

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bilagsnr.: | 609 |
| Land: | Somalia |
| Kilde: | Ecoi.net |
| Titel: | Security Situation in Somalia |
| Udgivet: | 26. april 2018 |
| Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet: | 14. maj 2018 |

Security Situation in Somalia

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ecoi.net's featured topics offer an overview on selected issues. The featured topic for Somalia covers the main current security incidents regarding clans, al-Shabaab and foreign armed forces. The information was found in selected sources and is not intended to be comprehensive.

1. Background Information

"The state of Somalia was born in 1960, when British Somaliland and what had formerly been Italian Somaliland united and declared independence." (Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/08/201281985222499991.html>))[i]

"In 1969, a coup headed by Mohamed SIAD Barre ushered in an authoritarian socialist rule characterized by the persecution, jailing, and torture of political opponents and dissidents." (CIA, 22 March 2016) (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>))[ii]

"Armed opposition groups overthrew Barre's regime in 1991, and Somalia descended into civil war and anarchy." (Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/08/201281985222499991.html>))

"The ousting of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 sparks a decades-long civil war between rival clan warlords and the disintegration of central authority. Former British Somaliland declares unilateral independence." (BBC, 4 February 2016) (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094503>))[iii]

"Somalia lacks a unified central government. Somaliland, in the north, declared independence from Somalia shortly after the civil war broke out in 1991, although it has not been recognised by any foreign governments. Puntland, in Somalia's northeast,

declared itself an autonomous state in 1998. Unlike Somaliland, Puntland does not seek independence.” (Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/08/201281985222499991.html>))

“In 2000, the Somalia National Peace Conference (SNPC) held in Djibouti resulted in the formation of an interim government, known as the Transitional National Government (TNG). When the TNG failed to establish adequate security or governing institutions, the Government of Kenya, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), led a subsequent peace process that concluded in October 2004 with the election of Abdullahi YUSUF Ahmed as President of a second interim government, known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of the Somali Republic. The TFG included a 275-member parliamentary body, known as the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP).” (CIA, 22 March 2016) (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>)

“In 2004, [the TNG] was replaced by the Transitional Federal Government, which initially ruled from Kenya until it moved to Baidoa in 2007. In July 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a group of Sharia courts, defeated the US-backed and secular Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The ICU took control of Mogadishu and large parts of the southern region.” (Peace Direct, January 2014 (<http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/somalia/conflict-profile/>))[iv]

“In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of much of central and southern Somalia, imposing a strict interpretation of sharia law over the areas it ruled. [...] Ethiopian troops intervened later that year to fight ICU forces. [...] A radical offshoot of the ICU called al-Shabab, now affiliated with al-Qaeda, controls much of southern Somalia, although African Union troops have recently seen major victories against al-Shabaab.” (Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/08/201281985222499991.html>))

“The seizure of the capital Mogadishu and much of the country's south by a coalition of Islamist shariah courts in 2006 prompted an intervention by Ethiopian, and later, African Union, forces. [...] 2007-11 - An African Union peacekeeping force, Amisom, begins to deploy and Ethiopian troops withdraw in 2009. Al-Shabab - a jihadist breakaway from the Islamic Courts - advance into southern and central Somalia, prompting an armed intervention by Kenya.” (BBC, 4 February 2016) (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094503>)

“In 2009, the TFP amended the TFC to extend TFG's mandate until 2011 and in 2011 Somali principals agreed to institute political transition by August 2012. The transition process ended in September 2012 when clan elders replaced the TFP by appointing 275 members to a new parliament who subsequently elected a new president.” (CIA, 22 March 2016) (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>)

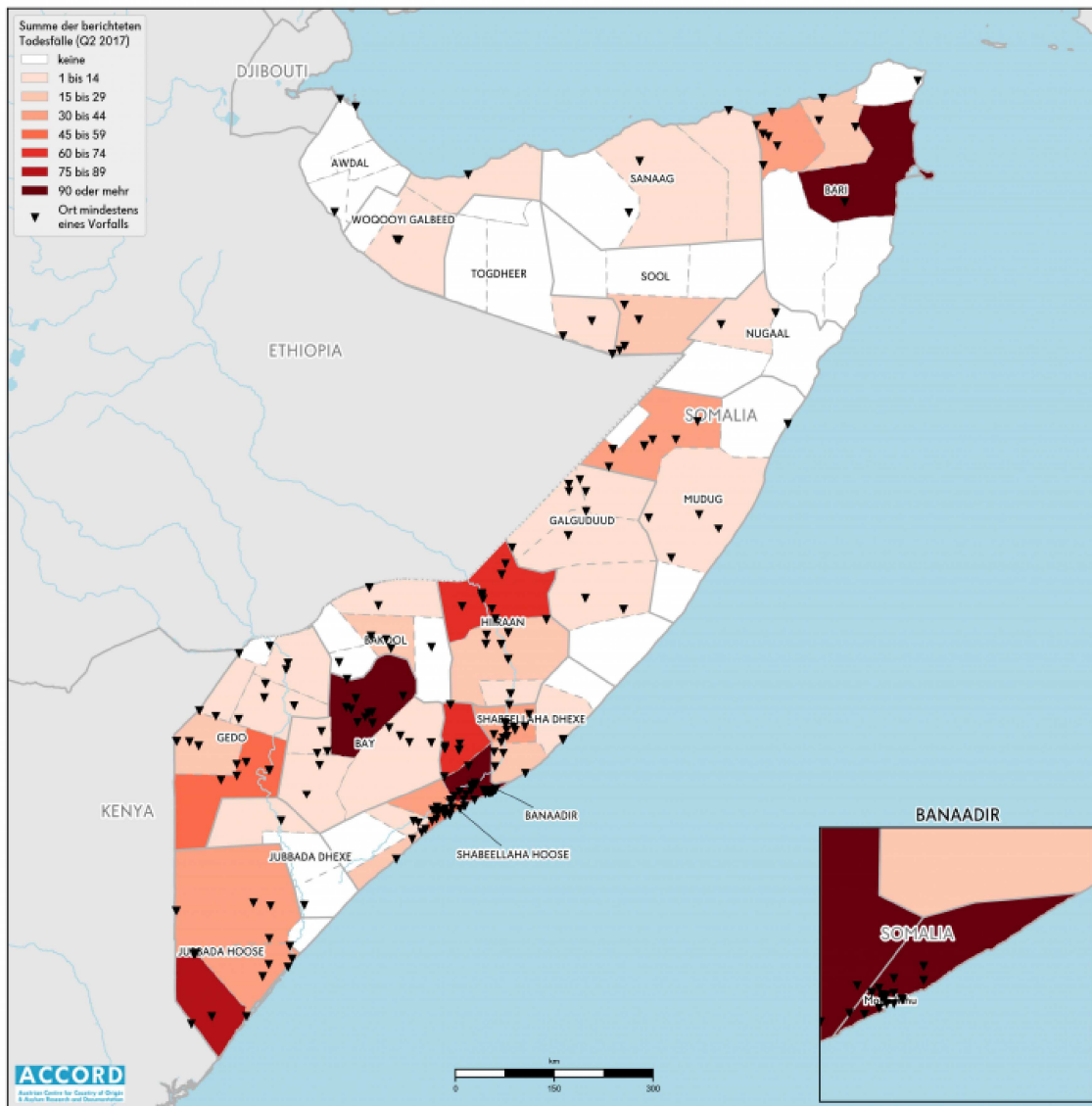
"A relatively new figure in Somali politics, academic and civic activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud beat the incumbent Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in a run-off presidential vote in September 2012. This was the first presidential election held on Somali soil since 1967, and held among members of parliament elected by clan elders. In 2015, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud shelved plans to hold the next presidential election the following as a direct popular vote, citing a lack of security and infrastructure." (BBC, 4 February 2016) (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094503>)

"Somali lawmakers elected a new president Wednesday, choosing a former prime minister who is a dual U.S.-Somali citizen. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner after two rounds of voting by the Somali parliament in Mogadishu. Farmajo won the largest share of votes in the second round, far outdistancing incumbent leader Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and former president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed." (VOA, 8 February 2017) (<http://www.voanews.com/a/somali-parliament-elects-president-under-tight-security/3714240.html>)[v]

"The president of Somalia has told VOA that his government will not hold popular elections next year, due to continuing insecurity in the country." (VOA, 29 July 2015) (<http://www.voanews.com/content/somalia-says-no-popular-elections-in-2016/2883749.html>)

2. Overview on conflict-related incidents

The following map, compiled by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), contains information on conflict-related incidents according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) at the University of Sussex (covering April to June 2017):



For further information on ACLED and the recorded incidents please see:

- ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation: Somalia, Second Quarter 2017: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) compiled by ACCORD, 14 September 2017 (available at ecoi.net)
http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/5734_1506340525_2017q2somalia-en.pdf
 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/5734_1506340525_2017q2somalia-en.pdf)

3. Security Situation in South and Central Somalia

“The overall security situation remained volatile across Somalia, including in Mogadishu, despite the operationalization of the Mogadishu stabilization force and strengthened security measures. In August, there were a number of explosions caused by vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, mainly in the vicinity of Makka Al-Mukarama Road, an area frequented by Government officials, with some commercial establishments. There

was a steady flow of low-intensity armed clashes, crime and terrorism-related incidents in September, with two large-scale attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. Targeted assassinations continued in the city with a record number of 12 assassinations targeting businessmen, security personnel, civil servants and Government officials." (UN Security Council, 26 December 2017, p.2 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422225.html>)) [vi]

"Periodic armed encounters between Al-Shabaab and Somali security forces occurred in Puntland. Al-Shabaab fighters fired six mortar shells at the village of Af Urur in the Galgala mountains on 15 November near a camp of Puntland security forces. No injuries were reported in the incident. Movement and activity by members of Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) was reported in and near Boosaaso, Puntland, and responsibility for a suicide attack outside a police station in Boosaaso on 4 October was claimed by ISIL. Reports of incoming fighters from Yemen to areas in Puntland were also received. While the security situation remained relatively calm in 'Somaliland' during the reporting period, there was some unrest before and after the presidential election of 13 November, mainly violent demonstrations in New Hargeysa, Erigavo, in the disputed Sanaag region, and in Burao, in 'Somaliland', by supporters of opposition parties." (UN Security Council, 26 December 2017, p.3 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422225.html>))

"The security situation in Mogadishu remains volatile notwithstanding some improvements as a result of initiatives taken by the Federal Government in conjunction with the Banadir Regional Administration. [...] Incidents on 8, 15 and 17 May involving explosive -laden vehicles killed at least 11 people and injured many more. On 20 June, an explosive -laden minibus detonated at the entrance gate of the Wadajir District Commission, causing 17 deaths and 30 injuries. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. On 22 June, a vehicle -borne improvised explosive device detonated in front of a police station, followed by a secondary explosion targeting first responders, resulting in several deaths and injuries. On 12 June and 4 July, a total of nine mortar shells targeted the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) bases at Mogadishu Stadium and Villa Somalia, killing one soldier and injuring two others." (UN Security Council, 5 September 2017, p.3 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1505292097_n1726605.pdf))

"In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab failed to disrupt the electoral process, despite conducting two attacks there in January. On 2 January, two explosive -laden vehicles detonated near the Mogadishu International Airport, killing 16 people and injuring 23. On 25 January, four assailants launched a complex attack on the Daya Hotel, resulting in 38 fatalities and more than 50 injured. No security incidents were reported during the presidential election on 8 February, but terrorist activities resumed the following week. On 16 February, four mortar rounds landed near Villa Somalia at the time of the presidential handover ceremony. On 19 February, a car bomb in a market area killed at least 34 people and injured 50. On 22 February, three mortar rounds impacted the same area, injuring four civilians. Al-Shabaab senior leaders have expressed hostility towards the new President and vowed to continue waging war on the Federal Government. On 13 March, two explosive-laden vehicles detonated near the former Jazeera Training Centre and in front of the Wehliye Hotel, killing 18 people and injuring others. Another car

bombing at a checkpoint near the National Theatre on 21 March resulted in over 10 fatalities and more injured. In both cases, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. [...] On 9 and 10 April, four terrorist attacks in the city killed at least 12 national army soldiers and 18 civilians, injuring many more. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a car bombing on 9 April near the Ministry of Defence, reportedly targeting the new Commander of the Army, and a suicide attack at the former Jazeera Training Centre on 10 April.” (UN Security Council, 9 May 2017, p.3 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1496910356_n1712363.pdf))

3.1 Conflicts between clans

“For example, in April at least three persons were killed in clashes in Middle Shabelle when a dominant clan reportedly attempted to take over disputed land by force. Civilians reported that many residences were burned down during the fighting, prompting displacement of village residents. Some marginalized communities, particularly the Somali Bantu/Jareerweyn, reported they were victims of attacks with no recourse since regional administrations characterized incidents as clan conflicts.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Section 1g (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1430094.html>)) [vii]

“Civilians were targeted or faced indiscriminate attack during fighting over resources and political positions and control between clan militia and regional forces, particularly in Lower Shabelle, Hiraan, and Galguduud.” (HRW, 18 January 2018 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1422589.html>)) [viii]

“Six people were reported killed on Wednesday [11 January 2017] in renewed clashes between two clans in central Somalia. The battle between local clan militias broke out in Abudwaaq town of the central Mudug region. ‘The situation is tense, the two sides are regrouping for a new conflict.’ said Abdi Osman Ali, a resident in the town by phone.” (AMISOM, 12 January 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/january-12-2017-daily-monitoring-report/>))[ix]

“[A]ccording to reports by resident, at least two people have been killed in a deadly inter-clan fighting in the rural areas near Mahaday district in Middle Shabelle region on Sunday [22 January 2017]. The fighting which started in Mir-Tugo and El baraf villages in the early hours of Sunday has intensified after the two sides received reinforcements which spanned out the standoff.” (AMISOM, 23 January 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/january-23-2017-morning-headlines/>))

“Ali Abdullahi Osoble, the President of the Interim Administration of HirShabelle called for an immediate end to the inter-clan fighting near Adalla town in Middle Shabelle province. HirShabelle President urged both warring clan militias to urgently stop the ‘unfortunate bloodshed,’ and end their differences through a peaceful dialogue, according to a statement.” (AMISOM, 27 February 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/february-27-2017-daily-monitoring-report/>))

"Galmudug and HirShabelle saw increased volatility owing to clan conflicts, political tensions and Al-Shabaab activities. On 12 May, seven people were killed in a land dispute near Dhuusamarreeb, Galguduud region." (UN Security Council, 5 September 2017, p.3 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1505292097_n1726605.pdf))

"Tension has been reported in eastern Galgaduud region on Sunday [14 May 2017] following a deadly inter-clan fighting on Saturday that left six people dead. Residents in Labi-Ano reported that both clan militiamen are mobilising around the village, in preparation for another battle. Local villagers began to flee their houses due to the conflict." (AMISOM, 15 May 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/may-15-2017-morning-headlines/>))

"At least two people were reported to have been killed, and several others wounded in a renewed inter-clan fighting in central Somalia on Thursday [25 May 2017] morning. The fighting broke out between two armed clan militiamen hailing from the rival Puntland and Galmudug states at Balli-Busle area, located east of Mudug region, according to the reports." (AMISOM, 25 May 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/may-25-2017-daily-monitoring-report/>))

"At least two people were killed, and more than five others wounded in a heavy inter-clan fighting at a small rural settlement near Galkayo, the regional capital of Mudug province. Residents said the Fighting broke out between two sub-clans over grazing pasture and water at Saaho village, about 90Km away from Galkayo city, the regional capital of Mudug region." (AMISOM, 6 June 2017 (<http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/june-6-2017-morning-headlines/>))

3.2 Attacks by al-Shabaab

"Al-Shabaab committed politically motivated killings that targeted civilians affiliated with the government and attacks on humanitarian NGO employees, UN staff, and diplomatic missions. Al-Shabaab often used suicide attacks, mortar attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). It also killed prominent peace activists, community leaders, clan elders, electoral delegates, and their family members for their roles in peace building, and it beheaded persons accused of spying for and collaborating with Somali national forces and affiliated militias. Targeted assassinations, particularly of electoral delegates and elders, humanitarian workers, and civilians, increased in the first half of the year compared with prior years, as did violent punishments including amputations and stonings." (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Section 1g (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1430094.html>))

"Al-Shabaab abducted 216 persons in the first half of the year and released 127, according to UNSOM. Between May 21 and May 24, al-Shabaab abducted approximately 70 persons, including women and children, burned numerous homes, and caused more than 15,000 persons to flee their homes during raids in Lower Shabelle, according to the United Nations. Some men who were abducted told human rights groups they were

held in makeshift facilities in an al-Shabaab-controlled town for up to three weeks with scarce food and water and no opportunity to contest their detention." (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Section 1g (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1430094.html>))

"Attacks on civilians by al-Shabaab intensified over the year; the most serious took place at a hotel in Mogadishu, the capital, on 14 October in which, according to the government, over 512 people were killed." (AI, 22 February 2018 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1425675.html>)) [x]

"On 28 October, a complex attack targeted the Naasa Hablood 2 Hotel in Mogadishu, in which 23 people were killed, including the Minister of the Interior, Federalism and Reconciliation of the Interim South-West Administration, Madobe Mohamed Nunow. Thirty people sustained injuries in the attack, including one national staff member of the World Food Programme. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack." (UN Security Council, 26 December 2017, p.3 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422225.html>))

"There were four large-scale Al-Shabaab attacks on towns and security installations in these regions, namely on Bulo Gaduud, Belet Xaawa, Ceel Waaq and Afgooye. An increase in the number of attacks by Al-Shabaab was also recorded along the Kenya-Somalia border region in the run-up to the rescheduled elections in Kenya on 26 October. At least eight attacks by Al-Shabaab were recorded during this period, compared to two in September and three in August." (UN Security Council, 26 December 2017, p.3 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422225.html>))

"Attacks against civilians and civilian objects using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices in Mogadishu resulted in a sharp rise in civilian casualties. The group also claimed responsibility for several targeted assassinations, particularly of government officials and electoral delegates. In late May, Al-Shabab fighters abducted civilians, stole livestock, and committed arson in attacks that caused more than 15,000 people to flee their homes in the highly contested region of Lower Shabelle." (HRW, 18 January 2018 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422589.html>))

"Al-Shabaab guerrilla warfare continued in rural areas of central and southern Somalia. Attacks on Somali and AMISOM forces along logistics routes were regularly reported." (UN Security Council, 5 September 2017, p.3 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1505292097_n1726605.pdf))

"Puntland witnessed renewed armed conflict. Aerial and ground offensives against Al-Shabaab hideouts took place in the Galgalo Mountains. On 8 June, Al-Shabaab fighters killed at least 70 Puntland security force soldiers at a military base in Af-Urur camp near Boosaaso, making it the most lethal Al-Shabaab attack in Puntland since 2010. In addition, the splinter group professing allegiance to pro-Islamic State of Iraq and the

Levant (ISIL) fighters also continued its activities near Qandala.” (UN Security Council, 5 September 2017, p.3 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1505292097_n1726605.pdf))

“The Islamist armed group Al-Shabab burned numerous homes in raids on villages in Somalia’s Lower Shabelle region in late May 2017, Human Rights Watch said today based on witness accounts and satellite imagery analysis. Al-Shabab fighters abducted civilians, stole livestock, and committed arson in attacks that caused more than 15,000 people to flee their homes.” (HRW, 26 July 2017 (https://www.ecoi.net/local_link/344487/488044_en.html))

“Puntland witnessed renewed armed conflict and acts of terrorism. Security forces clashed with Al-Shabaab fighters near the Galgala Mountains throughout January and February. In Boosaaso, suspected Al-Shabaab elements gunned down a traditional elder on 25 January. Three hand grenade attacks targeting a bank, a police checkpoint, and the Civil Court, on 24 and 26 February and on 4 March, respectively, resulted in at least five casualties. In Gaalkacyo, a Puntland parliamentarian was wounded in an Al-Shabaab car bombing on 8 March. Fresh activities by the splinter group professing allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) were reported in Qandala District. On 27 January, ISIL supporters abducted five Darawish soldiers at Karimo and beheaded three of them. On 8 February, four suspected ISIL affiliates attacked a hotel in Boosaaso, killing four members of a militia and two civilians.” (UN Security Council, 9 May 2017, p.4 (http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1496910356_n1712363.pdf))

3.3 Attacks by foreign troops and Somali Government forces

“According to UNSOM reports, between January and November security force attacks against al-Shabaab, other armed groups or individuals, and civilians resulted in civilian deaths, with casualties attributed to the SNA (107 deaths, 115 injured) and AMISOM (33 deaths, 60 injured). [...] In April AMISOM troops were reported to have killed five civilians, including three children, in Lower Shabelle Region after a bomb blast targeted AMISOM forces in the area. African Union officials had not released a statement regarding the incident by year’s end.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Section 1g (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/1430094.html>))

“According to media reports, the US government made secret changes to its rules on the use of lethal force in counter-terror operations, and included Somalia as one of its designated areas for ‘active hostilities’. This effectively meant that US forces could target those thought to be al-Shabaab fighters wherever they were located, regardless of whether they posed an imminent threat to life, and without obtaining high-level authorization. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a UK-based NGO, up to three civilians were killed in 31 US air strikes and strikes by remotely piloted vehicles (drones) during the year.” (AI, 22 February 2018) (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1425675.html>)

“Security forces unlawfully killed and wounded civilians during infighting over land, control of roadblocks, disarmament operations, and aid distribution. On June 9, at least 13 civilians were killed and 20 injured when fighting broke out between government forces at an aid distribution site in Baidoa. [...] According to UNSOM, AMISOM and other foreign forces were responsible for a significant number of civilian casualties during ground operations against Al-Shabab and in airstrikes. On September 26, an alleged Kenyan air force jet struck the village of Taraka in Somalia’s Gedo region recently recaptured by Al-Shabab, wounding 4 civilians and killing 20 camels. Accountability for abuses by security forces was almost nonexistent.” (HRW, 18 January 2018 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422589.html>))

4. Sources:

(all links accessed at 26 April 2018)

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[i] Al-Jazeera is a Qatar-based TV news network.

[ii] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is the civilian foreign intelligence service of the U.S. Government.

[iii] The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster.

[iv] Peace Direct is a charity based in London which supports grassroots peacebuilders in areas of conflict.

[v] Voice of America (VOA) is the official external broadcast institution of the United States federal government.

[vi] The UN Security Council is an organ of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

[vii] The US Department of State (USDOS) is responsible for the international relations of the United States.

[viii] Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international human rights organisation.

[ix] The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union in Somalia.

[x] Amnesty International (AI) is an international human rights organisation.

This featured topic was prepared after researching solely on ecoi.net and within time constraints. It is meant to offer an overview on an issue and is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection. Chronologies are not intended to be exhaustive. Every quotation comes from a document available on ecoi.net and is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document on ecoi.net.

Source

[ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation \(/en/source/10979.html\)](#)

Published

26 April 2018

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

