



# SOMALIA WATCHER

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NDI-SOMALIA

*More than 15 conflict-filled years after the fall of its last functioning government, Somalia remains one of the world's most dramatic examples of a 'failed state.' Although a 2004 National Reconciliation Conference resulted in an attempt at reconstituting the institutions of state – the UN-backed Transitional Federal Government, or TFG – Somalia has found itself once more on the brink of conflict.*

*Since early 2006, the already-weak TFG had been challenged by the sudden rise of the Supreme Islamic Courts Council, or SICC. Although this Islamist group has been accused of harboring terrorists by some in the West, it had also enjoyed some measure of popular support and – until recently – controlled wide swaths of the country.*

*More recently, however, government and Ethiopian troops routed the Islamist forces in a late December march from Baidoa. A widely-feared regional conflict has not materialized and TFG moved into Mogadishu – Somalia's traditional capital – newly empowered and eager to govern. After 16 years of political anarchy and warlord rule, these developments appear to present Somalia with a unique opportunity to reconstruct an inclusive and capable governing framework. The country's troubled history, however, cautions that this opportunity is likely both fragile and fleeting.*

*Somalia Watcher is compiled by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and its Somalia field office based in Nairobi, Kenya.*

## Recent Political Developments

- On the fringes of the African Union (AU) summit in Addis Ababa, TFG president **Abdullahi Yusuf** announced on February 1 that the TFG will convene a national reconciliation conference, to be held inside the country. He stated that all segments of Somali

society shall participate in the conference “to reconcile the clans and the people.” The move was welcomed by international stakeholders, including the U.S. and European governments as well as African states, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Arab League countries. Many in the international community had been encouraging the TFG leadership to reconcile with opposing groups inside and outside the country, especially the more moderate elements within the former Islamic Council. However, there seems to be some discrepancy between the reconciliation conference announced by the TFG leader and the one envisaged by the international community. While the participants, agenda and timeframe for the conference are yet to be announced, TFG leadership has stated that it shall comprise “clan elders, women’s groups, religious leaders, youth and business actors, as well as diaspora representatives,” without any reference to the inclusion of former SICC members or leadership.

- On January 31, the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) elected the TFG’s former Minister of Justice, **Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur** – better known as “**Madoobe**” – as its new Speaker. A former leader of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army, Sheikh Aden Madoobe hails from the *Digil & Mirifle* community and had run previously for the same position in 2004. According to a statement by the Second Deputy Speaker **Osman Elmi Boqorre**, Sheikh Aden Madoobe won 153 of the 213 votes cast by

attending MPs, defeating **MP Ibrahim Kishbur** (54 votes, six of which were declared invalid) and the former Deputy Premier & Minister of Livestock **Prof. Salim Aliyow** (38 votes in the 1st and 2nd rounds before conceding). The election of the TFG-aligned Sheikh Aden Madoobe, though obtained by clear majority, will consolidate the position of the President and Prime Minister, although it is also expected to lead to a more productive and cohesive parliamentary session. The electoral process, by secret ballot, was accepted as being fair by all candidates.

- Sheik Aden Madoobe was sworn-in as Speaker at a February 3 ceremony in Baidoa. Both President Yusuf and the Prime Minister **Ali Mohamed Ghedi** attended, and each addressed the assembled Members of Parliament. The president briefed the parliament on his trip to the AU summit, declaring that AU leaders are committed to supporting the Somali transitional institutions with stabilization forces. He invited the new Speaker to consult with his colleagues and reiterated his declaration that all components of Somali society shall have a stake in his called-for reconciliation conference.

Conspicuously, President Yusuf made no mention of incorporating any elements of the now-defeated Islamic Courts. He did, however, speak strongly against “those still pursuing violent means in Mogadishu,” and declared that addressing the security situation in the capital will be one of his top priorities.

For his part, the prime minister welcomed the nomination of the new Speaker and reiterated that the government shall now focus its attention on security matters, particularly in the capital, and the preparations for the national reconciliation conference. He promised to submit a detailed report on progress to these ends before the parliamentary session concludes in late February or early March 2007.

- The election of Hon. Sheikh Aden Madoobe did generate some resistance. On February 1, the former Speaker, **Hon. Sharif**

**Hassan Sheikh Aden**, rejected the election on a procedural basis and characterized the transitional parliament as having acted under duress, given the presence of “foreign troops” in Somalia. His parliamentary colleague **Hon. Omar Hashi** concurred with him, describing the election of the new Speaker as the natural conclusion to an “Ethiopian plan to control” both the executive and the legislative bodies. Sharif Sheikh Aden was ousted as Speaker on January 17.

- Violence in Mogadishu continues to increase in both its intensity and frequency. On February 2, the city’s airport and seaport were the targets of mortar attacks. Local police sources described the attacks as being the heaviest since TFG and Ethiopian troops took control of the city. Unidentified elements thought to be connected with the former SICC movement assailed the facilities by launching a total of nine mortar attacks in the evening hours. According to local Somali media, five people were killed and seven others wounded in the attack, which was launched from moving vehicles in southwest Mogadishu. The police chief in the capital, however, did not report any casualties or damage.

- The February 2 attacks came amidst growing violence in the capital and around the country. Between January 24 and 27, a number of mortar and grenade attacks rocked Mogadishu; three police stations were targeted, along with the airport and two checkpoints in the *medina* area of the city. On January 27, unidentified elements also attacked a convoy of TFG police and Ethiopian forces near the *El-Irfid* area of northeast Mogadishu, wounding several soldiers and a policeman. Meanwhile, in Kismayo, one Ethiopian soldier was killed and another seriously wounded in a January 25 marketplace attack by local militiamen.

- The moderate religious political and social movement *Al-Islah* issued a statement on February 2, welcoming the president’s call for reconciliation. The statement, distributed on

the internet, commends the call for reconciliation of the TFG leaders, advocates for a speedy implementation of the reconciliation conference, warns the Somali people of renewed civil strife, and appeals to Arab governments to support both the transitional institutions and the AU/UN troop deployment efforts.

- On February 2, the former chairman SICC's executive structure, **Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed**, addressed a number of Somali issues through the BBC and *Al-Jazeera* TV. He stated that, despite having been detained by Kenya on January 22, he is well and preparing to leave Nairobi for Yemen, which he did a week later. The Yemeni foreign minister expressed his confidence that Sheikh Sharif could yet play a crucial role in the Somali reconciliation process. The Yemeni government has, however, declined to play a direct role in that process, viewing it as an "internal one."

Sheikh Sharif acknowledged meeting Michael Ranneberger, the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, "several times" and welcomed President Yusuf's call for reconciliation. He stated that his colleagues are ready to attend any reconciliation conference to restore peace in Somalia, and that they have conveyed that to both Kenyan and U.S. officials. He continues to deplore, however, the "occupation" of the country by "foreign troops" and expressed his belief that true reconciliation would only be achievable once the Ethiopian forces have left Somalia.

Although he did not dismiss the notion of a potential AU stabilization mission, he cautioned that such forces could be deployed only once a political settlement has been reached by all Somali stakeholders. On *Al-Jazeera* he said, "we have an earlier experience of foreign troops in Somalia. What has happened then should not be overlooked." Despite his call for the speedy withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, Sheikh Sharif's overall tone was conciliatory and he appears ready to engage in dialogue with the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs).

- Sheikh Sharif's support for meaningful reconciliation was echoed by the former Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Sheikh Aden. From Djibouti, the former Speaker welcomed the idea of the president's reconciliation conference, but he too warned the true reconciliation could not take place inside the country until Ethiopian troops leave Somalia.

- After several days of ambiguous statements, and in contrast to the conciliatory chords struck by the Sheikh Sharif and the former Speaker, President Yusuf did finally clarify his position towards the former SICC leadership on February 4. In an interview with local Somali media, he stated that the "Islamic Courts and its leaders" should have no role to play in the reconciliation conference. He emphasized that, while "traditional religious leaders" would be consulted and invited to participate, the TFG leadership took the position that the former SICC leaders do not appropriately represent the Somali people.

- AU military experts have begun to assess the operational feasibility of deploying a stabilization force in Somalia, having paid visits to Mogadishu on February 3-5. The AU team toured the airport, seaport and military facilities in the capital, according to **Salad Ali Jelle**, the TFG's deputy minister of defense. The assessment team was received by representatives of the Mogadishu city administration and TFG and Ethiopian officials stationed in Mogadishu. According to the Ugandan colonel leading the team, the experts were touring Mogadishu to get acquainted with the facilities and will submit a report to the AU Peace & Security Council tasked with the deployment of the African forces. The mission had to contend with the city's volatile security situation. On the evening of February 5, a barrage of mortar attacks hit the seaport forcing an oil tanker to leave port and reach the safety of the high sea. The mission comes as the stabilization force continues to struggle to get off the ground; while several AU members have pledged

troops in principle, only Uganda appears ready to deploy forces, having committed a battalion to the effort.

- Though unwilling to send peacekeeping forces into Somalia, Tanzanian officials have offered to train 1,000 members of the new Somali security forces. According to the *East African* newspaper, the trainings are planned to commence in the next few months at the Monduli Military Academy in the northern Tanzanian region of Manyara. TFG President Yusuf is expected to visit Tanzania in the coming weeks to formalize the relationship.

- Together with UNDP Somalia officials, Prime Minister Ghedi convened a February 5 seminar for local traditional, civic and business people to discuss strategies for the now much-talked-about reconciliation process. In an effort to avoid remaking past mistakes, the prime minister called upon participants to research the roots of Somalia's clan disputes and institutional failures of the country's recent history. Among the participants were the chairman and members of the Independent Reconciliation Commission mandated by the Transitional Federal Charter, as well as members of Mogadishu's civil society community. Although TFG leaders have been clear on their views about the process, local civil society groups remain divided on approaches. While some are supporting the government's role and views on the issue, others find them unsatisfactory, calling for a reconciliation process that yields a real political settlement.

- A group of prominent Ayr political and traditional figures paid a February 6 visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the invitation of the Ethiopian government. The Ayr are the *Hawiye* subclan most-associated with the SICC and the Islamic Courts movement more generally. According to the elders and politicians, the visit is an effort to initiate a dialogue on the possibility that it may culminate with the eventual inclusion of some components of this group in the TFI structure.

Many observers believe that Ethiopia's objective is to convince these elders and politicians to participate in the stabilization of the country rather than continue to lend support to the remnants of the SICC.

- On February 7, the prime minister's office announced a major re-shuffling of cabinet assignments ahead of the National Reconciliation Conference. Among the notable changes include the re-assignment of **Hussein Mohammed Aideed**, who – in addition to his role as Deputy Prime Minister – had been the TFG's Interior Minister; Mr. Aideed is now the Minister of Public Works & Housing. The shift also features the appointment of **Dr. Qamar Adan Ali** as the Minister of Health, making her the second female minister in the TFG cabinet; previously she had served as the chairwoman of the parliamentary Committee on Gender & Human Rights. The new cabinet also illustrates TFG efforts to reach out to disaffected *Hawiye* subclans. At least three senior *Habargidir* officials were among the nominees, including a senior Ayr representative nominated as Minister of Justice. The new cabinet is likely subject to further changes after the conclusion of the reconciliation conference. □

### National Democratic Institute

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs has been working in Somalia since November 2005, conducting capacity-building training in support of the country's transitional governing institutions. NDI is a not-for-profit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide.

A description of the Institute's program activities in Somalia and back issues of *Somalia Watcher* are available on NDI's website: [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org)

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