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Somalia: Massive displacement and humanitarian need

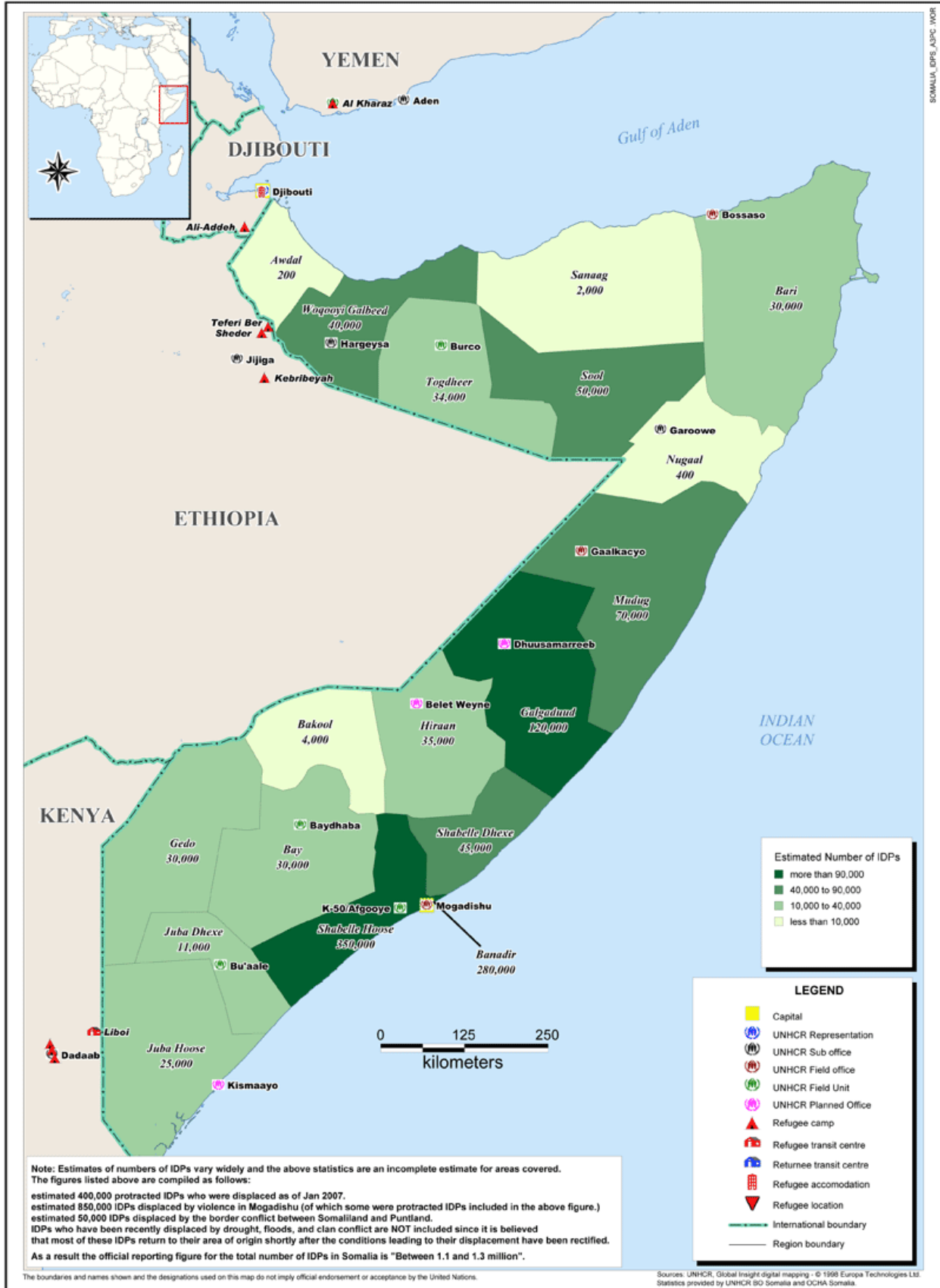
Through 2007 and 2008, the security and humanitarian situation in Somalia has continued to deteriorate. Fighting between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and their Ethiopian allies, and insurgents including the Islamic Courts Union, has led to displacement on a scale never before witnessed in the country. Displacement caused by insecurity and conflict has continued in and around Mogadishu, with the IDP population reaching 1.1 million. Coping mechanisms for host families in many parts of Somalia have already been stretched to the limit over the past years, and the overall crisis facing the growing IDP population has been compounded by the effects of drought, deepening insecurity, hyperinflation (especially of food) and currency devaluation.

In the capital Mogadishu alone, up to 60 per cent of the city's population have been displaced as a result of the fighting, including over 300,000 people between November 2007 and May 2008. Close to 8,000 civilians were killed from the start of 2007 to July 2008.

Meanwhile, in the north of the country, tensions and border conflict between Somaliland and Puntland led to the displacement of an estimated 45,000 people towards the end of 2007.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that up to 2.6 million people are in need of emergency food aid and that this figure is likely to rise to 3.5 million if the fighting continues and drought conditions persist during 2008. At the same time, access for humanitarian operations has been significantly reduced and the mobility of humanitarian workers restricted. All of these negative developments in the first half of the year have unfolded in the context of a long-standing humanitarian emergency and a seventeen-year absence of effective central government and basic social services.

Peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations between the TFG and the opposition Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia led to a ceasefire agreement on 9 Jun 2008. However, continued fighting in many parts of the country was seriously jeopardising the terms of the agreement as of July, and was likely to have serious implications for security and humanitarian access.



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 More maps are available on <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

Background

The people of Somalia have experienced displacement since the early 1960s. Conflicts with neighbouring Ethiopia over the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region of Ethiopia have repeatedly caused the displacement of civilians on both sides of the border. These cold war “proxy wars” were fuelled as both the USA and the USSR provided political and military support to the governments of the two countries.

The inter-ethnic conflicts that followed the fall of the government of Mohammed Siad Barre in the late 1980s led progressively to a humanitarian crisis and to a state of anarchy. In 1991, the north-western region of Somaliland declared itself an independent republic, and between 1998 and 2006 the north-eastern Puntland and other states within Somalia declared autonomy.

During these years two movements sought to establish national institutions and control. Somalia’s warring factions met in 2000 in Djibouti in a bid to establish a national government. Their attempts at reconciliation led in 2004 to the foundation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The new government gained international recognition, but inter-ethnic violence continued and the TFG never boasted effective control over most areas of the country.

Instead, control of much of central and southern Somalia was increasingly in the hands of an alliance of Islamic Sharia courts. The influence of these grew in the 1990s in the absence of effective state structures, especially those that dealt with law and order, and joined to form the Is-

lamic Courts Union (ICU) in 1999. The ICU immediately consolidated its power and started administering justice, collecting taxes and dismantling roadblocks. Some hardline members enforced strict Sharia law.

The ICU’s expanding influence was perceived by the TFG as an attempt to usurp its authority, and it also concerned the government of Ethiopia who feared that the group may support insurgency groups in the Somali-inhabited region of Ethiopia (Chatham House, April 2007). The Ethiopian government, with the backing of the USA, ordered troops into Somalia territory in December 2006. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi claimed that the ICU presented “a clear and present danger” to his country, but his government stated that the Ethiopian military went into Somalia at the request of the TFG. The American government saw the ICU as an arm of Al Qaeda in Somalia and reportedly suspected that ICU members were harbouring non-Somali terror suspects in Mogadishu (Chatham House, April 2007, p.5).

In January 2007, TFG troops backed by Ethiopian forces took control of much of South and Central Somalia away from the ICU. Violence subsequently escalated in the capital and in much of the south-central as Islamist militias adopted guerrilla insurgency tactics. This round of fighting has been the worst since the civil war of the early 1990s; over 6,500 civilians were killed in 2007 alone (Reuters, 31 December 2007; AI, May 2008) and thousands more injured, with human rights abuses committed by all sides in the conflict (AI; May 2008). As of July 2008, despite political efforts aimed at finding a lasting peace by the African

Union (AU) and the UN, the violence showed no signs of abating.

A UN-facilitated ceasefire agreement of June 2008 failed to have an impact on the intensity of the conflict as fighting between Government forces and the insurgency continues unabated (Reuters, 18 June 2008; Reliefweb, 9 July 2008).

Humanitarian situation

The conflict and civil insecurity across most of southern and central Somalia since early 2007 has caused massive displacement, particularly from Mogadishu and its environs. At the end of December 2007, there were an estimated 600,000 newly internally displaced people (IDPs) in Somalia, in addition to the estimated 400,000 people in situations of protracted displacement since 1991 (UNHCR, 20 November 2007; AI, May 2008). Humanitarian agencies in March 2008 reported that up to 20,000 people had been fleeing Mogadishu every month since January (UNHCR Protection Cluster update, 18 July 2008; BBC, 26 March 2008). As of June 2008, estimates put the number of IDPs in Somalia at 1.1 million (OCHA, 16 July 2008; CIA, July 2008; USAID, 16 July 2008).

Fighting and tensions in towns in the south-central such as Baidoa (IRIN, 8 July 2008), Beletweyne (IRIN, 14 July 2008), and Galgadud (IRIN, 30 June 2008) between June and July 2008 have displaced thousands of families. According to UNHCR, at least 28,000 people fled their homes in Beletweyne out of fear of conflict between insurgents and Ethiopian troops (Protection Cluster update, 18 July 2008). An estimated 30,000 people were also displaced from Guri-Eil

town in Galgadud region towards the end of June as a result of conflict (IRIN, 30 June 2008).

In 2007, in the north of the country, a separate border conflict between Somaliland and Puntland displaced an estimated 45,000 people (OCHA, October 2007). There have been no reports of new displacement there during 2008.

By December 2007, 60 per cent of the population of the capital Mogadishu had fled the poorest among them to destitution in surrounding areas. About 300,000 IDPs are camping out in makeshift settlements along the fifteen-kilometre stretch of road between Mogadishu and Afgoye (IMC, February 2008; FSAU, February 2008; UNSC, March 2008). The vast majority of IDPs lack access to water and sanitation facilities, and basic services such as health centres and schools. 80 per cent of the displaced lack access to clean water and latrines (FSAU, February 2008; MSF, 26 June 2008). Families sleep up to ten people in huts made from sticks, plastic sheets, and bits of fabric that provide little protection from the sun and the dust. More than 40 people share each latrine, in some places even more. In March 2008, 40 humanitarian agencies working in Somalia warned of an impending humanitarian crisis. The agencies claimed that two million Somalis needed daily help to survive the crisis caused by the fighting (BBC, 26 March 2008). The World Food Programme (WFP) at the same time warned that Somalia was “sinking deeper into an abyss” with a lack of security hampering humanitarian access in some areas and with over a million people displaced (WFP, March 2008).

A massive number of these IDPs were living on less than one meal a day (IRIN, 11 March 2008). A 2007 survey by the Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) in regions that were hosting the highest number of IDPs showed that about 70 per cent had no employment and that their access to food was limited as a result; a problem compounded by rising food prices (FSAU, February 2008). Even though some humanitarian assistance from international and local NGOs was getting to the displaced, the demand was said to be overwhelming.

Child malnutrition has been at critical levels for some months. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator reported in October 2007 that only 20 per cent of the children in south and central Somalia were receiving the food and medicines necessary for their survival, and that young children were suffering from the highest levels of malnutrition ever recorded in the area (UN News, Oct 2007). Camp life was causing increasing numbers of young children to suffer from malnutrition and diarrhoea (IMC, Jan 2008; MSF, 26 June 2008). A statement by UNICEF in February 2008 reported that some 90,000 children could die in the next few months due to inadequate funding for nutrition, water and sanitation programmes (UNICEF, 12 February 2008). Lack of hygiene and clean water has led diarrhoea cases among young children to increase dramatically, with one out of every 35 children dying of diarrhoea before the age of five (IMC, March 2008).

Physical security of IDPs

Civil society organisations in Somalia have reported fighting near IDP camps;

fighting that led to further displacements (IRIN, 10 Jan 2008). Human Rights Watch, in its 2007 report *Shell Shocked: Civilians under siege in Mogadishu* stated that thousands of displaced people from Mogadishu suffered further attacks from armed criminal groups and individuals as they fled the city in March and April. The attackers appear to have been motivated by the opportunity to steal cash, goods, and other assets from unarmed civilians. In addition, in some areas there was a pattern of rape and sexual violence against women and girls (HRW, 2007, p. 94).

Amnesty International also reported incidents of attacks, rape, assault, and extortion directed at displaced people by parties to the conflict (AI, May 2008). The Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia (appointed by the UN Secretary-General) also reported that internally displaced people were subjected to threats, intimidation, looting, assault and sexual- and gender-based violence (UN SC, 14 March 2008).

Humanitarian access

Somalia has been reported as among the most dangerous and difficult place in the world for humanitarian agencies to work (WFP, 27 March 2008), and fighting and attacks have regularly forced aid agencies to pull out staff and stop operations. During 2008 alone, over 15 national and international staffs of aid agencies have been kidnapped and 19 killed (IRIN, 15 July 2008). Convoys have been systematically targeted for looting and extortion.

The insecurity has been greatest in the South-Central Region and in Puntland. Following the killing of three of its staff

in January 2008, Médecins Sans Frontières decided to close its project in the southern port city of Kismayo. An attempted kidnapping in Garowe also forced UNHCR to evacuate its international staff from most of Puntland (UNHCR, April 2008). On 22 June 2008, the Head of UNHCR in Mogadishu was abducted. In May, one of the insurgent leaders issued a direct threat to Americans working for humanitarian organisations in Somalia (AI, 13 May 2008).

The extent of roadblocks set up by government and non-state forces is also a significant problem. Eric Laroche, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia until December 2007, reported counting 238 blockades on one journey into south and central Somalia. Trucks were forced to pay from \$30 to \$400 to pass through each roadblock. Without their own militias, those vehicles were thus unable to deliver humanitarian goods to the populations in need (UN News, Oct 2007).

According to the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia, this difficulty of humanitarian access has forced thousands of IDPs to go without any form of assistance for weeks, living in the open and often even forced to pay a “shade tax” to shelter from the sun and the coming rainy season (UN SC, 14 March 2008).

Peace building initiatives

Under UNSC Resolution 1725 of December 2006, the UN Security Council committed “to authorize Inter-Governmental Authority (IGAD) and Member States of the AU to establish a protection and training mission in Somalia,” with the following mandate: “(a) to

monitor progress by the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) and the Union of Islamic Courts in implementing agreements reached in their dialogue; (b) to ensure free movement and safe passage of all those involved with the dialogue process; (c) to maintain and monitor security in Baidoa; (d) to protect members of the Transitional Federal Institutions and Government as well as their key infrastructure; and (e) to train the Transitional Federal Institutions’ security forces to enable them to provide their own security and to help facilitate the re-establishment of national security forces of Somalia.”

In February 2007 the Security Council unanimously adopted UNSC Resolution 1744, which authorised the establishment and deployment of an African Union (AU) Mission to Somalia involving a “peace-support” force (known as AMISOM) of some 8,000 troops. AMISOM is mandated to support transitional governmental structures, implement a national security plan, train the Somali security forces, and assist in creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Since that time Uganda has provided 1,600 troops, who have been joined by a small Burundian advanced team. The UN has deployed a team of military and civilian experts, and the USA has provided logistical support to the Ugandan contingent and pledged to facilitate transportation assistance for countries contributing troops (AU, May 2008; UN, Jan 2008; AI, May 2008). The AU and UN had envisaged a UN peacekeeping operation replacing AMISOM and Ethiopian troops in Somalia, but in November 2007 the Security Council again postponed consideration of this step because of ongoing

security considerations. Very little progress has been since made in strengthening AMISOM, with only \$32 million of a total annual budget of \$622 million contributed by the EU, Italy, Sweden, China and the League of Arab States as of March 2008.

Peace talks under the auspices of the UN began in Djibouti on 13 May 2008, between the TFG and the latest opposition grouping, the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). The talks are being mediated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and the AU, EU and the League of Arab States are represented.

The impact of the talks has been limited as of July 2008 despite a ceasefire agreement being reached, as hardliners on both sides have resisted involvement. Some among the opposition have proposed that unless Ethiopian forces withdraw from Somalia, the opposition should reject contact with the TFG in favour of continued armed resistance. The Eritrean president, their main backer, claimed in a recent interview with Reuters that the UN-supported talks were an American ploy aimed at dividing the opposition and weakening the resistance forces (Reuters, 13 May 2008). Meanwhile, TFG hardliners have claimed that the opposition is allied with Al-Qaeda and bent on introducing Sharia law in Somalia. The Ethiopian government also accuses the Somalia opposition of giving support to the Ogaden Liberation Movement, a separatist movement operating in the Somali region of eastern Ethiopia (Chatham House, April 2007; Council on Foreign Relations, 22 August 2007). In June, both the TFG and some moderate members of the ARS signed a ceasefire agreement, but despite the

agreement, there has been no lull in fighting and the agreement is under severe strain.

National response

The TFG and regional authorities have so far played little part in responding to the needs of IDPs in displacement; partly because of resource constraints and partly because of the general insecurity throughout the country. Indeed, where there is TFG control, many local authorities do not have the necessary capacity to collect taxes for service provision. The TFG established the National Refugee Commission with a mandate to cater for IDPs. However, the Commission has failed to carry out its mandate due to lack of financial resources and the prevailing security situation.

A host of national and community-based organisations provide assistance by partnering with international organisations or local businesses. The Somalia Red Crescent has offices in most parts of the country, and the Elman Peace and Human Rights Organisation monitors and records human rights abuses by both the government and the insurgents (Reuters, 31 December 2007). Other local organisations carry out area-specific activities, particularly in areas where the UN and other international organisations do not have access. However, their impact is also constrained by the prevailing insecurity and lack of funding.

International response

The desperate situation facing millions of Somalis has led to the immediate scaling-up of existing humanitarian and livelihood-support programmes. In the 2008

Mid-Year Review, UN agencies and NGO partners of the CAP revised financial requirements upwards from the original \$413 million to \$638 million, an increase of 54 per cent. Against the revised requirements, the CAP is now approximately 34 per cent funded. Much of the increase is attributed to the fact that the requirements of the food aid cluster have doubled to support up to 3.5 million people by the end of 2008. The requirements for the protection cluster have been increased by 50 per cent. Other sectors, such as agriculture and livelihoods, coordination and support services, health, nutrition and WASH have revised their requirements upwards by 10 to 30 per cent (OCHA, July 2008).

Most aid agencies have discussed suspending operations in parts of Somalia hit by mounting insecurity and a recent wave of assassinations targeting senior local humanitarian workers (Reuters, 22 July 2008).

Mèdecins Sans Frontières talk of a widening gap between critical needs and humanitarian response in the health area (MSF, 26 June 2008).

Somalia is among the few countries where the cluster approach has been activated and implemented. Currently, there are seven operational clusters: agriculture and livelihoods; food; education; shelter; health and nutrition; water and sanitation; and protection. The cluster approach was formally adopted in July 2006, its opera-

tional implementation in Somalia did not commence in many areas of the south-central until early 2007. This was attributed to problems of access and increasing insecurity in most parts of the country; planning challenges given the unpredictability of the situation; and insufficient and inconsistent field staff presence in southern Puntland and South-Central Somalia. If the security situation improves, a review of staffing will be necessary to ensure that the field presence can achieve proper coordination.

UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, as well as international actors such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, Gedo Health Consortium, the International Committee of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, Relief International (RI), and CARE try and provide much needed assistance in areas of health care, education, food aid, shelter and sanitation, and protection to IDPs in various locations albeit on a limited scale. However, a UNHCR evaluation team found in 2007 that agencies and NGOs were largely operating according to their separate mandates, with limited coordination, only minimal common needs assessments or mutually agreed priorities, varying target regions, and multiple beneficiaries (UNHCR, Sept. 2007).

Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org

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