



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Somalia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 9 August 2012

Commentary on the current situation vis-à-vis articles/reports written regarding Eamonn Gilmore's visit in July 2012

A publication in July 2012 by the *Irish Examiner* notes that:

“The international community is being criticised for its slow response to the crisis in Somalia” (Irish Examiner (27 July 2011) *Gilmore asked to pressure European colleagues for more Somalia aid*).

The *Irish Times* notes in July 2012 that:

“Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Eamon Gilmore flew into the country's capital, Mogadishu, yesterday for a surprise and secret visit. The fraught security situation, namely the continuing threat posed by the extreme Islamist group al-Shabaab, meant the visit was not made public until it had happened. During the six-hour visit, Mr Gilmore visited a school and nutrition centre run by Irish aid agency Concern, witnessed the appalling conditions of a ramshackle camp housing 100,000 displaced people and met the prime minister of the transitional government. In the two decades since the Robinson visit there have been continuous war, periodic famines, massive displacement of people, no functioning government and lawlessness. Countless thousands have died, and there are almost three million people displaced because of famine and violence. While there is a more than a glimmer of hope with the successful offensive earlier this year that pushed al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu, the crisis facing the country remains one of the worst in the world, according to the UN's humanitarian co-ordinator Mark Bowden” (Irish Times (30 July 2012) *Somalia's cause is Ireland's cause, says Tánaiste on visit*).

In July 2012 the *Irish Times* notes:

“What made the visit possible was that the situation around the capital has improved markedly over the past year, especially since February, when forces loyal to the transitional government, supported by the African peacekeeping force Amisom, succeeded in pushing the hard-line Islamic militia al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu and its environs. However, the security situation remains fragile and attacks have continued, albeit less frequently. It was for that reason the Tánaiste's visit was shrouded in secrecy until it occurred. Mr Gilmore travelled in a convoy of armoured personnel carriers and wore body and head protection throughout” (Irish Times (30 July 2012) *Gilmore visits desolation of war-torn country*).

This report also points out that:

“One-third of the country's estimated population of 11 million is in need of humanitarian assistance” (ibid).

The *Irish Examiner* in July 2012 states:

“Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore announced an additional €3m in life-saving assistance to Somalia during a visit to the capital, Mogadishu today. Minister Gilmore's visit coincides with the one-year anniversary of the UN's declaration of famine in Somalia in July 2011. The Tánaiste is the first Irish Minister to travel to the country in more than two decades. Mr Gilmore said: “Somalia is one of the poorest and most insecure environments in the world. Our ongoing assistance is saving lives every day.” “ (Irish Examiner (29 July 2012) *Tánaiste announces €3m aid package for Somalia*).

This report also points out:

“The funding will help non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Concern, to scale up vital aid to millions of vulnerable Somalis whose lives are in jeopardy as a result of war and starvation. It is in addition to almost €30m in emergency and long-term development funding given through Irish Aid over the past five years. Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Somalia and North Korea as joint last, or most corrupt” (ibid).

In August 2012 *BBC News* states:

“A leaked UN report recently said that 70% of aid to the country was unaccounted for but the interim authority strongly denied that corruption was rampant” (BBC News (1 August 2012) *Somali leaders back new constitution*).

A report published by the *United Nations* in June 2012 notes:

“Civilians have borne the brunt of the impact of the on-going conflict in Somalia, with all major parties guilty of either indiscriminate attacks or disproportionate use of force” (United Nations (27 June 2012) *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002 (2011)*, point 95).

The *Agence France Presse* in July 2012 states:

“Bowed down by repeated droughts and riven by over two decades of conflict, Somalia is torn between rival clans, Islamist insurgents and the government, propped up by a 17,000-strong AU force” (Agence France Presse (25 July 2012) *War-torn Somalia's assembly convenes to debate constitution*).

In August 2012 the *United Nations News Service* points out that:

“After decades of warfare, Somalia has been undergoing a peace and national reconciliation process, with the country's Transitional Federal Institutions currently implementing the so-called Roadmap for the End of Transition in Somalia, devised in September last year, that spells out priority measures to be carried out before the current transitional governing arrangements end in 20 days' time” (United Nations News Service (1 August 2012) *UN officials welcome 'historic' approval of new constitution for Somalia*).

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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.

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