

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	675
Land:	Somalia
Kilde:	Somalia Figure Analysis - Displacement Related to Conflict and Violence
Titel:	ecoi.net featured topic on Somalia: Security Situation
Udgivet:	14. maj 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. september 2019

ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation

ECOI.NET FEATURED TOPIC ON SOMALIA: SECURITY SITUATION

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.

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Please note: In ecoi.net's English interface, the featured topics are presented in the form of direct quotations from documents. This may lead to non-English language content being quoted. German language translations/summaries of these quotations are available when you switch to ecoi.net's German language interface.

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](#))[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](#))[ii]

“Armed opposition groups overthrew Barre's regime in 1991, and Somalia descended into civil war and anarchy.” ([Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012](#))

“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](#))[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](#))

“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)

“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)[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)

“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)

“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)

“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)

“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)[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)

“In 2012 Puntland’s constituent assembly overwhelmingly adopted a state constitution that enshrines a multiparty political system. In 2014 Abdiweli Mohamed Ali ,Gaas’ defeated incumbent President Abdirahman Mohamed ,Farole’ by one parliamentary vote in a run-off election broadcast live on local television and radio stations. President Farole accepted the results. [...] The South West State parliament was formed in 2015 following the 2014 state formation conference, during which traditional elders and delegates elected Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adam as the region’s first president. [...] In 2015 the FGS [Federal Government of Somalia] officially inaugurated the 89-member Galmudug assembly; the members had been selected by 40 traditional elders representing 11 subclans. [...] The ASWJ [Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama] refused to accept the election results and unilaterally established its own self-declared administration for those parts of Galmudug it controlled. [...] Parliamentary elections in Somaliland, last held in 2005, were overdue by 13 years. [...] In November 2017 Somalilanders overwhelmingly elected ruling Kulmiye Party candidate Muse Bihi president. Bihi was peacefully sworn in in December 2017. [...] In 2013 the FGS and Jubaland delegates signed an agreement that resulted in the FGS’s formal recognition of the newly formed Jubaland administration. Ahmed Mohamed Islam ,Madobe’ was selected as president in a 2013 conference of elders and representatives. [...] In 2016 the FGS launched the state formation conference for Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle regions, the final federal member state to be constituted within the federal system. The process concluded with the formation of Hirshabelle State, the formation of the Hirshabelle assembly, and the election of Hirshabelle president Ali Abdullahi Osoble in 2016, although the state

assembly voted to impeach Osoble in August and elected Mohamed Abdi Waare in September.” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 3) [vi]

“The Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Raisedon Zenenga, congratulates Mr. Said Abdullahi Deni and Mr. Ahmed Elmi Karash on their election as President and Vice-President of Puntland, respectively, in yesterday’s balloting in the Federal Member State’s Assembly.” (UNSOM, 9 January 2019) [vii]

2. Security Situation

“The security situation in Somalia remains volatile, and Al-Shabaab remains the main threat to the country’s security. There was also a spike in reported activities by pro-Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) elements in Mogadishu. In the disputed Sool region, tension continued in the town of Turkaraq and adjacent areas, with sporadic armed clashes between ‘Somaliland’ and Puntland security forces. The highest number of terrorism incidents of the year were recorded in the month of November, with most cases reported in Mogadishu and in the Lower Shabelle and Hiraaan regions. Al-Shabaab continues to maintain its operational strength and capability, despite ongoing and intensified ground and air strikes across the country. Pro-ISIL elements have increased their activities in and around Mogadishu, although their operations remain limited to targeted killings. In Puntland, Al-Shabaab and pro-ISIL elements remain active.” (UN Security Council, 21 December 2018, p.3) [viii]

“Security incidents involving Al Shabaab are expected to persist in Lower and Middle Juba, Lower and Middle Shabelle, Gedo, Bay, Bakool, Banaadir and Hiraaan, causing displacement and loss of lives. Regular IED [improvised explosive device] explosions are reported in these areas, including landmine attacks, car and suicide bombs. At least 54 civilian deaths from explosive violence have been recorded since September [2018] (51 from IEDs). Casualties are reported in clashes between officials/soldiers and Al Shabaab around the capital Mogadishu, Hiraaan region, Gedo region and other regions. Armed groups and Al Shabaab also target Parliament members and civilians. Recent research into Al Shabaabs tactics suggests that the group is switching to bombs as its primary method of targeting the Somali government and its allies, and that Al Shabaab is conducting fewer attacks on government bases and more attacks against government offices and businesses that refuse to pay Al Shabaab taxes.” (ACAPS, last update on 13 November 2018)[ix]

2.1. CONFLICTS BETWEEN CLANS

“Fighting among clans and subclans, particularly over water and land resources, occurred throughout the year, particularly in the regions of Hiiraan, Galmudug, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and Sool.” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 1a)

“Clan-based political violence involved revenge killings and attacks on civilian settlements. Clashes between clan-based forces and with al-Shabaab in Puntland and the Galmudug, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba, Baidoa, and Hiiraan regions, also resulted in deaths.” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 1g)

“Civilians were targeted or faced indiscriminate attacks during clan violence [in 2018], notably in Ceel Afweeyn in Sanaag region, Galgaduud, and Hiraaan.” (HRW, 17 January 2019) [x]

“Interclan fighting and incidents between Al Shabaab and clan militias are common, resulting in significant casualties and displacement. On 22 October at least 50 people were killed and over 100 injured in clan clashes in Dumar district, Sool region, a disputed territory between the states of Puntland and Somaliland. Galgaduud region has also been affected by interclan violence and related displacement” (ACAPS, last update on 29 October 2018)

There were 130 civilian casualties recorded in August [2018]. Al-Shabaab (AS) was responsible for 48 casualties, state authorities for 34, clan militias for 30, and 18 casualties were attributed to unknown perpetrators. The number of civilian casualties by clan militias in August is the highest recorded since September 2017, and originated mostly from land disputes in Jubbaland. An airstrike by unidentified aircraft reportedly killed one civilian male in Jubbaland.” (UNSOM, 24 September 2018, p. 1)

2.2. ATTACKS BY AL-SHABAAB

“Al-Shabaab continued to kill civilians (see sections 1.g. and 6). The killings included al-Shabaab’s execution of persons it accused of spying for and collaborating with the FGS, Somali national forces, affiliated militias, and western security forces.” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 1a)

„Al-Shabaab caused significant civilian casualties, including 611 deaths and injuries, during that period. Other militias were responsible for 77 deaths and injuries.” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 1g)

“In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab continued to carry out attacks and targeted assassinations through the use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, under-vehicle improvised explosive devices and remote-controlled improvised explosive devices. In September and October, brief lulls in attacks were accompanied by an increase in general criminality in the capital. [...] The Lower and Middle Shabelle regions continued to record the highest levels of Al-Shabaab activity in the country, including improvised explosive devices as well as remote-controlled improvised explosive devices and armed attacks on AMISOM and Somali National Army security convoys and personnel. The Middle Juba, Lower Jub, Gedo, Hiran and Bay regions also reported activity by Al-Shabaab, although to a lesser extent.” (UN Security Council, 21 December 2018, p.4)

“The Islamist armed group Al-Shabab subjected people living under its control to harsh treatment, forced recruitment, and carried out deadly attacks targeting civilians. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) reported 982 civilian casualties by October, over half from Al-Shabab attacks.” (HRW, 17 January 2019)

“A total of 234 civilian casualties were recorded this month [November 2018], including 91 killed and 143 injured. This represents an increase of 67 per cent compared to October. Al Shabaab (AS) was responsible for 89 per cent of the casualties and 19 reported cases of abductions. AS carried out two mass casualty attacks in Mogadishu and one in South Galkayo causing 169 casualties. AS continued to target civilians who had reportedly participated in the 2016 electoral process. AS executed a 15-year-old boy in HirShabelle for the alleged rape of a six-year-old boy.” (UNSOM, 26 December 2018, p. 1)

“During the month of October [2018], 140 civilian casualties (78 killed and 62 injured) were recorded. Al Shabaab was responsible for 46 per cent of the casualties (with 55 out of 65 total casualties recorded in South West State), and 109 reported cases of abductions.” (UNSOM, 12 December 2018, p. 1)

“Al-Shabaab was again responsible for the highest number of attacks against civilians in violation of international humanitarian law, in particular following the attack on 14 October 2017 in Mogadishu. The group continued to impose inhuman and degrading punishments on civilians and to recruit children in areas under its control. In Government-controlled areas Al-Shabaab continued its campaign of assassinations. The group also continued to obstruct the provision of humanitarian assistance throughout southern and central Somalia. In areas under the group’s control, the activities of humanitarian organizations, other than Al-Shabaab’s own Al-Ihsaan, were either restricted or banned entirely.” (UN Security Council, 9 November 2018, pp. 5-6)

“On 9 November Al Shabaab detonated three suicide vehicle-borne IEDs and exchanged fire with security forces in Mogadishu, targeting two hotels and the headquarters of the Central Investigations Department of the Somali Police Force. Following the detonations armed individuals attempted to enter one of the hotels but were repelled by security forces. 53 fatalities and over 100 wounded have been reported; the number of deaths is expected to rise.” (ACAPS, last update on 13 November 2018)

“Al Shabaab detonated an IED targeting a convoy of Ethiopian troops from AMISOM in Hiraan region, central Somalia on October 29. Al Shabaab claimed to kill 30 soldiers in the attack, but these casualties are likely exaggerated. On 30 October hundreds of heavily armed Ethiopian troops entered Galgaduud region, on the northeast border with Hiraan region. It is unknown if they are part of AMISOM or reinforcements for Ethiopian operations in central Somalia.” (ACAPS, last update on 13 November 2018)

“In September [2018], 54 civilians have been killed and 85 wounded due to the continued conflict in Somalia. Al-Shabaab (AS) remains the main perpetrator, responsible for 57 per cent of civilian casualties, and civilian

casualties due to IED attacks by AS in Mogadishu have increased significantly since August.” (UNSON, 28 October 2018, p. 1)

“There were 130 civilian casualties recorded in August [2018]. Al-Shabaab (AS) was responsible for 48 casualties, state authorities for 34, clan militias for 30, and 18 casualties were attributed to unknown perpetrators.” (UNSON, 24 September 2018, p. 1)

2.3. ATTACKS BY FOREIGN TROOPS AND SOMALI GOVERNMENT FORCES

“According to UNSON reports, between January and October, security force attacks against al-Shabaab, other armed groups or individuals, and civilians resulted in civilian deaths, with casualties attributed to state security actors (238 total deaths and injuries) and AMISOM (eight deaths and injuries).” (USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 1g)

“Security forces unlawfully killed and wounded civilians during infighting over land, control of roadblocks, and disarmament operations, particularly in Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle.” (HRW, 17 January 2019)

“Inter-clan and intra-security force violence, along with sporadic military operations against Al-Shabab by Somali government forces, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops, and other foreign forces, resulted in deaths, injuries, and displacement of civilians.” (HRW, 17 January 2019)

“AMISOM reportedly killed four civilians [in November 2018] following an attack on their convoy in Mogadishu. Over 80 families of alleged AS members left a town in Jubaland following an order issued by the local administration.” (UNSON, 26 December 2018, p. 1)

“[In October 2018] AMISOM reportedly caused six casualties (four killed and two injured) in two incidents that occurred in Jubaland. Several security forces-related casualties were reportedly linked to poor crowd control and excessive use of force. In Mogadishu, one female IDP was killed during a registration for food distribution carried out by a local organization and one civilian was injured when police opened fire to disperse participants in a demonstration; in Bossaso, one civilian was killed when police opened fire to disperse vehicles on a road.” (UNSON, 12 December 2018, p. 1)

“Security forces are responsible for 36 civilian casualties [in September 2018], one fourth of which occurred in incidents at checkpoints in South West State. Six civilian casualties were caused in a single clash between security forces in Puntland, while a nine-year old girl was killed by crossfire between Somali National Army soldiers in Mogadishu. Six civilian casualties (four killed, including three children, and two injured) reportedly resulted from two airstrikes conducted by unidentified aircraft in Jubaland.” (UNSON, 28 October 2018 p. 1)

“There were 130 civilian casualties recorded in August [2018]. Al-Shabaab (AS) was responsible for 48 casualties, state authorities for 34, clan militias for 30, and 18 casualties were attributed to unknown perpetrators.” (UNSON, 24 September 2018, p. 1)

3. Sources:

(all links accessed at 14 May 2019)

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<http://www.voanews.com/a/somali-parliament-elects-president-under-tight-security/3714240.html>

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

[vii] United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is the mission of the United Nations in Somalia.

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

[ix] ACAPS is a non-profit project of the NGOs Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children.

[x] Human Rights Watch (HRW) 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 is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document.