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SOMALIA

Federal Republic of Somalia

Head of state: **Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (replaced Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in February)**

Head of government: **Hassan Ali Khayre (replaced Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke in March)**

Head of Somaliland Republic: **Muse Bihi Abdi (replaced Ahmed Mohamed Mahamoud Silanyo in November)**

Drought led to mass displacement and emergency levels of food insecurity. Up to three civilians were reported to have been killed in US air and drone strikes. Kenya continued its voluntary repatriation scheme for Somalis from Dadaab refugee camp and stopped registering new arrivals from Somalia. The armed group al-Shabaab and the authorities severely restricted journalists in their work. While women made small strides in the political sphere, sexual and gender-based violence remained prevalent.

BACKGROUND

The Somali Parliament, which represented all regions of Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland, elected Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (also known as Farmajo) President in February. In February, President Mohamed appointed Hassan Ali Khayre as Prime Minister. Some presidential candidates were accused of using millions of US dollars of campaign finances to bribe MPs to vote for them. MPs were elected according to a system that allowed male elders belonging to the four main clans one vote per person while male elders from minority clans were allowed half a vote. This effectively denied young people, women and men from minority clans equal voting rights. Elections also took place in Somaliland territory, where Muse Bihi Abdi was elected President.

The peacekeeping forces AMISOM (AU Mission in Somalia) withdrew from key locations in Somalia throughout the year, after which al-Shabaab regained control over towns in conflict areas, including in El Buur, Bardere and Lego, located in southern and central Somalia.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

Soon after he took office, President Mohamed declared that reform of the security forces and the defeat of al-Shabaab would be among his main priorities. 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.

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.

REFUGEES’ AND MIGRANTS’ RIGHTS

On 9 February, the High Court in Kenya declared that the Kenyan government’s 2016 directive to close Dadaab refugee camp in Garissa County was unconstitutional and in violation of Kenya’s obligations under international and national law (see Kenya entry). The majority of refugees housed at the camp were from Somalia. From January to November 2017, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, approximately 32,500 Somali refugees were voluntarily repatriated from Kenya to Kismayo, Baidoa, Mogadishu, Luuq, and Afmadow in south-central Somalia under the Tripartite Agreement between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR. By the end of the year, there were 229,592 Somalis registered as refugees in Dadaab refugee camp. However, Kenya continued not to register new arrivals from Somalia.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Al-Shabaab prohibited journalists from operating in areas under its control. The

group continued to detain, threaten and harass media workers throughout the country.

In July, the Somali Cabinet passed a repressive law that established a statutory regulatory body – whose members were appointed by the Minister of Information and which oversaw the content of print and broadcast media. The law established a blanket prohibition on news deemed to be false and on the publication of “propaganda” without providing a clear definition of those terms. The legislation was vaguely worded and included broad restrictions on journalists; and gave the authorities wide discretion to prosecute media workers.

The Somaliland Journalist Association said that more than 30 journalists were arrested and detained by authorities in Somaliland for criticizing the government.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Somali election quota system reserved 30% of seats for women. As a result, the level of women's representation improved and amounted to 24% of the lower house and 22% of the upper house.

Sexual and gender-based violence continued to be widespread although it was under-reported. The Integrated Management System of Somalia, a government agency, documented at least 271 and 312 cases of gender-based violence against displaced women and girls in Somaliland and Puntland respectively, and at least 400 cases in south-central Somalia. The drought led to more women being separated from their families, which put them at greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly because they were perceived as lacking “male protection”.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

There was an unprecedented drought that led to a significant increase in the numbers of internally displaced people, estimated to be 943,000 by the end of the year. Over 3 million people experienced emergency levels of food insecurity. Malnutrition reached

emergency levels in the southern and central regions, primarily among displaced populations, but also among those directly affected by the protracted conflict. In August, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 388,000 children were malnourished and 87,000 were in need of life-saving support.

SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa

Head of state and government : **Jacob G. Zuma**

Profound inequalities continued to undermine economic, social and cultural rights, including in access to sexual and reproductive health services. Failures in the criminal justice system obstructed access to justice for victims of hate crimes and gender-based violence. Investigations into police conduct following excessive use of force during protests were ongoing.

BACKGROUND

Protests against corruption were widespread. Political tension was heightened after President Zuma made substantial changes to members of government in March, including the dismissal of Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan.

Despite increased public spending on health, education and essential services, the national statistical service reported that the country was unable to reduce poverty and inequality.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

The Independent Police Investigative Directorate reported an increase in abuse of power by the police, including 394 deaths as a result of police action and 302 deaths in police custody in 2016-2017, both figures higher than for the previous year. It also reported 173 cases of torture, 112 of rape by police officers – including 35 cases committed by officers on duty – and 3,827 of assault by police. At the end of the year, it concluded its investigation into the fatal