

The Horn of Africa: Current Conditions and U.S. Policy

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Chairman Payne, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the sub-committee, let me first express my appreciation for the opportunity to testify before your sub-committee. The Horn of Africa region is by far the most unstable region in Sub-Saharan Africa today. Millions of people have died and many more have been displaced or forced into exile. One does not have to look in a refugee camp in Kenya for a Somali or Ethiopian. Hundreds of thousands of people from the Horn of Africa region are now second generation American citizens. Some have returned to help their fellow brothers and sisters as humanitarian workers, human rights advocates, and journalists. Many have lost their lives. Ibrahim Addou, an American Somali, is one such person.

In early 2007, at the height of the Ethiopian invasion, Ibrahim wrote “People are living in a nightmare. The peace and the stability brought by the Islamic Courts has now been replaced by anarchy and chaos. Killings, robbing, raping, and looting are part of the daily life.” In December 2009, he was killed in a suicide attack in Mogadishu along with over a dozen students, teachers, and two ministers. A number of Somali journalists covering the crisis in Somalia have been assassinated by insurgents. Dozens of humanitarian and human rights advocates have been killed or injured. I am making this point because what has gotten the attention of the media is the dozen or so people who went back to kill and maim their own people and not those who died while helping others.

The Horn of Africa region has been marred by civil wars, internal political turmoil, inter-state wars, famine, and man-made humanitarian disasters in recent decades. The region has also emerged as a place highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks and is considered a safe haven for international terrorist groups. The suffering in the Horn of Africa is largely manmade and some of the conflicts were triggered, in part, by failed leadership. Ethiopia and Somalia fought three major wars over the past several decades, while Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a bloody war in 1998-2000, in which over 100,000 people were killed and many more displaced. The two countries remain in a state of war, despite a peace agreement signed in 2000.

Somalia remains in a state of anarchy, despite a peace agreement reached in 2004 that led to the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Ethiopia’s intervention in December 2006 to install the TFG in power by ousting the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a group that took power in Mogadishu in June 2006, made Somalia more unstable than it was during the six months the ICU was in power. More than 22,000 people were reportedly killed during the Ethiopian occupation. Another area little is heard about is the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, where hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled to refugee camps in Kenya over the past several years. The Ogaden is a forgotten tragedy. Efforts to resolve the number of

conflicts in the region have led to important peace agreements, although these agreements have not led to lasting peace and stability in the region. Internal conflicts and conflicts between states are major contributing factors to humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa. High population growth, heavy debt burdens, lack of resources, economic mismanagement, interference in the internal affairs of neighboring countries, and poor leadership also play significant roles in the deteriorating conditions in that region.

The United States has been actively engaged in the Horn of Africa region since the 1960s. In recent decades, the United States has played key roles in conflict resolution and provided significant humanitarian assistance. The United States helped to secure the 2000 border dispute agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan in 2005. U.S. engagement in Somalia, however, has been limited over the past decade, although the Obama Administration has been actively engaged in support of the TFG and in the fight against terrorism. Relations between Eritrea and the United States, once strong, are currently poor. Relations between Ethiopia and the United States are strong, although some Members of Congress and human rights groups have been critical of Ethiopia's human rights record and the government's handling of the 2005 and 2010 elections.

The Terrorism Threat in the Horn of Africa

Political, ethnic, and religious conflicts in the region create an environment conducive to the growth of terrorist groups. The takeover of power in Sudan by the National Islamic Front (NIF) in 1989 led to a significant increase in the activities of international terror groups in Africa. The NIF government provided safe haven for well-known international terrorist organizations and individuals, and the government's security services also were directly engaged in facilitating and assisting domestic and international terror groups. Many observers contend that it was during his five-year stay in Sudan that Bin Laden laid the foundation for Al Qaeda. The penetration by Al Qaeda into East Africa is directly tied to NIF's early years of support to international terrorist organizations. The Horn of Africa is by far the most impacted by international terrorist activities in Africa. The 1990s saw dramatic and daring terrorist attacks against American interests in East Africa. Over the past two years, a number of local terrorist groups have emerged in Somalia, including *Al-Shabaab*, the *Ras Kamboni* group, and *Hizbul Al-Islam*.

Somalia: Safe Haven for Terrorist Groups?

The United States, Somalia's neighbors, and some Somali groups have expressed concern over the years about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Somalia. In the mid-1990s, Islamic courts began to emerge in parts of the country. These courts functioned as local governments and often enforced decisions by using their own militia. Members of the *Al Ittihad Al Islami* militia reportedly provided the bulk of the security forces for these courts in the 1990s. By the late 1990s, Ethiopian security forces and Somali allies severally weakened Al-Ittihad. But the absence of central authority in Somalia created an environment conducive to the proliferation of armed factions throughout the country.

In 2003, the leadership of *Al-Ittihad*, including Sheik Ali Warsame, brother in law of Sheik Aweys, the leader of *Hizbul Al-Islam*, and a number of other top leaders, met and later decided to form a new political front. The Islamic Courts Union, which came to the scene in 2006, included some of the top leaders of Al-Ittihad. The young members of the movement disagreed with the decision of the older leadership in 2003 and decided to form their own movement. These young leaders, some of whom had fought in Afghanistan, met and later formed what is known today as *Al-Shabaab*. Some of the key commanders and leaders of *Al-Shabaab* come from Somaliland. Ahmed Abdi Godane (also known as Abu Zubayr), who is

on the U.S. terrorism list and who trained and fought in Afghanistan, is a top leader from Somaliland. Mukhtar Robow, who is also on the U.S. terrorism list, is a key figure in the movement and at times the public face of the *Shabaab*. Another key player is Ibrahim Haji Jama (al-Afghani), who is on the U.S. terrorism list and also from Somaliland, and reportedly trained and fought in Afghanistan. Hassan al-Turki is a member of the Ogaden clan from Ethiopia, who has openly called for Jihad, and works closely with foreign fighters. On February 1, 2010, Al Shabaab and the Ras Kamboni group, led by Hassan Al Turki, reportedly agreed to merge under one name: *Al-Shabaab* Mujahidin Movement. In 2004, he was placed on the U.S. terrorism list.

U.S. Counter-Terrorism Measures

Al Qaeda poses a direct threat against U.S. interests and allies in East Africa, although *Al Shabaab* appears more focused on carrying out attacks against Somali citizens, the TFG, and African Union peacekeeping forces (AMISOM). *Al Shabaab*, however, has threatened to attack neighboring countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, and Eritrea. On February 2, 2010, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, at a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing, stated:

We judge most Al Shabaab and East Africa-based Al Qaeda members will remain focused on regional objectives in the near-term. Nevertheless, East Africa-based Al Qaeda leaders or Al Shabaab may elect to redirect to the Homeland some of the Westerners, including North Americans, now training and fighting in Somalia.¹

Over the past decade, especially since the U.S. 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States has intensified its counter-terrorism operations in the Horn of Africa region. In December 2002, the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) developed a joint task force, the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), to provide the United States with a forward presence in the region, train the region's law enforcement agencies on counter terrorism, collect intelligence, and oversee humanitarian assistance efforts. An estimated 2,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel make up the CJTF-HOA, located in Djibouti.

U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa region have shown some success in containing terrorism and extremism in the Horn of Africa region. Several countries in East Africa have benefitted from training and material support from the United States. Several known terrorists have been killed. In mid-September 2009, U.S. forces killed Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, a senior al-Qaeda member suspected of attacks against the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the leader of the terrorist attack against the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2002. Several other foreign fighters were killed along with Nabhan. Of the three most wanted al-Qaeda leaders in East Africa, the only one left is the leader of the group and the alleged mastermind of the U.S. embassy bombings: Haroon Fazul. A number of *Al-Shabaab* leaders have also been killed over the past two years, although the core leadership reportedly remains intact.

On the other hand, the Ethiopian invasion, with the support of the United States, is seen by some as having contributed to the emergence of *Al-Shabaab* and the proliferation of other extremist groups in Somalia. The ouster of the Islamic Courts Union leadership by Ethiopia in late 2006 created a security vacuum that was quickly filled by the most radical elements of the Islamist movement. The withdrawal

¹ Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair, Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 2, 2010.

of the U.S. and U.N. forces in the mid-1990s from Somalia also created a security vacuum, which was quickly filled by Somali warlords.

Al-Qaeda and its allies are reportedly much stronger today in the Horn of Africa than at any time in the past decade, even though Al-Qaeda has not been able to penetrate deeper into Africa and win a strong following. *Al-Shabaab* has been able to recruit dozens of Somalis from the United States, Europe and the Middle East, a number of whom have carried out suicide attacks inside Somalia in the past two years. Many of these recruits joined *Al-Shabaab* at the height of the fighting between Ethiopian forces and *Al-Shabaab*. Some joined believing that they were going to fight a foreign invader, while others saw this as a religious duty, a *jihad*. Over the past year, *Al-Shabaab* has not been able to recruit as much in part due to close monitoring of the activities of *pro-Shabaab* individuals in the United States and Europe. Moreover, many Somalis see themselves as victims of *Al-Shabaab* and view *Al-Shabaab* as a foreign controlled and led group.

Let me now speak briefly about current developments and U.S. policy in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Djibouti

Djibouti's pro-Western foreign policy stance and close alliance with moderate Western governments over the years have earned Djibouti friends, including the United States. During the 2003 Iraq war, Djibouti provided access to its port and airfields as well as facilities for training purposes. Djibouti also serves as one of the two locations worldwide for the USAID Food for Peace Program's storage facility. Over the years, the Djibouti has played key roles in conflict resolution efforts in the Horn of Africa. The last Somalia peace agreement was secured in Djibouti. The United States provided \$5.8 million in assistance in 2009 and an estimated \$9.4 million in 2010. In addition, the United States pays an estimated \$30 million to Djibouti for use of Camp Lemonier by U.S. forces.

Djibouti has a functioning multi-party system, although the ruling coalition, the Union for the Presidential Majority, is dominant. On April 8, 2005, President Guelleh won in the presidential election for another six year term. He ran unopposed because the opposition boycotted the elections. In March 2006, Djibouti held regional elections, the first since independence. The election, however, was boycotted by the opposition. In February 2008, Djibouti held parliamentary elections and the ruling UPM won all 65 seats. The opposition, again, boycotted the elections. President Guelleh's ruling coalition now dominates in local, regional, and national elected offices. In April 2010, the Djibouti parliament amended the constitution by removing the presidential term limits.

One issue that has been of major concern to the region and the United States is the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. In June 2008, Eritrean and Djiboutian forces clashed and an estimated 35 people were killed, with more than 50 wounded. The crisis erupted after several months of tension, following troop deployment to the border by both Eritrea and Djibouti. The dispute centers around claims by both sides over Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island. The border area was never properly demarcated. Scholars contend that France and Italy, the colonial rulers of Eritrea and Djibouti respectively, agreed that no third country could rule the Doumeira zone. The Government of Djibouti claims that an 1897 treaty between Ethiopia and France stated that the Doumeira area belonged to the French colony of Djibouti. In June 2010, the governments of Djibouti and Eritrea agreed to resolve their dispute through negotiations under the auspices of the government of Qatar. In early June 2010, Eritrean forces withdrew from the border area, and Qatar deployed its forces as observers.

Eritrea

Over the past decade, Eritrea has faced serious internal and external challenges. In 1998, Ethiopia and Eritrea clashed over a border dispute in which more than 100,000 people were killed and many more displaced. The Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict was followed by the most serious rift within the Eritrean liberation movement since the civil war between the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in the 1970s. The crisis split the top leadership of the ruling the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). In 2001, President Isaias ordered the arrest of 15 senior PFDJ officials, including the former foreign minister, who signed the peace agreement with Ethiopia; the former defense minister; former vice president; the long-time intelligence chief; and other senior party officials. The government alleges that these officials, known as the Group of 15 (G-15), were engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the government during the conflict with Ethiopia. The government of Eritrea also accused American officials in the Clinton Administration of being co-conspirators, and threatened to expel U.S. embassy officials. Two Eritrean employees of the U.S. embassy were also arrested in 2001, accused of being part of the conspiracy. None of these prisoners have been formally charged and access to these prisoners has not been granted to family members. Political parties are not permitted to operate and there have been no elections since independence.

The crackdown and the allegations against former Clinton Administration officials strained relations between the United States and the government of Eritrea. For most of the 1990s, the government of President Isaias Afewerki was considered a strong strategic U.S. ally in the Horn of Africa. Since the late 1990s, however, U.S. officials have expressed concern about a wide range of issues, including human rights conditions, Eritrea's role in Somalia, border disputes with Djibouti and Ethiopia, freedom of the press, and one-party rule. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) closed its office in Eritrea in 2005 after Eritrean officials demanded its closure. Eritrean officials alleged that USAID facilities were used to conduct meetings with anti-government groups. There is no U.S. assistance program in Eritrea. The United States also closed its Consular Section in Eritrea. Eritrean nationals seeking U.S. visas must now obtain visas in a third country. The Eritrean government has also imposed restrictions on visas, including denial of visas to some U.S. officials, although in recent years the Eritrean government has issued visas to U.S. officials, journalists and human rights organizations. In March 2010, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa and another State Department official were issued visas.

The United States has also imposed visa restrictions on Eritrean officials and other visitors. In late 2009 and early 2010, senior Eritrean officials were denied visas. Moreover, both Eritrea and the United States have imposed travel restrictions for their respective embassy officials. Officials from the Eritrean embassy in Washington and U.S. embassy in Asmara are required to obtain permission to travel outside their respective capitals. In January 2008, U.S. embassy officials were given permission to travel to the security zone near the Ethiopia Eritrea border on short notice in order to accompany a congressional delegation, and President Isaias Afewerki met with the congressional delegation several times during the visit. In the past three months, U.S. embassy personnel were granted six permits to go to different parts of Eritrea, while a request by the Eritrean embassy official to travel to Atlanta in March was denied by the State Department, although the State Department offered the permit a week later.

Efforts to Improve Relations

Over the past several years, President Isaias has stated that his government is ready to constructively engage Washington on a wide range of issues, including cooperation on the war on terror. Bush Administration officials, however, stated that the Eritrean government had rejected requests to engage in

talks with Washington. In 2008, the Eritrean government sent a letter to then-President Bush offering dialogue in order to improve relations. The letter was delivered, with a cover letter by a Member of Congress, to the White House in early 2008. President Isaias offered to come or send a high level delegation to Washington to discuss a wide range of issues. The Bush Administration did not respond to the offer for dialogue by the Eritrean government.

Officials of the Obama Administration have expressed interest in engaging the Eritrean government in order to address some areas of concern. President Isaias, in a letter to President Obama in May 2009, stated that “I would like to assure you that in order to pave the way for your positive contributions, we are determined to shoulder our responsibilities. We look forward to see the commencement of a constructive dialogue with your Administration.” A few months later, Assistant Secretary Carson announced his intention to go to Eritrea. In late 2009, the Obama Administration threatened the Eritrean government with U.N. Security Council sanctions if the Eritrean government continued its support to armed groups in Somalia. The Eritrean government dismissed the allegation.

In Washington, the proposed visit by the Assistant Secretary took a different turn by July 2009. In a letter sent in September 2009, the Foreign Minister of Eritrea requested a meeting with Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in New York during the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly. That request was not granted. However, in October 2009, Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, Eritrean Presidential Advisor Yemane Ghebream, and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Susan Rice, met in New York and discussed U.S. concerns about Eritrea’s alleged role in Somalia. At that meeting, the Eritrean delegation was asked to state that the Eritrean government would end its support to armed groups in Somalia. The delegation responded by saying that the Eritrean government did not and would not support any armed groups in Somalia. In December 2009, Assistant Secretary Carson wrote to the Eritrean Foreign Minister stating that :

The United States would like to establish a better relationship with Eritrea, but doing so requires that your government resolve several long-standing differences with the United States, that your government terminate its support for Al Shabaab, and that Eritrea play a more responsible role in regional affairs. I registered my willingness to meet with you in Europe or Africa to discuss some of the issues that have generated divisions in our relationship. That offer still stands. However, a visit to Washington would be inappropriate at this time given the difficulties in our relationship.

The decision to meet in a third country, according to the letter, was in large part due to the difficulties in U.S.-Eritrea relations. Assistant Secretary Carson had stated publicly his willingness to go to Eritrea in order to improve U.S.-Eritrea relations. A few months after the offer to meet in a third country, Carson’s Principal Deputy, Don Yamamoto, applied for and received a visa to go to Eritrea, suggesting a change in policy on this issue once again. Ambassador Yamamoto went to Eritrea in May 2010 but the Eritrean government officials refused to meet with him, arguing that he obtained his visa to do work related to the U.S. embassy. Ambassador Yamamoto stated that he intends to go back to Eritrea and has submitted another request for a visa.

Ethiopia

The May 2010 Elections

On May 23, 2010, millions of Ethiopians went to the polls to vote in national, regional, and local elections. According to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), an estimated 31.9 million

voters were registered. An estimated 2,200 candidates registered for the House of Representatives elections and 4,734 candidates for Regional State Council elections. According to the NEBE, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF) won all of the seats in the House of Representatives, except for two seats won by opposition members. The EPRDF also took all the Council seats in the capital, except one won by an opposition member. The EPRDF and its allies also won all the seats in the Regional State Councils. Longtime opposition figures were defeated in the elections. In the 2005 elections, the opposition won more than 160 seats in the House and all 23 seats in the capital. The United States and the European Union declared that the elections were generally peaceful but did not meet international standards. The African Union, on the other hand, declared the elections to be free and fair. The NEBE rejected opposition party members' formal complaints of rigging and request for a rerun.

Pre-Election Conditions

Ethiopia observers and opposition leaders predicted that the ruling EPRDF would dominate the 2010 elections. Pre-election conditions were marred by the harassment, detention, and in some cases killing of opposition members. The combination of measures taken by the ruling EPRDF over the past several years not only weakened legal opposition but also crushed civil society, human rights groups, and the independent press activities. Moreover, use of government resources, the civil service, and security forces to strengthen the constituency base of the ruling party through intimidation and incentives helped the EPRDF build a strong following. The forced exile of opposition leaders, civil society groups, and independent journalists also helped the EPRDF to secure victory. Some Ethiopians and outside observers also assert that many were fearful of being killed or injured should they express open support for the opposition as was the case in the 2005 elections. Recently adopted laws restricting non-governmental and media activities, as well as the new anti-terrorism measures, are being used to stifle the activities of opposition groups, the independent press, and civil society groups.

Opposition groups also likely contributed to the sweeping EPRDF victory. Since the 2005 election, opposition groups in Ethiopia and the Diaspora have been fragmented and fought each other more than preparing a united front with a vision. Opposition groups have often spent more time in the capital or outside the country than in building a constituency base throughout the country. Opposition groups were successful in the 2005 elections in large part due to a common purpose and active campaigning to build a strong consistency base in different parts of the country. The 2010 election results clearly show Ethiopia moving toward one party rule, despite the presence of other parties affiliated with the ruling EPRDF. Most of these parties were created by the EPRDF and have little independence from the ruling party. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has stated that he and a number of the senior leadership of the ruling party would retire by 2015. However, it is not clear at this juncture if the retirement of the old guard will pave the way for a true multi-party democracy in Ethiopia.

Opposition Leader Ms. Bertukan Mideksa

Let me now speak briefly about opposition leader Ms. Bertukan Mideksa. In late December 2008, opposition leader Ms. Bertukan Mideksa, who was arrested after the 2005 elections and pardoned in 2007, was re-arrested by the Ethiopian government and is currently serving a life sentence. The Ethiopian government accused Ms. Bertukan of stating in a speech in Europe that she did not apologize to get a pardon and that the pardon was a negotiated settlement between the prisoners and the government. In a letter before her arrest, Ms. Bertukan stated that "in the spirit of the elders' mission, I, along with other party leaders have signed the document (pardon) written on June 18, 2007 and submitted through these elders asking the public and the government for forgiveness, in the hope that this would bring about a

political resolution to a politically motivated charge and trial. I cannot alter this fact, even if I chose to.” The detention of Ms. Bertukan is seen by many as a deliberate measure to weaken and divide the opposition before the May 2010 national and regional elections. In a press interview, Prime Minister Meles stated that “There will never be an agreement with anybody to release Birtukan,” he said. “Ever. Full stop. That’s a dead issue.” Now that the ruling EPRDF has emerged victorious and the opposition crushed, the government might be open to Ms. Bertukan’s release, although many observers express doubt.

The Ethiopia-Eritrea Border Dispute

In April 2002, the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) ruled that the disputed village of Badme belonged to Eritrea. Ethiopia initially rejected the ruling but accepted with conditions in June 2007. No progress was made in the implementation of the Commission ruling. In July 2008, the United Nations Security Council terminated the mandate of UNMEE.

U.S.-Ethiopia Relations

While concerned about the state of human rights and general political trends, the United States considers Ethiopia to be an important ally in a region marred by violence and instability. In November 2009, welcoming Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton stated that “Ethiopia is a country with which we have very long ties, and have, in recent years, developed a very close working relationship on a number of important issues.” Concerns about human rights conditions and democracy nonetheless remain key issues in U.S.-Ethiopia relations. Opposition groups charge that Washington has turned a blind eye to human rights abuses and to intimidation and harassment of opposition groups by the government. Some observers contend that Washington’s close identification with the EPRDF government could hurt U.S.-Ethiopia relations in the long-term and could lead to anti-American sentiments. The Obama Administration has stated publicly that human rights and democracy issues in Ethiopia area major focus and priority. In late 2007, the House of Representatives passed legislation condemning human rights abuses and lack of democracy in Ethiopia (H.R. 2003). The Ethiopian government hired lobbyist groups in an attempt to defeat the bill.

The Ogaden

The crisis in the Ogaden is one of the worst in the region, although rarely reported. A brief background about the Ogaden. The Ogaden is located in the Somali region of eastern Ethiopia and shares a border with Somalia. Ethiopia first entered the Somali region in the late 1890s under King Menelik, who claimed Ethiopian sovereignty of the region. Areas of the Ogaden were claimed by both British and Italian colonists in the early 1900s until the British finally left the area in 1948. The British handed over the region to Ethiopia. The region has since been the scene of numerous conflicts and territorial disputes, in large part due to the incongruous colonial border treaties drawn up by European colonial powers. When Somalia gained independence in 1960, its government refused to acknowledge any of the colonial border treaties with Ethiopia and demanded self-determination for ethnic Somalis living in the Ogaden. Border disputes have proved endemic ever since.

In August 1984, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) was founded. The ONLF launched its liberation struggle against the Ethiopian regime. In 1991, after the ouster of the military regime in Ethiopia, the ONLF joined the current government. In 1992, the ONLF reportedly won 84% of the seats

in the regional parliament. But relations between the ONLF and the ruling EPRDF became strained in 1992 when Ethiopian security forces killed several ONLF leaders. In 1993, the Ethiopian government arrested the President, Vice President, and Secretary General of the regional parliament. In 1994, the ONLF called for a referendum on self-determination, a right guaranteed by the Ethiopian constitution. Shortly after, the Ethiopian military began to arrest ONLF leaders and launched a military campaign against the ONLF. The ONLF resumed its armed struggle. The ONLF has not rejected negotiations with the Ethiopian government, although it demands the participation of a third party and that the negotiations take place in a neutral place.

The government's suspension of food aid to the Ogaden in late 2006 and the unofficial blockade of commercial traffic created a dire humanitarian situation in the region. Security concerns have kept the majority of humanitarian aid workers from entering the region, and the expulsion of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders further hindered humanitarian access. Additionally, the Ethiopian government has essentially sealed off the area, making communication with the outside world next to impossible. Even so, reports have emerged of property and livestock being confiscated, villages being torched, and women and girls being raped. People from the Ogaden region are fleeing to refugee camps in neighboring countries, especially women and children. These refugees report that Ethiopian security forces are raping and hanging civilians throughout the Ogaden region. I met many of these victims in a refugee camp in Kenya.

Somalia

In October 2002, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), led by the government of Kenya, launched a peace process designed to end factional fighting in Somalia. In September 2003, the parties agreed on a Transitional National Charter (TNC). In August 2004, a 275-member Somali Transitional Parliament was inaugurated in Kenya. In October 2004, parliament elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as the new president of Somalia. In June 2006, the forces of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of the capital, Mogadishu. During the six-month rule by the ICU, Mogadishu became relatively peaceful, but efforts to bring peace did not lead to a major breakthrough. On December 28, 2006, Ethiopian troops captured Mogadishu with little resistance from the ICU. The Ethiopian intervention led to more chaos and instability in Somalia over the past two years. Humanitarian, political, and security conditions continue to deteriorate across south-central Somalia. In 2007-2009, more than 22,000 civilians were killed, an estimated 1.1 million people displaced, and 476,000 Somalis fled to neighboring countries. In 2008, fighting between insurgent groups and Ethiopian-Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces intensified, and by late 2008, the TFG had lost control of most of south-central Somalia to insurgent groups. In January 2009, Ethiopian forces completed their withdrawal from Somalia. In late December 2008, President Yusuf resigned from office and left for Yemen. In January 2009, the Somali Parliament elected the leader of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad, as president. In February 2009, President Ahmad appointed Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke as prime minister.

Recent Developments

In mid-May 2010, the Somali Speaker of Parliament resigned after several months of dispute with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. A day later, President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad fired the Prime Minister. In late May, President Ahmad reinstated the Prime Minister. The reversal of the decision may be temporary or pre-planned to oust the Speaker from office. In late May 2010, the Finance and

Deputy Prime Minister, Sheik Sharif Hassan, ran for Speaker and won the support of 217 members of parliament (MPs) out of 550. During the vote, an estimated 388 MPs were present. Four ministers resigned in protest, arguing that this was pre-planned and that Hassan used government resources to bribe members of parliament to support his candidacy. The former Speaker was targeted by the current Speaker and the President because he was pushing for parliament to resume its session in order to question government officials about government activities and responsibilities. The Prime Minister and His Deputy pushed for parliament to remain in recess.

Security Conditions and Political Developments

In January 2010, *Al Shabaab* intensified its attacks against the TFG and African Union (AU) peacekeeping forces. On December 3, 2009, a terrorist attack during a graduation ceremony for medical students at a hotel in Mogadishu reportedly killed 23 people, including three TFG ministers. The suicide bombing was carried out by a Danish citizen of Somali descent. Among the dead and wounded were students, family members, journalists, members of parliament, and faculty members. In late September 2009, government forces seized control of Beledweyne from *Hizbul al-Islam*. Beledweyne, a town near the Ethiopian border, has changed hands several times in the past six months. Meanwhile, attacks against government forces and African Union peacekeeping troops in Mogadishu intensified in September. An estimated 21 people, including 17 African Union peacekeepers, were killed in a suicide attack in late September 2009. The Deputy Force Commander was one of the victims in the attack. *Al-Shabaab* used two stolen United Nations trucks to carry out the attack against the AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Two of the suicide bombers are believed to be Somali-Americans.

In early August 2009, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton met with President Sheik Sharif Ahmad of Somalia in Kenya. The Secretary expressed U.S. support for the TFG. President Sheikh Sharif briefed the Secretary and her delegation about the challenges facing his government and asked for U.S. financial support. In late September 2009, President Ahmad came to the United States to address the U.N. General Assembly, and to meet with U.S. officials and Somali community members. The President visited several states, including Minnesota, to meet with the Somali community. In late September 2009, he expressed concern that pledges made by some governments to the TFG have not been delivered. He made the point that for every pledge made to the TFG, the insurgents receive support from their allies. He asserted that the insurgents get the support faster and the TFG has to wait for months.²

Somaliland

The northwest region of Somalia is considered by many analysts to be a model for successful regional authority and administration. The self-declared “Republic of Somaliland” seceded from the rest of Somalia in 1991 and now has its own flag and national anthem, army and police, and currency. Its government collects revenues from taxes levied at ports and roadblocks and vehicle licenses. Despite its government structures and apparatus, the “Republic of Somaliland” remains unrecognized by the international community. In May 2002, President Mohamed Egal died and Vice President Dahir Riyaale succeeded Egal in a smooth transfer of power. President Riyaale comes from the Gadabursi clan, a minority clan in a region dominated by the Isaaq clan. In April 2003, Kahin won in the presidential elections. In September 2005, Somaliland held legislative elections and international observers declared the elections free and fair. Presidential elections were expected to take place in March 2009 but were

² Ted Dagne met with President Ahmad and his delegation in Washington on September 29, 2009.

postponed several times. The elections are now scheduled for June 26, 2010. Some observers have expressed concerns that the voter registration process was marred and view the National Electoral Commission as not fully capable of managing the electoral process. In recent weeks, the Riyaale government has attempted to discourage international observers from coming to monitor the poll on security grounds, according to sources in Somaliland.