

Somalia

Response to Information Request Number:	SOM98002.ric
Date:	09 January 1998
Subject:	Somali Government Policy Towards The Isaaq Clan, Somalia
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Somalia / Isaaq Clan / Persecution

Query:

Did the Somali government have a policy of genocide against the Isaaq Clan of Northern Somalia?

Response:

The policy of the Siad Barre government towards the Isaaq Clan of Northern Somalia is alluded to in a WRITENET publication, *Somalia: Civil War, Intervention and Withdrawal 1990-1995*. It notes that the government resorted to clan-based tactics to counter the Majerteen threat following the suppression of a coup d'etat staged by officers of this clan in 1978. President Barre relied on mainly three clans to counter the Majerteen threat: the small Marehan, the Ogadeen and the Dolbahante. This patronage system was referred to as the MOD (Marehan-Ogadeen-Dolbahate), and was evident as MOD civil servants, superior officers and businessmen began to occupy the top ranks of Somali society, thereby alienating other clans including the Majerteen, the Isaaq who make up 80 percent of the former British Somaliland, and the Hawiye. Due to Barre's dislike for the Isaaq, he reportedly organized settlements of Ogadeen Somali refugees in the North which is Isaaq territory. Armed clashes between the Ogadeen and Isaaq multiplied, with the government appearing to side with the Ogadeen. These practices are believed to have contributed to the formation by the Isaaq exiles in Great Britain of the Somali National Movement (SNM), a guerrilla front, dedicated to the overthrow of the Siad Barre government.

A publication titled, *Somalia: A nation in turmoil*, describes grievances of the Isaacs which include: the Daaroods and Hawiyes domination of power and privilege to the deprivation of the Isaacs since independence; and that southern Somalia, former Italian Somalia, due to being more developed and densely populated, has tended to dominate the north Isaaq territory. The Isaacs dissatisfaction with the government as it relates to inequitable distribution of resources became evident soon after independence when northern officers staged an abortive coup in December 1961. Since then, there have been episodes of the Isaacs venting their grievances against the central government. A case in point was the bloodless coup staged by General Barre which resulted in the removal of the Isaaq premier (1967-69), Mohamed H.I. Igaal, from power, thereby confirming the Isaacs view that there was an anti-Isaaq hidden agenda to exclude them from leadership positions. The Isaacs through their guerrilla front, Somali National Movement, later launched an offensive in May 1988, on the towns of Bur'o and Hargeisa. They were defeated by the military regime after bombardment of the towns with artillery and planes, leaving those towns completely destroyed. Between 27 May and December, it is estimated that about 5000 Isaacs were killed, including women and children who were alleged to have been cold-bloodedly bayoneted to death. The city of Hargeisa, with over half a million inhabitants before the government's offensive, was in ruins as well as Bur'o. Cited references are attached.

This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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