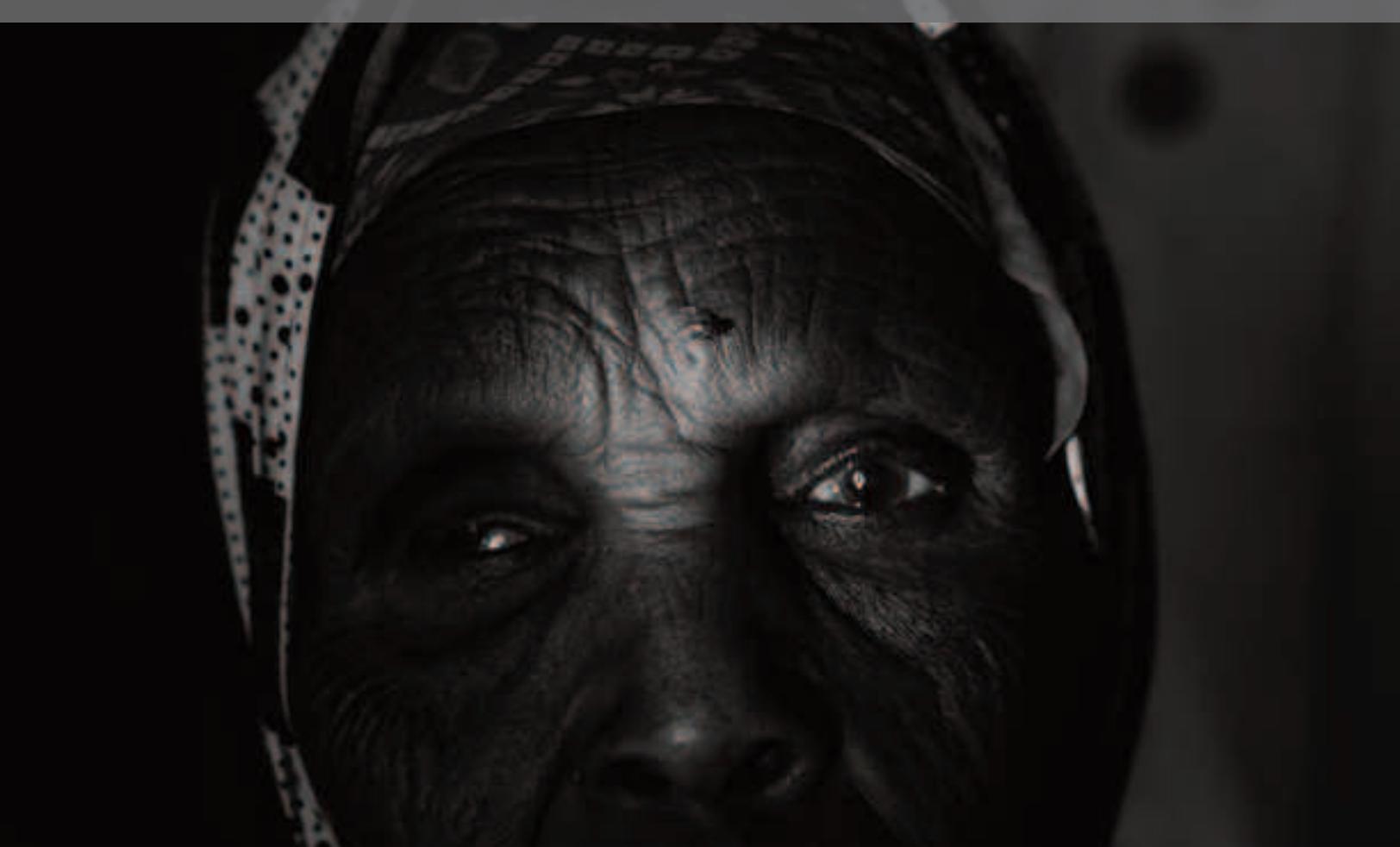


DECEMBER 2008



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SO MUCH TO FEAR

War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia

H U M A N
R I G H T S
W A T C H

Somalia is a nation in ruins, mired in one of the world's most brutal armed conflicts of recent years. Two long years of escalating bloodshed and destruction have devastated the country's people and laid waste to its capital Mogadishu. Ethiopian, Somali transitional government, and insurgent forces have all violated the laws of war with impunity, forcing ordinary Somalis to bear the brunt of their armed struggle.

Beyond its own borders Somalia has had a reputation for violent chaos since the collapse of its last central government in 1991. When Ethiopian military forces intervened there in late 2006 the country already bore the scars of 16 conflict-ridden years without a government.

But the last two years are not just another typical chapter in Somalia's troubled history. The human rights and humanitarian catastrophe facing Somalia today threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of Somalis on a scale not witnessed since the early 1990s.



Photographs by Marcus Bleasdale/VII



A young Somali refugee in Dadaab, Kenya.



A Somali girl collects water for her mother in the Dadaab refugee camp.



In December 2006 Ethiopian military forces, acting at the invitation of the internationally recognized but wholly ineffectual Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), intervened in Somalia against the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU was a coalition of shari'a (Islamic law) courts that had taken control of Mogadishu in June 2006 after ousting the various warlords who controlled most of the city. At the time the ICU had begun what might have been a dramatic rise to power across much of south-central Somalia. But Ethiopia viewed that development with great alarm; leading figures associated with the ICU had openly threatened war on Ethiopia and talked of annexing the whole of Ethiopia's eastern Somali region.

Ethiopia's ally the TFG was corrupt and feeble and it welcomed the Ethiopian military support. In 2006 it had a physical presence in only two towns, provided no useful services to Somalis, and with the ICU's ascendancy was becoming increasingly irrelevant. The United States, which denounced ICU leaders for harboring wanted terrorists, supported Ethiopia's actions with political backing and military assistance.

The Ethiopian military easily routed the ICU's militias. For a few days it appeared that they had won an easy victory and that the TFG had ridden Ethiopia's coattails into power in Mogadishu. But the first insurgent attacks against Ethiopian and TFG forces began almost immediately and rapidly built towards a protracted conflict that has since grown worse with every passing month. Opposition forces coalesced around a broad group of ICU leaders, former parliamentarians, and others known as the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, around the fundamentalist Al-Shabaab insurgent group and around numerous other largely autonomous armed factions.

During the past two years life in Mogadishu has settled into a horrifying daily rhythm with Ethiopian, TFG, and insurgent forces conducting urban firefights and pounding one another with artillery fire with no regard for the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in the city. The bombardments are largely indiscriminate, lobbed into densely populated neighborhoods with no adequate effort made to guide them to their intended targets. Insurgents lob mortar shells from populated neighborhoods that crash through the roofs of families living near TFG police stations and Ethiopian bases. Ethiopian and TFG forces respond with sustained salvos of mortar, artillery, and rocket fire that destroy homes and their inhabitants near the launching points of the fast-departed insurgents. Fighting regularly breaks out between insurgents and Ethiopian or TFG forces and all too often civilians are caught in the crossfire.

The warring parties in Somalia have been responsible for numerous serious human rights abuses. TFG security forces

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ACCOUNTS FROM
SOMALI REFUGEES
IN KENYA



There was heavy fighting in Mogadishu, especially in our neighborhood. The Al-Shabaab militia was fighting against the Ethiopians and the government forces. Young girls were being raped, houses were being looted. The fighting was non-stop. The Ethiopians killed some members of my family. That's why my cousin and I left Mogadishu. My uncle and my grandfather were killed by the Ethiopians who came into our neighborhood and entered our house.

The Ethiopians had been ambushed and attacked with explosives as they passed by our street. They blamed the locals for the attack. They entered the houses in the area and killed many people. They tied us up with ropes and killed my father, uncle and grandfather inside our home. I watched as they were shot and killed. The Ethiopians tied our hands behind our backs and laid us on the ground on our chest.

We fled the city. We arrived in the outskirts of Mogadishu. We built a small hut as a shelter. Then the situation in the area deteriorated. There was no food or water. We used to work in the market to support our family. My grandmother, who raised me since I was small, had a makeshift stall, but it was destroyed by fire. When the fighting escalated, we were forced to flee and come here.

This teenage girl (above) and her cousin (left) now live as refugees in Nairobi after fleeing Somalia.



We were sitting down for lunch. I was serving the lunch. As I brought the food to the table, a rocket landed on our house. Seven members of the family were killed instantly and seven others survived and fled the house.

We were in two separate rooms. The seven who were killed were in one room. The rest, including me, my husband and two of my children were in another room.

We were not expecting to be bombed that day. There was fighting in another neighborhood far from us. Then our area came under bombardment. We were shocked when the artillery shell landed on the house. The impact of the explosion was huge. All of a sudden we realized that several members of our family were killed and my husband was injured.

He is my husband and the father of my children, he is 55 years old. He is suffering from mental illness since the death of his children...There is no care for him, and there is nothing I can do for him...He is in chains all the time. We have to restrain him to protect him from other people and from himself, as he sometimes becomes violent.

This 55-year-old Somali refugee became mentally ill after he witnessed the deaths of two of his children during a bombing attack in Mogadishu.



I seek refuge in Allah from this catastrophe.

As you can see, I'm frail.

I don't know why God turned them against one another.

Endless devastation.

People are being killed.

All of the people are fighting,

I don't know what they are fighting about.

They took me and put me in a vehicle that brought me from Mogadishu.

The other passengers helped bring me here.

We came here, as you see, my son.

None of my children survived.

I have no other relatives with me, except this girl.

This girl is looking after me.

This girl? This girl is my daughter in law.

She is the only one I have.

You can see, my son, I am desperate.

This 90-year-old woman has been in the Dagahaley refugee camp for three months without registration. New arrivals at the refugee camp must sometimes wait weeks to be registered and be eligible to receive food assistance. Many cannot access the registration system at all.



If a person leaves the house in the morning, by the end of the day they're either in the hospital or killed. The insurgents will kill them, or the government soldiers, or the Ethiopians. Or street robbers will kill them.

One day, I was walking down the road. Some men had laid a mine in the road. It was meant for the Ethiopian troops when they passed by. The mine exploded and I was hit and thrown onto the side of the road. A woman picked me up. After that, I found myself in the hospital.

After some time, I left the hospital and came home. My brother used to go to the mosque.

One day masked men with guns threatened him and his Quran teacher. They said join us in the Jihad; you will be given some money. Some people joined them and others refused.

Then threats started and there were killings. The teacher was threatened. They told him if he didn't stop teaching the students, they would kill him. Then we all left.

When I grow up, I'll be whatever Allah wishes for me.

But I'd like to be a doctor.

This 12-year-old boy (above) fled Mogadishu with his 15-year-old brother (right). They now live as refugees in Kenya.



We had to leave Mogadishu because of a pervasive sense of insecurity and fear. Especially in my neighborhood, where the Al-Shabaab militia members were telling the youths they had to join them or they would be considered traitors, and you would be killed. The youths in my neighborhood who joined the militia came to me repeatedly and urged me to join. I went to Quranic school and I also attended Islamic lessons at the mosque. Al-Shabaab would come to the mosque after prayers to urge me to join. My mother heard about it, and she said we can't be here any longer; we should leave. There was also continuous heavy fighting.

The people in the neighborhood started shooting whenever they saw the police in uniform in front of your doorstep and we'd be in the crossfire.

Al-Shabaab came to my Quran teacher. They said, "We want you to persuade the students at the school to join Al-Shabaab." The teacher and I left.

One reason I left was that I was stopped at gunpoint in front of the mosque. The militia members asked me, "What are you up to. We can't understand whose side you are on or where you stand?" I told my mother what happened and she said, "I'm short of money, but as soon as I get more we will leave."

Whenever I was on the street, going to school, playing soccer, that's when they would confront me. They would say, "Forces are invading your country. You are Muslim - know your responsibility and what you are required to do." You just fear for your life, and that's why we left.

Somalia is worse now than when we left, everyone is worried now. Here at least we are not worried for our lives, there is no fear for our security. We live here and I go to school.

We hope that peace is restored in the future and we pray for that.

and militias have terrorized the population by subjecting citizens to murder, rape, assault, and looting. Insurgent fighters subject perceived critics or TFG collaborators—including people who took menial jobs in TFG offices or sold water to Ethiopian soldiers—to death threats and targeted killings. The discipline of Ethiopian soldiers in Somalia has broken down to the point where they increasingly are responsible for violent criminality. Victims have no way to file a complaint—the TFG police force has itself been implicated in many of the worst abuses, including the arbitrary arrests of ordinary civilians to extort ransom from their families.

Two years of unconstrained warfare and violent rights abuses have helped to generate an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis, without adequate response. Since January 2007 at least 870,000 civilians have fled the chaos in Mogadishu alone—two-thirds of the city's population. Across south-central Somalia, 1.1 million Somalis are displaced from their homes. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are living in squalid camps along the Mogadishu-Afgooye road that have themselves become theaters of brutal fighting.

Thousands of Somali refugees pour across the country's borders every month fleeing the relentless violence. Freelance militias have robbed, murdered, and raped displaced persons on the roads south towards Kenya. Hundreds of Somalis have drowned this year in desperate attempts to cross the Gulf of Aden by boat to Yemen. In spite of the dangers, thousands make these journeys every month. As a result the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya are now the largest in the world with a collective population of more than 220,000.

Somalia's humanitarian needs are enormous. Humanitarian organizations estimate that more than 3.25 million Somalis—over 40 percent of the population of south-central Somalia—will be in urgent need of assistance by the end of 2008. But violence, particularly targeted attacks on aid workers, is preventing the flow of needed aid. This past year has seen a wave of death threats and targeted killings against civil society activists and humanitarian workers in Somalia. At least 25 humanitarian workers have been killed in 2008 and the threat of more attacks has driven many of the very people Somalia most needs in this time of crisis to flee the country.

As shocking as these statistics are, the full horror of the crisis in Somalia can only be understood through the experiences of the ordinary people whose lives it has shattered. Human Rights Watch interviewed a young boy whose wounds from an insurgent bomb attack were festering in Kenya's under-resourced refugee camps. Others saw their relatives cut down by stray bullets during wild and indiscriminate exchanges of gunfire. One young man saw his parents shot and killed for arguing with TFG security personnel. A pregnant teenage girl told Human Rights Watch that she was gang raped by TFG

forces. Another young man was overwhelmed with rage after seeing his sisters and mother raped by Ethiopian soldiers who had killed his father.

No party to the conflict in Somalia has made any significant effort to hold accountable those responsible for war crimes and serious human rights abuses. The grim reality of widespread impunity for serious crimes is compounded by the fact that both TFG and insurgent forces are fragmented into multiple sets of largely autonomous actors. TFG security forces are not regularly paid and often act as freelance militias rather than disciplined security forces.

Somalia's conflict has international as well as domestic dimensions. For Somalia's regional neighbors—Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya—the conflict creates immediate security risks. Regional and western governments are currently trying to play an active role in supporting peace talks between the TFG and opposition groups in Djibouti. With key warring factions refusing to take part, however, these have made virtually no progress.

This report recognizes that there is no “quick fix” to bring about respect for human rights, stability, and peace in Somalia. However this does not justify a lack of political will to engage with problems that past international involvement in Somalia helped create, let alone policies by outside powers that are making the situation worse. Many key foreign governments have played deeply destructive roles in Somalia and bear responsibility for exacerbating the conflict.

The poisonous relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea have greatly contributed to Somalia's crisis. Eritrea has treated Somalia primarily as a useful theater of proxy war against Ethiopian forces in the country, while one of Ethiopia's reasons for intervening was a fear that an ICU-dominated Somalia would align itself with Eritrea and shelter Ethiopian rebel fighters as Eritrea has done.

Ethiopia has legitimate security interests in Somalia, but has not lived up to its responsibility to prevent and respond to war crimes and serious human rights abuses by its forces in the country. Ethiopia's government has failed to even acknowledge, let alone investigate and ensure accountability for the crimes of its force. This only serves to entrench the impunity that encourages more abuses.

United States policy towards Somalia largely revolves around fears of international terrorist networks using the country as a base. The United States directly backed Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia and has provided strong political backing to the TFG. But US officials have refused to meaningfully confront or even publicly acknowledge the extent of Ethiopian military and TFG abuses in the country. The US approach is not only failing to address the rights and



suffering of millions of Somalis but is counterproductive in its own terms, breeding the very extremism that it is supposed to defeat.

The European Union and key European governments have also failed to address the human rights dimensions of the crisis, with many officials hoping that somehow unfettered support to abusive TFG forces will improve stability.

Now is the time for fresh thinking and new political will on Somalia. Human Rights Watch calls upon all of the parties to the conflict in Somalia to end the patterns of war crimes and human rights abuses that have harmed countless Somalis and to ensure accountability for past abuses. This can only come to pass with much stronger and more principled engagement by key governments that have hitherto turned a blind eye to the extent and nature of conflict-related abuses in Somalia.

A mother holds an x-ray revealing where a bullet lodged in her son's spine. He was wounded during an attack in Mogadishu and is now paralyzed.

International engagement must take into account the rights and needs of the Somali people. It should include better monitoring of past and ongoing abuses and, as a starting point, a commitment at the UN Security Council to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate serious crimes in Somalia. Key governments should also use their diplomatic leverage with Ethiopian, TFG, and opposition leaders to insist upon accountability and an end to the daily attacks upon Somalia's beleaguered citizens.

In the short term, Human Rights Watch calls upon the TFG to immediately suspend officials implicated in serious human rights abuses pending the outcome of independent investigations. The Ethiopian government should launch a full



investigation into abuses by Ethiopian military forces in Somalia and immediately halt the practice of indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas. Insurgent groups should immediately halt targeted killings of civilians, indiscriminate attacks, and obstructions to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In Washington, the new administration of US President Barack Obama should urgently review US policy in Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa and break with the failed approach of his predecessor. European governments should follow suit, beginning by reversing the harmful actions of European Commission policymakers who have funneled donor money to abusive TFG security forces. The UN Security Council should establish a Commission of Inquiry to map widespread international crimes and pave the way for ending the impunity that has helped create the catastrophic situation that prevails today.

Somali refugees at the Dagahaley camp in Dadaab line up for registration by UNHCR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no “quick fix” to Somalia’s complex and multilayered conflict, but a broad array of local, regional, and international actors have roles to play in making possible an end to the abuses described in this report. Many of the same actors had a hand in laying the groundwork for the catastrophic situation in Somalia to begin with. The primary responsibility for ending the ongoing abuses that have marked the conflict lies with the parties who are fighting it. But this is only possible with strong pressure and support from key foreign governments and multilateral institutions.

International actors must first abandon policies that have exacerbated Somalia’s downward spiral. They must also insist upon an end to the impunity that has fueled the worst abuses—and the right place to start is by moving the UN Security Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry to document abuses and lay the groundwork for

accountability. The underlying causes of Somalia’s human rights catastrophe are numerous and varied. Understanding those causes and how they have built upon each other is a prerequisite to any future effort to ensure accountability for past abuses and prevent similar patterns of abuse from emerging in the future. UN Security Council action to establish a Commission of Inquiry would be the clearest signal the international community can send that it is serious about wanting to see accountability for war crimes and serious human rights abuses in Somalia.

Over the longer term, key actors including the United States and European states should fundamentally rethink their flawed policy approaches to the Horn of Africa as a whole. These deeper issues are discussed below.

TO THE TRANSITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA

- **Launch an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into allegations of serious human rights abuses committed by TFG security forces. Immediately suspend from office: Commissioner of Police Abdi Qeybdid and National Security Agency head Mohammed Warsame Darwish pending the outcome of this investigation. Hold accountable: TFG officials, whatever their rank, implicated in abuses.**
- **Immediately issue clear, public orders and take all necessary steps to ensure that all TFG security forces and militias comply with international human rights and humanitarian law, including by ending extrajudicial killings, rapes, mistreatment of civilians, and pillaging and looting of civilian property. Forces currently responsible for such abuses include the National Security Agency, the Somali Police Force, the Presidential Guard, and militias beholden to TFG officials including the former mayor of Mogadishu.**
- **Facilitate the access of civilians to humanitarian assistance by permitting full freedom of movement to humanitarian agencies and ending harassment and other interference with their relief work.**
- **Cease all mistreatment of detainees and ensure that they have access to family members and adequate medical care while in detention. Immediately and publicly communicate these instructions to all police and other security forces.**
- **Immediately close the NSA detention facility at the Baarista Hisbiga, where abusive conditions of detention are systematic. Charge with cognizable criminal offenses or release all current NSA detainees. Those charged should be transferred to other detention facilities.**
- **Immediately allow independent monitoring of detention facilities.**
- **Invite the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to increase the number of staff monitoring and reporting on human rights abuses in Somalia.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE ALLIANCE FOR THE RE-LIBERATION OF SOMALIA

- Issue clear orders and take all necessary steps to ensure that armed forces under ARS control comply with international humanitarian law and halt all human rights abuses.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that forces under ARS control, including their commanders, are held accountable for violations of international humanitarian law and serious human rights abuses.
- Immediately allow independent monitoring of detention facilities in areas under ARS control.
- Ensure that all civilians in need have access to humanitarian assistance by permitting humanitarian agencies freedom of movement.

TO AL-SHABAAB AND OTHER INSURGENT GROUPS

- Take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, including by:
 - Ceasing using civilians as “human shields” or placing them at unnecessary risk by launching attacks and firing mortars from heavily populated areas;
 - Ending mortar and other attacks that do not or cannot discriminate between combatants and civilians;
 - Facilitating the departure of civilians to safer areas during military operations;
 - Halting death threats and targeted killings of civilians, including journalists, aid workers, and civilian TFG officials.
- Appropriately hold to account insurgent commanders and personnel who commit violations of international humanitarian law.
- Facilitate the access of civilians to humanitarian assistance by permitting full freedom of movement to humanitarian agencies and ending harassment and other interference with their relief work.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

- Issue clear public orders and take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, including by:
 - Ending all attacks, particularly artillery and rocket bombardments, that do not or cannot discriminate between combatants and civilians or in which the expected civilian harm is excessive compared to the use of concrete and direct military gain anticipated;
 - Ceasing placing civilians at unnecessary risk by basing Ethiopian troops near heavily populated areas;
 - Acting to prevent abuses by TFG forces during joint military operations, such as house-to-house searches. In particular, cease the use of area bombardments of populated areas of Mogadishu.
- Investigate and discipline or prosecute as appropriate military personnel, regardless of rank, who are responsible for violations of international humanitarian law including those who may be held accountable as a matter of command responsibility.
- Ensure that all commanders and troops receive appropriate training in international humanitarian law.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, THE AFRICAN UNION, AND THE ARAB LEAGUE

- Publicly condemn violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties to the conflict in Somalia.
- Support measures to promote accountability and end impunity for serious abuses in Somalia, including through the establishment of an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to investigate and map serious crimes and recommend further measures to improve accountability.
- Publicly and privately demand that TFG, Ethiopian, and ARS officials take all necessary and appropriate steps to halt serious abuses by forces under their control and ensure accountability for abuses where they do occur.
- Specifically call on the Transitional Federal Government to ensure that their forces cease abuses against all persons in custody.
- In the case of the European Commission, refrain from applying any pressure on the United Nations Development Program to provide additional direct support to the abusive Somali Police Force and other TFG forces.
- In the case of the US, investigate reports of abuses by Ethiopian forces, identify the specific units involved, and ensure that they receive no assistance or training from the United States until the Ethiopian government takes effective measures to bring those responsible to justice, as required under the “Leahy law,” which prohibits US military assistance to foreign military units that violate human rights with impunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- Establish an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to investigate and map serious crimes and recommend further measures to improve accountability.
- Publicly condemn violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties to the conflict in Somalia.
- Encourage the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to expand its capacity to carry out human rights monitoring and reporting work on Somalia.

TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

- Support measures to promote accountability and end impunity for serious abuses in Somalia, including through the establishment of an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to investigate and map serious crimes and recommend further measures to improve accountability.
- Support a further increase in the number of staff from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights monitoring and publicly reporting on human rights abuses in Somalia.

TO THE UN POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA (UNPOS)

- In supporting the Djibouti peace process, ensure that UNPOS does not take actions that would undermine its neutrality, which is vital for humanitarian agencies operating in Somalia.
- Refrain from applying any pressure on the United Nations Development Program to provide additional direct support to the abusive Somali Police Force and other TFG forces.

TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP)

- Do not provide any direct financial or material assistance to Somali Police Force officers who have not received UNDP-sponsored training as police officers that includes training on human rights in police work.
- Ensure that all TFG personnel participating in UNDP-funded training programs have been screened for human rights abuses.
- Halt all direct financial support to the Somali Police Force through UNDP's Rule of Law and Security (RoLS) program until, at a minimum, the following conditions are met:
 - Effective mechanisms are put in place to ensure an effective response to allegations of police abuses as they occur by donor governments supporting RoLS;
 - Commissioner of Police Abdi Qeybidid is suspended from office pending the results of an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into patterns of widespread human rights abuse implicating officers of the Somali Police Force;
 - Independent monitors are granted unfettered access to all police detention facilities;
 - TFG and police officials adequately respond to incidents of human rights abuse implicating Somali Police Force officers that have already been brought to their attention.
 - Effective mechanisms are put in place to ensure the transparency of any stipend payments made by UNDP to Somali Police Force officers.

TO THE UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

- Increase the number of human rights officers monitoring and publicly reporting on human rights abuses in Somalia, and include staff with expertise on child and minority protection and sexual and gender-based violence.
- Ensure that monitoring of and public reporting on patterns of human rights abuse remains a central focus of OHCHR's efforts on Somalia. To the extent that monitoring inside Somalia is not possible due to security concerns, make a concerted effort to focus on documenting the experiences of refugees in Kenya, Djibouti, and Yemen and of displaced people in Somaliland.

SO MUCH TO FEAR

War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia

The past two years of warfare have left Somalia devastated and on the brink of even greater calamity. The increasingly brutal conflict involves Ethiopian military forces and the Somali Transitional Federal Government against a powerful but fragmented insurgency. Civilians trapped between the warring parties bear the brunt of the fighting, especially in the urban battleground of Mogadishu, the Somali capital. Up to 870,000 Somalis have been driven from the city since early 2007. More than one million civilians have been displaced across south-central Somalia and thousands killed. And while the conflict rages unabated and largely ignored, a humanitarian crisis partly generated by the abuses threatens to spiral out of control.

All of the warring parties are responsible for serious abuses that amount to war crimes under international law. Insurgent forces in Somalia have routinely launched mortar attacks from populated areas, using local residents as “human shields.” Ethiopian and transitional government forces have responded with indiscriminate bombardments of entire neighborhoods. Transitional government and Ethiopian forces have also targeted civilians for murder, rape, looting, and other violent abuses with increasing frequency in 2008. Insurgent fighters have threatened and killed civilians they see as unsympathetic to their cause—including humanitarian workers trying to assist the more than three million Somalis in desperate need of food aid. Based on more than 100 interviews with victims, witnesses, officials, and analysts, “So Much to Fear”: War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia documents patterns of deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians by all sides to the conflict.

“*So Much to Fear*” also analyzes the international community’s failure to respond adequately to the escalating crisis and describes how the policies of some key actors, including governments in the region, the United States, and the European Union, have actually made the situation worse. Human Rights Watch calls on the United States and European countries to urgently re-evaluate their policy approach to Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa, and for the UN Security Council and other key actors to demand an end to the impunity that fuels the worst abuses.

For full report go to: <http://hrw.org/en/reports/2008/12/08/so-much-fear-o>

Cover photo: A 60-year-old woman who fled the violence in Somalia now lives as a refugee in Kenya.

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