

Committee: Human Rights Council

Issue: The situation of Human Rights in Somalia

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Somali civil war, a topic of international concern, has shed light on severe human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, which have been committed by all parties involved in the conflict. In combination with the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity and famines, drought, severe weather conditions, extreme poverty and underdevelopment, the situation in Somalia has unfolded into a profound humanitarian crisis.

Specifically, the armed combat, which broke out in 1991¹ when the dictator Mohammed Siad Barre was ousted, has had numerous consequences on various domains that are directly linked to the enjoyment of fundamental individual rights. Al-Shabab, an insurgent Jihad militant group seeking to establish an Islamic state in Somalia, is the culprit behind most of the human rights violations and even war crimes. The aforementioned hostilities range from unlawful killings to barring humanitarian aid in the country.

The Somali government has received international praise for its fruitful efforts to revive its fragile economy and issue several constructive reforms. However, the government itself has had a considerable impact on intensifying violations of individual rights, through decriminalizing inhumane acts, such as forced marriage and child soldier recruitment. Furthermore, the government has introduced a heavily oppressive regime that significantly curbs civilians' freedoms and has failed to provide security to the Somali population, resulting in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) spiking. In particular, in 2012, when the reigning government was appointed, IDPs in Somalia numbered 1,350,000, whereas in 2020 they met an increase of approximately 1,618,000, numbering 2,968,000.²

Operations in Somalia that are claiming to aid the restoration of security, such as those of the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) are also responsible for breaches

¹"Civil War." Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Somalia/Civil-war.

²"Somalia." IDMC, www.internal-displacement.org/countries/somalia.

in humanitarian law. Consequently, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are committed multilaterally, presenting a considerable challenge to the creation of a reliable and sustainable infrastructure that ensures respect towards individual rights.

The analysis of the topic will begin by providing the historical background of the Somali Civil War. An overview of the most frequent and most concerning human rights violations will follow this, with respective statistics. The UN's involvement will be reported and the analysis will be concluded with the key international actors on the topic and possible solutions to the issue.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Human Rights

"Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status."³ Some fundamental human rights, which are also violated in Somalia, would be the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to work and education, but there are of course many more.

International Humanitarian Law

"International humanitarian law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict."⁴ It is otherwise referred to as the law of war or the law of armed conflict and its primary aim is to protect those "who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare."⁵

War Crimes

"War crimes are those violations of international humanitarian law (treaty or customary law) that incur individual criminal responsibility under international law."⁶ For an act to be categorized as a war crime, it needs to be committed in a setting of armed conflict, regardless of whether it is international or not.

³ United Nations. "Human Rights." *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights.

⁴ *International Committee of the Red Cross*, www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf.

⁵ *International Committee of the Red Cross*, www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf.

⁶ United Nations. "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." *Welcome to the United Nations*, www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml.

Impunity

Impunity is defined as the “exemption or freedom from punishment, harm, or loss.”⁷ This state emerges where those responsible for human rights violations are not held accountable for their actions.

Internally Displaced Persons

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are forced to flee their homes due to conflict or persecution. However, they remain within their country’s borders and under the protection of the respective government regardless of whether it is the reason for their displacement. In 2020, 55 million⁸ individuals had been internally displaced and 2,968,000 were from Somalia.

Oppression

Oppression is the social act of severely restricting a person or a particular group and exercising authority in a cruel and unjust manner. The active and conscious pursuit of disadvantaging a group is not solely accountable for this, because oppression might also arise due to societal norms.

Censorship

Censorship is defined as “the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good.”⁹ This might be present and concentrated in any and all manifestations of authority, but nowadays it is mostly linked to the government and the rule of law.

Gender-based Violence

“Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.”¹⁰

⁷ "Definition of IMPUNITY." *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/impunity.

⁸ "2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement." *IDMC*, www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/.

⁹ "Censorship | Definition, History, Types, & Examples." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/censorship.

¹⁰ "Frequently Asked Questions: Types of Violence Against Women and Girls." *UN Women*, www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Somali citizens' human rights have been jeopardized for decades, due to the relentless Somali civil war. Inhumane acts, such as gender-based violence and recruitment of child soldiers have been increasingly commonplace as time progresses. Recently, heightened political tension in light of upcoming elections, COVID-19, intense weather conditions, and locust infestations have led to decreased efforts towards ensuring the human rights of the Somali population. Thus, an array of human rights violations and war crimes has necessitated a proper humanitarian response.

Historical Background of the Somali Civil War

The Federal Republic of Somalia was formed in 1960 by the federation of a British protectorate and an Italian colony. The elected president was Aden Abdullah Osman Daar and in 1967 Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke undertook the position following presidential elections. However, in 1969 he was assassinated and Muhammad Siad Barre, who was to become a long-reigning dictator, seized power in the country through a military coup.

Clan-based guerrilla opposition groups multiplied at a rapid rate due to displeasure at the government's decisions regarding already existing conflicts, such as the peace agreement signed with Ethiopia. Barre's dictatorial rule continued until January of 1991 when he was ousted by the forces of the United Somali Congress (USC), a major paramilitary organization.

The deposition of the former dictator led to the most influential clans gaining access to an abundance of military equipment and dominating the spheres of influence they created. In May 1991,¹¹ the Somali National Movement claimed control of the "British Somaliland", which was essentially the afore-mentioned British protectorate, and proclaimed the independence of the region that would be the Republic of Somaliland.

Meanwhile, disputes resumed. Bitter clan rivalries in conjunction with their forces combatting Barre's regrouped militia, the Somali National Front led to the deterioration of Mogadishu. One of the consequences of the consistent hostilities was food insecurity, resulting in a famine in southern Somalia, because the area was harnessed for grain production.

Over the following years, innumerable endeavors to resolve the issue arose. The United States of America, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) led

¹¹ "Civil War." Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Somalia/Civil-war.

peacemaking operations and interventions in Somalia to restore security and provide humanitarian assistance; however, all US and UN military troops had evacuated the region by 1995. Despite this, the peacemaking attempts on behalf of the United Nations continued, with its troops remaining in the region and leading interventions but without impact.

Despite a new president and prime minister being appointed in August 2000, Mogadishu remained a dangerous location. It was seized by the Islamic Court Union (ICU), an organization aiming to address lawlessness after Muhammad Siad Barre's fall, in June 2006. The organization was accused and proven to have had ties to the terrorist group al-Qaeda and specifically the al-Shabaab faction.¹²

In 2012, following the United Nations' official declaration of famine in three regions of Somalia, Al-Shabab became increasingly flexible and later withdrew from Mogadishu, something they considered a "tactical move".

Over the next years, Al-Shabab resumed carrying out deadly attacks. During 2013-2015, Al-Shabab targeted Kenya, in retaliation for a former intervention and performed deadly raids, which continue even today.

Somalia still experiences severe political instability. Although President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's mandate ended on February 8th, 2021¹³, he exploited miscommunication and disagreements about participants to prolong it. This illegal and unconstitutional decision triggered gun battles in Mogadishu. However, in fear of potential reactions by the opposition, Mohamed announced the conduction of presidential elections to be held in October 2021, which have yet to take place since Barre's coup in 1961.

Unlawful Killings

Indiscriminate and unlawful citizen assassinations have become commonplace in Somalia. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), 296 recorded civilian killings have taken place from early August 2020.¹⁴

¹² "Al-Shabab." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 Feb. 2009, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab.

¹³ "Somalia to Hold Indirect Presidential Election October 10." *Breaking News, World News and Video from Al Jazeera*, 29 June 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/29/somalia-to-hold-presidential-election-october-10.

¹⁴ "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Somalia." *Human Rights Watch*, 13 Jan. 2021, www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/somalia#a3483d.

The Somali government is greatly involved in these arbitrary deprivations of life, something mainly manifested through the acts of courts and the authorities. Peaceful demonstrations were extinguished with the use of unjustifiable lethal force, resulting in dozens of civilian casualties. For instance, in May 2019¹⁵ security forces killed at least one child in Beletweyn as students protested against the postponement of their exams. Between November 5th, 2019 and August 13th, 2020¹⁶, courts in Somalia had ordered 32 executions, out of which 11 were carried out by state authorities, according to UNSOM. Additionally, federal and regional authorities occasionally executed those sentenced to the death penalty in a matter of days following the court's verdict. Nevertheless, Somaliland has not officially reported any unlawful killings.

Al-Shabaab, which remains untouchable, can be held responsible for most indiscriminate killings and civilian abuses. The group has been exploiting a variety of methods, namely improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, shelling and targeted murders to execute its attacks. Furthermore, the group executes suspected government spies or workers after unfair trials. The UN has reported 750 civilian injuries and killings due to the aforementioned practices in 2020¹⁷. There have been innumerable instances when Al-Shabab has taken responsibility for its actions.

However, peacemaking missions in Somalia have also accounted for a fair number of civilian killings. The US AFRICOM performed hundreds of airstrikes to mitigate the terrorist attacks of Al-Shabab during the Somali conflict, something that can now be perceived as an unofficial air war. The casualties and eventual killings of civilians, though, have yet to be acknowledged by the United States and no reparations were ever issued. On April 1st 2020¹⁸ AFRICOM publicly acknowledged that an airstrike resulted in the death of a woman and a young child as they were in a vehicle driving from north Mogadishu. This is the only case where civilian deaths linked to AFRICOM have been acknowledged. Despite this, no

¹⁵ "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Somalia." *Human Rights Watch*, 15 Jan. 2020, www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/somalia#20ce6f<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/somalia#20ce6f>.

¹⁶ "Somalia." *United States Department of State*, 20 Apr. 2021, www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/somalia/.

¹⁷ "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Somalia." *Human Rights Watch*, 15 Jan. 2020, www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/somalia#20ce6f<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/somalia#20ce6f>.

¹⁸ "The US Military is Ramping Up Its Secret Air War in Somalia, with a Deadly Impact for Civilians on the Ground." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/somalia-zero-accountability-as-civilian-deaths-mount-from-us-air-strikes/.

reparations were issued to the families of the victims. In February of 2020¹⁹ however, there had already been two new cases of civilian deaths, but they have yet to be acknowledged.

Gender-based Violence

A relentless civil war in conjunction with a strictly patriarchal society accounts for the establishment of significant gender-based violence (GBV) in Somalia. Remarkable it is to highlight that Somalia has signed and ratified most core international and regional human rights instruments.

As already mentioned, Somalia is a firmly patriarchal society with entrenched gender roles that often subjugate the female gender. GBV's extensions include Female Genital Mutilation, also referred to as Cutting (FGM/C), forced and early marriage, and sexual, domestic and psychological abuse.

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15-49 currently numbers at 99.2%²⁰. The Somaliland Ministry of Religious Affairs condemns the "more severe cases" of FGM and touches on the topic of compensation, but fails to address the punishments for the act.

Somali women experience domestic violence to such an extent that intimate partner violence (IPV) is the highest reported type of GBV. A startling fact is that in 2018, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that 76% of women aged 15-49 consider physical abuse by their husbands justifiable in the instances of "them burning their husband's food, arguing with him, going out without telling him, neglecting the children or refusing sexual relations".²¹ Despite the alarming rates of domestic violence, Somalia has yet to create federal laws criminalizing spousal violence.

In developing countries, such as Somalia, antiquated perceptions about marriage combined with devastating poverty lead to the prevalence of forced and/or early marriage. Dominant patterns include the abduction of women to forcibly wed them, a common practice by al-Shabaab and non-state armed groups. Al-Shabaab has namely been exploiting marriage as a luring mechanism for potential soldiers and wedding them through compulsory arranged marriages to women aged 14-20 from villages under their control by

¹⁹ "The US Military is Ramping Up Its Secret Air War in Somalia, with a Deadly Impact for Civilians on the Ground." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/somalia-zero-accountability-as-civilian-deaths-mount-from-us-air-strikes/.

²⁰ "28 Too Many." *28 Too Many*, www.28toomany.org/country/somalia/.

²¹ "Attitudes and Social Norms on Violence." *UNICEF DATA*, 13 Aug. 2021, data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/attitudes-and-social-norms-on-violence/.

intimidating their parents. Families are aiming for their daughters' marriage, due to the need to ensure the household's economic and financial stability and security, as a child's needs are costly. Nevertheless, the afore-mentioned outdated perceptions also contribute to the prevalence of forced and/or early marriage to an astonishing extent.

Sexual assault is now considered "normal" by Somali women. Sexual assault is defined as "an offence against modesty and sexual honor"²², excluding bodily integrity. Usually, the perpetrators live in close proximity with the subjects or mislead them by appearing in uniform. Minors constitute 55% of survivors whereas surprisingly most culprits are male students. Additionally, rape is largely commodified: women are harassed in exchange for essential goods. Due to stigma though, rape remains unreported.

As easily inferred by the above, GBV in Somalia is the norm. Despite the criminalization of rape, there have been innumerable instances where more flexible laws were attempted to be introduced. Thus, the issue of gender-based violence calls for a systematic resolution.

Child Exploitation

Despite the international efforts to eliminate abuses against children's human rights, Somalia continues to commit grave violations. Specifically, six grave violations can be identified to report on humanitarian violations against children and include the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment or use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access for children²³. Over 2016-2019, 10,462 grave violations²⁴ were committed to children by al-Shabaab and 2,916 were killed or maimed²⁵.

Somali children are admittedly very vulnerable. Due to the raging civil war, their proximity to armed groups, separation from parents and a lack of protective legislative measures, children remain at high risk of violence and exploitation.

²² "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Somalia." *Human Rights Watch*, 13 Jan. 2021, www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/somalia#d30335.

²³ "The Six Grave Violations." *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict – Children and Armed Conflict*, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/.

²⁴ "The Six Grave Violations." *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict – Children and Armed Conflict*, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/.

²⁵ "The Impact of Explosive Weapons on Children in Somalia - Somalia." *ReliefWeb*, reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia.

The abduction and recruitment of child soldiers by al-Shabaab has raised international concern. In 2018, 2,300 children were recruited according to UNICEF²⁶. The militant group invades schools, playgrounds, villages, mosques and demands that children as young as 8 years old are handed over. The abducted children are subjected to grueling training, inadequate diets, punishments and severe indoctrination. They are exploited for direct hostilities, as well as for human shields, suicide bombings, or for planting explosives. The group pursues indoctrination to such an extent that a new curriculum for elementary and secondary schools was introduced. Al-Shabaab even demanded that teachers are retrained after temporarily shutting down the schools according to the UN Security Council's Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG).

Although Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁷ presents the right to education as a fundamental human right, children in Somalia are actively deprived of it. The Somali state does not enforce compulsory schooling nor is education up to secondary level free. Schools are not in manageable proximity and children are distanced from school even further due to exorbitant school fees or practices such as early marriage and attacks.

Thus, poor protective legislation and constant hostilities deem this issue difficult to approach and resolve.

Op-PRESS-ion

The freedom of expression accounts for the 10th Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁸. In Somalia, though, citizens and journalists are experiencing profound censorship and punishments for expressing negative opinions about the government. Thus, Somalia holds the title of the most dangerous African country for media personnel.

During 2010-2019, 50 journalists were killed. Throughout 2020²⁹, journalists were threatened, intimidated, harassed, beaten and arbitrarily arrested, while two were killed. All the parties involved enjoyed impunity. The government has introduced restrictive measures, occasionally denying journalists access to government buildings or crime and accident scenes, as well as interviews with senior government officials. There have been recorded

²⁶ "Child Protection." *UNICEF*, www.unicef.org/somalia/child-protection.

²⁷ United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

²⁸ United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

²⁹ "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Somalia." *Human Rights Watch*, 13 Jan. 2021, www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/somalia#f6277a.

cases of bribery by officials at the Office of the President, as for unfavorable news not to be published.

At least eight journalists have been assassinated since the Somali president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed took over the position. These hostilities have led to countless journalists fleeing the country in search of security.

Somali law criminalizes “fake news” and journalists have been prosecuted in the past on these charges. Some have practised “self-censorship”. Al-Shabaab has banned reports on news that undermine Islamic law. The National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), which is the national intelligence agency of Somalia, also poses a threat, because “you can hide from Al-Shabaab, but you cannot hide from NISA”.³⁰

The same reprisals journalists are consistently facing are also endured by civilians. Those who express ideas about governmental corruption or criticize and undermine its actions are aware that there is a high risk of violent reprisal.

Internally Displaced Persons

In 2020, 2,968,000 Somalis were internally displaced.³¹ The factors that contributed to this number are primarily the ongoing conflict, environmental disasters, human rights breaches and food insecurity. Mogadishu, Somalia’s capital, has the largest concentration of IDPs, namely approximately 500,000 individuals³², with more flooding the capital daily, due to conflict or environmental factors. However, populous IDP camps are also located in Kahda, Weydow and Daynile, for instance.

IDPs are the most vulnerable portion of the Somali population. Insecure infrastructure leads to them requiring humanitarian aid, medical services, food, water and sanitation. Very often it is for them to be subjects of profound GBV, especially in campsites. IDPs usually settle in insufficient accommodation in urban areas where the threat of eviction is constant. Additionally, the facilities do not meet the necessary safety standards. Overcrowded accommodation has resulted in them being disproportionately affected by the

³⁰ "Repression of Press Freedom Entrenches Somalia As One of Most Hostile Places to Be a Journalist." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/somalia-killings-corruption-and-censorship-besiege-media-freedom/.

³¹ "Somalia." *IDMC*, www.internal-displacement.org/countries/somalia.

³² "IDPs in Somalia Surviving by the Grace of God Amidst COVID-19." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/somalia-internally-displaced-people-surviving-by-the-grace-of-god-amidst-covid19/.

COVID-16 pandemic. Due to the loss of livelihood and lack of humanitarian services, their return to their residence is unlikely.

Environmental Catastrophes

As a result of environmental issues and agriculture being hindered by land degradation, food insecurity arises. Somalia is threatened by potentially hazardous waste and the lack of proper mitigation of natural catastrophes leads to issues such as internal displacement.

The primary environmental challenges Somalia is facing are namely deforestation, land degradation, increasing aridity and overgrazing, water scarcity, waste disposal and other effects of climate change. Challenged areas include ecosystem services.

Heavy rainfalls have affected about 82,000 Somalis as of April 2021³³. Many people were displaced and negatively impacted. The environmental catastrophes make the attainment of human rights in Somalia even harder.

Generally, environmental issues have caused problems concerning poverty, public health, food security and nutrition and economic development. For instance, rainfalls devastatingly contribute to the distribution of cholera, illegal and unmonitored waste distribution cause respiratory and odd skin infections and even abdominal hemorrhages. Exports, 80%³⁴ of which are livestock, are hindered because of international bans and droughts.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The United States of America (USA) has been greatly involved in resolving the current situation in Somalia. US Marines have been leading interventions since 1992, but

³³ "Somalia – 400,000 Affected by Floods Says UN." *Floodlist*, floodlist.com/africa/somalia-floods-may-june-2021.

³⁴ Beier, Anja-Christina. "Environmental and Climate Change Policy Brief Somalia." *Google*, www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiYqZmBgbDyAhVVgf0HHRCZAOMQFnoECBUQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Faidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se%2FdigitalAssets%2F1725%2F1725294_environment-policy-brief-somalia-2012.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2Dyc_Mwg-Xk3uuE8lrzO8z.

fully retreated from the country in March 1994, due to overwhelming fatalities. The USA's main objective is to ensure that Somalia does not become a haven for terrorist groups. However, civilian casualties have raised moral doubts about American operations.

United Kingdom

Through its aid, the United Kingdom (UK) aims to develop a viable and prosperous state in Somalia. The UK, concerned about piracy in the Somali coasts and terrorism, developed a strategy, under the National Security Council's (NSC) authority, which provides humanitarian aid, with a focus on areas of high danger. The state is Somalia's second most prominent donor, having donated £147 million over 2019-2020; however, in 2021³⁵ the UK issued cuts in donations and funding, which were considered controversial and threatened the operation of health clinics amid COVID-19.

Germany

German aid in Somalia aims to improve resilience and the humanitarian situation in the long run. The financial aid, which amounted to €57.6 million in 2020³⁶, has helped prevent famine, severe droughts, and the effects of COVID-19, while supporting the efforts of the Somali authorities, international actors, and civil society. Furthermore, Germany supports the country's democratisation.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation and Somalia do not share very close ties; however, the former has humanitarily contributed to the current situation. In the past, the Russian Federation had donated 26 tons of medical equipment and medicine. It also helped curb piracy during 2008³⁷ crisis; however, an incident in 2010³⁸ where Russian commandos

³⁵ "Somalia Health Clinics Will Close Due to UK Aid Cuts, Charity Warns." *The Guardian*, 2 Mar. 2021, www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/02/somalia-health-clinics-will-close-due-to-uk-aid-cuts-charity-warns.

³⁶ Amt, Auswärtiges. "German Mission to Kenya, Somalia and The Seychelles." *German Mission to Kenya, Somalia and the Seychelles - Federal Foreign Office*, nairobi.diplo.de/ke-en/general-information/somalia/-/1891256.

³⁷ Ramani, Samuel. "ENGAGED OPPORTUNISM" RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA." Foreign Policy Research Institute, www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjSzeeswrDyAhUHgf0HHacBD-oQFnoECAMQAAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fpri.org%2Fwp-

captured Somali pirates off the coast of Yemen was a threat to the states' bilateral relations. The Russian Federation is described as an "engaged opportunist" in the Horn of Africa, something that raises questions about its help to Somalia.

People's Republic of China

Over the years, the relations between China and Somalia have been flourishing. The country has donated \$10 million in emergency food aid and more, to support IDPs. Commercial and cultural exchanges are constant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has provided immense support and assistance to the country; in April 2021³⁹, Somalia received a donation of 200,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine.

Eritrea

The complex relations and the hostilities of Somalia and Ethiopia and Ethiopia and Eritrea respectively had led to Somalia and Eritrea not establishing concrete diplomatic relations. Somalia has been claiming Ethiopia whereas Eritrea is fighting for its independence from Ethiopia after it was annexed in 1952⁴⁰. However, recently the UN reported on Somalia's involvement in the Tigray war, despite it being a breach of international law and Somalia claiming that it is an internal matter of the two countries. After 15 years of animosity, Somalia and Eritrea signed an agreement to restore their diplomatic relations in 2018⁴¹.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is one of the most active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) regarding campaigning and voicing the need for reforms in Somalia. It accurately

content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F06%2Fengaged-opportunism-russias-role-in-the-horn-of-africa.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0Bxrkr3zw0LEMNRlputk. Accessed 2020.

³⁸ "Somalia Says Relations With Russia May Be Harmed Over Pirates' Treatment." *Voice of America*, 20 May 2010, www.voanews.com/africa/somalia-says-relations-russia-may-be-harmed-over-pirates-treatment.

³⁹ "Somalia Receives China-donated Sinopharm Vaccines - Xinhua | English.news.cn." *新华网_让新闻离你更近*, www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2021-04/12/c_139873472.htm.

⁴⁰ "16. Ethiopia/Eritrea (1950-1993)." *University of Central Arkansas — UCA*, uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/ethiopiaeritrea-1950-1993/.

⁴¹ "Eritrea and Somalia Agree to Restore Diplomatic Relations." *Breaking News, World News and Video from Al Jazeera*, 30 July 2018, www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/7/30/eritrea-and-somalia-agree-to-restore-diplomatic-relations.

reports and comments on the array of multilateral humanitarian violations and repeatedly calls for change.

Human Rights Watch

Likewise, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) plays a fundamental role in investigating and reporting human rights violations in Somalia to inflict change. Being one of the largest NGOs globally, the HRW's annual World Reports⁴² touching on Somalia has allowed for greater awareness of the issue.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

Established by the UN Security Council, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia's (UNSOM) mandate includes policy advice on peacebuilding to the government and other bodies, security sector reform, democratization, rule of law and more. Among other functions, the UNSOM promotes inclusivity and respect by the Somali government.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab is an extremist, insurgent Jihad group which aims to create an Islamic state in Somalia. The group is responsible for most human rights violations, committing inhumane crimes, such as indiscriminate attacks and recruiting child soldiers. Attacks continue to this day.

Al-Qaeda

Similarly to al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda is a "broad-based militant Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s"⁴³. The two groups formed strong ties between 2006-2008 and declared an alliance in 2012.⁴⁴ The group led attacks on

⁴² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Human Rights Watch." *Refworld*, 12 July 2021, www.refworld.org/publisher,HRW,,SOM,50ffbce5190,,0.html.

⁴³ "Al-Qaeda | History, Meaning, Terrorist Attacks, & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/al-Qaeda.

⁴⁴ "Al-Shabab." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 Feb. 2009, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab.

peacemakers sent by the UN and the USA in December 1992⁴⁵ and continued targeting Somalia. Hostilities today are commonplace.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
October 1969	Muhammad Siad Barre assumes power in Somalia through a military coup, following the former president's assassination.
July 1977	The Somali National Army, led by Barre, invades Ethiopia's Ogaden region. That is when the Ogaden war between Somalia and Ethiopia began.
March 1978	Ethiopian forces prompt the Somalis to retreat from the area. Ethiopia's victory resulted in 500,000 people being displaced.
January 1991	Muhammad Siad Barre is ousted, leading to profound political instability that steadily evolved into a civil war.
24 th April 1992	The UN Security Council adopts resolution 751 which authorizes the creation of the United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM I).
1992	Approximately 350,000 Somalis perish due to disease, starvation and the hostilities of the civil war.
28 th March 1995	All UN peacekeepers have been officially withdrawn from Somalia, having failed in their mission.
2000	Poor water sanitation leads to a cholera outbreak which is responsible for the death of hundreds.
2005	Food shipments are hijacked near the Somali coast and food aid programmes, such as the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), are suspended.
23 rd August 2008	Two freelance media workers and their interpreter are kidnapped in Mogadishu and released after a year.
2009	AMISOM forces are accused of opening fire against civilians and indiscriminately shooting them.
July 2011	The UN officially declares famine in three parts of Somalia.
October 2 nd , 2015	Somalia ratifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
July 2018	The residents of Xaradheere refuse to provide al-Shabaab with children, resulting in fatalities and displacements. During the year, 2,300 children are recruited as child soldiers.
12 th July 2019	Two journalists are killed in an attack at a hotel by al-Shabaab.

⁴⁵ "View of Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn | Journal of Conflict Studies." *Centre for Digital Scholarship Journals*, journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/5655/6658.

September 2020	3.8 million Somalis are experiencing severe food insecurity.
27 th May 2021	The first Presidential elections, although indirect, are announced by President Mohamed after approximately 50 years.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- **A/HRC/RES/39/23 (28 September 2018):**

This resolution was adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2018, without a vote, on the topic of “Assistance to Somalia in the field of human rights”⁴⁶. The resolution appears to express concern over the wide variety of human rights violations in Somalia and it particularly emphasizes the committed humanitarian abuses on children and journalists while condemning impunity. It calls upon the government to engage in the necessary acts and implementations, with the assistance and support of the international community, to mitigate human rights violations.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴⁷, an international human rights treaty, secures some primary human rights, such as the right to education, fair and just conditions of work, an adequate standard of living, the highest attainable standard of health and social security. Somalia has ratified the covenant; however, it has not abided by its declarations.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

Since its establishment, the UNSOM has been empowering the government to abide by international humanitarian law. UNSOM’s Human Rights and Protection Group (HRPG), working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), has published reports on protecting civilians and enforced the creation of a National Human Rights Commission. A monthly brief is also issued which reports on civilian casualties and general concerns.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ "OHCHR | Session39 39th Session of the Human Rights Council - Resolutions, Decisions and President's Statements." www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session39/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx.

⁴⁷ "OHCHR | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx.

⁴⁸ "UNSOM." *Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs*, dppa.un.org/en/mission/unsom.

United Nations Operation in Somalia II

The United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) had a similar mandate; establishing a secure environment in Somalia for humanitarian assistance. It operated from March 1993 to March 1995, the year that all UN troops were removed. However, it did not mitigate the violence nor did it address food insecurity, despite shedding light on a forgotten crisis. Overall, UNOSOM II failed in its mission.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

United Nations Operations

The UNOSOM and UNSOM are the two primary peacekeeping operations run by the UN in Somalia. The UNOSOM was proven ineffective, seeing as the fatalities of peacemakers were that profound that all troops had to be removed. Thus, its goal was not attained. On the contrary, the UNSOM has reported on successful steps towards bettering the current situation.

Somalia National Peace Conference

The Somalia National Peace Conference (SNPC) was a series of meetings that took place from 20 April to 5 May 2000 with the aim of reconciliation. The conference aimed to bring together warlords from the factions of the Somali civil war to put an end to it. The conference achieved a political breakthrough, producing a Transitional National Government, the first since the 1991 coup.

Djibouti Talks

The Djibouti talks were UN-mediated talks in 2008 between the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) regarding the withdrawal of Somali troops from Ethiopia. Although a consensus was reached, al-Shabaab denounced the agreement with the result that the following years were catastrophic for Somalia.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The situation of human rights in Somalia is a topic of multilateral nature, where inequality, inequity, oppression and ignorance towards international law are systematically established. Therefore, endorsing and implementing measures that encourage reforms and more inclusivity and equity is vital.

Gender-Based Violence

GBV is one of the primary problems that have yet to be resolved despite the considerable efforts made. Redefining rape as a crime to bodily integrity is key to eliminating its stigma and enforcing survivors to report it.

Building concrete data collection and management methods is fundamental. Through collecting data from more diverse locations in Somalia for the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, more insight on national GBV patterns is acquired, which allows for proper handling.

Encouraging Somalia to ratify the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and engaging in community conversations with religious and traditional leaders can pave the way to mitigating GBV in Somalia.

Child Exploitation

Eliminating child exploitation will require a multilateral approach. International pressure must be applied so that Somalia ratifies all remaining treaties on the topic. Adults should ensure that children remain protected and that they assert by all means how unacceptable child recruitment is.

Somalia should be encouraged to abide by the existing principles⁴⁹ and operating procedures for the treatment of survivors. Of course, adequate infrastructure for the support of survivors is fundamental.

Accountability

Increasing accountability in the security sector is indispensable for change. Vetting mechanisms for security personnel are vital to ensuring that power is not abused. Training

⁴⁹ "Fact Sheet 2: What Do the Paris Principles Say?" *Towards a Region Where Everyone Enjoys Human Rights | Asia Pacific Forum*, www.asiapacificforum.net/support/what-are-nhris/paris-principles/.

military professionals to abide by international and humanitarian law and issuing impartial investigations when allegations arise can also be impactful.

The Somali government should be encouraged to draft laws that specify the mandate of its security agencies in order to mitigate ill-treatment.

Internally Displaces Persons

IDPs still remain an issue of great significance. Far-reaching recommendations include improving the collaboration of the FGS and local governments to begin resolving the issue at a regional level.

Local governments must eliminate unlawful evictions by developing alternative housing options, something that can be achieved by the funding of development.

The international community should also be prompted to sign treaties on how Somali IDP flows can be properly and respectfully managed abroad.

Finally, the creation and organisation of more camping grounds that are adequately equipped with primary necessities and staff, to ensure the overall safety of all individuals are of great significance.

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