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### Issue Paper SOMALIA

## UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH (SOMALILAND)

January 1995

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### Table of Contents

1. [INTRODUCTION](#)
  2. [CURRENT ISSUES IN SOMALILAND](#)
    - 2.1 [Tension Between and Within Clans](#)
    - 2.2 [Local Authority and the Importance of Elders](#)
    - 2.3 [Disarmament and Security](#)
    - 2.4 [Mine Clearing and Its Impact](#)
  3. [THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES](#)
  4. [OTHER ISSUES](#)
  5. [EVENTS IN HARGEISA: SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1994](#)
- [APPENDIX 1 - MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALILAND](#)
- [REFERENCES](#)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is an update of the paper in the "Question and Answer" Series entitled *Somalia: The North* which was published by the DIRB in September 1992. As *Somalia: Update on the Situation in the North (Somaliland)* was being prepared for publication in autumn 1994, fighting broke out in Hargeisa, the capital of the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland. The information within this paper remains valid as an account of the situation in Somaliland from 1992 until August 1994, however, a brief chronology of events in Hargeisa from September to December 1994 is included in section 5 of this paper.

On 17 May 1991, a few months after the regime of Mohamed Siad Barre collapsed, the Somali National Movement (SNM), following a decade of civil war that left tens of thousands of victims, proclaimed the independence of the provinces that comprised the former British colony of Somaliland (*Politique Africaine* June 1993, 9).

In October 1992, in an effort to make up for the government's inability to maintain public order, the elders negotiated an end to the fighting around the port of Berbera between the Habar Yunis and Isse Muse sub-clans ( *ibid.* 16; *The Guardian* 15 Oct. 1993). The two sub-clans signed a peace accord in Sheikh on 10 November 1992 (*Politique Africaine* June 1993, 16-17).

In February 1993, some 300 people representing the various clans in the region and the elders, customary chiefs, intellectuals, politicians and military personnel met in Borama to review the prospects for the future (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 27 Feb. 1993, 3). The delegates were to decide on plans for a referendum on secession to be held in July 1994, and select a date for the elections ( *ibid.*; *Al-Hayah* 24 Jan. 1994). As of December 1994, sources consulted made no mention of elections or a referendum having been held.

During this large "shir" (council), President Abdirahman Ahmed Ali, also known as "Tour" [ Alternate spellings include "Tuur" ( AFP 26 Nov. 1994) and "Tur" ( Reuters 28 Nov. 1994).] (hunchback), was accused of being "soft" on Somaliland independence and surrounding himself in government with members of his clan (Habar Gaharjiis) or allied clans and was removed from power (*Documentation-Réfugiés* 1528 Feb. 1994, 6). In May 1993, Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, who had served as Prime Minister of Somalia from 1967 to 1969 prior to the military coup of October 1969, was chosen as the new president ( *ibid.*, 3; AFP 8 May 1993). Appendix 1 gives a detailed list of Egal's cabinet (clan affiliation, military or civilian), which was formed in June 1993 and which has been described as a "government of colonels" (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 12 June 1993).

At the Borama conference, which lasted three months, the *Guurti* or Council of Elders adopted a national charter which, pursuant to article 5.1, was to remain in effect for two years ( Republic of Somaliland 25 Apr. 1993). The *Guurti* also designated an interim parliament and appointed a supreme court ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 29).

In December 1993, almost three years after Northern Somalia (Somaliland) declared its independence, a source reported that the government "face[d] the same problems as its predecessor: economic collapse, the destruction of infrastructures, the absence of administrative structures, high level of armaments, the lack of functioning social services, international isolation, and the huge problem of land mines" ( African Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 29).

## 2. CURRENT ISSUES IN SOMALILAND

Before the outbreak of violence in Hargeisa in autumn 1994 (See section 5.0), some sources noted that, compared with the rest of Somalia, the situation in Somaliland has been fairly calm (*The*

*Christian Science Monitor* 6 Jan. 1994; *World Refugee Report* July 1993, 44). Following the election of Mohammed Ibrahim Egal in May 1993, the region appeared to be more stable ( IPS 16 Dec. 1993). However, as a result of the lack of recognition by the international community, international aid had all but dried up (*The Dallas Morning News* 5 Nov. 1993).

## **2.1 Tension Between and Within Clans**

The Conference of Elders, held in October 1992 to promote peace and a peaceful end to the conflict between rival clans, was a "turning point" in the clan rivalry that had characterized the first 18 months of Somaliland independence ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 28 ). The rivalry has not disappeared, however. In January 1994, for example, at least two people were killed in a fight between militia from the Habar Yunis and the Eidagale [Alternate spellings include "Idagalle" ( SNU 21 Nov. 1994), "Idagale" ( The Indian Ocean Newsletter 26 Nov. 1994) and "Ida Gale" ( Reuters 28 Nov. 1994). ] clans ( AP 25 Jan. 1994), both of which are part of the Gahaarji, an Isaaq sub-clan (see appendix). The dispute was over the collection of taxes on *Catha edulis* or *khat*, a narcotic plant imported from Ethiopia and Kenya that is very popular in Somalia ( *ibid.*; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1989, 7-8; *Marchés tropicaux* 26 Mar. 1993, 823).

Clan political organizations such as the Somali Democratic Association (SDA) representing the Gadabursi, the United Somali Party (USP) representing the Warsengele and Dulbahante, and the United Somali Front (USF) representing the Issa cannot legally operate until appropriate regulations are introduced ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 29; *New African* May 1994a, 8). The restriction does not apply, however, to the Isaaq political organization, the Somali National Movement (SNM), which remains the only legal party ( *ibid.*; *Horn of Africa Bulletin* July-Aug. 1993, 25).

The government is still dominated by the old "maquisards" from the civil war, most of them Isaaq, who control such key ministries as Defence, Foreign Affairs and the Interior (see appendix). Some clans, such as the Warsengele, are still without representation (see appendix); despite the recent trend in the current government to include minority clans and sub-clans, many remain largely unconvinced that they have any real power ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 29).

As noted by Daniel Compagnon, a researcher who specializes in Somalia, a strong minority of Dulbahante and Gadabursi are still [translation] "insensitive to separatist alarms" for a variety of reasons (*Politique Africaine* June 1993, 14). Another source quotes a prominent Gadabursi who estimates that 30 per cent of the population would prefer a union with the South, but the conditions would have to be different from what they were in 1960 (*The Washington Post* 20 Oct. 1993).

In Las Khorey, home of the Warsengele, there are [translation] "no traces of the Independent Republic of Somaliland ... the national flag of Somalia, with its white five-point star on a light blue field, still flies over the home of Ismail, Sultan of the Warsengele" (*Le Nouvel Afrique Asie* Mar. 1994, 12-13). The head of the clan militia believes the Warsengele will deal with Somaliland [translation] "when its presumed president, Ibrahim Egal, extends his authority at least to the airport in the capital, Hargeisa. Now, when he uses that airport, he has to pay a transit fee to the Isaaq clan - a [sub] clan different from his own - which controls the runway" (See section 2.3) ( *ibid.*).

## **2.2 Local Authority and the Importance of Elders**

Because of the "fairly chaotic" situation created by the lack of a modern government structure, Somaliland society has had to use tremendous [translation] "political innovation" (*Politique Africaine* June 1993, 18). It has actually revived [translation] "the mechanisms of collective decision-making, representation, and negotiation" in which decisions are made by a council ("shir") of elders ( *ibid.*)

which is recognized by the National Charter ( Republic of Somaliland 25 Apr. 1993, 6).

According to Compagnon, every married adult male in the clan can claim elder status even though [translation] "his status will depend on his birth (genealogical link to the founding ancestor of the clan), his personal integrity and wisdom, his speaking ability and eloquence, and his wealth" (*Politique Africaine* June 1993, 18). Some elders have the traditional titles of *sultan*, *garad* or *okal*, [translation] "although they cannot employ either the physical or symbolic coercion which a true chief can" ( *ibid.*) [ For more information about the role of elders in Somaliland, see Lewis I.M., 1961, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somalia of the Horn of Africa*, London: Oxford University Press.].

However, the clan division reduces the overall political power of the elders. Since the clans are nothing more than "autonomous reproductions of the state on a smaller scale" and each clan "guards its sovereignty and separateness jealously", the elders have difficulty forming lasting cross-clan coalitions ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker 1994, 31).

Moreover, it appears that public affairs (including the police and all matters related to security) are administered at the local level ( Good 13 Sept. 1994). A good example of the substitution of state authority by local authority is the intervention of the elders as mediators in the conflict between the Habar Yunis and the Habar Jelo (two Isaaq sub-clans) in Burao in January 1992 (*Africa Report* May/June 1993, 46). The two sub-clans had become embroiled in an intense armed conflict; the elders had to step in at considerable personal risk to prevent further loss of life and reassure civilians, who were fleeing in droves ( *ibid.*). The government of Abdirahman "Tour", a member of the Habar Yunis clan (a sub-clan of the Habar Gaharjis), which did nothing to pre-empt or stop the fighting and "refused to support" the elders' initiative, was "accused of complicity" with one of the two sides ( *ibid.*).

Relations between the government and the elders took a more hostile turn in March 1992 when fighting broke out between the Habar Yunis and the Isse Muse militias in Berbera ( *ibid.*). The elders tried to negotiate an agreement between the two sides, but the government wanted to let the conflict drag on as a way of "settling political scores with some of its key opponents" ( *ibid.*). The victims of such manipulation were again civilians, who had to flee Berbera, and, when the fighting spread to that city, to Sheikh ( *ibid.*).

In February 1993, the elders succeeded in negotiating an agreement between the Dulbahante and the Habar Yunis in Darawayne; the two clans compete for grazing land ( *ibid.*, 48).

The elders' principal achievement in peacefully administering the region was the afore-mentioned conference of the council of elders (*Guurti*) held in Borama "to negotiate a comprehensive peace deal for Somaliland and to set the political framework for the two-year transition period" ( *ibid.*, 45). The conference was considered by many "the triumph of [political] discourse over armed conflict" and generated a degree of optimism ( *ibid.*, 48).

In October 1993, *The Guardian* reported that a functioning judiciary existed (*The Guardian* 15 Oct. 1993). Nevertheless, according to Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker, despite the appointment of a supreme court, there is no active, comprehensive judicial system; authority over the courts lies not with the government, but with the elders, who "resort to a traditional mix of Somali customary law and Islamic *Shari'a*" ( Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 29).

## **2.3 Disarmament and Security**

In a January 1994 speech in Hargeisa, President Egal issued a call for sweeping voluntary

disarmament. He added that the government (and not the armed clans) would be taking charge of national facilities, which were major sources of revenue (*Somali News Update* 27 Jan. 1994). However, the Somaliland government was unable to control the armed teenagers who were rampaging through the region: the 50,000 or so veterans of the civil war - most of them young men - and their weapons were still, according to one source, inseparable ( AP 25 Jan. 1994).

Only 6,000 of the veterans could be integrated in services like the new national guard and the police ( *ibid.*). Six military barracks were supposed to be used as demobilization centres, but because of financial problems, only the barracks in Mandera, 60 miles from Hargeisa, could be opened ( *ibid.*; *The Guardian* 15 Oct. 1993).

According to one source, "It's difficult to just say no to a teenager with a rifle, and [. . .] very few dare to try" ( AP 25 Jan. 1994). For example, armed teenagers from the Eidagale sub-clan are the ones who collect "taxes" at the airport in the "capital" of Hargeisa ( *ibid.*; *Le Nouvel Afrique Asie* Mar. 1994, 13). The president himself, in theory the supreme authority, has to pay the taxes because it is not his sub-clan that controls the airport ( *ibid.*). The situation is the same at the Borama airport and in the port of Zeyla ( Good 26 May 1994). The president also does not appear to be beyond the reach of the violence: his home in Hargeisa was the target of attacks by young former militiamen, although the president tried to downplay the impact of the attacks ( BBC Summary 22 Feb. 1994).

In February 1994, two British members of parliament and a British citizen working for the non-governmental organization Action Aid UK were abducted near the village of Mydt, Somaliland, by a band of kidnapers from the Habar Yunis clan ( Reuters 10 Feb. 1994; AFP 10 Feb. 1994). Opinion is divided as to the motive behind the abduction: an official of Africa Rights quoted by Reuters said the incident could have been politically motivated, but the president of Somaliland felt the kidnapers were simply after ransom money. The trio were released without ransom following negotiations with Habar Yunis elders ( *ibid.*). According to the president, the same group of kidnapers last year seized an Italian boat and its crew and did not release them until a huge ransom was paid ( AFP 10 Feb. 1994).

## **2.4 Mine Clearing and Its Impact**

The *Chicago Tribune* estimates there are 1.5 million land mines in Somalia (*Chicago Tribune* 28 Feb. 1993). According to Africa Rights, however, that figure is only a guess ( Africa Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 7); no one knows exactly how many mines are buried throughout Northern Somalia ( AP 31 Jan. 1994). There are two types of mine in Somalia: anti-tank devices made in Russia, Italy, Pakistan and Egypt, and anti-personnel devices from countries like the former USSR, the United States and Pakistan ( Physicians for Human Rights Nov. 1992, 39-40). Physicians for Human Rights claims that in the north, "most of these mines are anti-personnel devices left by Siad Barre's forces and, to a lesser extent, by the Somali National Movement (SNM)" ( *ibid.*, 15). Furthermore, "there are no maps of mine fields"; mines have been planted throughout the region ( AP 31 Jan. 1994).

There are many mines in Hargeisa, the main city in the north and the capital of the new "republic". Many areas of the city, in particular the military areas, the area around the airport, the area around the main prison and the area around the radio station (Radio Hargeisa) are high-risk areas ( Physicians for Human Rights Nov. 1992, 39). Moreover, many of the main roads, especially the roads linking the refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia to the major cities in the north, are laden with mines ( *ibid.*).

The mines are alleged to have killed and injured thousands of people in Somalia, especially in the self-proclaimed republic of Somaliland ( Africa Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 8). According

to the co-director of Africa Rights, some 10,000 people in Somalia have been killed by mine explosions ( IPS 16 Dec. 1993). The same source estimates that between 15,000 and 20,000 people in Somalia, most of them children, have lost limbs or been otherwise injured ( *ibid.*).

The impact of the mines goes far beyond the loss of human life or loss of limbs ( Africa Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 8). The mines are an obstacle to economic recovery in Somaliland ( *ibid.*; IPS 16 Dec. 1993). For example, the area stretching from Hargeisa to Borama, the main farming region in the north, is one of the most heavily mined regions in Somaliland ( Africa Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 37). The planting of mines on roads such as the road from Borama to Zeyla has had an adverse effect on trade, on the movement of goods, and on prices ( *ibid.*, 40-41). The mines are also an obstacle to the return of refugees ( *ibid.*, 43-44). Many of the refugees who returned to Somalia after the fall of the Siad Barre regime have gone back to the camps, primarily because of the mines or the lack of water ( *ibid.*). As one German physician observed, "There are so many victims. Three times at the airport, I saw people blown up near the runway" ( *ibid.*, 43).

Experts from a British company, Rimfire International, along with some 440 local employees, undertook the difficult task of locating, defusing and destroying all the mines buried in Somaliland ( AP 31 Jan. 1994). In two years, almost 78,000 mines were unearthed; moreover, the number of civilians injured by mines dropped from 416 in 1991 to 54 in 1993 ( *ibid.*). Despite these results, Rimfire International was forced to leave Somaliland in February 1994, initially because of a wage dispute between the company and its local employees and then because local authorities and United Nations representatives were not satisfied with Rimfire's work (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 26 Feb. 1994, 4).

### 3. THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES

According to *Documentations-Réfugiés*, Somaliland leaders and representatives of French authorities met late last year to discuss the French program to repatriate Somali refugees in Djibouti (*Documentations-Réfugiés* No 235 114 Feb. 1994, 2). The voluntary return program overseen by France was to involve 20,000 refugees (*Marchés tropicaux* 12 Nov. 1993, 2756). However, the Somaliland delegation, in addition to requesting financial aid, [translation] "expressed concern about the return of the refugees, most of them Isaaq, to a region dominated by the Isaaq of the primarily Isaaq Somali National Movement (SNM)" (*ibid.*; *Documentations-Réfugiés*, No 235 114 Feb. 1994, 2). This concern over the return of refugees can be attributed to the clan-based division of the territory: none of the clans will tolerate refugees from other clans on their lands ( Good 26 May 1994).

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), more than a million Somalis left the country during the last few years because of the civil war (*Calgary Herald* 16 Oct. 1993). Some 200,000, most of whom returned to Somaliland, subsequently left the camps in Ethiopia ( *ibid.*). However, the voluntary repatriation programs that began in 1991 ran into difficulty, principally because of problems with the mines and water ( Africa Rights & Mines Advisory Group Dec. 1993, 43-44). Further, despite the fact that Somaliland has been fairly stable compared to the rest of Somalia, there is still some insecurity which has prevented some international and non-governmental organizations from launching reintegration programs (*World Refugee Report* July 1993, 23, 44). The bomb attack on the United Nations office in Hargeisa (*Horn of Africa Bulletin* Mar.-Apr. 1993, 26) and an incident near Hargeisa in which bandits fired at an airplane transporting tents for the UNHCR ( AFP 29 Mar. 1994) provide examples of this state of affairs.

As noted in section 5, as a result of violence in Hargeisa in October and November 1994 and a migration of people fleeing the violence, the UNHCR postponed its voluntary repatriation programme (

Reuters 22 Nov. 1994; *ibid.* 28 Nov. 1994).

## 4. OTHER ISSUES

Vigorously opposed to secession by the north, the various Somali factions made statements at the conferences in Addis Ababa, Cairo and, most recently, Nairobi affirming the sanctity of Somali unity (*Results n.d.*; *New African* May 1994b, 8; *The Christian Science Monitor* 6 Jan. 1994). Political organizations such as the Somali Democratic Association (SDA) and the United Somali Party (USP), which represent the interests of the Gadabursi and the Darood (Warsengele and Dulbahante) respectively, are on record as being opposed to secession (Leatherbee, Leah and Bricker Jan. 1994, 29). Further, in April 1994, the first head of state of the self-proclaimed republic, Abdirahman Ahmed Ali, currently president of the Somali National Movement, declared his opposition to secession during a press conference in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa (Reuters 30 Apr. 1994). He added that "the path followed by the Somali people in the north and south of the country to resolve the Somali crisis has not achieved the desired results" (AP 29 Apr. 1994). The current president of Somaliland, Mohammed Egal, described Ahmed Ali as a traitor (AFP 29 Apr. 1994); he had said that the people of the north did not want to [translation] "put their fate in the hands of a central power in Mogadishu" (*Marchés tropicaux* 28 Jan. 1994, 163). According to Reuters, "The north-west is still threatened by clan war between ethnic militias who want to keep their independence and others which want to rejoin the rest of Somalia" (Reuters 10 Feb. 1994).

## 5. EVENTS IN HARGEISA: SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1994

As outlined briefly below, efforts of the government to regain control of the Eidagale-held Hargeisa airport (see section 2.3) resulted in violence in the capital in October through December 1994 and the flight of thousands of people from the city. While the outcome and long-term ramifications of the violence remain unclear, the following brief chronology may assist the reader in considering the effects of these events on the future of Somaliland.

### September

Fighting between supporters of former Somaliland president Abdirahman Ahmed Ali and government troops closes the airport in Hargeisa (AP 26 Nov. 1994)

### 9 October

According to Radio Hargeisa, a report is presented to a joint session of parliament and the senate announcing agreement between clan elders and government troops on control of the road between Berbera and Hargeisa. The issue of control over the Hargeisa airport remains unresolved (BBC Summary 25 Oct. 1994).

### 16 October

President Egal declares that government forces have taken control of the Hargeisa airport, reportedly in response to attacks by militia on government troops on the Hargeisa-Berbera road (Reuters 16 Oct. 1994; BBC Summary 24 Oct. 1994) As reported by Radio Hargeisa, "the president stressed that no clan had been defeated in the operation, adding that the military confrontation had been between the nation and an anti-nation group" (*ibid.*).

### 14-30 November

Clan militiamen (also referred to as rebels) and government forces engage in fighting in the town of Hargeisa (AFP 18 Nov. 1994; Reuters 22 Nov. 1994; *The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 26 Nov. 1994; SNU

21 Nov. 1994; Reuters 10 Dec. 1994). According to President Egal, over 30 people are killed and 100 wounded during the conflict ( Reuters 24 Nov. 1994) The militiamen are referred to variously as supporters or allies of Abdirahman Ahmed Ali or as members of the Eidagale [ Alternate spellings include "Idagalle" ( SNU 21 Nov. 1994), "Idagale" (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 26 Nov. 1994) and "Ida Gale" ( Reuters 28 Nov. 1994).] clan, an Issaq subclan ( AFP 26 Nov. 1994; *The Indian Ocean Newsletter* 26 Nov. 1994; Reuters 28 Nov. 1994; SNU 21 Nov. 1994). Egal reportedly calls them "young boys." ( AFP 18 Nov. 1994)

Thousands of people leave Hargeisa, some crossing the borders into Ethiopia ( Reuters 22 Nov. 1994; AFP 26 Nov. 1994; Deutsche Presse Agentur 26 Nov. 1994). The UNHCR postpones its voluntary repatriation programme for Somali refugees in Ethiopia ( Reuters 22 Nov. 1994; *ibid.* 28 Nov. 1994)

### 1 December

According to a Reuters report, President Egal claims to have repelled an attack on Hargeisa by rebel forces (Reuters 10 Dec. 1994). The report also notes that "aid agencies in Ethiopia and Djibouti say up to 60 percent of the population has fled Hargeisa since the fighting... [began]" (*ibid.*).

## APPENDIX 1 - MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALILAND

Clan	Title	Name	Status
<b>Issaq</b>	President	Mohamed Ibrahim Ega1	Civ.
<b>Gadabursi</b>	Vice-president	Abdirahman Aw Ali	Mil.
<b>Dolbahante</b>	<b>Speaker of the parliament</b>	<b>Ahmed Abdi Habsadey</b>	<b>Mil.</b>
<b>Issaq</b>	Defence	Dahir Warsame	Mil.
	Rehabilitation and reconstruction	Yusuf Jama Burale	Civ.
	Animal husbandry and forests	Ali Caddé	Civ.
Arap	Mail and telecommunications	Osman Adel Dool (Qualé)	Civ.
	Trade and industry	Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim Dahib Gurey	Mil.
Eidagale	Religion	Cabdirahman Cagib	Civ.
	Finance	Ibrahim Abdi Musa	Civ.
Habar Jelo	Planning	Abdillahi Mohamed Dualé	Civ.
	Foreign affairs	Osman Abdillahi Jama	Civ.
	Education	Suleiman Mohamoud Aden ("Gaal")	Civ.
Saad Musa	Interior	Musa Bihi Abdi	Mil.
	Agriculture	Haibé Omar Magan	Civ.
<b>Darood*</b>	Mineral and water resources	Mohamed Ali Attayé	Civ.
Dolbahante	Health and labour	Yacin Houssein	Civ.
	Social affairs (minister of state)	Deqa Ouljog	Civ.
<b>Gadabursi</b>	Information	Yusuf Ibrahim Sheikh	Civ.
	Public works	Abdi Mohamoud Gaagalé	Civ.
<b>Issa</b>	Justice	Abdillahi Gireh Robleh	Civ.

(*Horn of Africa Bulletin* July-August 1993, 25; Good 26 May 1994; Hersi 24 May 1994).

\* The Warsengele (a Darood sub-clan) are not represented in the current government.

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