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Somalia - Country of Concern: latest update 31 December 2014

0.1 Latest Update: 31 December 2014

The overall human rights situation in Somalia over the last three months has remained poor.

However, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) continues to take steps to improve this. In November, the FGS held a [national consultation workshop](#) on the Post-Transition Human Rights Roadmap for Somalia, with representatives from various government ministries, regions, and civil society and human rights advocates. Regrettably, internal political tensions throughout November and December held up agreement on key human rights legislation. The UK is urging the FGS to get this process back on track.

Following a consultation led by the FGS Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs with Somali legal experts, the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) was formally established, advancing one of the milestones of the Somali compact for the justice sector. The JSC has not yet become operational, and strengthening and safeguarding the independence of the judiciary remains a UK priority.

While the political and security situation in Somaliland is considered to be generally more stable than in other regions of Somalia, human rights concerns also remain prevalent here. A recent report from the Somaliland Human Rights Centre detailed numerous instances of concern.

The UN Human Rights Council Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Somalia, Mr Bahame Nyanduga, made his first visit to Somalia (including Somaliland) in December. In his statement, he noted adoption of the National Action Plan to combat sexual violence and improvements in the political and security situation as positive steps for the human rights situation in Somalia. But he also raised concerns on: resource constraints in judicial institutions and the role of military courts trying civilians; media freedom and safety of journalists; and the importance of regard for international human rights standards and principles in adopting legislation.

The period to 31 December has seen a continuance in attacks on journalists in Somalia. On 12 October, gunmen wounded the Director of Somali Channel Television in Mogadishu, and on 9 November a car bomb seriously injured a freelance journalist. Gunmen [shot dead](#) a journalist on 19 November in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. Most recently, two journalists were killed and three injured in an Al Shabaab suicide bomb attack on a restaurant known to be frequented by local journalists in Baidoa. This brings to five the number of journalists thought to have been killed in targeted killings in Somalia in 2014.

It was reported in the media that Somaliland authorities shut down an allegedly pro-opposition radio station. Two television journalists were also arrested following a political protest against the ruling party in Gebiley in November. In light of these reports, the UK has continued to press upon the Somaliland government the importance of media freedoms.

November saw the beginning of investigations by independent experts appointed by the African Union (AU), following allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by AU peacekeeping forces (AMISOM) in a [report](#) from Human Rights Watch. The UK has reinforced the need for thorough investigations with the AU, and has already further bolstered our pre-deployment training programmes for troops on prevention of sexual violence.

The AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, visited Mogadishu in November. Her discussions focused on strengthening women's voices and participation in decision-making. After meeting her, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud reiterated that "women's rights and protection are a key priority in the agenda of the government of Somalia."

Discrimination based on clan remains an area of concern. The period from 1 October saw ongoing clan violence in the Lower Shabelle region and reports that Somali National Army soldiers, and militia aligned to the FGS, were involved. Deaths were also reported in inter-clan violence in the Mudug region. Severe fighting occurred in Harardhere city on 27 and 28 November, between two Habir Gidir clans, with reports of 25 persons killed and several more injured.

Displaced populations are particularly exposed to the threats of SEA and clan-based discrimination. On 14 December, the FGS launched a national agency for refugees and internally displaced people that will monitor the affairs of more than 2 million Somali citizens. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has also stepped up efforts to repatriate Somali refugees from Kenya, and December saw the first repatriations of refugees for 23 years.

On 13 December, Somalia ratified the [Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) (subject to reservations on Articles 14, 20 and 21, which will be reviewed by FGS appointed experts to ensure that they are aligned to Sharia law).

There have been no successful pirate attacks off the Somali coast since May 2012, though there remain around 30 hostages held by Somali pirates.