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Federal Republic of Somalia

Head of state: **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud**

Head of government: **Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke (replaced Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed in December 2014)**

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

Armed conflict continued between Somali Federal Government (SFG) forces, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers and the armed group al-Shabaab in central and southern Somalia. SFG and AMISOM forces expanded the areas under their control by pushing al-Shabaab out of key towns in the South-West and Jubbaland regions. Over 500 people were killed or injured by armed conflict and generalized violence, and at least 50,000 people were displaced. All parties to the conflict were responsible for crimes under international law and human rights violations, which remained unpunished. Armed groups continued to conscript children, and abduct, torture and unlawfully kill civilians. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were widespread. Continued conflict, insecurity and restrictions imposed by the warring parties hampered aid agencies' access to some regions. Three journalists were killed; others were attacked, harassed or fined heavy penalties in courts.

BACKGROUND

The SFG and AMISOM remained in control of Mogadishu, the capital, and expanded areas under their control by establishing federal administrations in the Galmudug, South-West and Jubbaland States. A joint offensive by AMISOM and the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) pushed al-Shabaab out of towns in the Hiraan, Bay, Bakool, Gedo and Lower Shabelle regions, although the armed group maintained control of many rural areas. The offensive displaced more people, while armed clashes and al-Shabaab attacks against civilians continued, particularly in villages with changing control.

International support for government security forces, allied militias and AMISOM continued. The humanitarian situation remained dire: by 9 October, over 3.2 million people were in need of

assistance, and over 855,000 were food insecure. Among the most vulnerable were internally displaced persons (IDPs), who comprised 76% of those facing food insecurity.

In August, the country faced a political crisis after MPs submitted a motion of no confidence in President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. In July, the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, announced that the 2016 elections would not be held by universal suffrage, although this had been enshrined in the New Deal Compact for Somalia. Opposition MPs protested the decision as a ploy to extend the President's term. The human rights monitoring and reporting mandate within the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) was extended by the UN Security Council until 30 March 2016.

Al-Shabaab faced internal fissures over whether to remain aligned with al-Qa'ida or to align with the armed group Islamic State (IS). The situation remained tense in the town of Jilib, 97km north of Kismayo, after al-Shabaab deputy leader Mahad Karate pressured the leader, Abu Ubaidah, to switch allegiance to IS. In October, al-Shabaab leaders leaning towards al-Qa'ida arrested 30 people in Jubbaland who were presumed to be aligned with IS.

ABUSES BY GOVERNMENT FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS

Indiscriminate attacks

Civilians continued to be indiscriminately killed and wounded in crossfire during armed clashes, whether by suicide attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or grenade attacks. Al-Shabaab retained the ability to stage lethal attacks in the most heavily guarded parts of Mogadishu and other towns, killing or injuring hundreds of civilians. High-profile targets remained vulnerable to such attacks. In September, a car explosion at the gate of the presidential palace killed at least six people. In February, al-Shabaab carried out a mortar attack on the presidential palace. In July, a suicide attack at the Jazeera Hotel, which houses several embassies, killed at least 10 people. The number of civilians killed in various attacks was difficult to establish due to the absence of a reliable civilian casualty tracking system. The government and AMISOM offensive resulted in abuses by all parties to the conflict.

Direct targeting of civilians

Civilians remained at risk of being directly targeted in attacks. In July, reports indicated that AMISOM had directly targeted civilians and killed at least 10 people in Marka. In August, AMISOM revised the figure to seven people, issued an apology and announced that three soldiers had been charged with the killings. Extrajudicial killings, extortion, arbitrary arrests, rape and other forms of gender-based violence continued to be carried out by government forces and aligned militia, partly as a result of poor discipline and weak command control. On 20 August, a SNAF soldier shot and wounded a mentally ill person in the town of Baidoa, after an argument. In September, Jubbaland soldiers executed at least four people, including a woman, near the town of Doolow, Gedo, suspecting that they were al-Shabaab militants. Al-Shabaab continued to torture and extrajudicially kill people they accused of spying or of not conforming to their interpretation of Islamic law. The group carried out public killings and punishments such as stoning to death, amputations and floggings, particularly in areas where AMISOM had withdrawn. On 23 April, al-Shabaab killed a man by firing squad in the town of Jamame, Lower Juba, for "insulting" the Prophet Muhammad. On 25 July, al-Shabaab killed MP Abdulahi Hussein Mohamud and his guard in Mogadishu by spraying their car with gunfire. On 6 September, al-Shabaab beheaded a man in Qahira village, near the Toosweyne settlement, Bay, after accusing him of spying for Ethiopian peacekeepers. On 1 October, al-Shabaab militants shot and killed several people in the village of Kunyabarow, near the town of Barawe in Lower Shabelle, for refusing to obey their orders.

CHILD SOLDIERS

Children continued to suffer abuses by all parties to the armed conflict. As of 5 June, the UN documented 819 cases of recruitment and use of child soldiers by al-Shabaab, the national army and allied militia, Ahla Sunna W'Jama'a, and other armed groups. Somalia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 1 October, with the reservation that it did not consider itself bound by Articles 14, 20, 21 of the Convention and any other of its provisions that are contrary to the general principles of Islamic Sharia. The federal government did not 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.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

More than 1.3 million Somalis were internally displaced in 2015. The SNAF and AMISOM offensive disrupted trade routes. Similarly, al-Shabaab blocked supply routes after being pushed out of towns by AMISOM, disrupting humanitarian access. Continued conflict and El Niño rains starting in October threatened to further negatively impact the humanitarian situation.

In January and February, state security forces evicted over 25,700 people without due process from public and private land in Mogadishu. They evicted an additional 21,000 in March. The majority of those who were evicted moved to the outskirts of Mogadishu, particularly to the Sarakusta and Tabelaha areas, in deplorable living conditions. Forced evictions by the interim Jubbaland administration also occurred in the towns of Kismayu and Luuq following an attack on a police post near an IDP settlement. By the end of the year, the federal government had not yet adopted an IDP policy, although a draft framework was prepared in April 2014.

Over 1.1 million Somali refugees remained in neighbouring countries and the diaspora. In April, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and the governments of Kenya and Somalia formed a commission to supervise the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya, as agreed in the September 2013 Tripartite Agreement. On 20 September, the UNHCR announced it had repatriated 4,108 Somali refugees from the Dadaab refugee camp in northeast Kenya to Somalia. In January, there were 237,271 Somali refugees in Yemen. By August, however, over 28,000 Somalis had returned to Somalia to escape the escalating armed conflict in Yemen. Meanwhile, other states hosting Somali asylum-seekers and refugees, including Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and Denmark, continued to pressurize Somalis to return to Somalia, alleging that security there had improved.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Journalists and media workers continued to be intimidated, harassed, attacked and killed. In May, journalist Daud Ali Omar and his wife Hawo Abdi Aden were shot dead by gunmen who broke into their house in the Bardaale neighbourhood of Baidoa. On 26 July, journalists Abdihakim Mohamed Omar of the Somali Broadcasting Corporation and Abdikarim Moallim Adam of Universal TV were killed in a suicide car bomb attack on a hotel in Mogadishu, in which 13 people died. Salman Jamal, a reporter for Universal TV, was seriously injured in the attack.

Media freedom continued to be curtailed, journalists were arrested and media houses closed down. In May, the government ordered all Somali media houses to use the acronym UGUS ("the group that massacres Somali people") when referring to al-Shabaab. The Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA) called the order a threat to journalists' work. On 2 October, the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) arrested Awil Dahir Salad and Abdilahi Hirsi Kulmiye, two journalists working for Universal TV, and held them for six days without charge in Mogadishu. NISA officers also raided and shut down the broadcaster's offices on the same day.

Al-Shabaab continued to suppress the media and retained a ban on the internet in areas under its control.

In Somaliland, the government curtailed the freedom of expression of those who criticized its policies. Somaliland does not have a media law to protect journalists. Guleid Ahmed Jama, a prominent human rights lawyer, was arrested after he questioned the execution of six prisoners on death row in an interview with the BBC Somali Service. Other human rights activists, Otto Bihi and Suldaan Mohamed Muuse Cune, were also arrested for opposing the postponement of presidential elections to March 2017. Bihi was released and Cune spent 12 days in custody without charge. The government also restricted the opposition's freedom of assembly. On 11 May, security forces denied the main opposition party, WADANI, permission to hold a peaceful demonstration against the extension of the President's term by 22 months. The party's leaders were arrested and held for several hours after police violently broke up peaceful marches in the cities of Hargeisa, Berbera and Burao, and the party's offices were temporarily taken over by government security forces.

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. Members of Somali armed opposition groups such as al-Shabaab, government soldiers and people convicted of murder were executed by firing squad. Military Court processes fell short of international fair trial standards, while executions were often carried out in haste. In September, seven soldiers were executed in the city of Kismayo, Jubbaland, after they were convicted by a military court of killing civilians. In April, a military tribunal in Mogadishu sentenced to death two men accused of killing two members of the Federal Parliament and three intelligence officers.

In Somaliland, civilian courts sentenced people to death – at least 70 people were on death row in February. In July, a civilian court in Sool sentenced a mentally ill man to death after he was convicted of killing his friend. The government announced in February its decision to resume executions after a nine-year moratorium. In April, six prisoners who were on death row at the Mandera maximum-security complex were executed by firing squad.

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