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Despite continuing international intervention and the presence of more than 20,000 African Union troops in Somalia, political instability increased in 2014 and attacks by the militant group al-Shabaab continued inside Somalia and throughout the East Africa region. Attacks late in 2014 along the Somali-Kenyan border and on the African Union's main military base in Mogadishu highlighted the continuing and significant threat from al-Shabaab. With increasing instability inside Somalia, minority groups such as Bantu and Banadiri continue to face vulnerability and exclusion. Other vulnerable groups include occupational minorities or clans that are associated with specific trades, such as Gaboye, Tumul and Yibrow, who work as blacksmiths, carpenters, tanners, barbers and in other trades.

The importance of the clan governance system in the different regions of Somalia is reflected in lower levels of political representation. In South-Central Somalia, for example, though minorities are estimated to make up anything between a fifth and a third of the total Somali population, the parliament's 4.5 power-sharing formula provides equal political representation to the four major clans while leaving only a half share for the rest of the Somali population. However, the limited reach of central authorities in many areas enhances the importance of clan-based security structures and governance through *xeer*, the complex system of traditional customary law from which many minority groups are sidelined. This exclusion from the dominant clan structure, or membership in a weaker clan, leaves minority groups more vulnerable to property-grabbing, physical attacks, killings and general discrimination. Research by MRG during 2014 in Somalia found that clan-based hierarchies continued to enable widespread sexual violence and other rights abuses against minorities, particularly women.

In Mogadishu, for example, urbanization patterns have become dominated by clans, ensuring that residence in specific neighbourhoods is controlled by clan affiliation. Urban areas, especially in conflict-affected countries such as Somalia, often present very high risks for women, especially women who may be outside the protection regime of a dominant clan. The clan networks dominating residential patterns in Mogadishu also extend to the displaced people's settlements around the city. Accordingly, those who fall outside the clan structures, specifically minority groups, often cannot access basic services provided for displaced people in the camps, such as water, food and health care.

Clan politics in urban areas can be especially intense as dominant groups monopolize local political structures. In Mogadishu, for instance, municipal government positions are occupied almost exclusively by Hawiye. The common perception among clan members that Mogadishu and surrounding areas, as territory traditionally inhabited by Hawiye, belong solely to their clan has left

them reluctant to share land and other resources with other communities, despite the fact that, as the capital, it now accommodates a wide variety of groups.

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