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## SOMALIA

# Displacement and worsening humanitarian situation as a result of ongoing violence and conflict

Renewed fighting in Mogadishu and other areas of Somalia since May 2009 has displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians and also exacerbated the already desperate humanitarian situation of existing internally displaced people (IDPs), in particular the children and women among them. About 200,000 people have been displaced since January 2010, in addition to the estimated 1.5 million who remained displaced at the end of 2009. In Somaliland, thousands of families were displaced as a result of fighting between 'government' forces and a new rebel group.

The prevailing insecurity continues to block humanitarian access, despite the massive need for assistance, particularly in south and central Somalia. In January, the World Food Programme (WFP) suspended operations in southern Somalia because of threats and unacceptable conditions set by armed groups. However, a handful of agencies do operate in south central despite these threats either through local NGO's or by negotiating access individually with powers that be.

The civilian population continues to face threats to their life and human dignity, and IDPs have continued to face threats, intimidation, looting, assault, and sexual and gender-based violence. The violence and conflict have stretched peoples' coping strategies as livelihood opportunities and access to food is further limited. In Puntland, some IDPs were forcefully returned to areas that they had fled from.

The violence has had particular consequences for children. A quarter of the nearly 1,400 casualties recorded by three of the main hospitals in Mogadishu between late March and late last month were children under the age of five. Children were also affected by outbreaks of cholera and acute watery diarrhoea. Both the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and insurgents have reportedly recruited children to their fighting forces.

The African Union force (AMISOM) have also been accused on indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas with consequences for civilian casualties and resultant displacement.

The Transitional Federal Government, despite enjoying international support, remains weak and unable to provide protection and assistance. Problems of access and concerns about aid being diverted have led donors to decrease funding to agencies. In 2009, only 54 per cent of the humanitarian appeal for Somalia was funded.



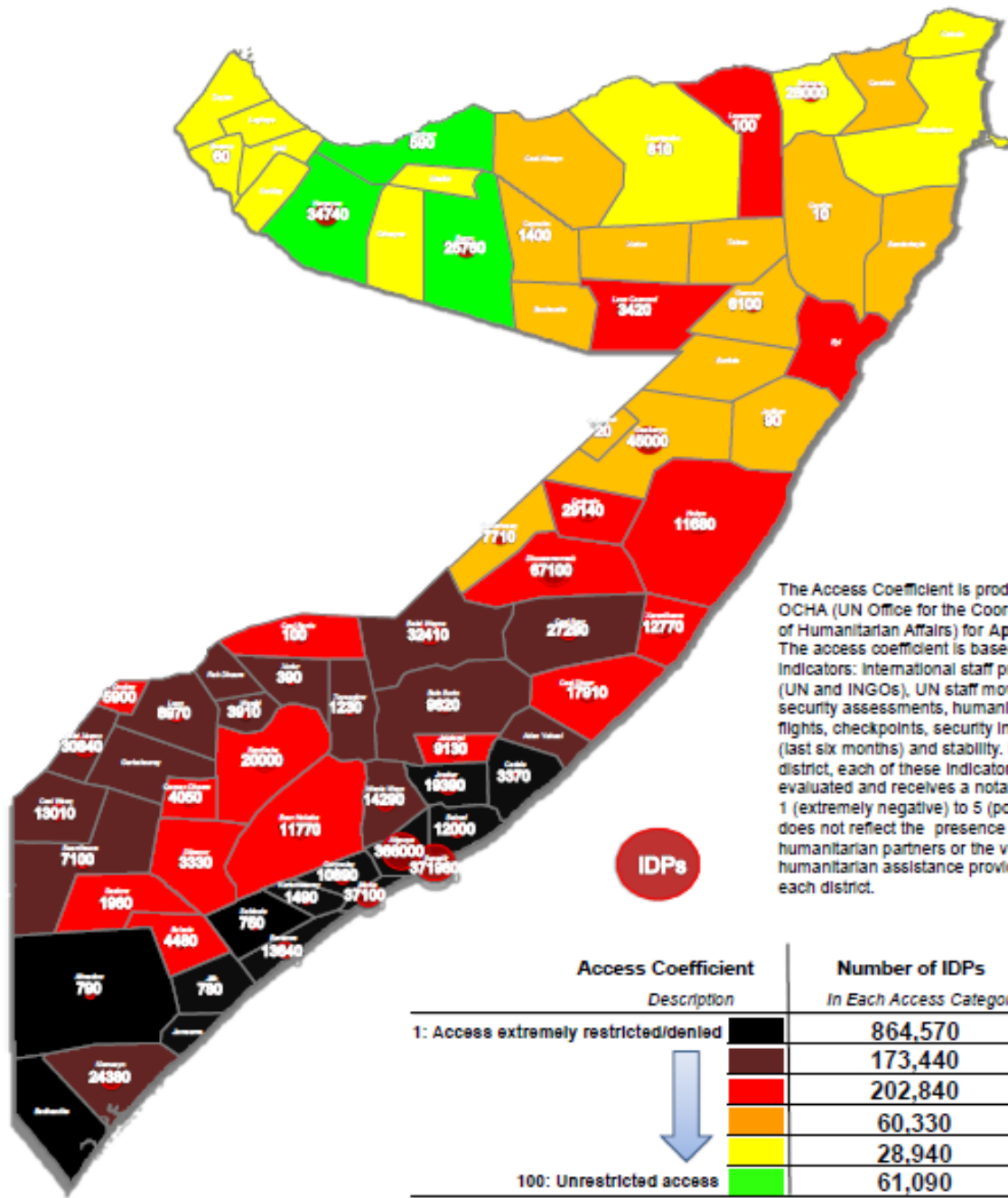
# Somalia: Humanitarian Access vs Total IDPs

April 2010

**UNHCR Somalia**  
Humanitarian Response

Source:  
OCHA Somalia, various IDP assessments including the Remote IASC PMT project (data brought digital mapping © 2009 Europa Technologies)

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



The Access Coefficient is produced by OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) for April 2010. The access coefficient is based on eight indicators: international staff presence (UN and INGOs), UN staff movement, security assessments, humanitarian flights, checkpoints, security incidents (last six months) and stability. For every district, each of these indicators is evaluated and receives a notation from 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (positive). It does not reflect the presence of humanitarian partners or the volume of humanitarian assistance provided in each district.

**IDPs**

Access Coefficient	Description	Number of IDPs
1	Access extremely restricted/denied	864,570
2		173,440
3		202,840
4		60,330
5		28,940
100	Unrestricted access	61,090

## Background

Somalia has not had a functioning government since that of Siad Barre fell in 1991. Local and international efforts aimed at building a stable government have since been unsuccessful. Over 14 peace processes have been conducted to establish a broad-based government. However, despite this effort, Somalia remains in 2010 a failed state and one of the most insecure places in the world, with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis (Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010).

In January 2009, a UN-brokered peace process led to the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) headed by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, a one time leader of the Islamic Courts Union which briefly controlled Mogadishu until Ethiopian forces went into Somalia in December 2006. Despite the election of Sharif, fighting between the TFG and armed opposition groups including insurgents such as Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam continues unabated.

The overall security situation in Somalia remains highly volatile and unpredictable. Armed opposition groups continue to launch regular and sustained attacks against forces of the TFG and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) which is mandated to support it. There has been a steady rise in violence across the country since May 2009, particularly in southern and central Somalia, where the insurgency against the government and its allies is most intense.

Whereas the mandate of AMISOM is peacekeeping, the force has been strongly criticised as it has tended to respond violently to attacks from insurgents by indiscriminately shelling civilian areas, causing fatalities and further displacement. AMISOM is based only in Mogadishu and currently protects the presidential palace, parliament, the airport and the sea port (Aljazeera, 22 July 2010; OCHA, 29 April 2010).

Fighting over control of territories continued in 2009 and up to June 2010, between Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam in Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle regions, and between Al Shabaab and the pro-government Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a in the central region of Galgadud.

From 2007 to early 2010, an estimated 21,000 Somalis were killed as a result of fighting (Reuters, 2 June 2010). Humanitarian agencies have expressed particular concern over the impact of the violence on women and children. A quarter of the nearly 1,400 casualties recorded by three of the main hospitals in Mogadishu between late March and May 2010 were said to be children under the age of five (UN News, 4 June 2010).

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 2009.

In Puntland, the security situation remains unpredictable, with continuing violent incidents, including armed clashes and assassinations, and frequent incidents involving improvised explosive devices.

## Displacement Figures

According to media and humanitarian sources, an estimated 1.5 million people remained displaced at the end of 2009. In the first half of 2010 alone, some 169,000 people were displaced from different parts of the country, but especially from the capital Mogadishu. Renewed fighting in Mogadishu has continued since May 2009 and has spread to different parts of the country including Hiiraan and Galgadud regions, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians (UNCR, 28 May 2010).

In June alone, renewed fighting between Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a and Al-Shabaab displaced an estimated 30,000 people in Hiiraan and Galgadud regions (UN News, 4 June 2010).

The strife in Somalia has also led hundreds of thousands of Somalis to flee abroad, with many crossing the Red Sea into Yemen. An estimated 120,000 sought refuge in neighbouring countries in 2009 (UNHCR, 12 May 2010).

In Somaliland, thousands of people were forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict between forces of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland and a new armed group that go by the name Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (IRIN, July 2010).

## Protection Risks

### *Physical security and integrity*

IDPs continue facing serious protection risks in different parts of the country. In July, authorities in Puntland deported some 800 IDPs back to south central Somalia accusing them engaging in subversive activities. This arbitrary action was condemned by UN agencies (UNHCR, 23 July 2010).

Civil society organisations in Somalia have reported fighting near IDP camps; fighting that led to further displacements. Civilians have been caught in cross fire between insurgents and government forces and their allies (IRIN, 10 Jan 2008; IRIN, 21 July 2010).

Human Rights Watch reported in 2007 that thousands of people fleeing from Mogadishu suffered further attacks from armed groups and individuals looking to steal cash, goods, and other assets. In some areas there was also a pattern of rape and sexual violence against women and girls living in camps (HRW, 2007, p. 94).

In 2008 Amnesty International also reported incidents of attacks, rape, assault, and extortion directed at IDPs 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 IDPs were subjected to threats, intimidation, looting, assault, and sexual and gender-based violence (UN SC, 14 March 2008).

In Galkayo in December 2009, IDPs were attacked by local residents as they were accused of planting bombs in the town. This forced many IDPs to flee from the town (IRIN, 21 December 2009; IRIN 23 December 2009).

In the capital Mogadishu, the ongoing fighting in 2010 has displaced 17,000 people, with particularly severe consequences for children. A quarter of the nearly 1,400 casualties recorded by three of the main hospitals in Mogadishu between late March and late May were children under the age of five. Children were also affected by outbreaks of cholera and acute watery diarrhoea (UN News, 4 June 2010).

During a visit to Somalia in October 2009, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs observed that serious violations included forced recruitment by militias (UN News, 21 October 2009; IRIN, November 2009). In May 2010, UNICEF reported that children as young as nine were being recruited by all parties to the conflict to engage in battle. UNICEF appealed to perpetrators to release the children within their ranks and asked the international community to bring perpetrators to book (UN News, 10 May 2010). Some of these recruitments have reportedly taken place inside IDP settlements (UN News, 21 October 2009).

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict reported in 2010 that the TFG was among the "most persistent violators" in sending children into war (UNSC, 13 April 2010).

Many of the people internally displaced from south-central Somalia have sought protection in the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland", where the authorities consider them as refugees; they lack clan support and associated livelihood opportunities (IRIN, 16 June 2010; Guardian, 6 July 2010). Meanwhile, IDPs in Puntland have reportedly continued to face protection risks including attacks and cases of rape (IRIN, 21 and 23 December 2009).

### *Access to basic necessities*

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).

About 300,000 IDPs were in early 2010 in makeshift settlements along the 15-kilometre stretch of road between Mogadishu and Afgoye (FSNAU, March 2010). 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 (IDMC interviews with aid agencies in Nairobi, June 2010).

Studies carried out in 2008 found that IDPs were living on less than one meal a day. Even though some humanitarian assistance from international and local NGOs was getting to the displaced, the demand was said to be overwhelming. (IRIN, 11 March 2008).

Acute malnutrition among internally displaced children in conflict-affected areas has continued to be among the highest in the world. The Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS NET) estimated in March 2010 that 3.2 million people, or around 40 per cent of Somalis, were in need of humanitarian assistance. The report found that IDPs continue to be the largest single group in need, representing 43 per cent of the total 3.2 million. Among the non-displaced population, one in four children were chronically malnourished; among internally displaced children there were even higher rates reported (FSNAU, March 2010).

Some displaced populations have not received assistance for prolonged periods. Many IDPs have fled to already congested areas, where they do not have access to land. The alternating cycles of drought and flood have destroyed crops and

livestock, and sharp increases in food and fuel costs have worsened the crisis, forcing additional people into displacement.

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; their difficulties were compounded by rising food prices (FSAU, February 2008).

## **National and international responses**

### *Access and obstacles to assistance*

Violence and insecurity in south and central Somalia have considerably limited humanitarian access and forced UN and other international agencies and NGOs to relocate or evacuate staff. Aid agencies have continued to raise concerns about shrinking humanitarian access, especially in south and central Somalia (UN News, 4 June 2010).

Without humanitarian actors on the ground, assistance to IDPs has decreased (VOA, 10 November 2009; Reuters, 23 November 2009; OCHA, 30 November 2009; Brookings, January 2010).

As well as leading to increased displacement, the ongoing violence and insecurity has also led to a fall in humanitarian assistance. Kidnappings of international and national aid workers, followed by ransom demands, have also presented major obstacles to humanitarian operations.

In January 2010, WFP temporarily suspended operations in southern Somalia because of threats and unacceptable conditions set by armed groups.

### **National Response**

Despite international recognition, assistance and capacity building, the government and its security forces remain ineffective, disorganised

and corrupt. The government owes its survival to the support of AMISOM, rather than to its own troops (UNSC, 10 March 2010; Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010). In February 2010, the president appealed to the international community for support in pacifying the country (Garoweonline, 22 February 2010).

The government controls only a handful of areas of Mogadishu and has been limited by resource constraints. It has thus not been able to address internal displacement issues at all.

UN officials say they have offered the TFG specific plans to demobilise child soldiers. But Somalia's leaders have been unresponsive (New York Times, 13 June 2010).

In some parts of the country, local authorities and community-based organisations have tried to help IDPs by providing services and life skills. In Puntland, the local authorities have offered training in skills ranging from tailoring and welding to electrical services to some 250 people, most of them IDPs, with support from UNDP (IRIN, 27 May 2010).

In Mogadishu, businessmen have mobilised resources locally to assist IDPs; the group helped some 51,000 IDPs with water. The businessmen took this initiative as agencies were unable to provide this assistance due to insecurity (IRIN, 9 February 2010).

### ***International Response***

Donor fatigue, problems of access and corruption have greatly impeded assistance to vulnerable groups in Somalia. Some donors, especially the United States, have been concerned about aid being diverted to groups opposed to the government, and so have decreased their funding to agencies including WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR (UNICEF, 19 November 2009; UN News, 8 December 2009; UNHCR, 12 May 2010). The New York Times has reported on the fear that American

donations may be reaching Al Shabaab, which is thought to have growing ties with Al Qaeda (New York Times, 1 October 2009; IRIN 6 November 2009; Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010).

In 2009, only 54 per cent of the humanitarian appeal for Somalia was funded. Given that some of these funds were carried over from 2008, funds going into Somalia were even lower in 2009 than expected (IRIN, 6 November 2009).

A March 2010 report by the UN's Monitoring Group on Somalia found that the war economy continued to impede humanitarian assistance efforts. According to the report, humanitarian resources including notably food aid, had been diverted to military use by some Somali contractors for aid agencies, who had channelled some of their profits (or aid itself) directly to armed opposition groups. The Monitoring Group also discovered that contractors for WFP had long been a financier of armed groups and a close ally of the Hizbul Islam leader (BBC News, 10 March 2010; UNSC, 10 March 2010).

**Note:** This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on Somalia. 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](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

### Contact:

**Nina M. Birkeland**

Head of Monitoring and Advocacy

Tel.: +41 (0)22 795 07 34

Email: [nina.birkeland@nrc.ch](mailto:nina.birkeland@nrc.ch)

**Nuur Mohamud Sheekh**

Country Analyst

Tel: +44 7931 738 301 (London)

+254 716 401 575 (Nairobi)

Email: [nuur.sheekh@nrc.ch](mailto:nuur.sheekh@nrc.ch)

**IDMC**

Chemin de Ballexert 7-9

1219 Geneva, Switzerland

[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700

Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701