

Somalia

Response to Information Request Number:	SOM98001.RIC
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Subject:	National Security Service Prison (Godka), Mogadishu, Somalia
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Query:

Somali NSS Prison structure, senior officers, torture.

Response:

The RIC Staff researched the Somali National Security Service Prison in Mogadishu referred to as Godka. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

The Benadir Region National Security Service (NSS) Headquarters in Mogadishu is mentioned in an Amnesty International report, *Somalia: A Long-term Human Rights Crisis*, as the torture center in the country. It is also known as Godka and has a reputation for being a notorious prison in Somalia. It was administered by the NSS during the Siad Barre administration and prisoners were held in underground cells in permanent solitary confinement. This prison was referred to as "The Hole" denoting that it was a place from which it was difficult to escape. It was known as a place of torture, forms of which included severe beatings, electric shocks, submersion in water, wounding with knives, sexual threats and death threats. One measure of torture described by former prisoners is the Mig - in which victims are bent double, tied up and beaten; another is water torture - the victim is tied up and submerged in water until nearly drowned - either dipped head first into a bucket or tank of water, or else put in the sea tied up in a sack. According to this report:

The evidence reveals a consistent pattern of torture, lengthy and often arbitrary detention of suspected political opponents of the government and unfair trials of political defendants. Prisoners have been kept for years in harsh conditions, incommunicado and without proper medical treatment. Many prisoners have been executed after unfair, frequently summary trials, and many unarmed civilians have been executed extrajudicially by the security forces.

An Amnesty International report, *Somalia: Detention Without Trial*, describes the prison as having mostly small cells without having sufficient room to stand up straight or stretch. The NSS, a state security agency, was established in 1970 with the responsibility of arresting and interrogating those suspected of a security offense. It is reported in another Amnesty International report, "Somalia: A Long-term Human Rights Crisis," that the NSS was established as part of a series of legal measures by the new military government in its first year of office as a mechanism to suppress and punish any opposition to its rule.

Responses To Information Requests (REFINFO - SOM2419) reports on the fate of an unsuccessful asylum applicant who was returned to Somalia in 1987 and was incarcerated in the Godka Prison. This prisoner's account of life in the prison is also detailed in an

Amnesty International publication, *Somalia: Torture*. He alleges being mistreated and tortured while in Godka NSS Prison. He mentions that he recognized two former asylum-seekers among 20 prisoners who were given prison sentences of 3 to 15 years for having applied for asylum in other countries. The Amnesty International report notes that many accounts of torture at the Godka Prison were communicated to them. Torture or ill-treatment was apparently intended as punishment for political opponents. It was considered routine by the NSS and the Military Police and was sanctioned by the officials in charge of the prison. The senior officer in charge of the prison was aware of the torture since his subordinates reported directly to him based on the following statement by the former prisoner mentioned above.

The torture was inflicted by the NSS officials at the instruction of Lieutenant Y who was reporting directly to the colonel in charge of the prison. This colonel was also the head of the NSS, Police and CID (Criminal Investigation Department) for the eastern region of Mogadishu.

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