



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Somalia – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 October 2010

Do all people from the Ashraf clan of Somalia consider themselves Benadiri? Is it possible a person from Ashraf clan of Somalia does not consider themselves Benadiri?

Information on whether all people from the Ashraf clan of Somalia consider themselves Benadiri could not be found within the sources consulted by the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. However one source states the Ashraf usually identify themselves with the group they live among and that members of this small group would be treated like members of the dominant clan in the region (See Immigration and Refugee Board Response to an Information Request SOM6169 below)

Under the heading 'Benadir' a Danish Immigration Service report states regarding the Benadiri:

'From discussions with these groups it transpired that the term Benadiri is used by these groups to indicate the coastal population of Somalia roughly between Mogadishu and Kismayo, who share an urban culture and who are of mixed origin (Persian/Portuguese/Arabian/Swahili/Somali), separate from the major Somali clans...

According to Perouse de Montclos, the name Benadiri does not correspond to any well defined sociological reality. In the context of resettlement programmes for Somali refugees in Kenya, the Somali refugee traders of the coastal ports decided to regroup under the generic term 'Benadir', which designates greater Mogadishu. Those indigenous to this area succeeded in calling themselves 'Benadiri'.' (Danish Immigration Service (December 2000) *Report on Minority Groups in Somalia*, 17 -24 September 2000, p.38)

This report also states:

"The Benadiri elders distinguished:

- four Hamar groups:
 - Qalmashube
 - Dhabar Weyne
 - Shanshiya
 - Morshe (Moorshe)

After some discussion they added that the Bandhawaw and Reer Faqi also belonged in this category.

- five Shangani groups, e.g.:

- Amudi
- Baa Fadal
- Reer Sheikh
- Abakarow

- twelve 'caps' (sub-groups) in Merka, e.g.:

- Shukereere
- Ahmed Nur
- Reer Maanyo
- Ali'iyo Mohamed
- Duruqbe
- Gameedle

and the Ashraf." (Ibid, pp. 39-40)

This report also states:

"The delegation also held a meeting with representatives of the Ashraf (Asharaf, Asheraf, Sharifians) community in Nairobi including elders and women. They were all refugees from the coastal areas of Somalia. The Ashraf elders interviewed by the delegation readily identified themselves as Benadiri. The Ashraf elders made it clear that only one Ashraf group (or clan) exists in Somalia. However, this group is further sub-divided on the lines of their male ancestors. The Ashraf of Bay and Gedo regions (Baidoa, Hoddur, Bardera) are the same group as the Ashraf in the coastal areas. On subgroup of the Ashraf called Ashraf Sarman lives mainly in Hoddur (Bakool region), Bay region, Bardera (Gedo region) and Mogadishu. Other sub-groups called Mohammed Sharif, Sharif Ali and Sharif Ahmed live mainly in Kismayo, Merka, Bardera, Jalalaqsi, Jowhar and Mogadishu." (Ibid, p. 40)

This report also notes that there are Ashraf from Ethiopia exiled in Somalia but it does not state whether these Ashraf consider themselves Benadiri:

"The Ashraf elders indicated that the Ashraf are living in southern and central Somalia, especially in urban locations like Bardera, Kismayo, Baidoa, Hoddur, Merka, Brava and Mogadishu. In Mogadishu the largest concentration of Ashraf was to be found in the Shingani district, but they also lived in Hamar Weyne. Ashraf used to live also in Ethiopia. Some Ashraf from Ethiopia became exiled in Somalia at the time of the Ogaden war in 1977. These Ashraf came from Ogaden, Oromia, Dire Dawa and Harar in Ethiopia and some of them fled Somalia in 1991-92. Those remaining in Somalia reside with other Ashraf." (Ibid, p.41)

A Response to an Information Request from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada states that the Ashraf usually identify themselves with the group they live among:

"A prominent member of the Canadian Somali community in Toronto states that 'Ashraf', originally an Arabic word, is the plural of Sharif, literally meaning "noble man". He corroborates the above information and reports that there is also a concentration of the Ashraf in Baidova, southern Somalia, who are also referred to as 'Sarman'. The source states that the Ashraf usually identify themselves with the group they live among.

Therefore the source suggests that members of this small and respected group would be treated like members of the dominant clan in the region.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 June 1990) *Somalia: Information regarding the Ashraf tribe (SOM6169)*)

Another Response to an Information Request from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada states that the Ashraf are related to the Benadir:

“In telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the same source clarified that the Ashraf are related to the Reer Hamar because Reer Hamar means ‘people of the city’ and refers to the people who inhabited Mogadishu before the civil war (26 June 1998). The Ashraf are related to the Benadir to the extent that they inhabited the Benadir coastal areas of Mogadishu, Merka and Brava. The Ashraf like the Benadir claim to be of Arab descent, are light-skinned and have distinct Arabic features.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 July 1998) *Somalia: Information on the Ashraf and whether it is a sub-clan of the Reer Hamar; the relationship between the Ashraf and the Benadir and the Reer Hamar and the Benadir (SOM29649.E)*)

Another Response to an Information Request from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada states that the Ashraf are found throughout Somalia:

“The attached excerpt from the Report by the Nordic Fact-Finding Mission to Central and Southern Somalia from 15 February to 14 March 1997 states that the Ashraf population form part of the Rahanweyn family of clans and are found throughout Somalia.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 August 1998) *Somalia: Differences between the Ashraf and the Reer Hamar (SOM29887.E)*)

Another Response to an Information Request from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada also states that the Ashraf are found throughout Somalia:

“In a telephone interview on 29 July 1996, a historian specializing in Somalia at Savannah State College in Savannah, Georgia stated that the Ashraf are found throughout Somalia, and are accorded some prestige by the other clans because of their reputation for learning and their religious probity. The Ashraf often live among various clans. The term ‘Ashraf’ means ‘respected’ in the Somali language, but the Ashraf would have suffered along with most of the other clans because of the indiscriminate nature of the violence during the civil conflict (ibid.)” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 August 1996) *Somalia: Current information on the Reer Hamar and Ashraf subclans, on where they are located and their security situation SOM24662.E*)

The UK Home Office Operational Guidance Note refers to case law in which Ashraf are described as a Benadiri sub group:

“In addition, in HH & others Somalia CG [2008] UKAIT 00022 (see above) the AIT found that some members of the Ashraf (a Benadiri sub group) have been able to live in southern Somalia under the protection of the majority clan in their geographic community.” (UK Home Office (March 2009) *Operational Guidance Note – Somalia*, p.18)

References

Danish Immigration Service (24 September 2000) *Report on Minority Groups in Somalia*
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a5fa0.html>

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 August 1998) *Somalia: Differences between the Ashraf and the Reer Hamar (SOM29887.E)*

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 June 1990) *Somalia: Information regarding the Asharaf tribe (SOM6169)*

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources consulted

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Europa World

European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Google

Google Scholar

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

IRIN News
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