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16 August 2004

SOM42809.E

Somalia: The security situation in Somalia; the effectiveness of peace process initiatives; whether protection is available to victims of violence and illtreatment (January 2001 - August 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Security Situation

There was a consensus among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate that during the period January 2001 to August 2004, the security situation in Somalia was very weak and unstable, and was characterized by human rights violations such as murder and extra-judicial killing, gender-based violence (e.g. rape), political violence, looting and extortion, armed clashes, destruction of property, use of child soldiers, kidnapping, discrimination against minorities, torture, unlawful arrest and detention and denial of due process (UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 1-2; M2 Press Wire 9 July 2004; *Guardian* 21 June 2004; AI 27 May 2004; CONCERN 27 May 2004; Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 11-18; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004; AFP 25 Apr. 2003; UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2-3; Freedom House 2003; *Africa News* 22 May 2002; *The New York Times* 21 May 2002; IPS 24 July 2004; Global News Wire 22 Aug. 2002; AP 1 Mar. 2002; Xinhua 1 Nov. 2001; UNHCR/ACCORD 11-12 June 2001, 132). During the period covered by this Response, violence was reported throughout the country, including in Mogadishu (*Guardian* 21 June 2004; AllAfrica.com 3 June 2004; BBC 2 June 2004; AI 27 May 2004; AP 24 May 2004; WNC 12 May 2004; Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 12; UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 2; UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2, 3; *Africa News* 4 Feb. 2003; DPA 28 Aug. 2002; IRIN 23 Aug. 2002; BBC 23 July 2002; IPS 24 July 2002; *The New York Times* 21 May 2002; AP 29 Dec. 2001; AP 16 Oct. 2001; BBC 28 Feb. 2002; BBC 27 July 2001), Bula Hawo (AllAfrica.com 3 June 2004; BBC 2 June 2004), Gedo region (IPS 24 July 2004; Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 12; IRIN 23 Aug. 2002; AFP 19 June 2002), Baidoa (Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 12; UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 2; UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2, 3; *Africa News* 4 Feb. 2003), Luuq (UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2), Kismayo (ibid.; DPA 9 Oct. 2002), Qardho district (UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2), Middle Shabelle region (Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 12), Lower Shabelle region (*Africa News* 4 Feb. 2003), Las Anod (ibid.), Bari (ibid.), Bay (*HornAfrik Online* 4 July 2003; *Africa News* 4 Feb. 2003), Bakool (AI 27 May 2004; *HornAfrik Online* 4 July 2003) Garbaharrey (Xinhua 2 Sept. 2002) and in Puntland (Radio HornAfrik 3 Aug. 2004; BBC 29 June 2004; Saudi Press Agency 28 June 2004; Radio Hargeysa 26 Nov. 2001). According to *Africa News*, the Puntland administration signed a peace agreement with opposition forces in May 2003, which ended two years of conflict in the region (19 May 2003). During a presentation on Somalia 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 there are internal power struggles in Puntland, while a representative of Amnesty International stated that Puntland is in a "state of suspended conflict" (27 May 2004). Until June 2004, Puntland was "known to be a region that enjoy[ed] security and stability" (BBC 29 June 2004).

In Somaliland, the security situation is generally good (UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 1; UN 26 Feb. 2003, 2). In Dublin, Ireland, the representative of CONCERN noted that Somaliland is "relatively stable, but fragile" (27 May 2004). In this internationally unrecognized state, which broke away from the rest of Somalia in 1991 following the ousting of the former dictator, there exists a president, government, currency, customs, a penal code and a police force that has "managed fairly well to keep law and order among Somalilanders despite shoddy equipment and the stubbornness of thieves and drunkards" (AFP 6 July 2003).

There have been "pockets of stability [in Somalia, but these] remain[ed] susceptible to sudden setbacks due to armed clashes and threats" (Danish Immigration Service Mar. 2004, 12; see also AP 29 June 2003). Mogadishu, for example, was "relatively safe" in April 2004, although periodic fighting does continue to occur and kidnappings are less frequent than in previous years (BBC 16 Apr. 2004). For additional information on the security situation in Somalia by region, please refer to the March 2004 report by the Danish Immigration Service entitled *Human Rights and Security in Central and Southern Somalia*.

According to the March 2004 report by the Danish Immigration Service,

...[t]he overall security situation in the second half of 2002 was at the worst level seen since 1995. The first half of 2003 was a relatively quiet period, however the situation deteriorated again in the second half of the year. ... [I]n 2003 security was manageable in the sense that the outbreaks of conflict could be anticipated (12).

Several sources indicated that there exists an environment of impunity among culprits in Somalia (ICG 4 May 2004, 14; UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 2; *The New York Times* 21 May 2002). A news report by the Associated Press (AP) stated that Somalia is "controlled by heavily armed, clan-based militia [and] [f] actions that control highways set up roadblocks and demand fees from others wanting to use the road" (28 May 2004). Mogadishu, according to AP, is controlled by at least six factions that set up checkpoints to extort money from motorists and that abduct businessmen, aid workers and others, for ransom (AP 29 June 2003).

Additional information on the security situation in Somalia can be found in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*.

Effectiveness of Peace Process Initiatives

Ever since the previous government was toppled in 1991, there have been over a dozen failed attempts to broker and implement agreements to end armed conflict and establish a new system of government in Somalia (UNHCR 10 Jan. 2004, 1; AP 28 May 2004; *ibid.* 24 May 2004; *ibid.* 21 Feb. 2003; *ibid.* 31 Oct. 2002; Freedom House 2003). The current peace initiative began in October 2002,

with the issuance of the Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities and the Structures and Principles of the Somalia National Reconciliation Process in Eldoret, Kenya (ICG 6 Mar. 2003, 1). All key political actors participated in the round of talks that led to the issuance of the document, except those representing the Somaliland administration (ibid., 2). Since October 2002, there have been further round-table talks which have been clouded by various setbacks, such as disagreements, continuance of hostilities in the country and the flow of weapons and ammunition into the country (AllAfrica.com 15 July 2004; AFP 20 Apr. 2004). In 2004, the peace process was supposed to be in its third and final phase (AP 28 May 2004; AllAfrica.com 14 July 2004) with a deadline set for 31 July 2004 (ibid.; BBC 9 July 2004). In January 2004, warlords and politicians signed an agreement to set up a new parliament (BBC 2 June 2004). In a 2004 report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicated that the peace process had resulted in "some notable progress [although] uncertainty over the process [has] continued" (10 Jan. 2004, 1). The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported in 2004 that the October 2002 declaration on the cessation of hostilities "has been violated and so often that it has lost all meaning" (4 May 2004, 1). Further, ICG noted that

...[t]he latest round of "consultations" in Nairobi involved no formal face-to-face negotiations between Somalis; only eight of the 38 leaders invited for the talks signed the "breakthrough" agreement known as the Safari Park Declaration, and five have since disowned the agreement or expressed strong reservations. A number of leaders have already returned to Somalia where they have threatened to hold a rival peace conference, and on 19 March 2004 nearly half the leaders at the talks announced their intention to withdraw (ICG 4 May 2004, 1).

In Dublin, Ireland, the representative of Amnesty International said that there are many doubts about the current peace process (27 May 2004). In April 2004, BBC reported that the peace talks have "hit a deadlock and there is little prospect of a breakthrough between the various clan factions that are jostling for power" (16 Apr. 2004). Information on the current status of the process could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

For additional information on the current peace process, please refer to the following reports: *Negotiating a Blueprint for Peace in Somalia* by ICG (6 Mar. 2003); *Biting the Somali Bullet* by ICG (4 May 2004), and the Danish Immigration Service's *Human Rights and Security in Central and Southern Somalia* (Mar. 2004).

There have also been several agreements between the Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) and various clan factions to establish peace and government in the country (*Africa News* 3 Dec. 2002; ibid. 28 Oct. 2002; ibid. 27 Dec. 2001; AP 13 Dec. 2002; ibid. 31 Oct. 2002).

In Mogadishu and Kismayo cities, security operations were launched in 2002 and 2003 respectively to confiscate firearms as a means of controlling violence in the cities (BBC 24 Jan. 2002; Balcad 2 Sept. 2003).

Available Protection

According to the representative of Amnesty International, mechanisms of protection do not exist for Somali citizens (27 May 2004). There is no rule of law or national police force in Somalia to provide any level of redress or protection

(AI 27 May 2004). The representative of CONCERN added that members of known or dominant clans are not immune to the violence (27 May 2004). The CONCERN representative declared that "there is no protection...anyone, anywhere can be a victim" and that "whatever clan you belong to, you are not safe" (27 May 2004).

Additional and corroborating information on the protection available to victims of violence and ill-treatment 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.

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