

Report

Southern Somalia: The security situation



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Report **Southern Somalia: The security situation**

SUMMARY

In spite of progress at the political level, the general security situation in Somalia remains volatile. From the beginning of 2007 until September 2008, it was estimated that about 8,000 Somalis were killed due to the conflict, and civilians are still being killed when caught in the crossfire between the insurgents and forces from the Government of National Unity (GNU). In May 2009, heavy fighting between insurgents and troops belonging to the GNU erupted in Mogadishu after a longer period of calm. Nearly 200 civilians have been killed and more than 90,000 have been internally displaced due to the fighting. The Transitional Federal Government has limited control, and large parts of southern and central Somalia are controlled by al-Shabaab and other Islamist groups. While the Somali people continues to face persistent drought and conflict, the global economic crisis during the last year has exacerbated their distress. According to the UN, 1.3 million Somalis are still internally displaced, and more than three million are in need of humanitarian assistance.

SAMMENDRAG

På tross av politiske fremskritt og dannelsen av en ny samlingsregjering hvor også moderate opposisjonskrefter er representert, er sikkerhetssituasjonen i store deler av Somalia fortsatt vanskelig. Minst 8000 somaliere mistet livet som følge av konflikten i perioden 2007-2008, og i mai 2009 brøt det igjen ut harde kamper mellom opprørere og regjeringssoldater i Mogadishu. Ifølge media og FN-kilder har ca. 200 sivile hittil mistet livet i kampene. Mer enn 90 000 mennesker er drevet på flukt på grunn av kampene. Overgangsmyndighetene har begrenset kontroll, og store deler av det sørlige Somalia kontrolleres av al-Shabaab og andre islamistiske grupper. Dårlig sikkerhet, tørke, økte matvarepriser og kraftig verditap på lokal valuta har forverret den humanitære situasjonen i store deler av landet. Ifølge FN er 1,3 millioner somaliere internt fordrevne. Man regner dessuten med at mer enn tre millioner mennesker har behov for matvarehjelp.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on security issues in Southern Somalia, with particular emphasis on the situation in Mogadishu. The situation in Southern Somalia, and the capital Mogadishu in particular, is volatile, however, and the balance of power in the regions, districts and urban districts can change in the course of a few days. The information and analyses relating to area control in this report may therefore quickly become out of date.

In order to be able to paint a balanced and representative picture of the relevant issues, the source material for this thematic report has been obtained from a variety of sources. The report is partly based on publicly available information in the form of printed and online publications, and partly on interviews conducted with representatives of UN agencies, international organisations, Somali organisations and Somali resource persons in Nairobi, most recently in March 2009. All of our interlocutors have been informed that the information they provided would be made public. Most sources consented to this, but many of them did not wish to be quoted by name or position. By agreement with them, they will be referred to anonymously. They have been omitted from the reference list in order to avoid recognition.

Landinfo has recently published a number of responses on specific issues:

- Protection and conflict resolution mechanisms (Landinfo 2009c)
- Omsorg for barn og eldre (Care for children and the elderly – in Norwegian only) (Landinfo 2009b)
- Vulnerability – minority groups, weak clans and vulnerable individuals (Landinfo 2009f)
- Skilte kvinner (Divorced women – in Norwegian only) (Landinfo 2009d)
- Voldtekt (Rape – in Norwegian only) (Landinfo 2009e)
- Armed groups and recruitment (Landinfo 2009a)

Landinfo would like to thank First Secretary Dag Petterson and the staff at the Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi for their valuable help in identifying parties it would be useful to meet and for organising Landinfo's stay.

2. THE GENERAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION

According to both international and local Somali observers Landinfo met in March 2009, the positive political process initiated by Somalia's new president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed after he took up office in January 2009,¹ and, not least, the

¹ In August 2008, the Somali transitional government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed's faction of the Islamist-dominated umbrella organisation for Somali opposition groups – Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS) – entered into an agreement, which, among other things, included a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Ethiopian forces. In November of the same year, the parties agreed to

withdrawal of the Ethiopian forces, contributed to a certain degree of stabilisation of the security situation in Southern Somalia during the first four months of the year. The majority of the population supports the president, but Somalia faces a number of difficult political and security-related challenges. Unpredictability and cyclical conflicts have dominated the security situation in Somalia for almost two decades, and according to well-informed observers, the political and military situation is very complex (interviews in Nairobi, March 2009). According to the same sources, it is difficult for the government to function without the support of the AMISOM force, which, among other things, controls the airport and the road from the airport to Villa Somalia.² The opposition to foreign troops also increases the motivation of extremist opposition forces. This opposition is shared by the elders of the Hawiye clans, among others. In March 2009, they criticised foreign minister Mohamed Abdullahi Omar's call for more soldiers for the AMISOM force.

Large parts of Southern Somalia are currently controlled by al-Shabaab and other radical Islamist groups that oppose the authorities. Leading observers agree that the situation is fragile, and that these groups are willing to continue their fight.³

Renewed fighting in Mogadishu in May 2009 confirms this assessment (see part 3.3) and al-Shabaab's takeover of power in the strategically important city of Jowhar in Middle Shabelle on 18 May further emphasises the volatility of the situation.⁴ Despite a certain degree of stabilisation in parts of the country, the civilian population is still subject to random violence, though to a lesser extent than before.

Unresolved disputes concerning property and land rights still cause clan conflicts; the security situation both delays and limits the opportunities international aid organisations have to carry out their work, and freedom of speech is under pressure. This affects journalists, and a total of 11 Somali journalists have been killed since January 2007.⁵ At the same time, discrimination continues against minority groups and marginalised groups (see Landinfo 2009f), women are still sexually assaulted (see Landinfo 2009e) and children and young people are still being recruited to armed groups (see Landinfo 2009a).

All the international and Somali resource persons that Landinfo met in Nairobi in March 2009 stated that the armed rebel groups are powerful, despite al-Shabaab suffering several military defeats prior to the most recent fighting, which started in

increase the number of seats in parliament from 275 to 550. Two hundred of the new seats were to go to ARS and 75 to different civilian groups, including women, Somalis resident abroad and business interests. It was also agreed to prolong the transitional government until August 2009.

² AMISOM is the African Union's peacekeeping mission, and 4,350 of its soldiers are currently stationed in Mogadishu. This is, however, only half the planned number, and their mandate covers a wide range of tasks. Their main focus is on protecting the president and the transitional government/institutions.

³ Hassan Dahir Aweys, head of the ARS-Asmara faction and opponent to the transitional government, returned to Mogadishu on 22 April 2009 after two years in exile. He has had several meetings with his sub-clan Hawiye-Habr Gidir-Ayr, who are said to have informed him that he will only have their support if he backs the peace process. According to Somali sources, Aweys has preached in several mosques and has attempted to form a parallel government and a parallel parliament. His return to Mogadishu ushered in a new phase of problems.

⁴ Shabelle Media Network reported on 3 June 2009 that government forces had regained control of the northern part of the city (2009b). This has not been confirmed by other sources.

⁵ Two journalists were killed in 2008. This is fewer than in previous years, but journalists are still frequently arrested and attacked (NUSOJ 2008).

Mogadishu in May. This is also underlined by the UN Secretary General, who, in his quarterly report to the Security Council in April 2009, said that:

The fact remains, however, that the ARS-Asmara, the remaining main opposition grouping, as well as so-called Al Shabaab or other armed groups, are still a considerable force to reckon with and it will be a long way for peace to be established in Somalia, as long as they stay out of the peace process (UN Security Council 2009).

At the same time, however, there are internal disagreements and schisms in the rebel groups. Hizb ul-Islam in Mogadishu is split (Garowe Online 2009), and one of the factions under the leadership of Yusuf Mohamed Siad 'Indha Adde' gave its backing to the transitional government in May 2009. According to well-informed observers, he is the most important connection to Eritrea, and it is therefore important that this tie is broken (interview in Nairobi, 31 March 2009).

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated in October 2008 that an estimated 3.2 million people need humanitarian aid. This figure remained unchanged in March 2009, which means that almost 43 per cent of the population still requires assistance (interviews in Nairobi, March 2009).

In reply to the question of what distinguishes the situation in Southern Somalia from other conflict stricken areas or countries, such as Afghanistan, a representative of a well-informed international organisation told Landinfo in a meeting that took place in March 2009 that Somalia is different to other areas of conflict in that the crisis has lasted for almost two decades. During this period, the country has been without functioning central government authorities, and recurring local conflicts have prevented development. In recent years, drought has also created considerable problems in large parts of Somalia. Food security is at its lowest level for 15 years, and access to clean drinking water is also a major problem. The persistently difficult security situation also limits the freedom of action of the international aid organisations. This source summarised the situation in Somalia as: 'unique, complex and permanent'.

The depreciation of the Somali shilling in 2007 has also had dramatic consequences for people's living conditions – the value of the currency fell by more than 140 per cent in less than a year.⁶ The poor security situation affects trade and thereby local food prices. While the markets do in fact function, most Somalis are dependent on monthly money remittances from relatives living abroad to make ends meet (interview in Nairobi with international organisation, 23 March 2009). However, the international financial crisis has also made its mark in Somalia, and it is estimated that the remittances have now been reduced by 25 per cent (international source in Nairobi, e-mail 5 June 2009).

While food prices have fallen slightly since January 2009, they remain high. It is not only the rural population that is affected by the difficult economic situation; the urban population is also affected and internally displaced persons, in particular. Asked whether the lifting of roadblocks has helped the situation, the people Landinfo interviewed in March 2009 said that it has not led to any marked improvement as the

⁶ There has been a gradual recovery, however. Since October 2008, the value of the shilling has increased by 3 per cent, from 35,225 SoSh per dollar to 34,067 SoSh per dollar in December 2008 (FSNAU 2009).

situation is so complex. It is not only transport costs that push prices up; access to produce is also a significant factor – whether it is imported from abroad or grown within the country.

An estimated 750,000 people are still internally displaced because of the conflict in Mogadishu, and parts of the capital are deserted. In total, there are approximately 1.3 million internally displaced persons in Somalia.

As regards the question of what living conditions are like for internally displaced people from, for example, Mogadishu, who seek refuge in the traditional clan areas, a central international source who Landinfo met in Nairobi on 23 March 2009 said that resources in most local communities are stretched to the limit. However, the clan members (the Diya group) will share the scarce resources they have as far as possible. Internally displaced persons without a clan background in the area in which they are staying do not have this safety net and are therefore in a more difficult situation (see also Landinfo 2009f).

2.1 ABUSE OF CIVILIANS AND THE REPORTING OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Although access to information and the monitoring of the human rights situation in Somalia have changed for the better in recent years, the absence of international observers with responsibility for routine monitoring of human rights violations is a problem. The UN-appointed expert on human rights in Somalia also emphasises this in his most recent report:

My difficulties are compounded by the imposition of travel restrictions for security reasons. How does one assess the situation on the ground effectively without visiting the country and talking to people? (UNHRC 2009).

The local human rights organisations do not, for example, publish detailed online reports for fear of their own safety. Information is therefore spread via other channels to representatives of the international community (interview with international organisation in Nairobi, 30 March 2009).

The issue of the objectivity of local organisations has repeatedly been raised with various international and Somali resource persons during Landinfo's visits to Nairobi, most recently in March 2009. They all point out that human rights groups and other voluntary organisations largely reflect clan-based Somali society in which clan loyalty is an important element. Negative attitudes to and a lack of understanding in relation to minority groups and their situation – even in areas in which they constitute a large part of the local population – mean that the abuse to which these groups are subjected does not receive a lot of attention from society at large (interview with international source in Nairobi, 24 March 2009).

Another important factor in the current situation is that the dissemination of information and news has been politicised. The lack of genuine individual commitment and competition among many voluntary organisations for funding from international sponsors are also factors that can affect the situation.

Asked how extensive the abuse of civilians is today, all of Landinfo's interlocutors in Nairobi in March 2009 said that abuse and killings still occur, but more sporadically than before. However, none of the sources could put a figure on the extent of the abuse (see also Landinfo 2009e). There have, however, been fewer

reports of political opponents and resource persons being assassinated since January 2009 compared with earlier periods (see Landinfo 2009f).

However, aid workers working for international organisation are more at risk of being killed, threatened or kidnapped than before.

Random imprisonment and harassment of civilians in areas under the authorities' control does still take place, but the extent is much more limited than in the period 2007-2008. However, no members of the various police forces and security forces who arrested, harassed and abused civilians in 2007-2008 have been brought to justice, and they are still in service (interview with Somali resource person in Nairobi, 26 March 2009).

Both international and Somali resource persons point out that crime has fallen in the areas controlled by al-Shabaab and Hizb ul-Islam. These groups have limited popular support, but arrests and strong penal sanctions have created fear and serve as a deterrent. Al-Shabaab also operates an efficient intelligence system (interview with Somali resource person Nairobi, 26 March 2009).

2.2 EXERCISING OF AUTHORITY

In its report of August 2008, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights states that:

The TFIs [Transitional Federal Institutions], which suffer from a severe lack of capacity and also often from internal political tensions, have so far failed to promote law and order. The administration of justice system is practically non-functional, and elders are presently de facto in charge of justice by applying traditional practices, including compensation, mostly for less serious offences, as they will have no influence on ensuring accountability for serious crimes. In this sense there is an absolute culture of impunity (OHCHR 2008, p. 8.).

An evaluation of the transitional parliament carried out by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in autumn 2007, was also critical of a number of factors (NDI 2008).⁷ The political framework conditions, however, have changed since the formation of the new government of national unity and the increase in the number of members of parliament in January 2009. So far, the transitional institutions have not succeeded in establishing and providing basic services for the population. However, in light of the limited resources available and with only 18 employees, who are paid via the international community, in each of the ministries, there is a limit to what can be achieved (interview with international organisation in Nairobi, 23 March 2009). The government and all the institutions are in place in Mogadishu, however, and, according to international observers, they have demonstrated a willingness to stabilise the situation. Four sessions of parliament have been held, and the government holds two weekly meetings.

However, the work of establishing a joint Somali security force, which is part of the agreement between TFG and ARS-Djibouti (parts of the former Islamic Courts

⁷ The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is an organisation based in Washington D.C., which works on democracy development in different parts of the world, see <http://www.ndi.org/>.

Union), is progressing slowly. So far, AMISOM has registered 1,300 ARS-D soldiers and 3,300 TFG soldiers who form part of the joint security force. Several observers and representatives of various international organisations that Landinfo met in Nairobi in March 2009 pointed out that the lack of coordination of the forces is a major problem. The soldiers who are stationed in parts of Mogadishu also lack uniforms, communication equipment, transport and food, and wages are paid sporadically or not at all.

2.2.1 Police and public order authorities

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is involved, among other things, in work on the so-called ROLS programme,⁸ which has trained Supreme Court judges and helped establish several regional courts. Through this programme, free legal aid is given via local NGOs and legal aid clinics. These projects also cooperate with traditional conflict resolvers in local communities.

Experience in relation to these measures has been mixed, however. Judges fear for their safety and do not turn up for work; it is also difficult to monitor court proceedings and the activities of the courts. At the same time, however, the legal aid/legal counsel project has been successful in Northern Somalia, and, according to the UNDP (interview in Nairobi, June 2008), there are also signs of positive developments in the south.

Today, there are a total of 5,616 police, and, in contrast to the work of integrating the security forces, more progress has been made with the police force, where a command structure has been established and a commissioner appointed.

3. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

3.1 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Freedom of movement has improved in Southern Somalia since January 2009, and the main impression is that the population can travel freely both in areas controlled by the authorities and in areas controlled by other groups (interviews in Nairobi, March 2009). While there were approximately 400 roadblocks in Southern and Central Somalia in the period between February and March 2008, there were only

⁸ The Rule of Law and Security Programme (ROLS) was established in 2002 as a collaboration between various UN agencies, donor countries and the Somali authorities. The objectives of the programme are to strengthen the judicial system, establish a professional police force, increase understanding of human rights, support the authorities in their work of demobilising and disarming militia groups, making the population aware of the need for control of small arms and supporting national mine clearing activities. The so-called Police Advisory Committees play a positive role. These committees were established to ensure that prisoners in the Benadir region were treated in accordance with international human rights standards. They submit monthly reports on the situation, and, between September 2007 and April 2008, they regularly visited 12 police stations, the central prison and CID's custodial centre in Mogadishu. During the period from June to December 2007, 1,800 of the 5,000-6,000 prisoners in the sixteen police stations in Mogadishu were released. In April 2008, there were 1,378 prisoners in these custodial facilities, 162 of whom were women and 65 minors. Many of the minors were in custody at the request of their parents.

two between Mogadishu and the Kenyan border in March 2009. Among other things, this had an impact on transport costs, which fell by 60 per cent in a short space of time for the stretch between Mogadishu and Baidoa in the Bay region (interview in Nairobi, 24 March 2009). The removal of the roadblocks has had a positive effect on crime, in particular, since rapes and robberies were frequently committed at the roadblocks. At the same time, however, a well-informed Somali resource person who met Landinfo in March 2009 said that travellers check out the conditions along the route and at their destination beforehand in order to avoid conflicts and groups that they may have a dispute with.

3.1.1 What areas do international organisations have access to?

Since 2008, international organisations have increasingly become the target of violent attacks, and today there are only 30 international representatives in Southern Somalia because of the security risk. Activities in Southern Somalia are therefore mainly run by local employees. The local employees act as links to the local communities, and, in order to avoid conflicts and accusations of clans being treated inequitably, the local employees must have the same clan affiliation as the population in the project areas. Aid work in Somalia is also a risky business for the local employees. There were approximately 149 attacks on various voluntary organisations in the period from January to September 2008, compared with only two in 2007. During the same period, 26 aid workers were killed and 12 were kidnapped (interviews with two international aid organisations in Nairobi, March 2009). The aid organisations have limited access to al-Shabaab-controlled areas. In Lower Shabelle, Bay, Bakool and Gedo, this has had consequences for the population, as access to necessary food deliveries and other forms of assistance is limited. A map drawn up by the UN agency OCHA⁹ does not directly pinpoint where the aid organisations are working, but it provides an overview of the risk situation. Black areas indicate high risk and very limited access.

3.2 THE SITUATION IN MOGADISHU 2007-2008

In June 2008, a number of observers described conditions in Mogadishu as being the worst since the civil war in 1991-1992.

The UN has estimated that approx. 750,000 people, or roughly half the capital's inhabitants, left the city in 2007-2008 (UN Security Council 2008) on account of the difficult security situation.¹⁰ According to Landinfo's interlocutors in Nairobi in June 2008, those who did not leave Mogadishu had something to gain from the conflict – as warlords, clan leaders, people with business interests, people who wanted to look after their property/properties, and the poorest people, including those

⁹ Available as an appendix on p. 18 of the report.

¹⁰ However, various aid organisations, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, have implemented various initiatives since 2007/2008, including establishing tent camps and schools for internally displaced persons in Mogadishu, building latrines, organising water transport, the rehabilitation of wells and establishing so-called water kiosks. The clearing work in several of the settlements for internally displaced persons has been carried out through food-for-work projects and approx. 80,000 meals are distributed daily via 16 soup kitchens in Mogadishu (OCHA 2008 and interview with the Norwegian Refugee Council in Nairobi, 25 March 2009).

who were already internally displaced¹¹ who did not have the financial wherewithal to leave. Many of those with business interests commuted to and from Afgoye, as it was too dangerous to stay permanently in Mogadishu. Moreover, the threshold for leaving was high for many people.

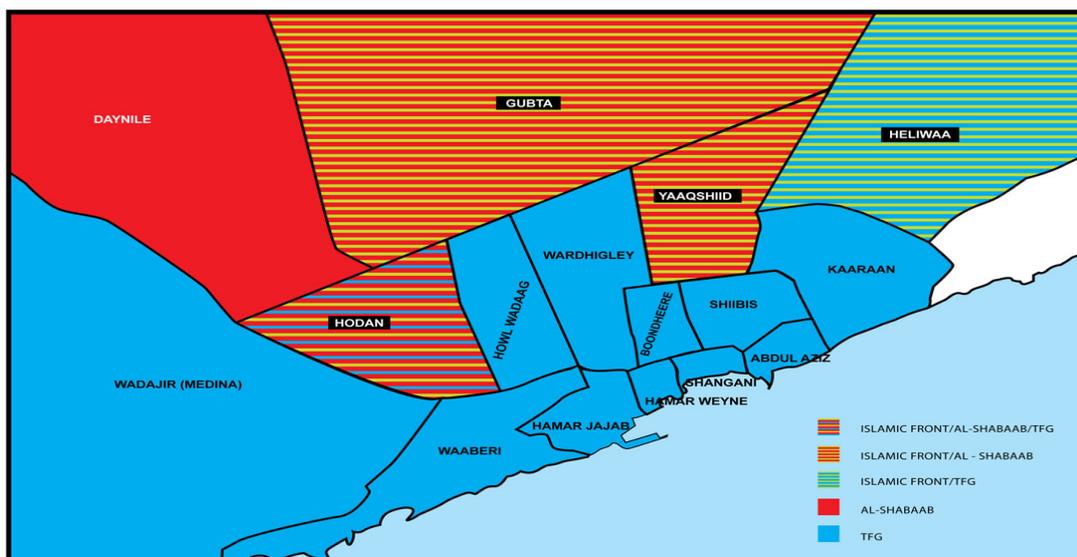
Another important factor in this context is that half of Mogadishu's population belong to the Hawiye clan Abgal, and the majority of those who remained in the city belong to this clan. They are well-established both in the city and in the neighbouring region of Middle Shabelle, to which it is possible for them to retreat, and it takes more for them to leave. According to a well-informed observer, the minorities' areas, were nothing short of ghost towns, and the number of members of minority groups staying in Mogadishu is unknown (interview in Nairobi, June 2008).

The suburbs of Karan and Medina are over-populated, as many inhabitants who previously lived in other parts of the city have settled there.

3.3 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN MOGADISHU

Following the Ethiopian withdrawal in January 2009 and the establishment of the government of national unity in February 2009, which also included parts of the opposition, the situation entered a more peaceful phase. The roadblocks were removed and the population was able to move around relatively freely. AMISOM also took over control of the vast majority of police stations in Mogadishu. At the same time, however, AMISOM's camps and checkpoints have been subject to frequent rebel attacks since May 2008. At the end of April 2009, more than 60,000 internally displaced persons had returned to the capital. According to Landinfo's interlocutors in Nairobi in March 2009, the reasons for this return were complex. The positive political process and the Ethiopian withdrawal led to a certain degree of stabilisation and gave many people hope. Some people returned because the situation in the place they were staying was difficult, while others saw business opportunities. However, the authorities have not had control of the whole capital; see the map below, which describes the situation as of March 2009.

¹¹ Before the conflict broke out in January 2007, it was estimated that there were approx. 400,000 internally displaced persons in Somalia. Approx. 250,000 of them were staying in Mogadishu, and many of them had been displaced from their homes in other parts of the country during the civil war in 1991-1992.



On 7 May, hard fighting broke out between the government forces and the rebel groups al-Shabaab and Hizb ul-Islam. The fighting was the most serious for several months, and more than 100 civilians have lost their lives to date. Approximately 96,000 people have once again been forced to leave their homes (IASC 2009).¹² Many of them had only recently returned to the capital. The three largest hospitals in Mogadishu, which are supported by the International Red Cross Committee and Médecins Sans Frontières, have reported that they have treated hundreds of civilians, including women and children.¹³ The areas that have been worst affected are Yaaqshiid, Medina, Wardhiigleey and Hawl Wadaag. During the course of a few days, the opposition took control of several areas of Mogadishu. The transitional government is said to have regained its position in some parts of the city and it has driven al-Shabaab back to Yaqshiid and Medina.

The AMISOM force has maintained a low profile and it has not been involved in the fighting.

According to sources in Mogadishu, the fighting has not only been between government forces on the one hand and Islamist groups on the other; there has also been fighting between Hizb ul-Islam and al-Shabaab. The background for the internal conflict among the Islamist groups is, according to Somali sources, that al-Shabaab asked Hizb ul-Islam's leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys to hand over his weapons, but he refused to do so. This conflict has been criticised by both clan

¹² 28,000 fled from Yaaqshiid, 14,000 from Wardhiigley, 7,400 from Hawl Wadaag, 5,200 from Hodan, 4,500 from Boondheere, 4,400 from Dharkenley, 2,800 from Wadajir and 2,800 from Kaaran.

Of the 96,000 who have fled their homes, 26,000 have gone to the IDP camps in Afgoye, 35,000 have moved within Mogadishu or to IDP settlements on the outskirts of the city. 12,000 have moved to the suburb Dayniile, 8,700 to the suburb Dharkenley, 8,100 to the suburb Kaaraan and 2,700 to the suburb Wadajir/Medina.

35,000 have moved to other regions, including 11,000 to Galgaduud, 8,900 to Middle Shabelle, 6,800 to Lower Shabelle (not Afgoye), 2,100 to Gedo and 1,900 to Lower Juba

¹³ The Medina hospital has approx. 150 beds. The Norwegian Refugee Council has donated tents to the hospital, but not all of the injured and sick persons get a bed indoors. Patients also stay outside the hospital. The situation is comparable to the situation at the start of 2007. A private (non-profit) company has donated ambulances to transport patients to the hospital. They have been allowed to drive freely in the city – and the opposition has respected this (e-mail, international source, 5 June 2009).

leaders and religious leaders. The council of religious scholars, Majlis al-Ulama, has denounced the fighting and called for a ceasefire.

Some of the government soldiers with backgrounds from the Islamic Courts Union ICU¹⁴ have deserted and joined the opposition, including the infamous warlord and leader of one of Hizb ul-Islam's factions, Yusuf Siad Mohamed 'Indha Adde' – after giving his support to president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in early May. In the middle of May, however, the media reported that 'Indha Adde' had again changed sides and was to be found in the presidential palace, Villa Somalia, with his men and heavy military equipment (Xinhua 2009).

Gaining an overview of the conflict in Mogadishu has been difficult. This is partly explained by the fact that many of the government soldiers do not wear regular uniforms – and it has therefore been difficult to know who is who. According to an international source, the ARS division of the joint security forces has now started wearing uniforms (international source in Nairobi, e-mail, 5 June 2009).

It has also been reported that many foreign jihadists from, for example, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Chechnya, are participating in the fighting in Mogadishu. Various estimates put the figure at between 300 and 400 persons (international source, interview in Nairobi, March 2009). According to several observers, the individual al-Shabaab groups are controlled by these foreign jihadists, who are probably neither interested in dialogue with the authorities nor in peace (e-mail, international source in Nairobi, 3 June 2009).

3.4 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN OTHER PARTS OF SOUTHERN SOMALIA

3.4.1 Mudug

In summer 2008, the situation in the Mudug region was described as complex, with many latent conflicts existing between the Hawiye clans Saad and Suleiman (interviews in Nairobi, June 2008). This situation has not changed as of June 2009. The northern part of the region that borders on Puntland is clan-controlled, and the Haber Gedir clans Ayr and Saad in this area support President Sheikh Sharif. In the south of the region, where the Hawiye clan Suleiman is dominant, there are smaller areas in which al-Shabaab also operates. President Sheikh Sharif also has support here. The main problem in the region is the competition between internally displaced persons and permanent inhabitants for limited resources, and even between persons in the same clan. The economic marginalisation of certain groups may be a potential risk factor (interview with a representative of an international organisation, June 2008).

Figures from UNHCR (2008b) show that roughly 70,000 internally displaced persons are staying in the region.

¹⁴ Following the Ethiopian invasion in 2006, the leaders of ICU (and other members of the opposition) left Somalia and settled in Asmara in Eritrea. This is where ARS – the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia – was formed. One faction of this alliance gave its support to the TFG in autumn 2008 following negotiations in Djibouti. This explains the denomination ARS-Djibouti in contrast to ARS-Asmara, which denotes the part of the opposition that is against collaboration with TFG.

3.4.2 Galgaduud

The region is now controlled by the moderate Sunni Muslim movement Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a after hard fighting with al-Shabaab in January 2009. Its members belong to the local Hawiye clans Haber Gedir Ayr and Duduble. The Hawiye clans Murusade and Abgal also support the movement. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a supports the transitional government.

According to the news agency Mareeg News, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a has recently imposed a curfew in the town of Guriceel between the hours of 21.00 and 06.00 (Mohamed 2009). It has also been reported that all cars and weapons in the town are to be registered by the town's police (IASC Somalia 2009). These measures have been implemented on account of al-Shabaab's activity in the region.

In February 2008, it was estimated that there were 120,000 internally displaced persons in the region (UNHCR 2008b). In March 2009, a key international source with a great deal of experience from Somalia (interview in Nairobi, 24 March 2009) said that Galgaduud and Mudug are the two regions in Somalia that are worst affected by food supply insecurity.

3.4.3 Hiraan

The strategically-important Hiraan region is controlled by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed's supporters in the Hawadle clan, while Galjeel and other local clans support al-Shabaab. The administration in the regional capital Beled Weyne is based on an alliance between elder representatives and members of the Islamic Courts Union, ICU (which is part of ARS-D).

The region is home to approximately 35,000 internally displaced persons from Mogadishu (UNHCR 2008b).

3.4.4 Bay and Bakool

The situation in Bay and Bakool is described as tense, but stable in security terms. The regional capital, Baidoa, which was formerly the seat of the transitional government, was captured by al-Shabaab on 26 January 2009, but the vast majority of members of parliament had left the city by the time al-Shabaab took over control. According to a well-informed Somali resource person, there are internal conflicts in al-Shabaab in the two regions (interview in Nairobi, 26 March 2009). Mukhtar Robow (Abu Mansur), who belongs to the Rahanweyne clan Leysan, controls the regions in consultation with the local Rahanweyne clans. He is seen as one of al-Shabaab's leaders.¹⁵ Other al-Shabaab leaders in these regions belong to the Hawiye clan Haber Gedir Ayr, which is much less popular among the population.

In February 2008, there were estimated to be approx. 30,000 internally displaced persons (UNHCR 2008b).

¹⁵ According to the media in Somalia, he is no longer al-Shabaab's spokesperson (Shabelle Media Network 2009a).

3.4.5 The Gedo and Juba regions

In June 2008, the security situation in the Gedo region was described as being relatively stable, but it became the scene of major rebel activity during autumn 2008.

According to a well-informed Somali resource person (interview in Nairobi, 26 March 2009) the districts of Bulo Hawo, El Waq, Lugh and Bardera are militarily controlled by al-Shabaab and Hizb ul-Islam. According to the same source, al-Shabaab has support in Gedo, and this is largely due to the organisation's local roots. The local clans are also reported to have influence in the Gedo region, and the local administrations have not been replaced, although former leaders who supported the transitional government have left the region. Their families still stay in the area (interview in Nairobi 26 March 2009).

In the town of Dolo, which is not controlled by either of the two rebel groups, the warlord and former minister Barre Hirale was said, according to unconfirmed reports (NGO in Nairobi, e-mail, 2 June 2009), to be in the process of mobilising soldiers to defeat the Islamists.¹⁶

The general situation in the Juba regions, and the port town of Kismayo in particular, has been volatile for many years. Following a prolonged conflict between the Marehan and Majerteen clans, al-Shabaab took over control in Kismayo in August 2008. In the Juba valley, there has also been internal tension and conflict between the Absame clans.¹⁷

Al-Shabaab has little support in Kismayo, but its inhabitants are afraid of opposing the group for fear of reactions. The stoning of a young girl for infidelity at the end of October 2008,¹⁸ and the generally strict enforcement of Sharia law, have a deterrent effect on both opponents of al-Shabaab and on criminals.

In February 2008, according to UNHCR (2008b), there were approximately 30,000 internally displaced persons in the Gedo region, 11,000 in Middle Juba and 25,000 in Lower Juba.

So far this year, an estimated 29,000 persons have been registered as refugees in the Dadaab camps in North East Kenya. The refugees crossed the Kenyan border from Lower Juba and Gedo (IASC Somalia 2009). As of March, the number of Somali refugees in Kenya is 261,000 (UNHCR 2009).

3.4.6 Lower Shabelle

The actual power situation in Lower Shabelle has changed little since 2007. The Hawiye clan Haber Gedir is still a power factor that controls large agricultural properties. With the exception of the Wanle Weyne district, which is controlled by Hizb ul-Islam, al-Shabaab now has military control of the region, including the port of Merka, where foreign jihadists have also been observed (interviews with international and Somali resource persons in Nairobi, March 2009). However, al-

¹⁶ In a meeting with Landinfo in Nairobi on 26 March, a Somali source stated that Barre Hirale was a real power factor. But given that the situation changes quickly, it is not unthinkable that this evaluation is no longer accurate.

¹⁷ The Darood Absame Federation includes the Ogaden and Bartire clans, in the same way as the Harti Federation includes the Majerteen, Dhulbahante and Warsangeli clans.

¹⁸ The girl was convicted by a Sharia court (IASC Somalia 2008 p. 4).

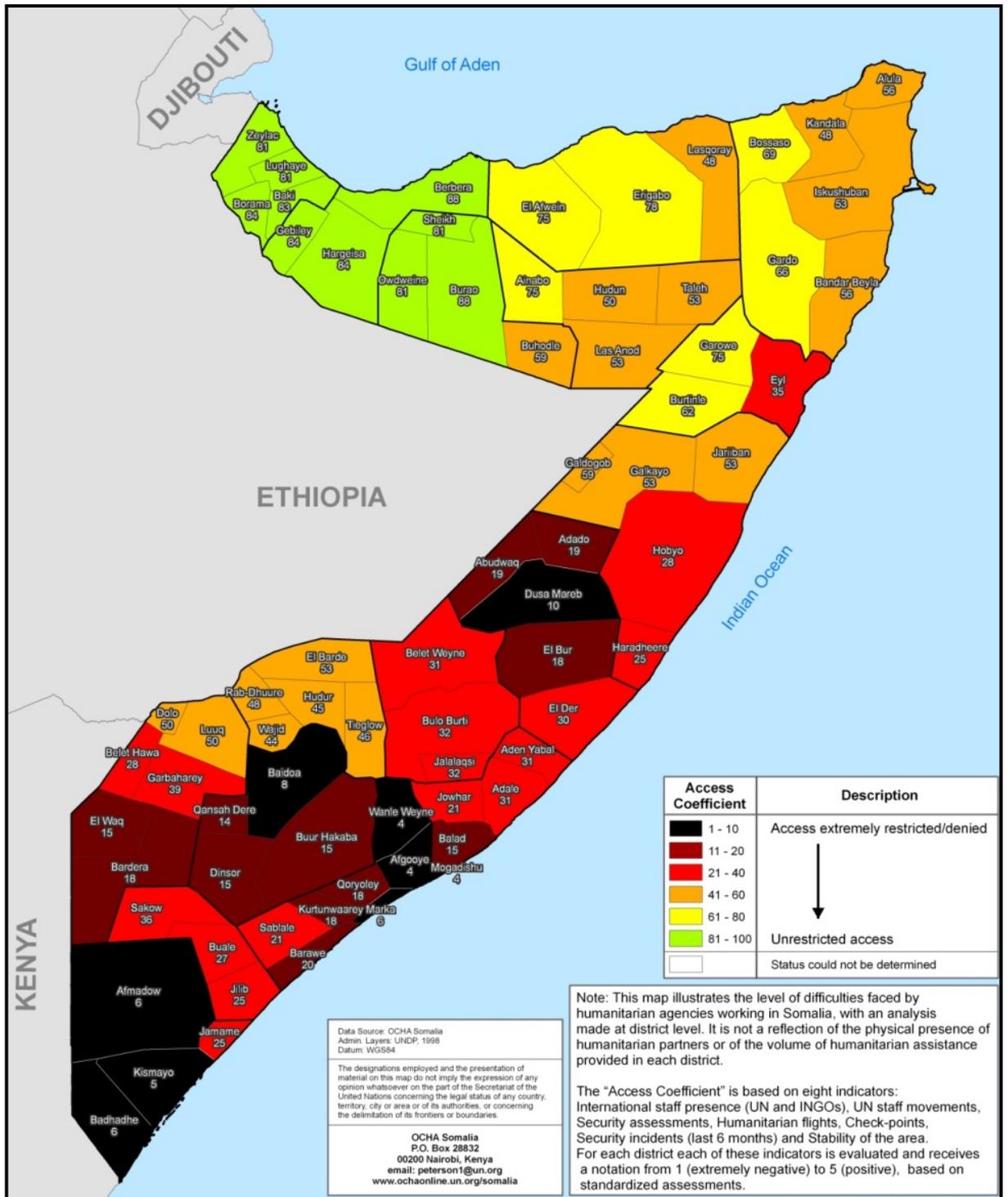
Shabaab has little popular support. The members of al-Shabaab have no local connections, and the majority of the population see them as foreign conquerors. The members of al-Shabaab in Merka mainly belong to the Majerteen, Marehan and Galjeel clans. The local clans are hardly represented in the movement, but some members of minority groups have joined the movement, according to several of Landinfo's interlocutors in Nairobi in March 2009. This is due to the marginalisation and injustice many of them have been subject to for decades under Hawiye Haber Gedir dominance.

Generally speaking, the security situation is relatively stable, but there are local pockets where the situation can be more volatile. International representatives of aid organisations do not have access to the so-called Afgoye Corridor, in which between 270,000 and 340,000 internally displaced persons from Mogadishu live in 122 settlements (UNHCR 2008b). This estimate does not include internally displaced persons living in the town of Afgoye. The Afgoye Corridor and neighbouring areas are partly controlled by Hizb ul-Islam, and, according to an international source in Nairobi (e-mail, 5 June 2009), the security situation is difficult. Nonetheless, a relatively high amount of relief work is carried out in the camps, in which committees have been established consisting of persons elected by the internally displaced population. The cooperation between the NGOs and the committees works well. The camp committees also prevent the activities of so-called *gatekeepers*, who are extortionists who demand payment from the people living in the camps and from the aid organisations for them to be able to continue to work in the camps.

Somali resource persons that Landinfo met in Nairobi in March 2008 said that local inhabitants have raised cases relating to ownership rights with al-Shabaab, which has admitted that there has been a lot of injustice. The al-Shabaab leaders in the region have also appointed a commission to assess the property issue. Some of the rightful owners have been given their properties back. But these are exceptions, and the same sources suggest that the vast majority of people do not dare to raise the issue for fear of reprisals. As one source put it: 'Who would dare to ask for their property back when they don't know who will be governing tomorrow?'

Women's freedom of movement is limited by al-Shabaab in both Lower Shabelle and other areas controlled by the movement. This has consequences for their families, who are often dependent on the income the women earn from trading. NGOs also have limited freedom to work in the town of Merka, and this creates problems for its inhabitants.

4. APPENDICES



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