



**HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER**

*Speaking for those who are not heard*

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# ANNUAL REVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

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# 2023

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



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# FOREWORD

The Human Rights Center is proud to publish its findings on the human rights situation in Somaliland. The center at its foundation was established to defend human rights in the country. The center has entered its 10th anniversary and it is with profound pride that the work of protecting human rights continues for us. It is for this purpose that we must acknowledge and recognize that we are failing to protect and defend human rights as a nation. In 2023, we faced challenging times through harassment and intimidation in carrying out our monitoring services, along with tensions and conflicts within Somaliland. An assault on freedom of expression and media has showcased the lack of trust between citizens and the government, as well as a deteriorating trust between the public and institutions, and that more work is needed. As chairperson of the center, I am proud of the work the country has accomplished since we have reclaimed our independence and the inception of the center as the only independent human rights organization.

However, we must also recognize our failings in continuing to build an environment conducive to the peaceful rebuilding and progressive movement of Somaliland. It is with this in mind that this report can serve as a recommendation and a challenge for the country, to rise above political division and promote growth and respect to upholding the laws governing the country and strengthen the trust and faith between the public and government. Our recommendations and documentation of incidences are merely to serve as a lesson and a lens through which we can continue the rebuilding of Somaliland. A main concern of the center is the rising arbitrary arrest cases have been significantly increasing post-COVID and into the postponement of the presidential elections. By emphasizing these incidences, we hope that change can be brought forth through policy transformation, meaningful impact, in truth, and upholding the laws of the country and a return to the foundations of the country through dialogue and reconciliation, a method which has been neglected recently.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This report would not have been possible without the hard work of HRC's committed and dedicated volunteers. We are forever grateful to all those that are involved. We thank these individuals and organizations who have helped us implement activities and field visits during this reporting period.

The center would like to thank the individuals and organizations that have collaborated, coordinated, and shared their experiences and stories to be included. We thank every one of you who has made it possible for us to share your lived experiences and carry out our mission to be an outlet for those without a voice.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This published report contains arrest records and coincides with a very tumultuous time in our nation's period. This report is published with great care that further work is needed to protect human rights in Somaliland. It is merely a look within our nation to see where we are lacking and where we should and can be.

As we have regained our independence and have worked to separate and create our version of a democratic nation, it is also important to recognize that failure to protect Somaliland citizens, democratic institutions, and laws have been routinely broken. As we all remember, political parties and presidential elections were all postponed, thus creating a chaotic election system for Somaliland. History has shown that Somaliland has failed to hold presidential elections promptly and on time. We have seen an exponential rise in arbitrary detentions and arrests, along with a broken judicial and legislative branch. Since Somaliland's resurgence on the world stage, it has achieved relative peace and elections have been held peacefully that have been monitored internationally, and institutions that are separated by checks and balances. However, conflict and man-made problems have plagued the country, specifically situations that are far removed from the foundations of the country. Somaliland has been slowly regressing and allowing its institutions to be engulfed in authoritarian tendencies. This 2023 report focuses on areas including but are not limited;

- The continued militarization of the police forces, and police playing the role of enforcers rather than public servants
- Shrinking space for media to function with an obscene effort to control media and criminalize journalistic endeavors;
- The use of the military courts to try and charge civilians
- The conditions of IDPs in Somaliland regions, specifically those of minority and marginalized communities.
- LasAnod during and after the conflict.

This report is based on qualitative research conducted and carried out in

Hargeisa, Burco, Berbera, Borama, Erigavo, and LasAnod. Throughout the year, we have interviewed journalists, members of civil society organizations, lawyers, judges, detainees, and the public. Human Rights Center has visited prisons in the five regions of Somaliland. HRC's system is a database to monitor human rights situations in Somaliland.

Our cases are reviewed and analyzed within our database to critique and assess the human rights situation in Somaliland and cross-referenced with other legal documents from various sources.

Oftentimes, Somaliland cites its progressive democratic environment through many processes, however, in the past 12 months, HRC has documented arbitrary detentions, use of excessive force and torture, beatings, harassment, and intimidation of journalists. In total, the center has recorded **78** individuals arrested for freedom of expression. Of those, **19** journalists were arbitrarily detained, and released subsequently. One note of great news is that Somaliland has not suspended or closed any media houses in 2023.

In the majority of the cases related to the detention of journalists, our records have shown that due process of the law was circumvented. There were no arrest warrants, the detainment process was violent and torturous for the detainee, and the arrest orders came from a source related to officials. Fair trial procedures were often ignored, and the application of articles related to their charges was often trumped up charges, including evidentiary process misconduct. Exit interviews conducted with detainees spoke of the detention process, including prison and jail conditions not conducive to Somaliland or human rights standards, often citing overcrowded cells and unsanitary areas.

Somaliland police and court systems have routinely held individuals past the 48 hours as recognized by the constitution. Remand procedures are often delayed, where prosecutors delay the charge sheets, poor investigation procedures due to lack of evidence, and use articles that are irrelevant and unreasonable, which in return allows the judge to remand the individual past the remand time for further investigations, unnecessarily prolonging the remand times, a never-ending cycle. We have seen and witnessed cases

where the judge has released an individual but the prosecutor has appealed the decision, thereby prolonging the individual's release time even further. Although there are laws protecting the individual from prolonged pre-trial detention, the prosecutor will often persuade the judge to renew the remand period for further investigation, without consideration to the reasons for their arrest, or their bail availability<sup>1</sup>.

Due to a lack of effective Police Act, judicial oversight and accountability are absent. Somaliland police force has been weaponized against civilians and journalists, as showcased by arbitrary arrest and detentions yearly. Eyewitness accounts have shown that Somaliland police will arbitrarily arrest and detain individuals and journalists without recourse to legal action and without compensation for illegally detaining civilians and journalists alike.

The legal mechanism in the Police Act that recognized legal protection to challenge police conduct has been removed from the legal document. Further conflation of the laws is using military courts to try civilians, contrary to the Constitution, which prohibits military courts from hearing cases in which civilians are involved. According to lawyers we interviewed in the Hargeisa Regional Court, estimates show that most of the defendants tried are those involved in the Sool conflict and from southern Somalia. As such, our case study is a civilian businessman tried in the military court.

This report also covers LasAnod conflict, specifically the damage the city and civilians have incurred. As the conflict has worn on, indiscriminate killing of civilians including health care workers have been documented. According to many international organizations and reporting by HRC monitors, thousands have been displaced, seeking refuge in surrounding areas. Major damages incurred by the city's infrastructure especially to the main water supply system, indiscriminate shelling of civilian spaces such as schools, healthcare facilities, and mosques.

Additionally, we are concerned about the conditions of IDPs in Somaliland.

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews by lawyers in Hargeisa on procedures.



Food insecurity, lack of healthcare facilities such as maternity ward inaccessibility, higher rates of suicide attempts or suicide deaths occurring amongst residents, along with the increasing rates of abandoned and street children. In the case of one IDP in Hargeisa, 16 children were abandoned in 2023.

These incidences recorded by the center are disseminated for the sole purpose of highlighting the importance of protecting civil and political rights and the trajectory in which the country is progressing toward protecting and defending human rights and the rights of the marginalized in our nation.

# RECOMMENDATION

To the Government of Somaliland:

- Implement the Media Act, and Press policy with a strategy to ensure the law is fully enforced.
- The current media act is drafted with too many fines and extreme punitive measures therefore redrafting the act to decriminalize media and journalism is a must
- Respect the freedom of expression enshrined in the constitution and accept the decriminalization of media to cease the prosecution and detention of journalists, critics, and dissenters.
- Reinforcement of legal frameworks to ensure that the rights of citizens, journalists, and independent media are protected.
- There must be an independent international investigation into the allegations of war crimes in LasAnod to hold the perpetrators accountable.
- Carry out meaningful police reform on the grounds of constitutional and internationally accepted standards. Demilitarize and de-politicize the police and subject the police to the jurisdiction of civilian courts.
- Police reform is a must and legislation should be developed and strengthened for enforcement purposes.
- Promote legal safeguards to strengthen democratic processes in Somaliland.
- Separation of powers within institutions is a must and should be upheld, as established by the constitution.
- Democratic processes such as election timelines must be upheld and strengthened further to stop the disruption of party and presidential elections.
- Cease the arbitrary arrests of critics, dissenters, and journalists without a warrant by the courts
- Provide support and aid to agencies working for mental health services,

IDPs, minorities and marginalized groups

- Provide support to these agencies that are creating services for mental health services, IDPs, minorities, and marginalized groups

# METHODOLOGY

This year's annual report was possible by the research conducted by staff and monitors from the six regions of Somaliland. HRC periodically monitors and documents human rights abuses and violations, verifying and recording the information on a database. The center actively researches, reports, and advocates for change in Somaliland, so that we can challenge ingrained behaviors and change the system of abuse in Somaliland. We work on establishing proven and consistent methods based on gathering information from various sources and field-based research in our foundation. Consistent with our work are interviews and conducting research that is standardized within the organization, evidence, and story to corroborate statements and truthful information, monitors are impartial and unbiased while gathering information, and protecting the security and dignity of the witness.

The most common method used by the center is often the statements of witnesses and victims. Apart from field research conducted, we employ legislative and policy frameworks in the country, legal documents during court proceedings, and international laws during the reporting periods, using these methods to conclude the situation of human rights. As always, conducting research and documenting information by the center can be challenging, especially in a society that is closed and often obscured by institutions. Accessibility to prisons or rape documents is hard to come by and challenging to obtain. Access to detainees and their testimony is often done without privacy, contrary to the constitution and international standards.

## BACKGROUND

Somaliland is located in the horn of Africa. Somaliland gained back its sovereignty and independence in 1991, after the reunification with Somalia on June 26, 1960. While regaining independence, Somaliland ratified its constitution in 2001, established a bicameral legislative organ, judiciary, and executive branches, and rebuilt a nation towards long-lasting peace. Somaliland has established and held both local and presidential elections and established itself as a country where democracy is at its core.

It is clear that in recent times, Somaliland has prioritized other important political aspirations at the expense of protecting the human rights of its citizens. At the base of its foundation through Somaliland's culture is the protection of the individual, community, and national interests through peaceful dialogue and consensus of the majority. Additionally, recent times have shown that prior considerations of inclusivity have been reduced to a few, a break away from the tradition of what Somaliland's previous traditions have been in absolving disputes. This breakaway tradition has been evidenced by the recent conflict in LasAnod and the Gacaan-Libaax uprising.

# MEDIA FREEDOMS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SOMALILAND

## Exercising the right to protest and assembly

Before the celebration of 18 May, multiple protests occurred in Borama, Erigavo, and Burco. Each protest occurred for different reasons and purposes. Months after the announcement that the presidential and political party elections would be postponed, Somaliland's citizens exercised their right to express and protest the decisions and the future of the country. The first demonstrations started in Borama after the assault of Commander Khadar Mohammed Aynanshe from the Somaliland Coast Guard. Riots and demonstrations shortly followed, with a record 43 individuals arrested and detained. According to a lawyer from the prosecutor's office, estimations of individuals arrested and detained were rounded up, as riots and looting took place, thus leading to indiscriminate arrests.

According to the police commander, accurate information of individuals who were exercising their right to demonstrate and those taking advantage of the situation was a challenge and the process to release them was a challenge in determining innocence. Individuals arrested during the protests were released on June 4, 2023. Somaliland's police often use excessive force to squelch assemblies or protests as evidenced by the previous year's demonstrations in which police brutality was rampant. Recent political and social developments in the country have led to more protests and those protesting are often treated with excessive force by Somaliland police. Somaliland's police force response to such activities often escalates problems and riot offense is activated, rather than a de-escalation process.

## Case study #1

Naafic Mohammed Qaadi, Ahmed Misan Khairdoon, and Abdiqani Mohammed Dhego were arrested on May 14, 2023, for a social media post in Borama. Pre-trial practices meant that they were not fully charged with a crime nor did they appear in court. However, they were later released.

## Case study #2

Protests broke out in Erigavo, sanaag region on May 8, 2023, after policed opened fire on a citizen from a car. According to eyewitness accounts, those who were arrested at the crime scene were later released, after protests took place shortly. Public demonstrations, as described by authorities, are often interpreted as a crime, because permission to protest was not granted. Much of the protest activities in Somaliland are often done without riot measures or de-escalation tactics. Article 32(2) states every citizen can exercise their right to participate in any peaceful assembly or demonstration. However, that right is often met with excessive force and police intimidation.

## Detention and persecution of journalists

Human Rights Center has documented detentions, torture, and harassment of journalists in the past year alone. The total number of journalists arbitrarily detained and arrested without a warrant is **19**. Compared to the previous year, **48** journalists were arrested. Journalism and media are still the primary target of the government. Since the foundation of the center, each year showcases an increased trajectory of arrests and detention of journalists. Several harsh crackdowns on media have occurred, most recently a total telecommunication blackout in 2022. In addition, the criminalization of journalists has increased and continues to be practiced as a criminal activity by the judicial and executive branches.

These journalists are often detained, intimidated, tortured, and persecuted while on duty. Outdated and misinterpreted text from the Somali penal code criminalizes Somaliland journalists. Most trumped-up charges against journalists from the Somali Penal Code predate the advanced technology currently in use now, and the legal framework utilized by the courts is not an adequate crime, at best the articles utilized are harsh. Charges such as Publication of False News, Non-observance of orders of Authorities, or Anti-National Propaganda are often misinterpreted by officials who order the arrest, and the courts and mismanaged by the prosecutor's office.

The Somali Penal Code articles are used to censor, punish, and prosecute journalists that are contradictory and contrary to what is established in the constitution for media and journalism. Article 32(3)<sup>2</sup> states that the press and media are fundamental freedoms of expression, independent and the subjugation of the press and media is prohibited. Journalists in Somaliland face a hostile environment while on duty. As evidenced by arrest records, crackdown and intimidation have become routine practice. Of the 19 cases investigated, only one journalist was prosecuted using Criminal Procedure Articles. There were no further media house closures or suspensions this year, a difference from the previous year where five media houses were closed or suspended and fined.

### Censorship by the Ministry of Information over LasAnod conflict

The Minister of Information<sup>3</sup> released a press statement on 30/01/2023, ordering journalists and media houses in Somaliland to suspend coverage of the ongoing situation in LasAnod, Sool region. The order also stated that the Somaliland population must respect the laws of the land, which stipulates unity, and protection of the national integrity of Somaliland, and any violation of the order will be punished by the laws of the country, including articles found in the Criminal Procedure of the Country. Media houses and journalists were ordered by the statement of their responsibility to share accurate information. However, this preemptive strike has prevented journalists from reporting during conflict and access to information, a right granted to journalists. Such a statement impedes the work of journalists to report during times of conflict in an ethical manner.

Table 1: Comparison of journalists detained between 2022 and 2023 reporting years

Reporting period	Reported year	Detained Journalists
January 2022-Dec 2022	2022	48
January 2023-Dec 2023	2023	19

<sup>2</sup>THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOMALILAND (somalilandlaw.com)

<sup>3</sup>Statement released by the Ministry of Information, Culture, and National Guidance 30/01/2023



The lack of a legal mechanism in place that governs media and press is a contributing factor to the increasing rates of detention among journalists and the conflation of articles that are wholly separate from media and journalism, such as Anti-National Propaganda<sup>4</sup>. Articles used by the prosecution against journalists that are mostly applied to the media are:

- Defamation
- False accusation
- Publication or Circulation of False, Exaggerated, or Tendencies News Capable of Disturbing Public Order

The freedom of expression is protected by Article 32 of the Somaliland Constitution, which incorporates Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights into Somaliland law.

Freedom of expression is deemed to be one of the essential foundations of a 'democratic society' within the meaning of international human rights law, and the UNHRC opined that it is "a fundamental pillar for building a democratic society and strengthening democracy."<sup>5</sup> However, documentation of cases related to freedom of expression and specifically independence of media has seen shrinking space for media to flourish. A key contributing factor is impunity. A journalist will be arbitrarily detained, tried, and sentenced only to be released a few months later without reason in the court system or compensation.

Below are the details of the journalist's arrest records from January 2023 to December 2023.

### **Prosecution of Freelance Journalist Bushaaro Ali Mohammed**

Bushaaro was arrested on May 15, 2023, and remanded on May 17, 2023. She was detained and arrested without a court-issued warrant. Due to the method of her detention, she suffered bodily injuries. During her court proceedings, she was remanded a total of four times by the prosecutor's office.

Her first initial round of trial was dismissed due to a lack of sufficient evidence

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<sup>4</sup> Somali Penal Code

<sup>5</sup> Resolution Adopted by the Human Rights Council on 19 June 2020, resolution (A/HRC/25/L.2/Rev.1),

by the prosecutor's office, thus allowing for another trial to begin with a different set of charges against her. Investigators involved in the discovery process of her case could not identify the difference between the judge or the investigator who pressed charges against her. Her charge sheet showed that it was a judge who pressed charges against her. Her trial concluded and she was released on 15/08/2023. Her sentencing resulted in her being fined for a year in which she was able to pay a fine based on the months she was held in jail. Her violent capture by either Somaliland Police or Immigration officers was also not investigated as these institutions lack an oversight body<sup>5</sup>.

### **Freelance Journalist Ali Ismail Arreh**

Ali Ismail Arreh was arrested on May 14 2023 without a court-issued warrant in Borama. His pre-trial detention was prolonged, as he was not brought to court nor was he charged with a crime. According to his states during our visit to the Borama Regional Prison, he explained that he was informed informally that his arrest and detention was due to his briefing post about an alleged clandestine meeting with the Dir Community about three months before his arrest. The meeting did not happen. He was released on June 22, 2023.

### **Journalist Warsame Kaafi Abdirashid Adam**

Waarsame Kaafi Abdirashid Adam was arrested on May 28, 2023, in Erigavo, Sanaag. Warsame currently works with MMTV. His arrest was ordered by the Governor of Erigavo. He was released days later.

### **Journalist Ahmed Wadacad Qabille**

Ahmed Wadacad Qabille was arrested on January 18, 2023, in Berbera, Sahil region. He was arrested for creating a Facebook post, discussing the mismanagement of the Berbera Local Council. He was released three days later on bail conditions.

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<sup>5</sup> Trial testimony by defense and prosecuting lawyers

# FAIR TRIAL PRACTICES AND RIGHT TO LIBERTY

Fair trial practices and rights are severely lacking in practice and behavior. Based on observation of randomly selected cases at the Hargeisa Regional Court and interviews with accused individuals, pre-trial detention is often done without the presence of lawyers. Accused individuals usually go through the Criminal Investigation Department without being afforded lawyers, depriving the individual of their fundamental rights as enshrined in the constitution. Accused individuals are not allowed to view their charge sheets and are often deprived of correct procedures such as search warrants. These visits are done to elucidate the gaps in which the judiciary functions in Somaliland and to showcase the areas that need improvement.

In cases HRC has observed, accused individuals are detained without access to lawyers in the initial processes. Article 27(1) in the Somaliland Constitution stipulates that the individual must meet their legal representatives, relatives, or any person they ask for. However, in our observation having access to Bushaaro and others through legal documents provided by the court has seen us turned away from meeting with the accused. As such, accused individuals will be held in jail stations even while their trial is ongoing, without consideration of bail conditions, despite the long remand process. Thus, allowing the court and investigative department to infringe on the right of the accused, thereby violating Article 27(2) which requires the individual accused of criminal offenses to be brought to court within 48 hours of their arrest. However, that is never the case in Somaliland's judicial process. Individuals will be processed by the Criminal Investigation Department and held there until they are moved to jail stations without their lawyers present or informed consent of the deprivation of their freedom. Article 25 of the Somaliland Constitution clearly states that one cannot be arrested, searched, or detained without a warrant. However, this order is always violated by

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<sup>6</sup> Somaliland Constitution (somalilandlaw.com)

authorities, allowing the police and other authorities to abuse the public, by arresting and detaining citizens, journalists, and opposition members on the order and requests of those in higher positions in the government without cause or justification. The same for their freedom. The individual will have a trial with many legal gaps and insufficient evidence by prosecutors, in which the judge will give them ample time to find charges, thus delaying the bail time or being remanded further.

Court-issued warrants, prolonged pre-trial detention, and other human rights violations occur within the first 48 hours of the accused's detention and are often the case in Somaliland's judicial process. Individuals will be processed by the Criminal Investigation Department without the presence of a lawyer, and taken to court, where a remand deal is accepted without consideration for the individual's rights, depriving them of representation and moving without the consent of the individual. Article 25 of the Somaliland constitution states that one cannot be arrested, searched, or detained without a warrant, a violation committed by authorities. HRC's observation of jails and prisons' condition is severely depleted, lacking proper sanitation areas. Regions such as Berbera in the Saaxil region are in worse conditions with a lack of proper a/c. Jails and prisons do not provide food, the responsibility of the government. Concerns about diet/ and food supply are often cited as a problematic issue amongst those interviewed. Overcrowding of jail and prison cells is another contributing factor that violates the standards in which individuals are meant to be held in. Additionally, the dignity of the accused is not protected. Accused individuals will be chained with multiple people, sitting outside in the hot sun. Priority of the condition of the individual is not considered by authorities, violating how an accused individual is brought to and forth from court and jail and how they're treated as inmates.

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<sup>7</sup> Interviews of accused journalist and victims on the condition of their detention

Attached below is a photo of accused individuals chained together



# MILITARY COURT TRIES CIVILIANS

Somaliland's military court started this year to hear criminal cases against civilians who are not members of the security forces . According to article 104 of Somaliland's constitution, the military courts "shall have special jurisdiction in hearing criminal charges brought against the members of the national army in peace or war." Until recently, individuals accused of being "terrorists" or members of "terrorist" organizations have been brought to the civilian courts. But, this year, the military court took over these cases. Somaliland does not have an anti-terrorism law. Therefore, individuals alleged to have participated in these so-called "terrorism" acts are charged with the Penal Code articles. The change of jurisdiction of the military court is not based on law and is contrary to the constitution and precedence. Dozens of "terrorist" cases have been tried by Somaliland civil courts in the last two decades.

The lack of a clear definition creates legal loopholes. In September 2023, a businessman named Abdirisaaq Mohammed Mohamoud was arrested in Hargeisa and brought to the military court, which remanded him. He was accused of contacting or having relations with the group fighting in LasAnod against the government of Somaliland. He was later released without charges.

The government of Somaliland has called the local armed groups fighting in LasAnod a coalition of forces, including "terrorists." Such labeling and the empowerment of the military court create human rights issues and violations of the constitution where the military court's jurisdiction is expanded to civilians in the absence of a law that defines the court's new extra-constitutional powers. According to defense lawyers, Somaliland still relies on the military court to try cases in which officials abuse their power to try individuals.

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<sup>8</sup> Somaliland Constitution checks and balances. Somaliland Constitution (somalilandlaw.com)

Despite knowing the nature of the case that the individual is not military personnel, the military court will try the individual and later release them. Engrained military behavior is a contributing factor, magnifying harm to basic rights; legal procedures that were already hard to come by in the civilian court. Furthermore, lawyers have mentioned abuse of legal frameworks and abuse of power when trying civilians in the military courts justifying the violation of an individual to receive a fair trial, an act that was committed by the previous regime. When asked for the total number of detained civilians in the court, defense lawyers regrettably could not determine the total.

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<sup>9</sup> Investigate civilians' deaths in Somaliland. (amnesty.org)

# LASANOD CONFLICT

The assassination of Abdifatah Abdullahi Abdi (Hadrawi), a local politician, on December 26, 2022, escalated civil unrest between the local population and Somaliland forces. Demonstrations shortly after were repressed as Somaliland forces opened fire on protestors and used live ammunition in the city. Years of unanswered civil unrests and multiple assassinations of politicians from the region had worsened the situation in Sool. By then, the death toll for the protests in December 2022 had been ten people and many others wounded as a result of the use of live ammunition on protestors. As the protests continued well into the new year in the city, further escalation of indiscriminate shelling had taken place by Somaliland forces to squelch the conflict.

On February 6, 2023, heavy infighting occurred between Somaliland forces and the local population began in LasAnod city of Sool region. Several months of indiscriminate shelling between Somaliland forces and the local population in Sool exacerbated humanitarian crises in the city. Unanswered grievances contributed to the cause of protests and according to Somaliland government, narrative surrounding the conflict is creating an inroad to Al-Shabaab and terrorism to function in the area, disrupting the peaceful environment cultivated by Somaliland. To date, little to no evidence of allegations associating the region to terrorism has been found, despite claims by Somaliland in the numerous press conferences held by the President of Somaliland, Muse Bihi. However, the conflict further conflated the humanitarian crises in the region. As the residents were affected by the droughts occurring, armed shelling by Somaliland forces had damaged local infrastructures such as hospitals, mosques, schools, and the major water supply systems of the city. Furthermore, according to many international organizations such as Amnesty International, estimates of more than 100 civilians have been killed, many more injured civilians, and displacing thousands of people. Monitors in the region have reported that indiscriminate killing of civilians had occurred, including targeting healthcare workers by the shelling.

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<sup>10</sup> Report conducted by Monitors on Dec. 2023



By August 2023, the local population had captured the area where most of the infighting had taken place, and while the situation had remained collectively calm, displaced people have returned to the city, despite a clear rebuilding needing to take place. However, vulnerable populations such as IDPs are in a disadvantage. Government services are still absent, such as court systems that are not yet fully functioning, police do not have full capacity and enough skills to manage the rebuilding. About 120 police corps were recruited, however they do not have enough support and are not highly trained yet, in regards to knowledge about human rights and international humanitarian standards. Local administration is not yet strong, contributing to many violent actions taking place in the city after the war. Due to the conflict, police stations are used as detention facilities which have become overcrowded, and there is a lack of adequate number of properly trained personnel in the detention centers. The number of prisoners is at 310, among them being 294 prisoners of war .

# CONDITIONS OF THE MARGINALIZED AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN SOMALILAND

Human Rights Center observed the conditions of marginalized and minority communities in IDPs in the regions from October 2023 to December 2023. Without the drought crisis and insecurity plaguing residents, basic items such as water are a consistent humanitarian crisis. Amongst the most important needs in these communities are basic needs met, economic opportunities, employment opportunities, safety and security for everyone in the camps, medical and clinic services in the area, police presence is understaffed, and major crimes committed often target women and those deemed foreigners. HRC monitors interviewed residents in their respective regions to raise awareness of the challenges facing them. Minorities and marginalized communities have been displaced by environmental crises and conflicts in the regions. The findings are included in this report in the hopes that further attention is given to IDPs around Somaliland as there is a great need.

## Daami Camp in Hargeisa

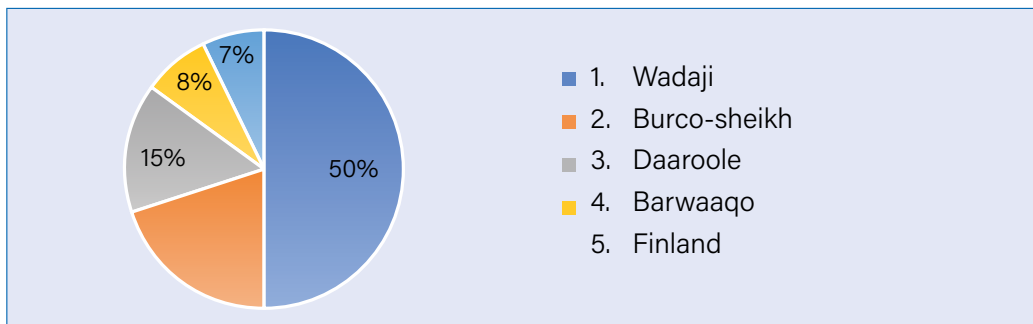
We visited Daami B IDP, and we met with the neighborhood committee to discuss the general conditions of the IDP. They shared with us their concerns and observations, and they stated that the IDP is home to a lot of underprivileged people and foreigners. They mentioned that there are concerns about the security of the area since the only police station that is near the IDP is understaffed (there are only two to three police officers in the station) and that the foreigners and young females who go to work early are targeted and violated. They also revealed that the most common violation that happens in the IDP is domestic violence, which is always related to the bills of the house. In addition, there are suicide cases in the IDP that are mostly committed by youth, and they stated the reason is mostly related to unemployment. They also share with us that there are increased numbers of detentions of underage children, mostly related to burglary and their sentences are between a year and two years and often share jail cells with adults since there are no rehabilitation centers for troubled kids.

They also mentioned that the reason behind these kids' troubled actions is that they do not have access to education since their parents cannot afford to put them in schools and are food insecure. They also said that because of the life conditions in which these kids live, they end up becoming street children. When it comes to health care, the committee stated there is only one MCH close enough to IDP, but they cannot afford it either. They said that for a mother to give birth in the MCH, they have to pay 250 SH plus the medication, which most of these mothers do not have. Abandoned children are another issue in the IDP. 16 kids were abandoned last year according to the neighborhood council.

### Berbera IDPs

There are five IDP camps for marginalized and minority communities in Berbera.

- Wadaji
- Burco-sheikh
- Daaroole
- Barwaaqo
- Finland



Wadajir accounts for 50% of gabooye clan residents. Residents that monitors interviewed are comprised of:

- Gabooye
- Southern Somalia (Digil and mirifle)
- Old residents of Arab descent
- Minority traders of Somaliland communities

Unemployment rates are high within these communities, job opportunities are often bypassed for other members in Berbera, and educational opportunities are severely lacking, as well as the exclusion of opportunities to be involved in the local councils.

### Challenges facing minority/marginalized communities

- Insults and unfair language, racial and clan slurs to showcase superiority.
- Unfair and challenging work opportunity practices.
- Job trades previously held by the communities are now given to Ethiopian refugees.
- Cleaning services held by the community are not permissible and allowed for them.
- High interest in the community during election campaigning time without consideration for long-term vision.



## Borama

Hayayabe is a camp where the marginalized community lives. There are 306 families and is located in the southwest of Borama. Among the problems faced by the Hayayabe community is that they do not have basic rights such as work (government and local and international agencies), representatives of government agencies in Borama district and Awdal region, water and roads, and malnutrition. A challenge facing the community is court fees during lawsuits, the fee to procure a lawyer, and social integration when it comes to marriage issues. The most common crimes committed by IDPs in Hayayabe are rape, theft, robbery, and selling marijuana and alcohol.

## Erigavo

There are Five refugee camps in Erigavo district, those camps are named Hafad-Somaal, Barwaaqo, Banadir Shacabka and Caydhah. This report is specific to Barwaaqo IDP. Most of the people are internally displaced, but there are people from Ethiopia who live in this area. An estimated 70 families are currently in need of humanitarian assistance for a plethora of reasons, including the care of one or more disabled family members. Residents are also from southern Somalia, who have been displaced due to the many droughts that killed their livestock, a major source of income for many. There are residents of IDPs who have been displaced from the Sanaag region of humanitarian and environmental crises. There are an estimated 120 families, a total of 1080 members of which 30 % are children under the age of 10.

According to the families interviewed, educational awareness is an insecurity, there are only two classes offered to primary and intermediate students, as there are not enough schools to meet the needs of the community, including disabled children, and hearing, and visually impaired children. Most of the residents are vulnerable individuals, as much of the aid from donors is limited. Unemployment has increased, adding to the severity of malnutrition amongst the vulnerable community. Many of the residents were laborers, such as working in construction or steel workers, a main source of income for these residents which have stopped now.

# ABOUT THE HRC

The Human Rights Centre (HRC) is a non-profit organization established in January 2013 with the aim of contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights in Somaliland. HRC was founded by lawyers who are inspired by the Bill of Rights in the Somaliland Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is registered with the Somaliland government as a non-profit-making and non-governmental organization.

HRC was formed to cover the need for documentation and advocacy on human rights to help maintain the gains made by Somaliland's nascent democracy. The central policy of the Human Rights Centre is creating and fostering a culture of voluntary human rights activism where committed human rights defenders with passion contribute to the protection, promotion, and realization of human rights.

## Our Mission

For Somaliland, a place where human rights are protected, promoted, respected, and fulfill.

## Our Vision

Human Rights Centre exists to defend and protect the rights of human beings.

## Our Values

We uphold the values of honesty, justice, and integrity for all. We aim to work with transparency and accountability, commitment, and discipline. We encourage creative participation understanding the need for sustainability and respect for all. We will continue to strive for impartiality and independence while placing great value on confidentiality. We also appreciate the importance of volunteering which forms the foundations of our organization.

## Areas of Operation

HRC helps and works for the people of Somaliland. It focuses on vulnerable people, women, the poor, minority clans, and victims of human rights abuses. HRC directs most of its attention to abuses committed by the state. The areas HRC works on include, but are not limited to, police brutality, freedom of media and expression, sexual and gender-based violence, illegal detentions, the death penalty, and freedom of assembly.

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