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REPORT OF INFORMATION GATHERING MISSION 27-30 APRIL 2007

SOMALIA

17 May 2007

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Introduction

i In the light of rapidly changing events in Mogadishu during April 2007, a mission led by Country of Origin Information (COI) Service visited the region in order to obtain up to date information on conditions in central and southern Somalia. The mission was carried out 27 – 30 April 2007.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the mission were to obtain up to date information about the security and humanitarian situation in Mogadishu and other parts of central and southern Somalia. The mission did not seek to obtain information about Somaliland or Puntland in the northern part of the country.

METHODOLOGY

- The mission team was based in Nairobi and held meetings with a number of individuals and organisations with detailed knowledge of the position on the ground in Mogadishu and central and southern Somalia. These included advisors to the Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Kenya; inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations; Kenyan airline executives; an expert advisor to a western government; an independent researcher; and a prominent political opponent of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.
- This report has been compiled for use by officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. All individuals and organisations referred to in this report were advised of the purpose of this report and care has been taken to present their views in an accurate and transparent way. Every interlocutor has seen the note of their interview in draft form, made amendments where necessary, and given explicit consent for it to be published. Several of the interlocutors requested that they should not be directly identified in the report and the level of anonymity required has been reflected in the descriptor for each source.
- v The programme of meetings for the mission was organised by the British High Commission to Kenya and COI Service is very grateful for the assistance and support provided.

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Interviews

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DELEGATION: RICHARD HANDS, JEREMY BRICKHILL INTERVIEWED 27 APRIL 2007

- 1.01 Mr Hands said that unlike all other 'donor' organisations, the EC had a significant presence on the ground in Somalia, with offices in Hargeisa, Garowe, Mogadishu and Baidoa, staffed by internationals with the exception of the capital. As a result of this presence and the extent of its aid programme, the EC also had an unusually high political profile, access to key players and 'institutional memory'. No other international organisation had a comparable presence in Somalia apart from the UN. But the UN's work was not political; it was driven largely by humanitarian and development concerns.
- 1.02 Mr Hands said that he travelled regularly into Somalia, but no EC international staff had been to Mogadishu since December 2006. The EC operates a flight service comprising three aircraft serving some 15 airstrips around the country, although local security conditions and regular attempts to extort "taxes" frequently lead to the suspension of flights to individual airstrips.
- 1.03 In recent weeks, three aircraft carrying African Union troops have been shot down, as well as one Ethiopian attack helicopter. However, several commercial operators are still flying on a regular basis. African Express still operates regular flights, though some flights had been cancelled the previous week. There are still daily flights between Nairobi and Somalia carrying Khat narcotic, in the 'semi legal' trade of this substance.
- 1.04 Mogadishu International Airport was under the control of the Ethiopian, TFG and Ugandan (AU) forces, though under pressure from the Hawiye militias. The area between the airport and Mogadishu city was 'dead' and full of Ethiopian and TFG troops and more or less uncontrolled militia; human rights violations including rape and murder were rife.
- 1.05 When asked if it was possible to get taxis from Mogadishu International Airport out of the city in safety, Mr Hands and Mr Brickhill said this was out of the question unless prior arrangements had been made with the appropriate militias. To do so would be difficult because of the chaotic situation many of the elements involved in the fighting were under no effective command and control.
- 1.06 Mr Hands and Mr Brickhill said that it would not be safe for a Somali person to return to any part of Mogadishu. Mr Brickhill said that there was a clan war taking place in the city and that any individual could be subject to 'revenge' attacks. Ethiopian forces controlled all the important strategic positions in Mogadishu but did not have sufficient forces to control the city as a whole.

¹ Hargeisa, Garowe/Conoco, Bosaso, Erigavo, Mogadishu North, Mogadishu "K50", Luuq, Wajid, Baidoa, Jowhar, Gabarharey, Huddur, Jiamame, Afmadow, Buale

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1.07 The intensive shelling during the past 10 days and 4 days in March had forced people to take sides and hardened positions. Ethiopians were the traditional enemy of the Somali people for historical and religious reasons. But the conflict was essentially a 'clan war' between the Darod who dominate the TFG (holding nearly all the top commands in the military and security services) and the Hawiye, the main clan in the Mogadishu area. So far, the TFG had been unwilling to negotiate with the Hawiye. At root, the conflict was about power and money rather than politics. Although the clan war centred on the Darod and Hawiye, it had impacted on other clans and had likely ramifications in other parts of Somalia and beyond.

- 1.08 The UIC had spearheaded the Hawiye resistance but did not really have a distinct identity, representing a "broad church" of opinion united by clan resentments, rejection of the warlords who had previously controlled the capital, and nationalistic opposition to the Ethiopian presence. In many ways the general population had welcomed the period of stability brought by the UIC and, with some exceptions, the Islamic aspect was not generally radical or oppressive.
- 1.09 The EC delegation said that the current official estimate of numbers of IDPs leaving Mogadishu was 350,000 but the real figure was likely to be around 500,000, nearly half the population of the city. UNHCR has said this was the largest movement of refugees in the world this year. These people have nowhere to go and on the whole are not moving far from Mogadishu, but are subjected to systematic attacks, rape, harassment, robbery etc, by regulars and 'freelance' militias.
- 1.10 Most of Mogadishu is now deserted, with very few locals left. Most who remained are at the University on the hill (about 150,000) or at the pasta factory very few are still in town. Some men remained to try to guard their homes from looting, but all women and children have left. All commercial activity has stopped; it effectively ended when the market was shelled an event that had symbolised the end of any possibility of trade in the city.
- 1.12 The TFG has little popular support across the country. TFG military forces number perhaps 10,000, mostly Darods drawn from Puntland's 'internal security' forces together with some from a mixture of southern clan groups. Troops are poorly trained, unreliable and undisciplined, with ineffective command and control structures.
- 1.13 The TFG also has a 5,000 strong police force and a 1,000 strong and "seriously nasty" Anti Terrorist Unit, the latter in particular having been responsible for widespread abuses and violations.
- 1.14 Around 1,200 police remain in place from 'the old days', still in their police buildings waiting to resume meaningful duty when stability returns. Also, UNDP had trained a number of young recruits to be police officers operating in a hostile environment. These have been vulnerable to pressures from militias to collude with and participate in abuses and violations at checkpoints.
- 1.15 We asked whether it might be safe for Somalis to return to any parts of the country beyond the Mogadishu area. Mr Hands said that it could be feasible to return to Somaliland and Puntland, but in general return would not be advisable in central/southern Somalia, anywhere south of Gaalkayo.

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1.16 We asked whether it might be possible in certain circumstances to return individuals to areas where they were members of the dominant clan. Mr Hands said that this could be possible, provided the specific individual circumstances and location were carefully considered, but ruled out the areas surrounding Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa.

WALID MUSA, SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, EUROPEAN COMMISSION INTERVIEWED 30 APRIL 2007

- 2.01 Mr Musa stated that Mogadishu is calmer than last week and there is no intense fighting. The opposition force that was fighting in March and April had 'taken a beating' and had dispersed. But there is no popular support for the TFG and the resistance is regrouping, with a new force emerging. Massive financial support for resistance is likely to come from the diaspora. Mr Musa thought the greatest threat to stability would be an externally supported Islamic insurgency.
- 2.02 Mr Musa thought that, while continuing skirmishes were likely, it is possible that that the TFG could establish governance on the ground and impose dialogue and perhaps a 'quasi agreement' for the government to continue to the end of the transition period. But there is an equal chance that resistance will grow with increasing incidents of roadside bombings and suicide attacks.
- 2.03 Mr Musa estimated that up to 2,000 people, predominantly civilians had been killed in the recent fighting, the great majority of them from the Hawiye clan. The collection of bodies from the streets, from the rubble and from homes had only just begun. The TFG had issued warnings to the population of Mogadishu before the bombardment. It had divided Mogadishu into three vague sectors, warning the population of each sector to evacuate and then shelling it heavily. It is likely that the TFG will soon begin a house to house disarmament operation. Humanitarian conditions in Mogadishu are very poor and access for relief supplies very limited, with only the ICRC able to operate.
- 2.04 The TFG only has control in Mogadishu and Baidoa. It has no real control of the 100 or so other local airstrips in central and southern Somalia outside these areas but Mr Musa predicted that if they still control Mogadishu in a few months time, they will extend their control to other airstrips.
- 2.05 On the question of whether there were prospects for a greater AU deployment, Mr Musa thought there might be if some deal could be reached in the next month or so; ie. arrangements for sustainable cessation of hostilities in Mogadishu between the TFG and the local Hawiya community on the basis of which peacekeepers could be deployed (to police the agreement). Otherwise, he expected the Ugandans to pull out in two months time. There was a growing belief that a UN mission would be necessary to sustain the situation. Existing Ugandan AU forces were localised at the airport, along the airport road as far as K4 roundabout, and at Villa Somalia. There was no suggestion that the Ugandan forces had committed any offences against the population and they have been praised by the UN for their behaviour.
- 2.06 Mr Musa said that Mogadishu International Airport had been operating under government control for a few weeks. Regarding onward travel from the Airport, Mr Musa said that it would be necessary to pre-arrange an escort for travel away from Mogadishu, and to make arrangements to cross other clan areas. He was not sure about going into Mogadishu as the situation was constantly changing.

2.07 The highways could be dangerous but people always travelled with escorts arranged with their own clan, so check-points just meant paying a "toll". Typical "tolls" would to be around US\$5-\$20 at each check-point, but to some extent were dependent on how smart the car and how rich the occupants looked. Asked what would be the typical cost of the longish journey from Mogadishu to Galkayo, Mr Musa estimated that around US\$100 would cover the cost of a single escort, fuel and checkpoint tolls for a day's trip covering roughly about 50 to 100 km, depending on the state of the road. Wealthier people might choose to pay US\$600-\$1,000 for the same journey, with a heavily armed escort in a separate vehicle.

- 2.08 Asked to estimate the chances of a person completing their journey safely, if they had the appropriate protective security measures in place, Mr Wusa thought they would be 90% if not greater. He had made journeys in this manner on several occasions.
- 2.09 Mr Musa said that rural, village based areas had been more or less unaffected by the recent violence. He said that banditry was attracted by money and very little money was to be found in the villages. Similarly, political violence tended to be concentrated around the cities. Consequently, there should be no problem for people who could return directly to the rural areas. Mr Musa said that there were many ways for people to return to these areas and that people routinely do on their own initiative if they need to.
- 2.10 Mr Musa said that small towns and villages have their own structures for administration, law and order based on those set up by the UIC. These are built on traditional structures and are likely to be retained because they have been effective and helped create stability. Specifically asked whether the situation in central and southern Somalia was any less safe outside the cities than it had been before the latest fighting started, say six months previously, Mr Musa did not think it was.
- 2.11 Mr Musa thought that given their poor economic and social position in Somali society, women should always be granted asylum.
- 2.12 Asked whether IDPs are starting to return to Mogadishu, Mr Musa said that there were conflicting reports but was sure the vast majority were not. He thought a few hundred had mostly men checking on their properties before bringing back their families, and others who had absolutely nothing elsewhere and so nothing to lose.
- 2.13 Mr Musa was asked what might be available to those who return to Mogadishu, in particular in terms of water. He explained that the two main water plants had been out of operation for 10 years and so virtually every house relied on its own borehole. The quality of the water had been a problem for some time it was becoming increasingly salty and so had to be filtered twice before being drinkable. Previously, many had obtained water from hospitals and bottled water was available at a price.
- 2.14 Electricity too in Mogadishu was produced at home by domestic generators. Prior to the recent conflict there had been increasing incidence of blocks of houses being served by a communal generator serving perhaps 60 homes but these were likely no longer to be in service.

2.15 On the question of food supplies in Mogadishu, Mr Musa said that the market will be the first thing to resume functioning when people return. But Mr Musa also pointed out that nearly half a million in Mogadishu were already destitute before the fighting and lived by begging or by being hired militia members.

2.16 Travel into Mogadishu is a dangerous adventure these days. More than the cost, it is the bombs of the insurgents which are making everyone travel as few a meters as possible outside their homes. However, around \$200 should be enough for a Somali to arrange travel inside the city (including getting around checkpoints manned by TFG militia and in some cases freelance militia) say from any of the five or so airstrips around Mogadishu.

United Nations Security Officer Interviewed 27 and 30 April 2007

3.01 When asked about the safety of people in central and southern Somalia, the source said that the position was different for Somalis and Internationals. When the Union of Islamic Courts was in control the situation for Somalis was stable and much safer than under the warlords.

- 3.02 The source said that there had been no fighting since 26 April. The recent fighting had taken place inside Mogadishu, but there had been mortar attacks on the airport and there had also been roadside bombs and suicide attacks on the road between Mogadishu and Afgoye.
- 3.03 The safety of Somalis being returned from other countries to central and southern Somalia was a matter of individual circumstances. He said that he would not have returned any Somalis to Mogadishu since 1 January 2007. Apart from Mogadishu, other areas could be safe for return if the individual's clan was dominant in the area concerned and he had not done anything to antagonise them in the past. When specifically asked whether the general security situation was different from that which existed, say, 18 months previously, the source thought that, apart from Mogadishu, it was only materially different in Middle and Lower Shabbelle where there is a vacuum in leadership.
- 3.04 In general, apart from Mogadishu, the source thought there would be no problem for Somalis travelling through an area dominated by a different clan. He explained that peaceful interaction between members of different clans did take place when they were not in dispute. The risk would be if they were caught up in the sporadic inter-clan fighting; individuals could be targeted on the basis of their clan membership in a revenge attack in response to a previous incident that they may not even know about. Otherwise there should be no difficulty, provided the individual did not do anything to antagonise the resident clan when passing through.
- 3.05 The source said that the roads out of Mogadishu are more dangerous now than 4–5 months ago, particularly the road between Mogadishu and Belet Weyne. "Freelance' militias operated checkpoints which, though generally interested in extorting money rather than killing people, could become violent. The source gave the example of a bus carrying a number of deserting TFG soldiers being attacked for their weapons. There were also incidents arising from armed militias transporting mirraa (khat) being attacked by other armed groups.
- 3.06 In Gedo there had been some UN-specific issues, targeting UN staff. When inter-clan conflict flared up, it was sometimes necessary for the UN to withdraw their local staff who were at risk of attack because their employment by the UN gave them a higher status and made them prized targets for retribution (rank within clan hierarchy can be based on a combination of heredity and acquired social status).
- 3.07 The source described the Ethiopian intervention, from their attack on Christmas Eve 2006 and the sequence of events over the following months. He indicated where the Ethiopians had established positions within Mogadishu: notably positions at the University, Seaport, Airport, former

Ministry of Defence and Villa Somalia (the Presidential area) from where most recently they had launched attacks on the area around the stadium; also in Towfiq, Huriwaa, Fagah Junction and the Pasta Factory.

- 3.08 He said that the Ethiopians and TFG now stated that they controlled the whole city. They were still vulnerable to attacks when moving between positions and there were increasing incidents of roadside bombs. The source was not sure which areas the TFG had asked civilians to flee from, but the shelling and fighting took place in the areas around the stadium, east up to the Animal market (all the way to the northeast of the city) as well as from the Fagah Junction and north to the same point.
- 3.09 Asked about the distribution of clans in Mogadishu, the source said that the Abgal and Murusade live in areas not really affected by the recent fighting. The fighting mainly affected the areas occupied by the Habr Gedir but there is a mixed population in some of these areas.
- 3.10 The source said that in terms of risk to UN staff, Mogadishu and Badhade District (southwest Somalia on border with Kenya) were classified as UN Security 'Phase 5', the highest risk level. There were no major problems in Bakol Region and parts of the Central areas. The Mudug area had always had and continued to experience problems of inter-clan violence. There were also inter-clan clashes in the area south-west of Adhele (Middle Shabelle) where 5 people had been dragged from their car and killed the previous week. The security officer said there were no Ethiopians in Kismayo, but it was an area that was always likely to see instability: there were many clans there but none was dominant so it was inherently unstable and volatile.
- 3.11 Talking about likely developments, the security officer said that it would be interesting to see what the Ethiopians would do next. They might now claim to have achieved their objective of capturing Mogadishu but they would not want to stay there indefinitely. He pointed out that the much larger UN force of 25,000 had failed to hold the city in 1993. He contrasted this with the 1200 Ugandan soldiers which so far made up the African Union force. The AU troops were currently only at the airport, seaport and Villa Somalia. When asked whether there was any prospect of an increase in AU troop involvement the source said that troops from Nigeria, Malawi, Burundi and Ghana had all been mooted but he did not know if these would materialise.

SECURITY ADVISOR TO ALL NGOs (INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL) OPERATING IN SOMALIA INTERVIEWED 30 APRIL 2007

- 4.01 The source explained that the function of his organisation was to provide advice to about 200 NGOs on safety and security in Somalia. When asked about the current situation in Mogadishu, he said that it is quiet at the moment. It is 'Mogadishu quiet', which means that there are still occasional gunshots or roadside bombs. He said that the recent spell of fighting has finished, and the anti-government elements have been dispersed. But although the opposition forces have been dealt a very serious blow, they have not been defeated; they would regroup and continue using 'terrorist-style' tactics.
- 4.02 The source said that the TFG are looking for a military solution when a political solution is needed. But all the TFG's statements have been warlike, saying that they are not prepared to talk to 'terrorists'. It has been said that they fear that the outcome of a reconciliation conference would be their replacement by a new government.
- 4.03 The source said that in Somalia 'everything comes down to clan' and the fighting was perceived in many quarters to be a clan war between the Majerteen sub clan of the Darod and the Hawiye, a very large clan in Mogadishu. Most of the Majerteen forces came from Puntland and were seen as an occupying force in Mogadishu. The Hawiye see the conflict in terms of the Darod taking its territory and usurping its business interests.
- The appointment of several warlords to key positions, including Mohamed Dhere to mayor of Mogadishu, could serve to further fuel the conflict. One of the main factors in the rise of the UIC had been people's resentment of the warlords. The source said that the TFG need the military strength of the warlords to bolster their position, because without the Ethiopians in the past they were only capable of controlling half of Baidoa. Without the Ethiopians, it would be impossible for the TFG to control Mogadishu, even with the support of the warlords.
- 4.05 The source said that the Ugandan AU force is located at the airport, the sea port and Villa Somalia. Asked about the security position at the airport, he said that some flights are going in and out but he is advising NGOs not to do so because things are too uncertain. He said that it is very hazardous travelling by road out of the airport in all directions, particularly because of risks posed by the many checkpoints.
- 4.06 He mentioned several recent incidents including one where an NGO vehicle had been travelling behind an Ethiopian troop truck, which had been hit by a roadside bomb and the soldiers had reacted by shooting in all directions; and another when a TFG checkpoint had turned back an NGO 4x4 because an earlier suicide attack had used a similar vehicle. In many areas there is a power vacuum.

- 4.07 There are four kinds of checkpoints:
 - TFG checkpoints mostly on the roads close to Mogadishu, travellers have been routinely threatened and there have been reports of rapes and murders;
 - Ethiopian checkpoints these could also be rough, with some serious abuses;
 - Clan checkpoints these are long established and are effectively road tolls, operated by the local clans;
 - Freelance militia checkpoints these could appear anywhere and are very unpredictable and dangerous.
- 4.08 When asked about the situation in villages in rural areas away from the main towns and highways, the source said that many of these had not been affected by the fighting in Mogadishu and were comparable to that six months or a year ago. He said that in villages, there could be several different authority structures:
 - Clan elders who hold moral authority but who may not have military power;
 - religious leaders who have religious authority but probably no weapons;
 - militia leaders who have the greatest military strength;
 - and sometimes there are also district administrators who have been recently installed by the TFG.
- 4.09 The source said the TFG administrators were sometimes imposed on areas where the appointee was not of the local clan and this had directly led to problems, such as in Kismayo.
- 4.10 Asked about whether it could be safe for individuals to return to any parts of Somalia, the source said this would depend on the circumstances. He said that in general it would be 'irresponsible' to return people to Mogadishu without very careful checking, but there may be particular cases where this could be possible. In terms of the rural village areas which have not been affected by the Mogadishu fighting, he said that it could be possible for individuals of the predominant clan in a particular clan to return there.
- 4.11 The source again emphasised the importance of clan blood is thicker than water and if a person has not offended against his clan they would take him back and defend him. However, if the person had offended his own clan or had caused a dispute with another clan, he could be at risk. For example, if he had killed a member of another clan, his own clan would have to pay 100 camels for the life of a man or 50 camels for the life of a woman. Rather than paying, his clan may decide to just hand him over for execution.
- 4.12 The source said the feasibility of return to Somalia would have to be closely assessed on a case by case basis. Theoretically, return is not impossible or 'a complete no', particularly if the person had left Somalia for economic reasons. But you would have to look very carefully at factors such as whether the person's clan wanted him back or whether he might be at risk from the TFG / Ethiopian forces for being a member of the UIC.
- 4.13 Asked about whether it is practically possible for members of one clan to travel through another clan's area, the source said this could be done in reasonable safety provided it was done in a respectful and appropriate

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manner. He noted that very few areas are completely homogenous in clan terms. He said that leaving aside the Mogadishu conflict, clan relations were generally maintained in a state of balance or 'cold war' which enabled them to interact peacefully. In general, if clans were not feuding, it was possible for members of each to cross the others' territory

4.14 The source described the usual arrangement for such travel. The person or would be driven to the edge of his clan's territory. This would be met by a vehicle from the other clan, which would stop a few hundred meters away. The person would then walk to the vehicle of the other clan and be driven to where he was going by them. Movement across clan territories had been done in a similar manner for years and while perhaps not safe in European terms, was 'Somali safe'.

REPRESENTATIVE OF AN INTERNATIONAL AID ORGANISATION WITH SUBSTANTIAL EXPERIENCE IN SOMALIA INTERVIEWED 27 APRIL 2007

- 5.01 The source provided an extremely informative explanation of the background to the current situation and an analysis of where it might be going. We then went on to talk about the current situation.
- 5.02 The source said that the situation in south-central Somalia is at its worst since the early 1990s when hundreds of thousands died through violent conflict, famine and disease. The situation is also uniformly desperate in Mogadishu itself. Heavy and indiscriminate shelling by Ethiopian, government and resistance forces had already affected many areas of the city including, most recently and unexpectedly, the north of the city. There is widespread damage to infrastructure including to the two well-equipped private hospitals, both of which have been closed (one occupied by Ethiopian troops as a military position, the other ransacked) and SOS hospital, which was hit by 4 artillery barrages. Virtually all schools and all universities are closed. Food prices are dramatically inflated, there are water shortages and disrupted electricity supplies. The efforts of civic actors and the business community to maintain order in the city have been seriously undermined.
- 5.03 Over 365,000 people, mainly women, children and elderly, have fled Mogadishu since 1 February (UNHCR) the largest displaced population in the world this year with a further 300,000 displaced within the city. Many families have left a male family member behind to protect their property and businesses, or fight, some of whom have been killed.
- The source did not think there were any safe routes out of Mogadishu, with TFG and freelance militia check-points on every route. Over 140,000 of the most impoverished IDPs are in Shabelle area, many of whom are also at risk of flooding of the Shabelle river expected in mid-May. Over 140,000 IDPs have reached the central regions, where the recent conclusion of a reconciliation process between the Saad and Suleyman sub-clans has enabled relatively free movement. Most IDPs are living in the open in the bush without access to shelter, food, safe water or health facilities. Cholera is an increasing problem, with over 17,000 reported cases, and 600 deaths, mostly children.
- The transitional Somali government has deliberately blocked humanitarian aid delivery. Although some restrictions are reportedly being lifted following strong condemnation by the US and German ambassadors in letters to the TFG president, TFG forces are continuing to intimidate and threaten aid agency staff. The acute humanitarian crisis and lack of humanitarian access is also putting enormous strains on the host communities because of the pressures of the displaced population, which has been estimated to be the biggest movement of IDPs in the world this year.
- 5.06 It was the source's opinion that the country is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe (quoting the head of OCHA, mid-April) and that it was difficult to conceive of returning anyone to central and southern Somalia given the current security and humanitarian situation and the bleak outlook. Many IDPs have also fled to Hargeisa, in Somaliland. Puntland is not a viable

proposition for those who do not belong to the Harti clan, following reports that IDPs fleeing Mogadishu were placed in detention centres in Galkayo.

- 5.07 The outlook remains bleak with imposition of a government through force by Somalia's historic enemy, Ethiopia, with the tacit approval of the US and western governments, and the return to power of the warlords who have exploited the population of south-central Somalia for the past 16 years. The Somali transitional government has appointed one former warlord as commander of the police and another as governor of Mogadishu, others are ministers and all appear to be assured of their impunity.
- 5.08 The people of Somalia, while not being particularly enthusiastic about their ethos, were grateful for the stability that the UIC brought and there was also great enthusiasm for them in the Diaspora. The UIC dispersed following the invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia in December 2006 but the recent devastation of Mogadishu is likely to radicalise the population with the UIC offering the only apparent alternative. In the absence of a political solution or international political will to pressure for one there is likely to be a continuing increase in the number of "insurgency" attacks.
- 5.09 UK (and US) policy, together with the EU and Norway, have provided an enabling environment for the escalating violence of the past 5 months.
- 5.10 The UK is continuing to provide moral, political and financial support to both the Somali transitional government and the Ethiopian government despite the full record of indiscriminate use of air strikes and heavy artillery on civilian areas, bombing of hospitals, rape of women, deliberate blocking of food and humanitarian supplies, and intimidation of humanitarian agency staff. On 2 April, the European Union warned that war crimes might have been committed in the assault on Mogadishu in March and, if so, that the EU would be complicit. The battering of Mogadishu escalated through April. Human Rights Watch is compiling a report on serious breaches of international law.
- 5.11 There is no military solution but now the risk is that the humanitarian crisis will precipitate further legitimisation by the UK and other western governments of a proxy regime of warlords.
- Unless western governments suspend their support for the parties to the conflict, call for ceasefire arrangements between all parties, immediate validated humanitarian access, and a tribunal to investigate breaches of international humanitarian law, the result is likely to be an escalating humanitarian crisis and radicalisation of the population, with jihadism seen as the only resistance. There is also the risk that this will destabilise the relatively peaceful areas of Puntland (N.E.) and Somaliland (N.W.).
- 5.13 Asked to describe in detail the conditions in which IDPs are living, the source said that most of the displaced are women, children and the elderly. Many have walked miles in the heat and without water or food to escape Mogadishu. Most fled from Mogadishu with nothing or were looted on the way by the scores of government or freelance militia at checkpoints along the roads out of Mogadishu and onwards. People have been threatened, some killed, women raped (including systematic rape). Those able to pay for transport (trucks or buses) are also in trouble as public vehicles, which normally have a security guard, are being disarmed by government forces

as they leave Mogadishu and are then attacked and looted by both government and freelance militiamen.

- People are living in appalling conditions in the open scrubland with the better-off people constructing makeshift structures from rags and twigs. In other places there are no trees, or the shelter under trees is already too crowded, or they have no resources at all. They are sheltering up against walls or simply lying down to get out of the wind. The onset of the seasonal rains increases the survival risks for people already weakened by lack of food and water, living in the open. The seasonal floods of the Shabelle river will hit people who are sheltering in the flood plains.
- 5.15 Some people are being given hand-outs (milk, grain) from the host communities, themselves desperately poor having been hit by drought in 2006 and then floods in December. The huge numbers of arrivals in Shabelle area (nearest to Mogadishu, which is as far as the most impoverished people can get) is overwhelming the local communities. Others are gathering wild foods from the bush. Most of these people are urban and do not know how to live wild in the bush what wild foods to eat, what water is safe to drink.
- 5.16 Food prices have escalated as a result of shortages caused by the war in Mogadishu, aggravated by the imposition of exorbitantly high taxes at the port by the transitional Somali government and the subsequent blockade by the business community (now lifted after the TFG agreed to revert to the old taxation system).
- 5.17 The cost of clean drinking water has increased by 2000% in some places so instead, now that the seasonal rains have started, people are drinking rainwater from rain pans (depressions in the ground). This water is unsafe and likely to contribute to the spread of cholera, which has already claimed over 600 people, mostly children.

SENIOR ADVISER ON SOMALIA TO A WESTERN GOVERNMENT (NOT UK) INTERVIEWED 28 APRIL 2007

- 6.01 The source said that with the exception of Kismayo, fighting was confined to Mogadishu. He considered that it was not possible at the time we spoke to say which parts of Mogadishu were or were not safe. The territorial battle is now largely over, with the TFG and Ethiopians controlling strategic points in the city although they do not exert day to day control over individual neighbourhoods and there have been widespread reports of looting and violent crime across the city. The source did not think there had been any disarmament since the fighting stopped. Around 1/4 to 1/3 of the city was badly damaged or destroyed by shelling and bombing; much of the area along the industrial road was reduced to rubble. The government gave broadly accurate warnings to civilians to leave certain areas of the city to avoid the violence, although the source was in no doubt that bombardment within these areas was indiscriminate.
- The likelihood is that Mogadishu will remain relatively peaceful now for a short period while everyone takes stock, but that fighting may resume in the near future. If so, the next phase is likely to be "asymmetrical warfare", similar to that of January and February 2007, characterised by increased use of terrorist-style attacks. Although much of the population of Mogadishu had been prepared to give the TFG 'the benefit of the doubt', recent actions by Ethiopian and TFG forces are likely to leave a legacy of fear, anger and resentment.
- 6.03 The source expects that IDPs will start to return to the city quickly and in large numbers not because they feel secure, but because living conditions are not sustainable where they are and they hope that they may be better in Mogadishu. They will also want to check on their properties and men are likely to return ahead of their families to assess the situation. However, there will still be large numbers of people who are afraid to return, or prefer to "wait and see". Some of those in the worst circumstances may choose to remain IDPs in the hope of receiving humanitarian relief supplies and services.
- Most IDPs are from the Hawiye clan. The source thought that few of them had gone to Puntland because it is largely a Harti Darod area, whose residents are generally supportive of the TFG. 'Elite' members of the Hawiye who could afford to and/or had family connections there had moved to Somaliland. The government of Somaliland is sympathetic to the Hawiye because of their opposition to the TFG, but there are signs that it is becoming impatient with the inflow. The source thought that Somaliland was keen to maintain its separate identity and feared that accommodating a large Hawiye population displaced from central and southern Somalia may blur the boundaries. It also feared that among the displaced there may be Islamic militants who might cause problems within Somaliland. The welcome for Hawiye IDPs is therefore finite and may be drawing to an end.
- 6.05 When asked about the safety of travelling in central and southern Somalia outside Mogadishu, the source thought that anyone "would be mad" to travel around because of the number of checkpoints where they faced the risk of looting, rape or murder, although the source did not think that there would be any greater risk to someone on account of their being perceived as wealthy

because they had arrived at the airport. As a minimum, any travellers would likely be disarmed, leaving them unable to protect themselves against attack further along the road. The risk is concentrated in the Mogadishu, Baidoa, Jkoha, Beradween area where the roads are full of checkpoints. The road to Kismayo is also very dangerous. Off the main roads, in rural areas, the source thought that the situation may be less affected by the current hostilities and that life may be proceeding more or less normally for the moment.

- 6.06 When pressed on the question whether it would be safe for someone to fly to an airstrip within their home area or an area dominated by their own clan, the source thought that this was no longer the case. In this respect, he considered that the presence of TFG and Ethiopian forces was the main problem. Whereas until recently the clans operated their own systems of protection in their own areas which previously would have ensured safe passage for their own people, the presence of TFG and Ethiopian forces may prevent them from doing so without offering any alternative form of protection.
- 6.07 The source thought that the TFG and Ethiopian forces have neither the ability nor the inclination to provide protection. Many checkpoints are now operated by local bands of freelance thugs who are answerable to and respect no-one. It was his opinion, based on numerous NGO and UN reports, that civilians passing through TFG and Ethiopian checkpoints are at real risk of being robbed, raped or murdered by those forces.
- 6.08 The source believed that if the situation in Mogadishu stabilises, it is likely that more African Union countries will commit forces, although it is uncertain, and in the source's opinion highly unlikely, that numbers would approach the mandated ceiling of 8,000 troops. If fighting resumes in any form, countries would naturally be reluctant to send troops. AU forces are formally mandated to protect the airport from militia/insurgent armed violence: AMISOM has a 'protection' mandate. AU troops have not directly confronted Somali insurgents in the recent fighting, although their positions around the Presidency (Villa Somalia) were struck repeatedly by mortar rounds the presidency was reportedly used as a major artillery base by Ethiopian troops.
- Asked whether he would consider some areas of central and southern Somalia to be more stable and less affected by the hostilities, the source said there was nowhere that is completely unaffected and nowhere that it would be safe in his opinion for people to internally relocate to. However, there are regional differences. Worst are the areas around Mogadishu, Afgoye, Jowhar and Merka. Almost as bad is the area between Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa. Lower Juba is inherently unstable and Islamic militants are exploiting this region. Other parts such as Gedo, Galkayo and South Mudug are currently more stable, but may not necessarily remain so.
- On the effect the current hostilities are having on clan relations, the source emphasised that clan loyalties remain central to what happens in Somalia, including the current war. Clans could be a dynamic and positive factor, but could also be used destructively. He contrasted the situation before and after 1993. Up to 1993, it was not safe for a private individual to travel from his/her own clan area to an area controlled by a rival clan. However, after various peace agreements, genuine clan warfare ceased and clan enmity

had largely dissipated. Clashes had tended to be between clan-based militias, but about matters unrelated to any clan issues that might impact upon 'innocent' individuals. So, in the main, a private individual could safely travel outside their own clan area, throughout the country. The recent hostilities had seen the beginning of a return to the pre-1993 situation, with clan enmities being revived as a direct result of the TFG's actions.

- The TFG is dominated by certain clans, largely the Darod (specifically the Majerteen and other Harti sub clans), and is increasingly being described as a 'clan clique' by media and in public debate. The TFG's military command and control structures are almost exclusively Darod and an estimated 50% of its troops are drawn from this clan, many of them from Puntland 'internal security' forces. TFG military actions have deliberately targeted other clans, specifically the Hawiye sub clans of Habar Gidir Ayr, Habar Gidir Suleyman and Duduble.
- The source said the TFG had shown a clear preference for use of force over dialogue. The President and ministers of the TFG are on record as saying that civilians in specific areas of the city are considered to be equally responsible for opposition violence as the perpetrators and as such liable to "collective punishment". TFG and Ethiopian forces have conducted a scorched earth policy, deliberately bombing and shelling civilian populations in Mogadishu. These actions have resulted in around 1,000 civilian casualties. Taking a historical perspective, it was possible to see the current TFG actions in terms of 'payback' for the events of 1991 when the Hawiye had purged the Darod from Mogadishu. In general, the source saw the current situation as being the worst that it has been since 1991/2.

PROMINENT POLITICAL OPPONENT OF THE TFG INTERVIEWED 30 APRIL 2007

- 7.01 The source is unable to travel to Mogadishu because of the risk of being assassinated. However, the source is extremely well connected there and said that the city was on the way to returning to the situation before the UIC established control and security. The TGF has appointed a warlord as mayor of Mogadishu and the areas under TFG control are being carved up among the warlords.
- 7.02 The source saw this as a deliberate display of the TFG's utter disdain for the people of Somalia and that it betrayed the TFG's total disinterest in reconciliation. Rather, the deal is that the warlords deliver Mogadishu to the TFG and the warlords in turn get the chance to return to their old ways of money-making. The source expressed utter frustration at the apparent reluctance of the international community to try to stop this or exert real pressure on the TFG to seek reconciliation by cutting its funding.
- 7.03 The source said that there has been large scale looting in Mogadishu since the end of the fighting. Some of this had been random theft but some had been politically targeted. The source's own business had been looted and equipment seriously damaged. The source's home had been destroyed in indiscriminate bombing. Speaking on 30 April, the source said that Mogadishu was currently calm but that it was not safe and that fighting was expected to break out again very soon in the form of resistance type activity.
- 7.04 The source said there had been no real services in Mogadishu since February 2007 when people began fleeing the city. There was at the time of speaking no shelter, no food, no water, and people were really suffering. Most of those who had fled the city were scattered around the outskirts but some had also gone to other regions. ICRC was the only major international aid organisation operating, along with some local NGOs. Much of the aid never reached its intended recipients with probably over 50% being siphoned off in "pay-offs". Cholera is becoming a major problem, although denied by the TFG who refer to it as 'watery diarrhoea', and well over 500 children have already died from the disease.
- 7.05 There is a functioning civil society in Mogadishu but because of the fighting in Mogadishu they are scatted across the outskirts of the city since there is no conducive environment for them to operate. The source thought that it may re-emerge but that it would be strongly discouraged from doing so with the city under the control of warlords. The source considered that the people of Somalia are sick and tired of the culture of war and said that any move by the TFG towards the recognition of warlords is totally against the will of the Somali people. Also, most people would never forgive the TFG for bringing in Ethiopian forces.

MR AHMED NUR KHAIRE, SWEDISH RESEARCHER OF SOMALI DESCENT INTERVIEWED 27 APRIL 2007

- 8.01 Mr Khaire is a Somali Swede who had been living in Somalia for three months up to the week he provided information for this report when he travelled to Nairobi for a short break. He planned to return to Somalia shortly. Most recently during his time in Somalia he had lived in the Mogadishu suburb of Afghoye where many of the IDPs displaced by the recent fighting had moved.
- Mr Khaire thought that most IDPs had remained within about a 30km radius of the city. Conditions were very harsh: they had no basic shelter and little access to food and water. Local inhabitants had exploited the situation by 'renting out' trees for shelter and charging for water. Many of the IDPs were suffering from severe health problems including what was likely to be cholera. Access to food and water had recently improved slightly when some relief aid had been provided.
- 8.03 Mr Khaire had been in all parts of Mogadishu apart from the north of the city, the Abgal area, where the fighting was heaviest. He said that the only part of the city that had been safe was the area occupied by Ugandan AU troops. However, when the market was attacked the previous week it was clear that nowhere within the city was safe anymore.
- 8.04 When asked, Mr Khaire said that his clan background was Hawiye, sub-clan Habr Gedir, but he did not 'live' the clan system and did not generally disclose his clan background. He said that he would feel uncomfortable travelling through an area dominated by a different clan and that this could be very dangerous.
- 8.05 He said that the current war marked a new development because clans which were normally hostile to each other had joined forces against the common enemy the Ethiopians and Darods. Another new development was the intensity of the conflict. Clan disputes were normally characterised by posturing, brief flare-ups and then withdrawal, but the intensity of this war had been sustained.
- 8.06 Mr Khaire commented that people saw the period when the Islamic Courts were in control as one of relative peace and tranquillity when things functioned reasonably well. This had promoted greater contact between different clans and more social interaction.
- 8.07 We asked about general safety in areas of central and south Somalia outside Mogadishu and its immediate environs. Mr Khaire said that the provinces had been relatively unaffected by the main fighting, and that life there remained much the same as it had always been, with little impact from IDPs, most of whom remained on the outskirts of Mogadishu. He thought though that other areas would be increasingly affected if the war carried on.
- 8.08 He said that in the provinces there continued to be local disputes between local clans and militias, often about water rights (he thought that the provision of reliable water supplies would see the end of inter-clan conflict in Somalia). But this was 'normal life' Somalia style. Although not comparable to western standards, the local administration and justice administered by

local clans was reasonably fair. However, even without the current war, Somalia remained a dangerous place. Mr Khaire did not think it would be appropriate for anyone to be returned to any part of Somalia and said this was likely to be the case for another 10-15 years.

AIRLINE EXECUTIVE INTERVIEWED 27 APRIL 2007

9.01 The source began by informing us that the previous night US aircraft had bombed the positions of UIC connected fighters opposed to the TFG and Ethiopian forces. In retaliation, those forces had bombed a hotel killing many TFG and Ethiopian forces. He said he thought the main fighting had ended and that further conflict would be guerilla style.

- 9.02 He then told the delegation that the airline was flying to Mogadishu as usual, from Nairobi via Aden and that the day's flight a DC9 with 71 passengers was expected to arrive in Mogadishu while the delegation was talking to him. He later telephoned one of his crew on the ground in Mogadishu asking what conditions were like the crew replied that "it's alright now".
- 9.03 The source said that his airline had not cancelled a flight to Mogadishu since 1991. He went on to explain that Mogadishu has no effective immigration service, contrasting this to Somaliland which has a very effective immigration service, security and intelligence services etc. He explained that the airline works with whoever is in control on the ground in Mogadishu to ensure the safe operation of the flights, be that the UIC as before, or the TFG now.
- 9.04 He does not think that the TFG or those who are fighting them have the time to worry about people who are returned to central and southern Somalia from other countries; nor would they be particularly interested in any event in ordinary returnees. They would be interested in e.g. British or US spies, but he works with the TFG to ensure that he does not carry such people. In general, he has no problems working with the TFG, which co-operates fully with the airline.
- 9.05 He explained that the airline has 'special status' in Somalia and that it would be in no-one's interests to harm the flights. He said that any fighting around the airports stops during the times the flights arrive. When questioned on this, he explained that it is quite likely that all sides will have their own people on the flight. Also, because the current conflict is political rather than clan based, the clans do not want to kill members of another clan which would lead to retributive attacks.
- 9.06 Asked about travel from Mogadishu International Airport into Mogadishu, the source said that there were no difficulties. He contrasted this with the previous situation, under the warlords, when flights had been to Bale Dogle airport, around 90kms from Mogadishu. From there, he said, it had been necessary for people to arrange militia escorts because there were so many roadblocks but that did not apply from Mogadishu International. He said that his airline had never had a passenger ambushed.
- 9.07 The source said that he did not know what the current position was following the US airstrikes on 26 April, but before the airstrikes there were always lines of taxis queuing up outside Mogadishu International. There was no problem for anyone to take a taxi into Mogadishu and there were no road-blocks or checkpoints to impede their 12km journey. When asked about the situation for those who wished to travel elsewhere in Somalia he thought

that, distance aside, this was no more difficult than travelling into Mogadishu.

- 9.08 We asked about the practicality of flying returnees directly to other airstrips within Somalia. He said that the only airports that had long enough runways for his aircraft were Mogadishu International and Bale Dogle and that the latter was now out of bounds because it was for military use only. He did not see why there should be a need to use other airstrips, as there were no problems at Mogadishu International. But he could not see any difficulty in principle, or any security concerns, about operating charters of smaller aircraft directly to any suitable airstrip elsewhere in Somalia, with the exception of Kismayo.
- 9.09 We explored with the source how the clan system worked in everyday life in Somalia and how this might affect freedom of movement. He explained that it would be difficult for the member of one clan to move indefinitely into an area dominated by another clan with whom they had no connection. This was primarily due to limited resources, and in particular the most precious of all, water. He explained that if an outsider clan member moved his cattle to a watering hole of another clan he would be extremely unwelcome.
- 9.10 However, the source was at pains to emphasise that in ordinary circumstances a member of one clan would not harm someone of another clan solely because of their clan membership it would be because of what they did. The exception would be if there was an inter-clan dispute. For example if one clan had killed members of another, it would be a matter of honour for the offended clan to kill at least as many members of the offending clan of equivalent or greater rank.
- 9.11 In practical terms, this meant that so long as there was not an ongoing dispute between clans, a member of one clan could safely travel through the territory controlled by another and would be treated well when doing so, being shown hospitality and provided with e.g. water for personal needs. He said that in such circumstances members of different clans would often talk interestedly "chit-chat" to each other about their clan affiliations and ancestry.
- 9.12 He did not think that ordinary Isaaqs from Somaliland who did not have connections in Mogadishu could locate there. He went on to explain that this could be overridden if the Isaaqs were of high status, wealthy or had family connections in Mogadishu. He gave the example of if a person's mother was from a Mogadishu clan: the mother's clan membership would not pass to her child but the mother's clan would provide protection for her offspring so long as they did nothing to offend that clan.

AIRLINE OPERATOR TO SOMALIA INTERVIEWED 27 APRIL 2007

10.01 The sources indicated that the airline for which they work flies to Mogadishu on a weekly basis, via Djibouti and then Hargeisa where the plane usually remains overnight so that the position in Mogadishu can be assessed before proceeding there. Flights had been suspended from 18 March 2007 but had resumed on 23 April. They expected that the flight on 31 April would go ahead as usual.

- 10.02 We asked the sources whether the airline would have any difficulties about carrying asylum seekers returning from UK. They were concerned about the possible impact of carrying such individuals upon other passengers on the aircraft. While there would be no problem in carrying voluntary returnees, enforced returns could only be contemplated if escorted and even then the implications would need to be considered carefully. The airline had once carried an individual being deported from South Africa, though that person had actually returned voluntarily and there was no problem.
- 10.03 We asked the sources if they were aware of passengers having faced safety problems in onward travel from Mogadishu International Airport either into Mogadishu or away from the city, such as having to pass through hostile checkpoints or being subject to attacks. They had not heard reports of such problems and people continued to make use of their flights. In general, they thought that people were most vulnerable to bandit attack on longer road journeys of several hours.
- 10.04 The sources said that apart from Mogadishu International Airport there were a number of airstrips around the country which could be utilised, some only for smaller aircraft, but in practice these were only used for chartered flights. The airline had itself operated charters to Baidoa and Galkayo, and the sources thought too that it may be possible to operate charters to Kismayo.
- 10.05 We asked the sources whether the airline would be willing to provide charter services for the purpose of returning Somalis from the UK, perhaps to a site outside of Mogadishu. They considered this to be a possibility but such flights would have to be routed via Djibouti to avoid passing through airspace over the closed Kenyan border.

Annex A – Glossary

AMISOM African Union Mission to Somalia

AU African Union

EU European Commission European Union

FCO Foreign and Commonwealth Office FTP Federal Transitional Parliament

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

IDP Internally Displaced Person
NGO Non–Governmental Organization

OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

TFA Transitional Federal Assembly
TFG Transitional Federal Government

Union of Islamic Courts (also referred to as Islamic Court Union,

Supreme of Islamic Courts Council and Islamic Courts Council)

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

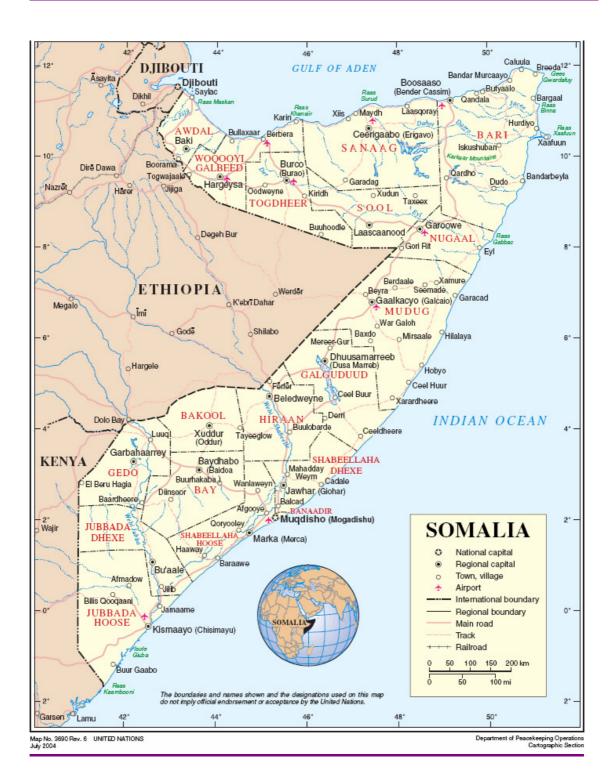
UNHCHR United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

Annex B - Guide to clans

Clan family	Sub-clans/groupings	Residential location
DIR	Issa (Ise) Gadabursi Bimal	All regions of Somalia. Also Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya
ISAAQ	Habr Awal: Saad Muse Issa Muse Ayub Habr Garhadjis: Habr Yunis Aidagalla Arab Habr Jaalo (Habr Toljaalo): Mohamed Abokor Ibrahim Muse Abokor Ahmad (Toljaalo)	Ethiopia, Dijbouti W/Galbed, Togdheer Sanag
DAROD	Marehan Ogaden <i>Harti division:</i> Majerteen Dulbahante Warsangeli	All regions of Somalia. Also Kenya and Ethiopia
HAWIYE	Hawadle Waadan Habr Gedir Abgal Murasadde Gaalgale (Galjael, Galje'el)	Hiran and Gedo Also Kenya, Ethiopia
DIGIL	Dabarre Jiddu Tunni Geledi Garre	Mainly Lower Shabelle, also Middle Juba, Bay, Hiran, Gedo and Mogadishu. Also Kenya and Ethiopia
RAHANWEYN	The "Eight": Maalinweyna Harien Helleda Elai, and others	Bay, Bakool, Gedo. Also Kenya and Ethiopia
	The "Nine": Gassa Gudda Hadama Luwai Geledi, and others	Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Middle Juba, and Hiran. and Ethiopia

Annex C – Map of Somalia



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