopes of peace following the installation of a new Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed in early 2009 have been dashed. The capital Mogadishu is wracked by indiscriminate warfare in which all parties are implicated in war crimes or other serious human rights abuses. Much of the rest of the country is now under the control of local administrations linked to armed opposition groups” (Human Rights Watch (20 January 2010) *World Report 2010, Somalia*, p.1)

Reviewing events of 2008 *Freedom House* states in August 2009 that:

“The country has no effective political parties, and the political process is driven largely by clan loyalty” (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World - Somalia (2009)*)

The *United States Department of State* in February 2009 reviewing events of 2008 notes:

“In the absence of effective governance institutions, citizens could not exercise the right to change their government. The country was governed by an internationally recognized, although unelected, TFG with a mandate until 2009 to prepare the country for national elections. Clan leaders operated as de facto rulers in most regions under the nominal control of the TFG. Although many such leaders derived their authority from the traditional deference given to clan elders, they often faced opposition from intraclan groups and political factions, as well as from the perceived central authority of the TFG” (United States Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Reports: Somalia*, Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government)

The *United Nations Security Council* in January 2010 states:

“The Transitional Federal Government continued to consolidate and expand its support base on three fronts. First, the Government intensified efforts to expand its support base among the main opposition groups in Mogadishu; secondly, the cooperation between the Government and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a (ASWJ) was consolidated; and thirdly, the Government commenced an in-depth review of its relationship with the “Puntland” regional authorities. An increasing number of elements from the armed opposition have renounced violence and opted to work for peace in partnership with the Government” (United Nations Security Council (08 January 2010) *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia*, p.1).

This report also states:

“The Transitional Federal Government is making progress in some critical areas. Despite the challenging environment and incessant attacks on the Government, the implementation of the Djibouti Agreement generally remains on track. The Somali leadership has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring the success of the peace process, notably by relocating its federal institutions to Mogadishu. However, the persistent attempts to overthrow the Government through violent means and targeted assassinations should remind the international community of the precariousness of the situation” (ibid, p.16)

A January 2010 statement by a representative of the *United Nations Security Council* notes:

“Citing the Government’s accomplishments, he said they included establishing its authority in Mogadishu, the capital; drawing up a budget; recruiting and training security forces; and keeping its political legitimacy over violent and extremist groups. The Government had remained open to all Somalis who were ready for dialogue and reconciliation, he said, adding that Somalia was moving from failed State to fragile State” (United Nations Security Council (14 January 2010) *Secretary-General’s Special*

Representative, Briefing Security Council, Calls Somalia 'Global Crisis' That Can No Longer Be Ignored)

A December 2009 *Voice of America* news story comments on January of 2009 and subsequent events noting:

“Somalia's United Nations-backed Transitional Federal Government, under former Islamist opposition leader Sharif Sheik Ahmed, took office in January - raising hopes the country's Islamist-led insurgency against the government would end. But Mr. Sharif's ascension to power further intensified the conflict and, nearly one year later, the government remains weak and unable to unite the country” (*Voice of America* (17 December 2009) *Shaky Somalian Transitional Federal Government Hangs On*)

In December 2009 *Reuters* notes:

“Parliament elected a new moderate Islamist president, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, in early 2009. Ahmed headed the sharia courts movement that brought some stability to Mogadishu and most of south Somalia in 2006, before Washington's main regional ally Ethiopia invaded to oust them. His hardline former allies have declared war on his government and called him a traitor. Ahmed has picked Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke to be prime minister in a power-sharing government intended to end civil conflict. Sharmarke says resettling the displaced and facilitating international aid are his main priority” (*Reuters* (2 December 2009) *Somalia in turmoil*)

IRIN News in December 2009 notes:

“The latest deadly suicide attack, on 3 December in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, which killed three ministers in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), has taken the country's violence to a new low” (*IRIN News* (3 December 2009) *Somalia: "It is as if they want to kill any hopes of a better future"*)

Amnesty International in January 2010 states:

“Leaders of the TFG formed following the UN-sponsored Djibouti peace agreement in 2008 have repeatedly called for international assistance to their security forces, as they face armed opposition groups who now control the vast majority of south and central Somalia, including major cities. Today, the TFG controls little more than a few districts of the capital Mogadishu and constantly faces attacks by armed groups. Many observers believe that without AMISOM,¹¹ the TFG would not be able to maintain a presence in the country” (*Amnesty International* (21 January 2010) *Somalia: International Military And Policing Assistance Should Be Reviewed*, p.9)

AMISOM is an acronym for African Union Mission in Somalia.

This document also notes:

“After 18 years of armed conflict following the collapse of the last central government in 1991, there are multitudes of armed groups operating in Somalia, including clan militia, militia associated to warlords, armed forces

affiliated to the TFG, armed groups opposed to the TFG and armed criminal gangs. These groups often overlap, forge or shift alliances, or suffer divisions” (ibid, p.9)

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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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