



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – SOMALIA

Situation Report # 31 - 8 August, 2008

Main developments

A Canadian frigate will escort WFP food shipments bound for Somalia. In a press statement released on 6 August, WFP said the frigate is coming at a critical moment when more food is needed for a growing number of people in Somalia. Around 90% of WFP food assistance for Somalia arrives by sea. Since a naval escort system began in November 2007 with frigates from France, Denmark and Netherlands in succession until late June, no ships carrying WFP food have been attacked. WFP is appealing to countries with naval capacity to take over from Canada in a few weeks. Pirate attacks off Somalia's eastern and northern coasts have increased, with 31 incidents in 2007 and 24 so far this year.

Two Italian aid workers held hostage since May were released on 5 August in Mogadishu and immediately flown to Nairobi. However, their Somali national colleague is still in captivity. The three, who work for the NGO Cooperazione Italiana Nord Sud, were captured on 21 May while on mission in Aw Dheegle village, Lower Shabelle region. Since January 2008, 18 aid-related workers have been abducted and 11 remain in captivity.

On Sunday 3 August, at least 20 people were killed instantly and another five died in hospital in Mogadishu when a roadside bomb exploded while they were clearing rubbish. The majority were women working on a food-for-work project. More than 40 other people were wounded in the same explosion. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, condemned the incident and the rising number of civilian casualties in Somalia. In a press statement released on 7 August, John Holmes said, "All parties to this conflict have an obligation under international law to protect civilians and to refrain from indiscriminate attacks. Yet it seems at every turn, the death toll of ordinary Somalis is growing. Far too many of them are women, children and aid workers who have no part in this conflict."

Abdulkadir Yusuf Kariye, the manager of an orphanage in Lafoole, Lower Shabelle region, was killed on 6 August by unidentified gunmen who shot him as he was entering his home. The orphanage is one of the largest centres in Somalia, which has cared for hundreds of orphans and street children in Mogadishu and surrounding regions since the collapse of the former Somali government in 1991. This brings the total number of aid-related workers killed since January 2008 to 21.

Heavy fighting between Ethiopian/TFG forces and insurgents was reported on 4 August around Heliwa and Yaaqshiid districts in Mogadishu. It is reported that 15 civilians died while 30 others were injured. Fresh fighting continues to limit the access of humanitarian workers to thousands of displaced people in need of food, water and other basic needs, compounding an already dire humanitarian crisis. In Baidao, insurgents reportedly launched about seven mortars targeting the airport and the presidential palace. No casualties were reported.

Tension between the southern and northern communities in Gaalkacyo, Puntland, are said to be rising. One man was killed on 4 August in the northern part of the town. Last week, a remote-controlled bomb detonated in north Gaalkacyo damaging residential homes, while a hand grenade was hurled at a school building between north and south Gaalkacyo. The two rival clans have disagreed over resources in the past but recently more incidents have been reported.

On 31 July, one African Union (AU) peacekeeper was killed in the explosion of an anti-personal mine planted by insurgents and triggered by a road sweeping check for explosive devices. The AU, which currently has some 2,600 peacekeepers in Somalia, condemned the killing.

During the week, WFP distributed approximately 5,417 metric tons of food in South Central, Somaliland, and Puntland, benefiting some 330,296 people.

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