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**COI QUERY**

Country of Origin/Topic	Somalia
Question(s)	Information on the Somali caste of Madhibans and in particular: • Existence of genealogy • Specific mother tongue of Madhibans (besides the Somali language), evidence if this language is also known by the Madhibans living in Mogadishu, evidence of Madhibans who live in Mogadishu that do not speak the Madhiban traditional language • Whether the Madhibans living in Mogadishu are affiliated to another clan
Date of completion	29 January 2019
Query Code	Q3
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [Common EU Guidelines for Processing COI](#) and [EASO COI Report Methodology](#).

The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 29 January 2019. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Background information

In Somalia there are different clans as well as minority groups.¹ The Somali society is structured on the patrilineal lineage type of clans.² According to the anthropology professor I.M. Lewis, an expert in Somalia, 'The clan system is the most important constituent social factor among the nomadic-pastoralist Somalis'.³ The clan system is differentiated into several different levels, including clan families, clans and sub-clans.⁴ Lewis stated in his work that the clans held a political role and influenced the function of society and politics, due to the absence of state structures in certain parts of Somalia. Aside from the large clans, in Somalia there are minorities, which are not part of the clans. Somali minorities⁵ are diverse and include ethnic minorities, religious minorities and occupational groups. Where the ethnic and religious minorities have a different cultural and language background than Somalis from the pastoralist majority clans, the occupational groups share their background, but practice specific non-pastoralist occupations.⁶ Those occupational groups, known as 'outcaste' groups or by the collective term Sab, are generally non-pastoralist and are considered inferior.⁷ According to the 2014 EASO COI Report on Somalia, the occupational groups are at the lowest level of the social hierarchy of the Somali society and are traditionally occupied in positions considered impure or dishonorable by the major clans.⁸ Their type of occupation, combined with the fact that they cannot trace their genealogy to Prophet Mohammed⁹, contribute to the treatment of the occupational casts as inferior.

¹ There are the ethnic nomadic-pastoralist Somalis who speak Af-Maxaa-tiri (i.e. the "noble clans" of the Darood, Hawiye, Dir, and – depending on one's perspective – the Isaaq), which became the official language of Somalia after independence. The other large group is composed of the mainly sedentary agro-pastoralist people, residing in the inter-riverine area between the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Southern Somalia, known as Digil-Mirifle or Rahanweyn. They speak Af-Maay-tiri, which is quite distinct from Af-Maxaa-tiri. ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), p. 11

² ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), p. 7

³ Lewis, I. M., A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa, James Currey Publishers, Oxford, 1999 (reprint), p. 4, cited in: EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 20; Gundel, J., The predicament of the 'Oday'. The role of traditional structures in security, rights, law and development in Somalia. 2006. [url](#), p. 4-5.

⁴ Lewis, I. M., A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa, James Currey Publishers, Oxford, 1999 (reprint), p. 4, cited in: EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview, 2014, [url](#), p. 20; Gundel, J., The predicament of the 'Oday'. The role of traditional structures in security, rights, law and development in Somalia, 2006. [url](#), p. 1.

⁵ The terms minority group and minority clan are frequently used interchangeably. UK Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Majority clans and minority groups in south and central Somalia, June 2017, v 2.0, [url](#), p. 17

⁶ MRGI, No redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities, 31 January 2010, [url](#), p. 12

⁷ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), p. 14

⁸ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview, 2014, [url](#), p. 47

⁹ Unlike the major clans

2. The Madhibaan

There are various names being used for the Sab and sources agree that they are not always consistent.¹⁰ Other denominations for the Sab are Waable, Midgaan or Madhibaan.¹¹ According to the Minority Rights Group, the occupational groups are known historically as Midgan (or commonly known nowadays as Gaboye, Madhiban and Musse Deriyo), Tumal and Yibro.¹² It must be highlighted that while the denomination Midgaan is sometimes used as a general term for all occupational groups, it actually refers to only one group within the Waable. However, this can make it difficult to define the term exactly.¹³

The Midgaan are also known as Madhibaan, Gabooye, Gaboye or Gaboyo.¹⁴ According to LandInfo, 'Midgan in Northwest Somalia are called Gabooye, a term introduced during the Barre era. This however is not a clan/group name - nor the name of an ancestor. The most common generic name for the groups in other parts of Somalia is sab or bon'.¹⁵

According to different sources the term Midgaan appears to be considered pejorative or rude, used by the larger clans.¹⁶ Since it is also often translated as 'untouchable' or 'outcast', some Midgaan have preferred to be called Madhibaan, which means 'harmless'. The term Gabooye is also another preferred and not insulting term, replacing the term Midgaan, when referring to this occupational caste.¹⁷

The Midgaan are historically hunters and are also associated with tanning, leather processing, shoemaking and many other professions.¹⁸

Geographical location of the Madhibaan

According to different sources, Madhibaan appear to be scattered across Somalia. They can be found in the North and Centre of Somalia as well as in Hiran, Mogadishu and Kismaio.¹⁹

According to information available from the Asylum Research Consultancy (ARC) in 2017 the Madhibaan are also found scattered in Southern Somalia.²⁰

¹⁰ DIS, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UK Home Office, Report on minority groups in Somalia Joint British, Danish and Dutch fact-finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya 17 – 24 September 2000, 1 November 2000, [url](#), p. 48

¹¹ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014, [url](#), p. 21

¹² MRGI, "No redress. Somalia's forgotten minorities". 2010. [url](#), p. 8.

¹³ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#) [original source: Tiwald, A., Die Parias Somalias: Ständische Berufskasten als Basissozialer Diskriminierung, Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, December 2010 (<http://www.integrationsfonds.at/laenderinformation/diepariassomalias>) accessed 10 June 2014, p. 21-23; BAMF, Minderheiten in Somalia, July 2010 (https://milo.bamf.de/milop/livelink.exe/fetch/2000/702450/683266/693991/697672/697677/6029534/13604856/13565580/Deutschland___Bundesamt_f%C3%BCr_Migration_und_Fl%C3%BCchtlinge,_Minderheiten_in_Somalia,_Juli_2010.pdf?nodeid=13904432&vernum=-2) p. 19]

¹⁴ Canada, IRB, Somalia: The Gabooye (Midgan) people, including the location of their traditional homeland, affiliated clans, and risks they face from other clans. SOM104239.E. 4 December 2012. [url](#)

¹⁵ Norway, LandInfo, Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p.3

¹⁶ MRGI, "No redress. Somalia's forgotten minorities". 2010. [url](#), p. 34, note 49

¹⁷ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 48

¹⁸ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁹ UN OCHA, A study on minorities in Somalia. 2002. [url](#)

²⁰ ARC, Situation in South and Central Somalia (including Mogadishu). 2018. [url](#), p.334

According to another source most of the low casts including the Gaboye live in North West Somalia and in eastern Ethiopia, but some are also found in southern Somalia.²¹

The Madhibaan are originally from the counties Mudug and Nugal, where they were traditionally associated with different Hawiye clans, including Gurgate.²²

The Secretary of the Gaboye Organization and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs agree that Madhibaan can be found in Mogadishu.²³ Further or corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Query.

Genealogy

Different sources agree that Madhibaan (or Gabooye or Midgan) do not have a particular genealogical system. According to the ACCORD Report the Sab do not have territorial, genealogical or ethnic foundation.²⁴

More specifically, according to the British anthropologist Lewis, Midgan do not have a special recognized genealogical system, but operate with a simpler and shorter clan system. Midgan is not the name of a common ancestor, as is the case in the clans.²⁵

Languages

According to the EASO COI Report on Somalia, Somali is the country's official language.²⁶ Different sources agree that the Somali language has distinct regional variants. The main two variants are the Af-Maay (or Af-Maymay), the common language in the south, and Af-Maxaa (or Af-Maha), spoken in the rest of Somalia, with minor dialectical spoken differences in Somaliland and Puntland.²⁷ According to the same source, the occupational groups in general speak standard Somali in the version where they live, while according to an ACCORD Report, the occupational groups are also reported to speak their own languages.²⁸ The specific languages spoken by the Sab are disappearing according to the ACCORD Report.²⁹ According to a UN Report Somali is the language that the Gaboye/Midgan use.³⁰

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada indicates that 'while some members of the Midgaan and Yibir sub-groups have their own dialect, generally the Gabooye speak "standard" Somali'. However, the source stated that no further information could be found to corroborate that statement.³¹

²¹ Ambroso, G. Clanship, conflict and refugees: An introduction to Somalis in the Horn of Africa. 2002. [url](#), p.13

²² Norway, LandInfo, Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p.5

²³ UN OCHA, A study on minorities in Somalia. 2002. [url](#); Canada, IRB, Somalia: The Gabooye (Midgan) people, including the location of their traditional homeland, affiliated clans, and risks they face from other clans, SOM104239.E. 4 December 2012. [url](#)

²⁴ ACCORD, Ethiopia: Treatment of Madhiban/Midgan/Medigan minority clan originating from the Ogaden area by Ethiopian forces in the area and by members of majority clans. 20 May 2009. [url](#), p. 1

²⁵ Norway, LandInfo, Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p.5

²⁶ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 21

²⁷ MRGI, "No redress. Somalia's forgotten minorities", 2010. [url](#), p. 16

²⁸ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), p. 15

²⁹ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), p. 15

³⁰ UN OCHA, A study on minorities in Somalia. 2002. [url](#)

³¹ Canada, IRB, Somalia: Distinguishing characteristics of the Gabooye (Midgan) people; whether it is possible for a member of the minority clan living in Mogadishu to hide that they are part of the Gabooye from his or her spouse and in-laws, who are members of a majority clan [SOM104589.E]. 7 October 2013. [url](#).

Similarly, the Minority Rights Group states that the Midgan ‘have a special dialect that the major Somali clans do not understand’.³² LandInfo states that the Midgan have their own secret languages, which today would be described as sociolects, a form of language determined by social factors. Concerning the extend of knowledge of this specific language, the same source states the following: ‘Various representatives of these groups have over the past decade claimed that most of the groups’ members have knowledge of this language. However, in Landinfo’s opinion there is reason to believe that there are major variations in the level of knowledge amongst members of the groups, depending on age and residency. It is unlikely that groups that have lived so far apart for generations have been able to convey uniform knowledge to all members in all parts of the country. The age-old conflicts in Somalia, migration and social upheavals seem to have also contributed to changes and variations’.³³

It has to be underlined though that different sources agree that the languages of the various minorities, including the occupational casts, are not accepted, officially recognized or respected.³⁴

Affiliations

Among all sources consulted and within the timeframe allocated to respond to this query, no information could be found on whether the Madhibaan living specifically in Mogadishu have clan affiliations. However, below follows general information on the affiliations of the Madhibaan in Somalia.

The EASO 2014 Report on Somalia states that ‘The position of a group within Somali society is mainly defined by its ability to defend itself. As small and poor groups, minorities usually are in no position to defend and enforce their rights against a majority clan. Therefore, they often enter a long-term client relation with a majority clan according to Somali customary law (xeer), in which protection, conflict resolution and marriage rules are regulated. [...]’.³⁵

According to two different sources, members of the Midgan clans who move usually align themselves with representatives of clans who can give them protection in the new location, preferably clans they have been associated with before.³⁶ This relationship appears to arise only in cases that the Midgan need protection.³⁷ According to a 2012 report by the UK Border Agency, Midgan and other groups ‘have assimilated in major clan or sub-clan groups’.³⁸

On the contrary, according to an interview with the Gabooye Organization Secretary in November 2012, the Gabooye are not allied with any major clans but are in good terms with other minority

³²MRGI, “No redress. Somalia’s forgotten minorities”. 2010. [url](#), p. 16

³³ Norway, LandInfo, Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p.4

³⁴ARC, Situation in South and Central Somalia (including Mogadishu). 2018. [url](#), p. 333

³⁵ Lewis, I.M., Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho, International African Institute, London, 1955, p. 149, cited in: EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 50; ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. December 2009, [url](#), p. 22

³⁶ Norwegian embassy in Kenya. E-mails 11 March 1996, 10 June 1996, 25 September 1997, 28 April 2004 and 4 June 2007, cited in: Norway, LandInfo Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p. 8; ARC, Situation in South and Central Somalia (including Mogadishu). 2018. [url](#), pp. 362-363

³⁷ARC, Situation in South and Central Somalia (including Mogadishu). 2018. [url](#), pp. 362-363

³⁸ UK Home Office, Operational Guidance Note: Somalia, 23 October 2012 [url](#), p. 42

groups.³⁹ A 2002 UN Report on minorities in Somalia similarly stated that the Midgan/Gaboye have no patrons and no clan affiliations.⁴⁰

It has to be stated that in more than one sources consulted, the Madhibaan are not among the minority groups listed with clan affiliations, overall in Somalia and in particular in Mogadishu.⁴¹

Discrimination

Different sources agree that the occupational groups in general, and the Madhibaan in particular, face discrimination. In general, the occupational groups face severe social, political, judicial and economic discrimination.⁴² They often lack vital protection.⁴³ Concerning Mogadishu, displaced minority populations that have ended up there face insecurity, sexual violence and discrimination.⁴⁴

The Madhibaan in particular suffer severe discrimination on grounds of caste exclusion, according to a 2017 UN Report.⁴⁵ No statistics on the Madhibaan population in Somalia are available, according to the same source. According to a 2016 Amnesty International Report, the Gaboye, as well as other minorities in Somalia, face discrimination and are frequently excluded from access to land and to essential services due 'to their identity as ethnic minority in a society with dominant clan structures'.⁴⁶ The United States Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016 in Somalia states that minority groups which include the Madhibaan, 'often lacking armed militia, continued to be disproportionately subjected to killings, torture, rape, kidnapping for ransom, and looting of land and property with impunity by faction militias and majority clan members, often with the acquiescence of federal and local authorities. Many minority communities continued to live in deep poverty and to suffer from numerous forms of discrimination and exclusion'.⁴⁷ According to the EASO 2014 Somalia Report, in Northern Somalia, the occupational groups, including the Madhibaan, often face discrimination due to their occupation. The human rights situation of those groups is considered bad although it has been improving to a small extent. The report also states that 'Little is known about the humanitarian conditions in which specific occupational groups in southern Somalia live'.⁴⁸

It has to be pointed out that two different sources claim that members of occupational groups do not appear to be much more vulnerable than the rest of the Somali population. LandInfo states in its 2016 response that 'Members of the occupational groups do not seem to be significantly more vulnerable to abuses than other Somalis. The representatives of both of the two interest organisations Landinfo

³⁹ Canada, IRB, Somalia: The Gabooye (Midgan) people, including the location of their traditional homeland, affiliated clans, and risks they face from other clans, SOM104239. E. 4 December 2012. [url](#)

⁴⁰ UN OCHA, A study on minorities in Somalia. 2002. [url](#)

⁴¹ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia. 2009. [url](#), pp. 17- 20; ARC, Situation in South and Central Somalia (including Mogadishu). 2018. [url](#), p. 344, pp. 345-354

⁴² The discrimination takes the following forms: they are often insulted with the use of derogatory tongue, have very limited interaction with major clans, are usually excluded from clan support and live in ghetto-like neighborhoods in disadvantaged areas. In politics, the occupational groups' opinion is largely ignored and they are often subject to a denial of justice. They have very limited access to education and as a result have difficulty finding a job. Additionally, the jobs that the occupational groups used to be linked to are now not limited to them, making it even more challenging to find employment. Source: EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 50.

⁴³ UNHCR, 'UNHCR Position on Returns to Southern and central Somalia (update I)', May 2016, [url](#), p.9

⁴⁴ MRGI, 'State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015', 2 July 2015, [url](#)

⁴⁵ UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, Report on Somalia of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, 2 November 2017, [url](#), pp.127-130

⁴⁶ AI, Nowhere Else To Go: Forced returns of Somali refugees from Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya [AFR 32/5118/2016], 14 November 2016, Discrimination against Minority Groups. [url](#), p.26

⁴⁷ USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 – Somalia. 2017. [url](#).

⁴⁸ EASO Country of Origin Information Report, South and Central Somalia, Country Overview. 2014. [url](#), p. 102



met in Hargeisa said that, for example, rape affects both the majority and the minority, and that their own people can commit abuses as well (against other Somalis and against their own). However, the local resource person and researcher Landinfo met in Hargeisa said that there were probably no cases involving Gaboye abuses against non-Gaboye'.⁴⁹ Particularly concerning the discrimination towards the Gabooye, in a 2012 telephone interview between the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada and the Secretary of the Gabooye Minority Organisation for Europe and North America, the latter stated that 'discrimination against Gabooye in the south exists but "generalized insecurity" is a greater risk than targeted persecution...although the Somaliland government claims that the situation has improved, discrimination against the Gabooye in Somaliland is "bad" and violence against them continues to occur'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Norway, LandInfo, Query response: Somalia: Low status groups. 2016. [url](#), p.8

⁵⁰ Canada, IRB, Somalia: The Gabooye (Midgan) people, including the location of their traditional homeland, affiliated clans, and risks they face from other clans, 4 December 2014. [url](#)



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