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Federal Republic of Somalia

Head of state: **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud**

Head of government: **Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke**

Head of Somaliland Republic: **Ahmed Mohamed Mahamoud Silyano**

Armed conflict continued in central and southern Somalia between Somali Federal Government (SFG) forces, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers, and the armed group al-Shabaab. The areas controlled by SFG and AMISOM forces in the south-central regions remained in their hands. More than 50,000 civilians were killed, injured or displaced as a result of the armed conflict and generalized violence. All parties to the conflict were responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, some amounting to war crimes. There was no accountability for these violations. Armed groups continued to conscript children, and abduct, torture and unlawfully kill civilians. Rape and other crimes of sexual violence were widespread. The continuing conflict, insecurity and restrictions imposed by the warring parties hampered aid agencies' access to some regions. About 4.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance; 950,000 suffered from food insecurity. Tens of thousands of people were forcibly evicted from their homes. Freedom of expression was curtailed: two journalists were killed and others were attacked, harassed or fined.

BACKGROUND

The SFG and AMISOM remained in control of the capital, Mogadishu. They also retained areas taken from al-Shabaab in 2015 and consolidated their control through the federal administrations in Galmudug, Jubbaland and South-West states. AMISOM and the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) fought intermittent battles with al-Shabaab but control of territory did not change. By the end of 2016, al-Shabaab still controlled many rural areas, especially in Bay, Gedo, Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba regions. The fighting displaced more people. Inter-clan clashes and al-Shabaab attacks against civilians continued, particularly in districts where control repeatedly shifted between AMISOM and al-Shabaab. Civilians were killed and wounded in crossfire and targeted

attacks, and as a result of grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide attacks and complex assaults. All parties to the conflict committed war crimes.

UN Security Council Resolution 2275, passed in March, extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 March 2017, while Resolution 2297, passed in July, extended the mandate of AMISOM until 31 May 2017. International support for government security forces, allied militias and AMISOM continued. As a result of pressure for accountability, nine Ugandan soldiers serving under AMISOM were sentenced to imprisonment for violating the rules and regulations of peacekeeping.

An acute humanitarian situation persisted and it was feared that the return of Somalis from neighbouring countries would exacerbate the crisis. At least 4.7 million people (40% of the population) needed support; most vulnerable were the more than 1.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).

A political crisis emerged over the electoral colleges for parliamentary and presidential elections due in September and October respectively. A forum set up by political leaders eventually agreed that 275 electoral colleges, each comprising 51 delegates selected by clan elders, would each elect an MP. Elections were scheduled for the lower and upper houses of Parliament in September and October respectively, but were twice postponed. Meanwhile, al-Shabaab rejected all forms of election, intensified attacks and called on followers to attack polling venues and kill clan elders, government officials and MPs taking part in the elections.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Indiscriminate attacks

Al-Shabaab carried out indiscriminate and lethal attacks in heavily guarded areas of Mogadishu and other towns, killing or injuring hundreds of civilians. High-profile targets remained vulnerable to such attacks. It was difficult to establish the total number of civilians killed because there was no reliable casualty tracking system.

An al-Shabaab attack on Beach View Hotel and Lido Seafood restaurant at Lido beach in Mogadishu on 21 January killed at least 20 people. A suicide car bomb attack at a police station in Mogadishu on 9 March killed at least three people. A suicide bomb attack on a restaurant near a local government building in Mogadishu on 9 April killed at least four people and wounded seven. A suicide car bomb attack at Mogadishu's traffic police headquarters on 9 May killed at least five people. An al-Shabaab attack on Nasa Hablod Hotel in Mogadishu on 26 June killed at least 15 people and injured more than 20. Clashes between al-Shabaab fighters and SNAF in Bay region on 18 July killed 14 civilians caught in the crossfire. Two car explosions on 26 July outside a UN office in Mogadishu killed at least 10 people, both civilians and security officers. Two suicide attacks on the local government headquarters in Galkayo in Puntland (a semi-autonomous region in the northeast) on 21 August killed at least 20 civilians. An al-Shabaab attack on Banadir Beach Restaurant at Lido beach in Mogadishu on 26 August killed at least 10 civilians. A truck explosion outside SYL Hotel in Mogadishu near the presidential palace on 30 August killed at least 15 people and injured 45.

Targeting of civilians

Civilians were also directly targeted in attacks, especially by al-Shabaab fighters and clan militias. On 15 June, al-Shabaab fighters fired mortars into densely populated areas of Mogadishu; five loud explosions were heard but no deaths were reported. On 6 August, al-Shabaab fired mortar shells into a neighbourhood near the general hospital in Baidoa, killing one man and injuring six others.

In addition, al-Shabaab continued to torture and extrajudicially kill people they accused of spying or not conforming to its interpretation of Islamic law. The group killed people in public, including by beheading and stoning, and carried out amputations and floggings, especially in areas from which AMISOM had withdrawn. On 19 January, al-Shabaab killed a man in Kurtuway district after accusing him of witchcraft. On 20 May, al-Shabaab beheaded three men in Buur Hakaba district in Bay region after accusing them of spying for the federal government. On 17 August, al-Shabaab publicly killed a man by firing squad in Biyoley settlement, near Baidoa, after accusing him of spying for the federal government.

Clan and government-aligned militias continued to carry out extrajudicial killings, extortion, arbitrary arrests and rape. On 7 August, a clan militia in Qansax Dheere district in Bay region fired mortar shells at civilians, killing three. In August, several civilians were killed during clan clashes in Bay region.

CHILD SOLDIERS

Children continued to suffer grave abuses by all parties to the armed conflict. Somalia is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child but the federal government had yet to implement the two action plans it signed in 2012 to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as the killing and maiming of children.

In June, UNICEF stated that it believed there were up to 5,000 child soldiers in Somalia, mostly recruited by al-Shabaab and clan militias.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

More than 1.1 million Somalis remained internally displaced. Most continued to settle along the Afgooye corridor between Mogadishu and Afgooye town. Intermittent clashes between SNAF and its AMISOM allies and al-Shabaab disrupted trade in various regions. While SNAF and AMISOM forces controlled major towns, al-Shabaab blocked supply routes and taxed the civilian population in districts that it controlled. Continued conflict threatened to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation.

In January, the federal parliament passed a law to protect and rehabilitate IDPs and Somali refugees, but implementation of it was slow. Over 1.1 million Somali refugees remained in neighbouring countries and the wider diaspora. As violence intensified in Yemen, Somalis who had fled there continued to return to Somalia. By the end of the year, over 30,500 Somalis had done so. Meanwhile, other host states, including Denmark and the Netherlands, put pressure on Somali asylum-seekers and refugees to return to Somalia on the grounds that security had improved in the country.

HOUSING RIGHTS – FORCED EVICTION

Forced evictions of IDPs and the urban poor remained a major problem, especially in Mogadishu. The government and private landowners forcibly evicted nearly 31,000 people in Deynile, Dharkeiny, Hamar Weyne, Heliwa, Hodan, Kaxda and Wardhigley districts of Mogadishu in the first half of the year. Over 14,000 people were forcibly evicted in January alone. The majority of those evicted moved to insecure and isolated locations on the outskirts of the capital, where social services were limited or non-existent and living conditions were deplorable.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists and media workers continued to be intimidated, harassed and attacked. Two journalists were killed. On 4 June, unidentified gunmen shot dead Sagal Salad Osman, a journalist for state-

run radio and television. On 27 September in Mogadishu, two assailants shot dead Abdiasis Mohamed Ali of Radio Shabelle. Several media houses were closed. On 9 July, police raided the premises of City FM, shut down the radio station and arrested the editor-in-chief, Abdishakur Abdullahi Ahmed, and deputy editor-in-chief, Abdirahman Hussein Omar Wadani. They also confiscated radio equipment. On 13 August, police in Beledweyn region detained a freelance journalist, Ali Dahir Herow. Al-Shabaab continued to suppress the media and retained a ban on the internet in areas under its control.

In Somaliland, which lacks a functioning media law to protect journalists, media freedom was also restricted. The government curtailed freedom of expression of those who criticized its policies. By October, nine journalists had been arrested in relation to their work, seven of whom faced criminal cases in courts. On 25 May, Ahmed Mouse Sakaaro, a journalist based in Burao, was arrested and charged with inciting violence. In June, police officers arrested the publisher of the independent *Foore* newspaper, Abdirashid Abdiwahaab Ibraahim, and the editor-in-chief, Mohamed Mahamoud Yousuf, for covering an agreement on the management of Berbera port between the Somaliland government and a private company based abroad. Also in May, two journalists – Cabdirashid Nuur Wacays and Siciid Khadar, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Hubsad* newspaper respectively – were arrested and the newspaper was closed down. In addition, the government suspended publication of *Haartif* newspaper, a court revoked its licence and the police occupied its premises.

DEATH PENALTY

Somalia continued to use the death penalty despite its support for the UN General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty. Few executions were reported, but the Military Court did sentence people to death in proceedings that fell short of international fair trial standards. Among those sentenced to death was a former journalist accused of helping al-Shabaab to kill five fellow reporters. On 14 August, a military court in Puntland ordered the execution of an army officer by firing squad in Garowe city. It was not known whether the execution was carried out.

In Somaliland, six prisoners at the Mandera maximum security complex were executed in January. On 25 July, a civilian court in Berbera sentenced eight men to death. Civilian courts continued to impose death sentences and at least 50 people were on death row at the end of the year.

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