

**Mass Atrocities Alert: Somalia**  
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Complex civil conflicts, along with devastating periods of drought over the past two decades have left the Republic of Somalia a failed state. The UNDP deems Somalia the world's "worst humanitarian disaster." Somalia's instability has led to mass atrocities and human rights violations against the civilian population, being committed by all major parties involved in the conflict, but especially by Al-Shabaab insurgents, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, and intervening Ethiopian military forces. Therefore, Genocide Watch places Somalia at Stage 7 on the *8 Stages of Genocide*, and issues a Genocide and Mass Atrocities Alert.

Since its independence in 1960, Somalia has been plagued by decades of inter-clan rivalries and warfare. Mohamed Siad Barre seized power in 1969 by military coup d'état and proceeded to turn Somalia into a Soviet-backed communist state, leading the totalitarian Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party. Resentment for the regime grew as Somalia became a proxy battleground for the US and USSR during the Cold War. A coalition of clan-based opposition groups overthrew the regime in 1991 as a response to government corruption and a major episode of politicide committed by the Barre regime after the Isaaq clan rebellion of 1988.

The current armed conflict in Somalia began in 1991 with the fall of Barre and the subsequent onset of civil war. Somalia has since been devoid of stable, centralized government control. This power vacuum has given way to protracted clan warfare and lawlessness that continues to wrack the country, with thousands of casualties, periods of famine, and large refugee movements into surrounding countries. In the early 1990s there were several humanitarian intervention attempts made by the US and the United Nations, but because of violent opposition from Somali militias, both withdrew from the country by 1995.

In 2004, a two-year peace process resulted in the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), marking the country's fourteenth attempt to establish control since the 1991 start of the Somali Civil War. Representing just a few clans, and having almost no effective power over the majority of Somali territory, the TFG lacks legitimacy. In 2006, an alliance of *sharia* courts and Somali business men, known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), emerged in opposition to the TFG, and successfully gained control of Mogadishu and much of the south. However, the rise of the ICU was unacceptable to Ethiopia, the European Union and the US.

In its place, a radical Islamic insurgent group, al-Shabaab, openly allied with Al Qaeda, took control of large swaths of Somalia north of Mogadishu. In support of the TFG, Ethiopia, backed by the US, launched a military intervention in 2006, which drastically intensified internal violence. Ethiopia withdrew its troops in 2009 following the Djibouti peace talks, which extended the Transitional Government's mandate and selected a moderate Islamist president. Fighting continued against al-Shabaab, and ANISOM forces (the African Union Mission in Somalia) led by Burundi, intervened. They have steadily gained ground for the Transitional Government. Kenyan forces intervened in southern Somalia to combat al-Shabaab militants, who pose a threat to Kenya's northeastern border, which is controlled by Somali clans.

In addition to the grave effects of protracted armed conflict, Somalia has also suffered from periods of severe drought, which led the UN to declare much of the country to be in a state of famine in 2011. Al-Shabaab worsened the crisis by imposing severe restrictions on humanitarian aid agencies, banning most Western aid agencies from entering the territory, and stopping civilians from fleeing the affected areas. Although the UN determined the famine to be over in February 2012, Somalia is still suffering from its lasting effects. Today, al-Shabaab forces continue to control much of Somalia's southern territory, despite their "strategic withdrawal" from Mogadishu in August 2011.

Effective and relatively successful attempts at stability have been made in the autonomous northern regions of the country known as Puntland and Somaliland. Puntland, the northeastern section of the Somalia, declared itself an autonomous state in 1998, and has since had a democratically elected government while still working in cooperation with the TFG. The northwestern region of Somalia, known

as Somaliland, declared its independence in 1991, though it is not recognized by any country or international organization. Somaliland also has its own democratically elected government, and since its self-proclaimed independence in 1991, has successfully avoided the instability and violence that have devastated the rest of Somalia.

Puntland has allowed a growth in piracy as a source of income, though there has been an increasingly effective naval effort to stop the pirates, including recent renewal of authorization by the UN for allied naval forces to pursue the pirates to their land bases.

For the purposes of this *Mass Atrocities Alert*, Genocide Watch sees the following warning signs of genocide and atrocities being committed against the civilian population of Somalia:

- Prior unpunished genocidal massacres, such as those perpetrated by the Barre regime, primarily against the Isaaq clan, in the late 1980s;
- Polarization and attempted rule of the clan-based society by groups with an exclusionary ideology, such as the ICU and al-Shabaab;
- Systematic human rights violations being committed by all major parties (al-Shabaab, the TFG, ANISOM forces, Ethiopian and Kenyan armed forces and their respective supported militias).

These widespread systematic human rights violations include the following:

- Indiscriminate killing of civilians by all major parties;
- Denial of humanitarian aid and basic necessities to civilians by al-Shabaab forces;
- Arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians by all major parties;
- Forced recruitment and physical abuse of children by al-Shabaab forces;
- Use of child soldiers by al-Shabaab and TFG forces;
- Domestic and sexual violence against women;
- Arbitrary arrest, abuse and deportation of Somali refugees by Kenyan forces.

Somalia is currently under a great deal of pressure to produce a new constitution by August 20, 2012, when the transitional government mandate is set to end, as stipulated in the Somalia End of Transition Roadmap. The roadmap is a comprehensive plan, designed to install more permanent political institutions, security and stability in the country, which was agreed in September 2011 by Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, the UN, AU and other regional leaders such as those from the autonomous Somali entities of Puntland and Galmudug. With the help of the UNPD, a National Constituent Assembly of 1,000 members will vote on a draft constitution in May 2012. Despite the UN's efforts to include a diverse array of social and political actors in the process, there is growing concern within the country that the constitution will not be fully "Somali."

The current crisis in Somalia is one of extreme complexity, but at its roots are two factors:

1. The after-effects of totalitarian communist rule under Siad Barre, followed by two decades of anarchy, war, and famine;
2. The clan-based nature of Somali society. In a classic essay in social anthropology, Prof. Marshall Sahlins declared that "the segmentary lineage system is an organization for predatory expansion." The communist system unsuccessfully tried to abolish clans. Al-Sabaab is attempting to replace them through imposition of fundamentalist Islam. Neither totalitarian system will succeed.

Genocide Watch recommends that the UN, AU, and Somali officials convene an all-Somali congress to draw up a new con-federal constitution that recognizes the autonomy of southern Somalia, Puntland, Galmudug and Somaliland. The new constitution should draw inspiration from the Somaliland constitution of 2000, and allow Somalis to govern themselves using their traditional clan-based political system. A dramatic increase in accountability for human rights violations committed by all major parties should be enforced through a judicial system in accord with Somali tradition.