

## Query response

### Somalia: Deportation from Saudi Arabia to Mogadishu

- Who is deported?
- How does a deportation proceed?
- What happens upon arrival in Mogadishu?
- Can people prove that they have been deported?

#### Sources and limitations

This query response is mainly based on information from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It primarily describes the situation from February/March 2014 to 17 August 2014, when IOM, at the request of the Somali authorities, offered assistance to deportees upon arrival in Mogadishu. Information on deportation before December 2013 is fragmented and incomplete, partly due to limited international presence in the city.

#### Prevalence and scope

During the period from December 2013 to 17 August 2014, 40,779 people were deported by plane from Saudi Arabia to Mogadishu (IOM Somalia 2014g). Deportations from Saudi Arabia to Mogadishu also occurred before this, including in 2010, when the city was in a state of war (Human Rights Watch 2010). Landinfo has no information about the extent of deportations before December 2013. However, Saudi Arabia sharply tightened its policies towards illegal immigrants in late 2013 (Al Jazeera 2013; Human Rights Watch 2014). This may indicate that the number of deportations was significantly lower before December 2013. The airport in Mogadishu has also been closed for periods of time, particularly before the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of the city in the summer of 2006. During such periods, Mogadishu has occasionally been serviced by airstrips outside the city, but it is unclear whether these airstrips have been used for deportations.

#### Who is deported?

People are deported to Mogadishu regardless of gender, age, health and family relations. Information from IOM also indicates that people are deported to Mogadishu regardless of where in Somalia they belong (IOM Somalia 2014d; IOM Somalia 2014e; IOM Somalia 2014f). In

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some cases, it is not even a given that the deportee is from Somalia.<sup>1</sup> What they have in common is that they do not have a residence permit (iqama) in Saudi Arabia. Many came to Saudi Arabia illegally, while others came legally with a sponsorship-based visa to work or to go on a pilgrimage, but remained in the country illegally after the permit was no longer valid (McDowall & Alsharif 2013). Many of the deportees have lived in Saudi Arabia for a long time. Some were born there.<sup>2</sup> Some are also deported voluntarily (IOM Somalia 2014b), possibly because it can be difficult for people without residence permits to leave Saudi Arabia otherwise (Al Jazeera 2013; Human Rights Watch 2008, p. 104). Saudi Arabia has no asylum system, i.e. people who are deported do not have the opportunity to apply for asylum (Human Rights Watch 2014).

### **Arrest and deportation**

A well-informed source (anonymous source, e-mail 25 March 2015) points out that people without residence permits can be arrested anywhere in Saudi Arabia, including at work, at home, on the street or in mosques. Then they are transported to a closed detention centre pending deportation. Human Rights Watch (2014) points out that the conditions in such centres are very reprehensible, because they are overcrowded, prisoners receive little food and health conditions are poor, amongst other things. Children are held together with adults.<sup>3</sup> How long inmates spend in detention varies. Some are confined for weeks. Some have been to several detention centres before deportation.

According to the anonymous source (e-mail, 25 March 2015; e-mail, 30 March 2015) undocumented persons who are deported receive a “go home” travel document from the Saudi authorities when they are deported. The source points out that deportees will not be accompanied by Saudi guards or government officials to Mogadishu. IOM Somalia (2014b, p. 3) points out that the aircraft can also carry regular passengers and sometimes has a layover in Hargeisa.<sup>4</sup>

### **Arrival in Mogadishu**

Upon arrival at the airport in Mogadishu,<sup>5</sup> the deportee will be registered by the Somali immigration authorities (anonymous source, e-mail 25 March 2015). The Somali authorities also collect the travel documents that were issued by the Saudi authorities. The deportee

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<sup>1</sup> Information from IOM Somalia (2014c; 2014e; 2014f) shows that some deportees claimed to be citizens of Ethiopia or had traveled on from Mogadishu to Djibouti and Ethiopia. Landinfo notes in this context that ethnic Somalis traditionally also reside in Somalia's neighbouring countries, including Djibouti and Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup> Children born in Saudi Arabia will not be registered if the parents do not have a residence permit (Human Rights Watch 2008, p. 105).

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch (2014) indicates that adult men and women are kept separated, but it is unclear whether this is always the case.

<sup>4</sup> Landinfo does not have any information regarding which airlines are used for deportation. IOM Somalia (2014a) shows a picture of a plane from Daallo Airlines.

<sup>5</sup> The airport in Mogadishu is formally called Aden Adde International Airport. Satellite pictures from Google Maps show the airport's location. The airport is physically separate from the rest of the city with walls, barbed wire and other security measures.

therefore has no documents that can prove that they have been deported from Saudi Arabia (anonymous source, e-mail 30 March 2015).

During the period from February 2014 to 17 August 2014 the deportees were offered assistance from IOM and other organisations (IOM Somalia 2014b; anonymous source, e-mail 25 March 2015). On 2 March 2014 IOM established a separate tent camp for deportees (OCHA 2014, p. 4). IOM provided their assistance after the deportees were cleared by the immigration authorities. The assistance included medical aid, food, help contacting family and temporary accommodations before any further travel. IOM overviews show that many deportees traveled to other places in Somalia: to Somaliland, Puntland and various regions in Southern Somalia (IOM Somalia 2014d; IOM Somalia 2014e; IOM Somalia 2014f). Some traveled further by plane.<sup>6</sup> As previously mentioned, some originate from Djibouti or Ethiopia. Others explained that they wanted to travel back to Saudi Arabia to be reunited with family.

### About Landinfo's Query responses

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Country of origin information presented in Landinfo's Query responses does not contain policy recommendations nor does it reflect official Norwegian views.

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<sup>6</sup> Domestic flights are very limited in Somalia, and are often changed or canceled without notice.

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**Translation provided by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Belgium.**

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