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Somalia: Determination of clan affiliation (January 2001 - August 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the determination of clan affiliation of Somali citizens was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

A report prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) about the Seventh European Country of Origin Information Seminar, which was held in Berlin, Germany, from 11-12 June 2001, indicated that unless refugee-receiving countries have access to an individual who "is a very good native speaker of Somali and can detect slight variations, it is almost impossible to establish ethnic identity through linguistic means" (147). The report points out that physical appearance also cannot conclusively determine clan affiliation (UNHCR/ACCORD 11-12 June 2001, 147). Further,

...there are maps to where approximately clans reside. One can ask about their place of residence and place of birth. If one has an honest interpreter, it would also be possible to approximate the place of origin from the dialect of the Somali language. Between the North, South and Northeast there are minor differences in the pronunciation of certain words and sounds: 'd' or 'r' for written words (ibid.).

During a presentation at the Ninth European Country of Origin Information Seminar held in Dublin, Ireland, on 26 and 27 May 2004, a representative of CONCERN, a non-governmental organization based in Somalia, indicated that clan affiliation can be determined via communication and linguistic accent, but not by physical features (27 May 2004). The representative also added that some clan members have the ability to recount 30 to 50 generations of ancestral self-identity, although individuals who come from urbanized areas may not have this ability if they are 30 years old or younger (CONCERN 27 May 2004).

However, several news sources indicated that members of the Bantu clan have distinguishing physical features (*Smithsonian* 1 Jan. 2004; *Boulder Daily Camera* 13 Sept. 2003; *Africa News Service* 25 Jan. 2002). Members of the Bantu clan are referred to as "jarer" because although they "are as dark as the majority Somalis [they have] unique[ly] curly hair" (*Boulder Daily Camera* 13 Sept. 2003). The Bantu clan has an Arabic bloodline and its members "tend to be identifiable by their thinner lips and aquiline noses" (*Smithsonian* 1 Jan. 2004). The Somali majority refer to the Bantu, who "have kinkier hair than [the

majority] and a nose that is broader and flatter, as 'tight hairs' and 'fat noses'" (ibid.). Africa News Service reported in 2002 that some members of the Bantu clan in Somalia speak Swahili (25 Jan. 2002).

In respect of the Rer Hamar clan, a March 2004 report by the Danish Immigration Service describes that

...the Rer Hamar is divided into two general categories: the so-called light-skinned and the dark-skinned. The Rer Hamar groups, the Bandhabow and Morshe, are considered dark-skinned, while Shanshi and Dharbarwayne are considered light-skinned (Mar. 2004, 39).

For information on the linguistic distinctions of the Bajuni clan, please refer to the excerpted attachment from the March 2004 report by the Danish Immigration Service entitled *Human Rights and Security in Central and Southern Somalia*, a joint Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and British fact-finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya from 7 to 21 January 2004.

Additional and corroborating information on the determination of clan affiliation could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Africa News Service. 25 January 2002. "US to Resettle Thousands of Somalis." (Dialog)

Boulder Daily Camera. 13 September 2003. Mitch Pugh. "Escaping to Freedom Bantu Family Finds New Life With Help from Broomfield." (Dialog)

CONCERN [Somalia]. 27 May 2004. Presentation on Somalia, Ninth European Country of Origin Information Seminar, Dublin, Ireland.

Danish Immigration Service. March 2004. "Human Rights and Security in Central and Southern Somalia." Joint Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and British Fact-Finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya, 7-21 January 2004. <<http://www.udlst.dk>> [Accessed 5 Aug. 2004]

Smithsonian. 1 January 2004. Vol. 34, No. 10. "Coming to America: A Somali Bantu Refugee Family Leaves 19th-Century Travails Behind in Africa to Take Up Life in 21st-Century Phoenix." (Dialog)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD). 11-12 June 2001. *7th European Country of Origin Information Seminar, Berlin, 11-12 June 2001: Final Report*. "Somalia." Presentation by Mr. Kalunga S. Lutato,

additional remarks by Mr. Moe A. Hussein.
<http://www.ecoi.net/pub/mv17_cois2001-som.pdf> [Accessed 26 July 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), BBC, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, Dialog/WNC, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), *Freedom in the World 2003*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Panapress, Somalitalk, United Kingdom - Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND).

Attachment

Danish Immigration Service. March 2004. "Human Rights and Security in Central and Southern Somalia." Joint Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and British fact-finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya, 7-21 January 2004. <<http://www.udlst.dk>> [Accessed 5 Aug. 2004] (pp.37-38)

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