

**WHY SOMALIS FLEE**

**Synthesis of Accounts of Conflict Experience**

**in Northern Somalia**

**by Somali Refugees, Displaced Persons and Others**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In February 1989, the author was engaged by the Department of State's Bureau for Refugee Programs to undertake an assessment of designated Somali and Ethiopian refugee issues. The Bureau's Director decided to have the assessment conducted as a result of the Bureau's perception of a mounting refugee crisis in this area of the Horn of Africa. A longstanding civil conflict between the insurgent Somali National Movement (SNM) and the Government of Somalia had suddenly intensified in May 1988 and was thought to be the principal cause of this crisis.

In the eight months between May 1988 and January 1989, an estimated 300,000 – 500,000 Somali refugees had arrived in eastern Ethiopia from northern Somalia, sometimes at the rate of 4,000 a day. Mobilized through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international community provided food and cash contributions approaching an annualized level of roughly US\$50 million to assure the survival of these refugees. Somali refugees were said to be arriving in Djibouti and Kenya as well. Hundreds of thousands of other Somalis were thought to be internally displaced inside Somalia.

Another population of concern to the Refugee Bureau were hundreds of thousands of refugees who had fled from Ethiopia to sanctuary in Somalia as many as ten years earlier, who were still residing in refugee camps in northern Somalia and who were also severely affected by the intense fighting which broke out there in May 1988. These refugee camps had been established under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In August 1988 the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Refugee Assistance in the Bureau for Refugee Programs visited the affected region. His reports suggested that detailed study of numerous aspects of the northern Somalia situation was required. Among the concerns was how scarce assistance resources for the Somali refugees in the inhospitable environment of eastern Ethiopia should be allocated, based in part on an assessment of how long they were likely to stay there and the possibilities for their voluntary repatriation. An additional concern was whether it would be possible to return to a normal, internationally monitored program of refugee assistance for the Ethiopian refugees in northern Somalia. The answer to both concerns hinged in large measure on the experiences, motivations and intentions of the refugees themselves.

The author was engaged by the Bureau for Refugee Programs to examine such issues as the root causes of refugee flows, internal displacement, and disruption of the UN refugee camps in northern Somalia; refugee protection issues; and prospects for repatriation and return strategies which could offer durable solutions for the affected populations.

To do this, the author conducted a field visit of nearly three months to thirty-one different locations in three countries – Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. In these places, which were separated by as many as 1,000 miles, he spoke at length and individually with more than three hundred randomly selected individuals who fell into two broad categories:

- He interviewed over two hundred and fifty refugees and displaced persons who had fled from or who continued to reside in conflict-affected locations in northern Somalia. The bulk of the information included in this report is derived from these interviews. Their reports focused on violence against unarmed civilian non-combatants.
- For comparative purposes, he spoke with twenty Ethiopian refugees residing in UNHCR refugee camps in southern Somalia and with thirty Ethiopian refugees who had until recently resided in those camps and who had just repatriated to their homes in southern Ethiopia. None of these fifty refugees/returnees were directly affected by the intensified civil conflict in northern Somalia.

Throughout the eleven week field trip, the author spoke with many national and international personnel who provided valuable complementary information, and with Government officials.

The map which appears on the following page describes some key reference points for northern Somalia and the areas of eastern Ethiopia where refugee camps are located. The 252 interviews which are the primary basis of this report's conclusions were conducted in some of these locations.

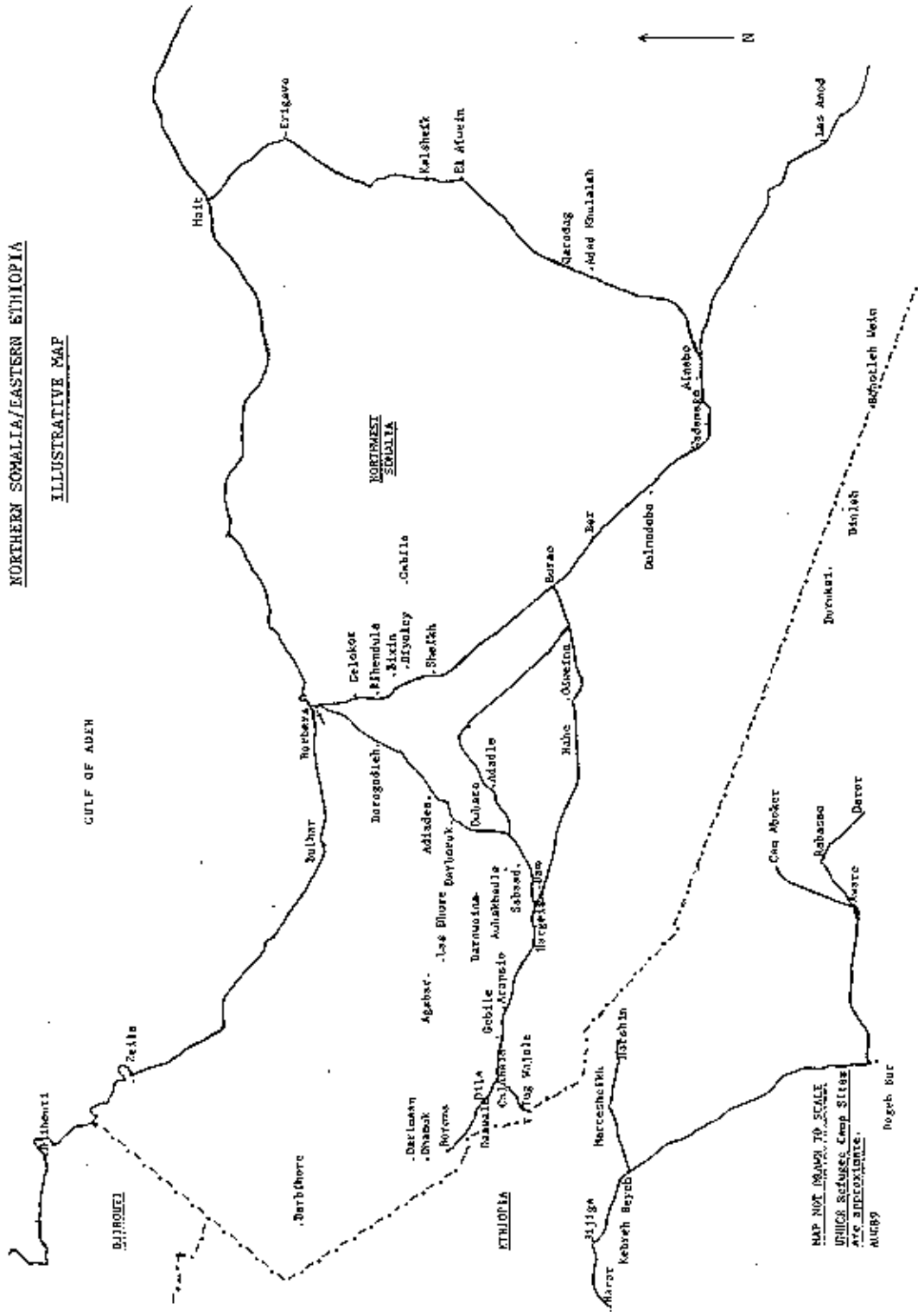
This report synthesizes the information gathered during the assessment. It is divided into the following sections:

- General Assessment Procedures
- Reports from Somali Refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya
- Reports from Somalis in Northern Somalia
- Reports from Ethiopian Refugees in Northern Somalia
- Findings and Conclusions

# MAP

## NORTHERN SOMALIA/EASTERN ETHIOPIA

### ILLUSTRATIVE MAP



MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE  
 UNICEF Refugee Camp Sites  
 are approximate.  
 UNR99



## **ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

### **Source of Findings**

The field research for this assessment was conducted during a period of eleven weeks, between March and May 1989, in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. The principal source of the assessment's findings were three hundred and two individual interviews with refugees, displaced persons and others who provided eyewitness accounts of incidents and patterns of conduct related to the subject of this study. In the national capitals, regional administrative centers and in some field sites, the author met with about forty national and international personnel with first-hand experience in the field. They provided background information and an opportunity to better understand and sometimes corroborate aspects of the information provided in the three hundred interviews with local eyewitnesses. The author also met with host Government, United States Embassy and United States Agency for International Development officials.

### **Geographical Scope**

The assessment was conducted in thirty-one locations in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya which included:

- Sixteen sanctuary sites for Somali refugees and displaced persons directly affected by conflict violence in northern Somalia. Among these were:
  - Five refugee camps in western Ethiopia
  - Ten sites in northern Somalia
  - One location in Kenya.

Almost all of the 252 interviews with families directly affected by the war in northern Somalia were conducted in these locations. The bulk of the data in this report is based on these 252 interviews.

- Two longstanding UNHCR camps in northern Somalia for Ethiopian refugees which had not been directly affected by the conflict.
- Three national capitals (Addis Ababa, Mogadishu and Nairobi) and five regional administrative centers where relief operations are based.
- Two refugee camps in southern Somalia which were not directly affected by the conflict in the north; and four "returnee" re-integration settlements in southern Ethiopia for families who had recently returned from refugee camps in southern Somalia. None of these had been directly affected by the fighting in northern Somalia, and it was in these camps that, for comparative purposes, fifty of the interviews were conducted.

## **Host Government Cooperation**

Both the Government of Ethiopia and the Government of Somalia, in whose countries 97% of the interviews were conducted, provided full cooperation to the author. This cooperation in both countries included:

- Prompt approval of the author's requests for lengthy travel programs with loose advance itineraries, to which neither Government was accustomed in these border and conflict areas.
- Freedom to use his time and to alter the travel plan without prior notice within the regions visited as he felt necessary.
- Unimpeded access to the refugee, displaced persons and other sites during daylight hours. For security reasons which in both countries appeared reasonable and warranted by local circumstances, the author was in some cases required to return to nearby administrative towns at sunset. In northern Somalia, the duration of access to some sites was curtailed because of security concerns.
- Almost all travel in both countries was conducted without Government accompaniment. However, in northern Somalia, security accompaniment on the road was deemed necessary during some daytime travel. In southern Ethiopia, accompaniment did not include participation in the substantive work of the trip such as decisions about random selection or conduct of the interviews.
- Freedom to randomly select subjects for interviews and to organize the interview process in accordance with his own procedures.
- Freedom to engage the translators of his choice.
- No Government presence in the interviews. However, in one refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia, a local employee of the Ethiopian Government's relief unit insisted upon being present during parts of four interviews conducted in that particular camp. This presence was discontinued after consultation with the Government's senior camp coordinator.
- Assistance with logistics when local weather (in Ethiopia) or conflict conditions (in Somalia) generated unanticipated requirements.

Given the security and logistics constraints present in northern Somalia, the freedom of movement and activity and the logistical and security assistance extended to the author by Government of Somalia officials are particularly noteworthy.

### **Selection of Interviewees**

The three hundred interviews described earlier were conducted in twenty-four locations in three countries. The author personally selected or directed the selection for interviews of refugees, displaced persons and others as randomly as possible. They were selected without reference to the type of problems they might have experienced (except at the author's request in five cases in northern Somalia, described later in this report). In Ethiopia, the author also placed particular emphasis on selection of those who came from as wide a geographical distribution as possible.

The author attempted to select refugees, displaced persons and others who became displaced throughout the eight-month period when the refugee flows and displacement had occurred. In the case of Somali refugees in Ethiopia, the majority of the refugees had arrived in the June/September 1988 period. The author selected refugees who had arrived in the thirty days preceding the interviews in somewhat higher numbers than the proportion of all refugees which they represented.

## **Categories of Interviewees**

Interviewees in this study fell into the following categories:

- 120 individuals interviewed in refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia and 10 individuals interviewed in Kenya all described themselves as Somali citizens of the Issak clan family, which is based predominantly in northern Somalia. Most had fled their home region as a result of the intense violence which broke out in May 1988.
- 122 individuals interviewed in northern Somalia fell into three sub-categories:
  - Thirty-three were Somalis who had been displaced by the intense violence and who continued to live as displaced persons in sanctuary areas in northern Somalia far from their home towns. Most of these were non-Issaks.
  - Twenty-four were Somalis who had remained in their hometowns in northern Somalia despite intense violence, or who had temporarily fled to a nearby location for sanctuary and returned to their homes shortly thereafter when the violence abated. Most of these were also non-Issaks.
  - Sixty-five were Ethiopian refugees who had fled their own country because of a war there some ten years ago and had been living in UNHCR refugee camps in northern Somalia since then. When these camps had been directly affected by the violence in northern Somalia, these refugees had either fled to different sanctuary locations or, despite the violence, had remained in their refugee camps.

Thus, about half of the interviews conducted in northern Somalia involved Ethiopian refugees affected by the conflict. The emphasis which the author placed on visits to these refugee camps and interviews with the affected refugees was the result, in part, of the access they provided to concentrated populations and of the Refugee Bureau's special concern for them. It was also a function of the relatively greater difficulty of locating and identifying the displaced Somali population, which tended to reside in very dispersed patterns.

- Fifty of the interviewees, described earlier in the report, were interviewed for comparative purposes in southern Somalia and southern Ethiopia, and had not been directly affected by the conflict in northern Somalia.

Chart A on this page illustrates the categories of interviewees described above.

**CHART A**

**CATEGORIES OF INTERVIEWEES**

**NORTHERN SOMALIA RELATED**  
**252 interviewees**

<b><u>Issak Refugees</u></b>		<b><u>Northern Somalis</u></b>		<b><u>Ethiopian Refugees</u></b>
<b><u>Ethiopia</u></b>	<b><u>Kenya</u></b>	<b><u>DPs</u></b>	<b><u>Non-DPs</u></b>	<b><u>in Northern Somalia</u></b>
120	10	33	24	65

**SOUTHERN SOMALIA RELATED**  
**50 interviewees**

**Southern Somalia**  
**Ethiopian Refugees**

20

**Southern Ethiopia**  
**Returnees**

30

## **Interview Accounts**

Interviewees provided eyewitness and other detailed, credible accounts of their experiences; spontaneous responses to many follow-up questions; and, in some cases, diagrams which illustrated the manner in which the incidents they described had occurred. The majority of the respondents had no formal education or literacy skills. But they described effectively what they had seen and what had happened to them, and these observations are the principal basis for the data and findings of this report. A small number appeared reluctant to provide any information. But the great majority appeared to speak forthrightly and with confidence about their experiences.

Except where otherwise indicated, the violent incidents described in this report refer only to those committed by armed combatants against unarmed civilians in the absence of combatants of the other side. Thus, except as otherwise specified, the stated presence of SNM soldiers at the scene of violence attributed to the Somali Armed Forces automatically excluded the incident from this report. This applied equally to reports concerning negative actions by the SNM. Crossfire deaths were attributed to neither party to the conflict.

This report includes statistical compilations of deaths and other casualties eyewitnessed or described in credible detail by interviewees. Where possible and in contexts in which it was reasonable to expect that the interviewee would be able to provide them, the author collected the names of as many as possible of the victims of each incident as the interviewee could provide. Criteria for accepting reports were relatively stringent and, in the author's view, have had the effect of underestimating the statistics for the numbers of deaths and other casualties witnessed by all interviewees.

The reports from the refugees who had fled Somalia, regardless of which of the five refugee camps in Ethiopia they resided in, and for the small number interviewed in Kenya, tended to be consistent, even though the interview sites were separated by hundreds – and in some cases nearly 1,000 – miles. In addition, some of the reports of the same incidents, received from randomly selected refugees in different interview locations, corroborated each other.

The sanctuary sites in northern Somalia were quite dispersed – with some up to hundreds of miles apart. The number of sanctuary locations in which interviews were conducted in northern Somalia was about twice the number of interview sites in eastern Ethiopia. The reports received from individuals within the group of 122 interviews conducted in northern Somalia also tended to be consistent and mutually corroborative.

The interviewees provided sufficient detail so that accounts by several of them – sometimes received in different countries – could be readily identified and thus not "double-counted" in the quantitative tabulations.

All of the interviewees appeared to be able to readily identify and distinguish between the two parties to the conflict.

Where differences in perceptions or reports emerged between the Somali Issak refugees outside Somalia and the principally non-Issak Somalis and Ethiopian refugees interviewed within Somalia, these are described in the report.

The same consistency and mutual corroboration which characterized the 252 northern Somalia-related cases applied within the groups of fifty refugees and returnees interviewed, respectively, in southern Somalia and in southern Ethiopia.

To describe the refugee accounts of why they had fled from their homes and from other sanctuary sites as clearly and accurately as possible, the author analyzed their reports and divided their accounts of conflict violence into nominal categories of conflict conduct by both parties, recognizing that some categories overlap in some respects.

## **Limitations of Interviews**

Serious negative reports concerning the conduct of both parties to the civil conflict in northern Somalia were described in the interviews. Negative reports about each side tended to contain the same level of detail and authority, to be conveyed with the same level of conviction, and to permit the same level of mutual corroboration.

The Issak clan members who had fled their homes in northern Somalia had overwhelmingly chosen Ethiopia as their destination. They provided a few negative reports concerning SNM actions. But almost all of their negative reports concerned actions by the Somali Government's Armed Forces which had compelled them to flee from their homes. It is said that Ethiopia has in the past provided sanctuary and assistance to the predominantly Issak SNM forces, and most Issak clan members who fled when the violence intensified went to Ethiopia.

These displaced persons and others who when forced to flee had chosen sanctuary within Somalia or who had remained in conflicted areas under Government protection, identified themselves mostly as Darod, Dir and other non-Issak clans. The Government of Somalia is dominated politically by Marehan and other Darod clans. The interviewees provided some negative reports concerning Government forces. But the overwhelming majority of their negative reports concerned specific actions by SNM forces which had forced them to flee their homes or exposed them to danger.

In the political and geographical context of this particular conflict, these destination choices appear consistent, even predictable. The forces in this conflict are rather clear cut. Those affected by the war tended to seek sanctuary with the side which they did not fear, which did not take the action which generated their flight, or which they believed would extend protection to them, generally consistent with the clan divisions which appear to be at the heart of the conflict. The accounts provided by those who had fled in both directions usually seemed equally credible and consistent.

A small number of affected individuals interviewed on both sides may have had a natural hesitation to provide negative reports of incidents carried out by the side under whose flag they have sought protection. It is believed that this factor is unlikely to have significantly affected the findings of this assessment.

Interviews with about forty national and international personnel sources contributed to the findings and conclusions of this report. Some of these sources were eyewitnesses to the events in northern Somalia reported by the interviewees or were present in the immediate areas from which these reports emerged.



### **Limitations of Precision of Data**

The great majority of the reports provided by the 252 interviewees described incidents which occurred within the nine-month period (June 1988 – February 1989) during which they had been forced, in most cases, to flee their homes or to endure intense levels of violence around them. Some of their reports can be pinpointed in time in relation to an event whose date is widely known. For example, many respondents could estimate the number of days between the SNM attacks on Burao and Hargeisa (May 27 and 31, 1988, respectively) and the incidents which they described in the interviews. But as the incidents they described occurred more distantly from the period immediately before or after these important events, or from commonly-known religious days, it became increasingly difficult to pinpoint with precision the date of the incident they reported.

However, many of the incidents described by the interviewees can be assigned to relatively specific time periods before and after the conflict intensified. These periods are described in more detail in the body of the report.

The knowledge of numbers among these interviewees was imperfect but more developed than similar skills in interviewees in other countries in which the author has conducted similar assessments. The author believes that the stringent criteria applied to the statistical compilation of these accounts, as described in an earlier section of this report, has had the effect of under-counting the deaths and other human rights abuses witnessed by the interviewees.

The author believes that these two limitations – pinpointing of dates and numbers – would affect all of the reports collected – inside and outside Somalia – in equal proportion and do not materially affect the conclusions of the assessment.

The foregoing limitations notwithstanding, the ability of the interviewees to effectively describe what they had seen and what happened to them in credible detail; the relatively stringent criteria governing acceptance of their reports; and the reinforcement by instances of mutual corroboration of the same accounts from refugees in places separated by hundreds of miles, established a high level of credibility for the 252 accounts of events in northern Somalia and to the fifty accounts from southern Somalia and southern Ethiopia which are synthesized in this report.

## **REPORTS FROM SOMALI REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA AND KENYA**

The first part of this section of the report describes the locations in which the 130 Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya were interviewed and some characteristics of this group. The second part of this section describes the reports which these 130 refugees provided.

### **Interview Locations**

Interviews with the 130 Somali refugees were conducted in the following locations:

<u>Ethiopia Refugee Camps</u>	120 interviews (92%)
Hartesheikh/Harshin	50 interviews (39%)
Rabasso	20 interviews (15%)
Daror	16 interviews (12%)
Cam Aboker	<u>34 interviews (26%)</u>
	120 interviews (92%)
<u>Kenya</u>	10 interviews (8%)
	<hr/>
<u>TOTAL</u>	130 interviews (100%)

### **Sex of Interviewees**

Of the 130 Somali refugees interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya, eighty (61%) were men, fifty (39%) were women.

### **Age**

The ages of the 130 interviewees were as follows:

18 and under	3%
19 – 29 years	32%
30 – 39 years	20%
40 – 49 years	22%
50 and over	<u>23%</u>
Total	100%

The ten Kenya interviewees fell into the 19 – 39 year age range; seven of the ten were men.

### **Marital Status**

Of the 130 interviewees, 80% described themselves as currently married. Of the married men, 65% reported being married to one woman, 35% to two women.

### **Home of Origin**

In order to gather information concerning the causes of refugee migrations from the widest number and types of origins, the author placed emphasis on selection of individuals who came from as many different locations in northern Somalia as possible. Thus, the following statistical breakdown should not be construed as a proportionate sample of the towns and villages of origin of all of the Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya. Had the author not sought the widest geographical dispersion in the sample, a far greater proportion than listed on the chart on the next page would have been former residents of Hargeisa and Burao towns in northern Somalia. The breakdown which follows reflects only the composition of the interview sample.

The 130 refugees identified their hometowns (or home areas) in Somalia as the forty-three which appear on Chart B on the following page. Many of these locations appear on the map in this report.

### **Place of Birth**

Of the 130 refugees, 47% reported that they had been born in the same town or village where they had been living when they were forced to flee by the war. Some 53% of the sample indicated that they had moved to the area from which they had fled many years before the war intensified.

### **Previous Travel Outside Somalia**

About 70% of the refugees reported that they had never traveled outside Somalia before circumstances related to the civil conflict obliged them to flee to Ethiopia or Kenya. Of those who were interviewed in Ethiopia, 94% reported that they had never visited Ethiopia before; 25% said that they had made previous visits to Djibouti. Three times as many men as women had visited Djibouti. Of the ten interviewees in Kenya, one reported having visited Kenya before.

### **Mode of Travel from Somalia to Ethiopia/Kenya**

Nearly 80% of the 130 interviewees reported that they had made the entire journey from their homes to the sanctuary site in which they were interviewed by foot. About 20% indicated that a part of their journey had been made by vehicle.

**CHART B**

**Villages of Origin**  
**130 Somali Refugees Interviewed**  
**in Ethiopia and Kenya**

<b><u>Town/Village</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Hargeisa	25%
Berbera	12%
Burao	<u>13%</u>
Subtotal	50%
Dobolok*	5%
Erigavo*	5%
Odweina	4%
Mogadishu	3%
Adadle	2%
Ainabo	2%
El Afwein	2%
Gebile	2%
Maigaga	<u>2%</u>
Subtotal	27%
Arapsio	
Bali Matan	
Bederwanak	
Ber	
Beye Gure	
Bihendulah	
Bohol	
Dabogoryale	
Daragodleh	
Daraweina	
Darburuk	
Deaad Budo	
Deregod	
Derewoyne	
Dokoshe	
Dulmadoba	
Ged Balaad	
Gelole	
Habale	
Hahe area	
Kismayo	
Laso Dahwo	
Leferuk	
Libo	
Lugh	
Mait	
Ogh	
Qaradag	
Ramale	
Sheikh	
Wadamago	
Subtotal	<u>23%</u>
TOTAL	100%

\* Reported particularly among relatively recent arrivals.

### **Clan Identification**

One of the 130 individuals interviewed outside Somalia declined to identify his clan. All of the other respondents identified themselves as members of the Issak clan family, and described their individual clans as follows:

<b><u>Clan</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Habr Awal	26%
Habr Joelo	25%
Habr Yunis	21%
Edegelle	18%
Arab	3%
Other	4%
Unnoted	<u>3%</u>
TOTAL	100%

### **Formal Education**

The 130 individuals interviewed in Ethiopia and Somalia reported that they had received formal education or schooling for the following numbers of years:

<b><u>No. Years Education</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
None	78%
1 –2 years	3%
3 – 6 years	6%
7 – 9 years	6%
10 years and over	<u>7%</u>
Total	100%

Approximately 90% of the women reported having no years of formal education, as compared with 70% of the men. The Kenya interviewees had higher levels of formal education than those interviewed in Ethiopia; three of the ten Kenya interviewees had more than ten years of education.

## **Occupation**

The 130 individuals interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya identified their principal occupations as described on Chart C on the following page.

## **Refugee Family Participation in SNM**

Forty (33%) of the 120 Issak refugees interviewed in refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia reported that members of their immediate families (defined as parents, spouse, children and siblings) were SNM combatants in northern Somalia. They were said to have joined the SNM before the intensification of the conflict in May 1988 or in Somalia immediately thereafter. They reported an aggregate number of 85 such relatives in the SNM, of whom 72 (85%) remained active and 13 (15%) had been killed in action. The Issak refugees in Kenya reported no family members in the SNM.

**CHART C****Occupations of Issak Refugees**

Small business Shopowners, traders, merchants	33%
Housewife Family duties	19%
Nomad/Herder	8%
Transportation Owner/Driver	8%
Tradesperson Plumber/Mechanic/Carpenter	6%
Farmer	5%
Worker/Laborer	5%
Government Employee Policeman/Port official/News Agency	3%
Soldier	2%
Religious Man	2%
Livestock Export	1%
Professional Engineer/Accountant	1%
Student	1%
Teacher	1%
Charcoal producer	1%
Cook	1%
Other	3%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

### **Conflict Experience: Reports of Violence Against Civilians**

In explaining why they had fled Somalia, most of the refugee reports in Ethiopia and Kenya focused on incidents of violence against unarmed, civilian non-combatants which had driven them to leave their homes or, having left their homes, forced them to abandon another place to which they had gone to escape the violence. Ninety (nearly 70%) of the 130 interviewees had witnessed the killing of unarmed civilian non-combatants, and almost all of these were attributed to the Somali Armed Forces. (Two incidents, which involved eleven killings attributed to the SNM, are described at the conclusion of this section of the report.) Some of the reports concerned events said to have occurred before the conflict intensified in May 1988; but the overwhelming majority were said to have occurred thereafter.

The refugee reports of violence against non-combatants tended to fall into a number of distinct categories of incidents which reflected similar patterns. The author has divided the reports into these nominal categories, which are presented in the following order:

- Civilians killed near battle areas
- Attacks on unarmed civilian villages and watering points
- Attacks on unarmed asylum seekers
- Summary executions and other killings
- Systematic elimination outside conflict zone
- Deaths and ill-treatment in prison
- Deaths during looting and rape

In the following pages, each of these patterns of conduct and statistical analysis for them are described.



### **Civilians Killed Near Battle Areas**

The 130 refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya, like their 122 counterparts in northern Somalia, witnessed crossfire deaths too numerous to record during the interviews and, both groups said, too numerous to count. Their accounts suggest that crossfire deaths ascended into the thousands, particularly in the battles for Hargeisa and Burao.

A separate, non-crossfire category of deaths which was recorded, however, were those said to have taken place near a battle, but not at its immediate scene, where soldiers of only one side to the conflict killed unarmed civilians who offered no resistance. Seven Issak refugees in Ethiopia reported twelve such incidents involving twenty-six deaths of Issak civilians which were attributed to Somali Armed Forces soldiers.

Nineteen (73%) of the victims were identified by name. According to these reports, nearly 75% of the victims of these actions were women, children and elderly persons. They include a very elderly man who had left his house to search for water and who was stabbed to death with a bayonet; two boys (ages one and seven) who were beheaded; a religious man reading the Koran in front of a mosque; a father and three young children shot when Somali Armed Forces soldiers entered their home; and two women and a man, all unarmed, who were standing still at the order of Somali army soldiers. The remainder of the cases describe civilians, including several unaccompanied women and children, shot while fleeing from their houses in areas which were not the scene of immediate conflict.

These deaths were ascribed to the following time periods:

<u>Timing</u>	<u>No. Deaths</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
May 27/August 31, 1988	24	92%
September/December 1988	0	0%
January/March 1989	<u>2</u>	<u>8%</u>
TOTAL	26	100%

### **Attacks on Villages and Watering Points**

Thirty (23%) of the Issak refugees reported eyewitness and/or credible detailed accounts of twenty-six separate surprise armed attacks on unarmed, undefended civilian villages in the reported absence of resistance, conflict or SNM forces. These attacks were targeted at civilians in and immediately around Issak villages, and at Issak civilians and their livestock at watering points and grazing areas near the villages. All of these attacks were attributed to the Somali Armed Forces.

A total of 254 civilians were reported to have been killed in these attacks, of whom 64% were identified by name. Of the 254 victims, 58% were reported to be men, 25% women, 16% children. The gender and age of two (1%) of the victims were not noted.

These deaths were ascribed to the following time periods:

<u>Timing</u>	<u>No. Deaths</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
January/May 26, 1988	2	1%
May 27/August 31, 1988	188	74%
September/December 1988	16	6%
January/March 1989	44	18%
Undetermined	<u>4</u>	<u>1%</u>
TOTAL	254	100%

Of the twenty-six reports of these types of incidents, twenty-three were said to have been conducted by ground forces; three were air attacks.

### **Ground Attacks**

Twenty of the ground attacks were reported to have been directed against villages, three against watering points. Fifteen were separate instances in which the pattern of attack was the same. In these cases, a column of uniformed Somali Armed Forces soldiers surrounded a small village or watering point. These troops were sometimes said to have originated from the Somali Armed Forces camps on the outskirts of the villages, and sometimes from military camps in nearby towns. The residents of these villages were said to have been almost exclusively Issaks. Without warning, the soldiers were said to have opened fire on the villages/watering points at their fleeing occupants. Some refugees reported that while shooting appeared indiscriminate, the attackers seemed to give higher priority as targets to Issak men.

### **Air Attacks**

The three air attacks, which accounted for eleven of the 254 deaths, were said to take place during the May 27/August 31, 1988 period. Seven of the reported deaths were attributed to strafing, i.e., machine-gunning from the aircraft; four were attributed to bombing. Two of the attacks were directed at villages; one at a grazing area.

### **Attacks on Asylum Seekers**

Nine (7%) of the 130 Issak refugees reported witnessing ground or air attacks on unarmed civilians as they were fleeing by foot from conflict areas in search of sanctuary and asylum in Ethiopia. These attacks tended to take place as the refugees were walking along a road or track, or as they were resting or preparing a meal along the journey.

The nine refugees observed a combined total of 54 deaths of Issak asylum seekers in these incidents. Eight of the nine refugees ascribed their reports to the May 27/August 31, 1988 period; the timing of the ninth report could not be determined. Of the nine reports, four were made by refugees from Hartesheikh/Harshin; three from Daror and two from Cam Aboker.

- Four of the nine cases, accounting for 33% of the deaths, were observed to have been committed by Somali Armed Forces ground soldiers. Sixteen (89%) of the victims were killed by gunshots; two (11%) were knifed to death. About 50% of the victims were identified by name.
- Five of the nine cases, accounting for 67% of the deaths, were caused by air attacks against the asylum seekers. Of these, 12 (33%) were said to be caused by strafing; 24 deaths (67%) were caused by aerial bombing. About 40% of the victims of the air attacks were identified by name by the witnesses.

Of the 54 victims of the nine attacks on asylum seekers, 15% were said to be men, 67% women and children. The sex and ages of ten of the victims were inadvertently not noted.

### **Summary Executions and Other Killings**

Twenty-eight of the Issak refugees, about 22% of those interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya, reported eyewitness or credible detailed accounts of thirty-two incidents of executions conducted in a summary manner, in the absence of judicial process, by the Somali Armed Forces. Twenty-nine of the incidents were reported by refugees in Ethiopia, three by refugees in Kenya. Because some refugees reported both single and multiple instances of these types of incidents, including some duplicate reports of the same incident, there is a difference between the number of refugees whose reports fall into this category and the number of reported incidents of these types of deaths.

A total of 233 civilians were reported to have been killed in these executions, of whom about 43% were identified by name. About 77% of the victims of these executions were said to have been men. These deaths were ascribed to the following time periods:

<b><u>Timing</u></b>	<b><u>No. Deaths</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
1982/1986	10	4%
1987	1	1%
January/May 26, 1988	33	14%
May 27/August 31, 1988	156	67%
September/December 1988	1	1%
January/March 1989	27	11%
Undetermined	<u>5</u>	<u>2%</u>
TOTAL	233	100%

The 233 reported deaths fall into three general categories: executions conducted in reprisal for actions known or suspected by the Somali Armed Forces to have been conducted by the SNM; executions of Issaks immediately upon their apprehension where the motive is uncertain and the conduct of a judicial process can be ruled out; and other killings.

### **Reprisal Deaths**

Some 111 deaths – about 48% of those reported in the category of "executions and other killings" – were described as reprisals exacted against the local civilian population by the Somali Armed Forces. About 91% of the victims were said to have been killed by shooting; 6% by knifing; and 3% by other methods.

These deaths were placed in the "reprisal" category because the refugees reporting them made a link between them and a related security incident. Such reprisals were reported to have been conducted after landmine explosions believed to be the work of the SNM killed Somali Armed Forces soldiers; after the hijacking of a truck; in reprisal for suspected harboring of SNM forces in a village; in reprisal for SNM attacks on nearby Somali military camps; and in reprisal for an SNM execution of an alleged Somali military agent. (The SNM execution is described later in this section.)

The reports characterized these incidents as a random roundup of local citizens followed immediately by their executions.

### **Summary Executions Without Process – Motive Unknown**

This category of executions took much the same form as the "reprisal" executions, except that the witnesses to them said that they were not aware of the Somali Armed Forces' motive for the actions or were unable to make a link between these executions and security incidents in the area.

A total of 103 individuals were said to have been killed in this manner, equal to about 44% of those 233 said to have been killed in the "executions and other killings" category. These incidents included the indiscriminate massacre on one occasion of seventeen civilians (16 named individuals, 15 of them men) who had just been summoned to a location by the military authorities, and numerous cases in which army soldiers collected small groups of people (about 80% of them men) and almost immediately executed them nearby. About 75% of these cases took place during the May 27/August 31, 1988 period, and after abating for several months, appeared to surface again in reports for January/March 1989, the last period covered by this assessment.

### **Other Killings**

The smallest number of deaths in this category – some 19 deaths accounting for 8% of the "executions and other killings" – are comprised of numerous small incidents. For example, five incidents, involving five deaths, were said to have occurred when the individuals attempted to flee from an involuntary unpaid labor system in Berbera. Two incidents, which resulted in thirteen deaths, took place when individuals attempted to flee from Somali Armed Forces roundups of Issaks which were sometimes preludes to the types of executions described above.

### **Systematic Elimination Outside the Conflict Zone**

Fifteen of the refugees interviewed identified the port town of Berbera as their home (no Berbera residents were interviewed in Kenya). Berbera has not been the object of an SNM attack or the scene of violent conflict to date. It would thus not be expected to generate many refugees and displaced persons, although it apparently has. A sizeable proportion of Berbera's population before May 1988 was Issak.

Fourteen of the fifteen Issak refugees who described conditions in Berbera stated that they fled Berbera in order to avoid violence and persecution. All of these fourteen made reference to the killings of Issak civilian men. Five made direct reference to substantial numbers of systematic deaths of Issak men which they had witnessed or of which they had credible, detailed information. Four others provided anecdotal information which, while failing the test as "eyewitness or credible, detailed accounts," was nonetheless consistent with and corroborative of the first five accounts. Other refugees reported witnessing in Berbera the deaths or the corpses of Issak men killed in other ways, including several executions in town and two murders in the course of an army looting incident.

According to many of these refugee accounts, shortly after the SNM's May 27, 1988 attack on Burao, and continuing at least until September 1988, Somali Armed Forces soldiers systematically collected large numbers of Issak males on the sole basis of their clan association. Some of these men were placed in prison in the town of Berbera; other victims were said to be held in two or three different locations outside the town near the Berbera airport. According to the accounts, prisoners and detainees, after remaining in these locations for varying lengths of time, were routinely taken out at night in groups of five to fifty persons, and believed to have been killed. The individuals so removed were not seen or heard of again by the refugees who provided these accounts. None of the witnesses or others knew of a judicial process of any type which had been applied to the victim population. Other victims were said to have been taken directly from the location where they were collected to an execution area, where they were immediately killed.

Those held in prison in Berbera reported that they saw or heard of no deaths in the prisons themselves. Two of the refugees (each in a different refugee camp in Ethiopia) reported that their own freedom from a prison in Berbera town had been obtained through payment of 50,000 and 200,000 Somali shillings, respectively, to a Somali Armed Forces official. They stated that this practice had been used by Somali officials to obtain funds from other Issak men who had the means to raise such amounts. (One other refugee from northern Somalia and one from southern Somalia also reported this practice.)

Two eyewitness accounts were provided by refugees who had been kept in prison for varying lengths of time and had then themselves been taken out with a larger group for the purpose of being killed. They stated that they had witnessed the deaths on those occasions of all those who had been taken from prison with them. They said that they had survived because the Somali Armed Forces soldiers either thought they were dead or decided to question them further. A third account was provided by a man who witnessed such killings because of the location of his detention facility but who was never himself taken out of the building to be killed. These three, and the two other credible, detailed accounts, report that the killings took place in several Berbera locations always with large knives chopped into the necks of the victims. The bodies were then said to be buried close to the place where they were killed. Several refugees identified one burial location about one kilometer from the end of the Berbera airport runway.

These accounts describe a pattern of activity which appears systematic, organized and sustained over a period of at least several months. The author believes that at least five hundred and perhaps many more Issak men were systematically eliminated in Berbera in this manner solely because they were Issaks.

## **Deaths and Ill-Treatment in Prison**

Twenty-eight interviewees reported cases of ill-treatment, sometimes resulting in deaths and/or cases of executions of prisoners who had been held in Somali Government prisons. Eight of these 28 refugees described ill-treatment of prisoners and the death of some who had been subject to this treatment. Twenty-two of these refugees reported cases of execution of prisoners by Government forces.

### **Ill-Treatment and Resulting Deaths**

Eight refugees – about 6% of the 130 persons interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya – reported eyewitness accounts of ill-treatment in Somali Government prisons. They stated that virtually all of the prisoners whose ill-treatment they reported were accused of supporting the SNM. Four said they had personally experienced this ill-treatment (three of them had prominent scars which were consistent with their accounts); two had themselves been prisoners and reported witnessing the ill-treatment of other prisoners; one routinely visited the prison in connection with his occupation and had frequent opportunity to observe such practices; and one, who lived opposite a prison, witnessed one incident of ill-treatment which occurred in front of the prison building. Six of these cases were reported by refugees interviewed in Ethiopia; two were reported by refugees in Kenya.

The accounts of three refugees who observed prison conditions for weeks or months either as prisoners or, in one case, as an individual who had reason to routinely observe conditions there, suggest that ill-treatment of prisoners as described below was a routine practice during the periods of their observation. The interviewees state that they eyewitnessed the deaths of five prisoners as the result of this ill-treatment. Their accounts included reference to the practices listed on Chart D on the following page.



**CHART D**

**Types of Ill-Treatment of Prisoners**  
**In Somali Government Prisons**  
**Reported by Refugees in Ethiopia/Kenya**

- Beatings with gunbutts
- Beatings with sticks and clubs
- Stabbing with knives
- Burning plastic dripped over or attached to subject
- Prolonged poking
- Petrol poured in ears
- Use of clips to tear flesh
- Use of clips on testicles
- Electric shock to testicles
- Immersion in excrement sewage tank
- Prolonged chaining in own excrement
- Buried alive for limited periods
- Wrists and ankles bound
- Prolonged nakedness

### **Execution of Prisoners**

Twenty-two interviewees described ten cases of execution by Government authorities of a total of 101 persons (all men, 61% of whom were named) who had been held in Government prisons. Several of the cases were reported by more than one interviewee. Six of the eight cases were said to have taken place prior to the May 1988 SNM attack on Burao, including two particular cases which between them comprised 81 (80%) of the victims.

- One case, involving approximately 44 persons executed, was said to have taken place in Burao three or more years earlier, apparently in the month of December. This case was reported separately by thirteen interviewees, who among them provided the names of most of those executed.
- A second case, reported by one refugee, indicated that 37 individuals were executed in Hargeisa during early 1988. This refugee also said that he witnessed the ill-treatment in prison of one of the persons executed with this group.

A common characteristic of these accounts is that many of the persons executed had been detained in prison for some time. They were said to have been Issak men accused by the government of being SNM collaborators. The accounts suggested that the length of pre-execution detention in many cases was sufficient to have permitted some type of judicial process, which some were said to have received before they were executed. Some of these executions were reported to have been public and were well-known events in the local community.

Some of the Issak refugees who reported these incidents asserted that, in fact, in many cases there had been no judicial process; that where a process had been conducted it was substantially flawed; that the accused were innocent; and that some, in fact, had been sentenced to ten years in prison but had instead been executed.

Given the significant number of refugees who asserted that they witnessed or who provided credible details about some of these events, it appears certain that they in fact took place. For this report, it is not possible to conclude whether or not judicial process was received; if so, whether or how it was flawed; or whether its results, if not calling for execution, were superseded. Therefore, these 101 deaths are not included in recapitulations which appear later in this report.

### **Deaths During Looting and Rape**

Issak refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya reported that they witnessed events of looting and rape in their home towns, both before and after May 1998, which occasioned the deaths of 57 persons.

#### **Looting**

Forty (31%) of the 130 interviewees in Ethiopia and Kenya (two of the interviewees were in Kenya) said that they had eyewitnessed one or more cases of looting. Of these, half reported that they themselves had been the victims of such incidents. One incident, reported not to have occasioned any deaths, was said to have occurred in September/December 1988, and was attributed to the SNM. The other thirty-nine reported incidents were attributed to Somali Armed Forces soldiers, and included 22 lootings of houses, 20 incidents of theft of significant numbers of livestock, and three vehicle thefts (some cases involved more than one of these).

Forty-nine persons were said to have been killed by Somali Armed Forces soldiers when they resisted the looting. About 70% of the victims were identified by name. About 63% were men, 25% women and 12% children.

These deaths were reported to have taken place in the following periods:

<b><u>Time Period</u></b>	<b><u>No./% Deaths</u></b>	
1982/1986	0	0%
1987	1	2%
January/May 26, 1988	3	6%
May 27/August 31, 1988	21	43%
September/December 1988	15	31%
January/March 1989	7	14%
Undetermined	<u>2</u>	<u>4%</u>
TOTAL	49	100%

## **Rape**

Sixteen of the refugees in Ethiopia reported witnessing or provided credible, detailed accounts of at least twenty-five separate instances of single or multiple rape of Issak women by Somali Armed Forces soldiers. Inquiries concerning rape were made of 50% of the interviewees in Ethiopia; thus, about 27% of those asked reported such incidents. The great majority of the reported rapes were said to have occurred before May 1988. The sixteen refugees reporting these incidents said that eight women, all named, (six in 1987, two between May 27/August 31, 1988) died as a result of these rapes.

**RECAPITULATION:****CONFLICT VIOLENCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE SOMALI ARMED FORCES**

The 130 Issak refugees interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya provided eyewitness and/or credible, detailed accounts of the killings of a total of 629 unarmed, non-combatant civilians by Somali Armed Forces soldiers. Nearly 70% of the interviewees had witnessed such killings. Of those who died, over 55% were identified by name. About 60% of the victims were men, including elderly men, 24% women, 14% children and 2% of inadvertently unnoted sex and age. About 86% were reported shot; 5% knifed; 1% beaten to death; and 8% killed by aerial strafing or bombing. The contexts in which these killings were said to have been committed were described as follows:

<b><u>Context</u></b>	<b><u>Number/Percentage of Deaths</u></b>	
Near Battle Area	26	4%
Attacks on Villages and Watering Points	254	40%
Attacks on Asylum Seekers	54	9%
Reprisal Killings	111	18%
Summary Executions and Others	122	19%
Deaths Arising from Ill-Treatment	5	1%
Deaths Arising from Looting	49	8%
Deaths Arising from Rape	<u>8</u>	<u>1%</u>
TOTAL	629 deaths	100%

The following categories of death reports are not included in the 629 deaths:

- Crossfire deaths, which are not attributed to either side;
- Execution of prisoners held in Government prisons, particularly the deaths of 101 persons in which the report was unable to conclude whether judicial process had been received prior to execution; and
- Systematic eliminations in Berbera, for which a separate death estimate of at least 500 and perhaps many more was provided.

The time periods associated with these 629 deaths are:

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Number/Percentage</u>	
1982 – 1986	10	1%
1987	8	1%
January/May 26, 1988	41	7%
May 27/August 31, 1988	441	70%
September/December 1988	32	5%
January/March 1989	80	13%
Undetermined	<u>17</u>	<u>3%</u>
TOTAL	629	100%

### Family Mortality

In about 110 interviews, time permitted discussion of the whereabouts of each immediate family member (defined parents, children, spouses and siblings) of the interviewee. These 110 individuals reported that ninety-one of their immediate relatives (see breakdown below), all civilian non-combatants, had lost their lives in the civil conflict in northern Somalia, both through the types of killings described in this section and in crossfire deaths.

<u>Relation</u>	<u>Number Killed</u>
Fathers	21
Mothers	11
Husbands	2
Wives	4
Children	36
Brothers	12
Sisters	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	91

### **SNM Executions of Prisoners of War**

Two of the 130 Issak interviewees provided eyewitness accounts of SNM executions of 11 prisoners of war. One of these prisoners was said to have been executed in the May 27/August 31, 1988 period; ten during the January/March 1989 period. The ten prisoners executed in the more recent case were described as Ethiopian refugees who had received weapons from the Somali Armed Forces in order to combat the SNM. According to this account, six told the interviewee before they were killed that they had resided at the United Nations refugee camp at Sabaad. This interviewee also claimed to have routinely eyewitnessed execution of prisoners by the SNM.

## **REPORTS FROM SOMALIS IN NORTHERN SOMALIA**

The first part of this section of the report describes the locations in which 57 Somalis were interviewed in northern Somalia and some characteristics of this group. The second part of this section describes and quantifies the reports which these persons provided.

### **Categories of Interviewees**

The 57 interviewees whose reports are included in this section fell into the following categories:

- Thirty-three were Somalis who had been displaced by the intense violence and who continued to live as displaced persons in sanctuary areas in northern Somalia far from their home towns.
- Twenty-four were Somalis who had remained in their hometowns in northern Somalia despite intense violence, or who had temporarily fled to a nearby location for sanctuary and returned to their homes shortly thereafter when the violence abated.

### **Interview Locations**

Interviews with these Somalis were conducted in the following locations:

<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>No./Percentage</u></b>
Boroma	14 interviews (25%)
Burao	15 interviews (26%)
Hargeisa	10 interviews (18%)
Las Anod	16 interviews (28%)
Other	<u>2 interviews (3%)</u>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b>57 interviews (100%)</b>

### **Sex of Interviewees**

Of these 57 Somalis interviewed in northern Somalia, 30 (53%) were men, 27 (47%) were women.



## Age

The ages of the 57 interviewees were as follows:

18 and under	3%
19 – 29 years	28%
30 – 39 years	23%
40 – 49 years	25%
50 and over	<u>21%</u>
Total	100%

## Marital Status

Of the 57 interviewees, 85% described themselves as currently married. Of the married men, 83% reported being married to one woman, 17% to two women.

## Home of Origin

In the selection of the 33 displaced interviewees, the author placed emphasis on selection of individuals who came from as many different locations in northern Somalia as possible. This emphasis was not possible in the selection of (previously-displaced) returnees because the number of persons who could be located for interviews was very small. The 57 Somali interviewees identified their home or area of origin as shown below. Many of these locations appear on the map in this report.

<u>Town/Village</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hargeisa	40%
Burao	33%
Calabeir	9%
Erigavo	<u>4%</u>
Subtotal	86%
Agabar village	
Alebede	
Ber	
Buhotleh	
Gebile	
Mogadishu	
Nasiya	
Nomadic area	
Subtotal	<u>14%</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	100%

### **Clan Identification**

The interviewees identified themselves as members of the following clans:

<b><u>Clan</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Dolbahante	23%
Mitgang	23%
Issak	18%
Gadabursi	<u>16%</u>
Subtotal	80%
Dir	3%
Hawiya	3%
Marehan	3%
Warsenghelli	<u>3%</u>
Subtotal	12%
Batire	
Gueri	
Issa	
Ogadeni	
Subtotal	<u>8%</u>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	100%

### **Formal Education**

The 57 individuals interviewed in northern Somalia reported that they had participated in formal education or schooling for the following numbers of years:

<b><u>No. Years Education</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
None	86%
1 – 2 years	2%
3 – 6 years	4%
7 – 9 years	5%
10 years and over	<u>3%</u>
Total	100%

Approximately 93% of the women reported having no years of formal education, as compared with 80% of the men.

## **Occupation**

The 57 individuals interviewed in northern Somalia identified their principal occupations as follows:

<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Small business Shopowners, traders, merchants Video rentals, coffee shop	39%
Housewife Family duties	23%
Tradesperson Blacksmith/Butcher/Potter Shoemaker/Wireman	14%
Farmer	7%
Soldier Current or Pensioner	5%
Transportation/Driver	4%
Government Employee Tourism department	2%
Cook	2%
Worker/laborer	2%
Relief worker	2%
Student	2%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

### **Conflict Experience: Reports of Violence Against Civilians**

In explaining why they had fled their homes or how they had been affected by the conflict, seven (about 14%) of the 52 randomly selected northern Somalia interviewees and five non-randomly selected interviewees reported witnessing killings of unarmed civilian Somali non-combatants which they attributed to the SNM. All of the reports concerned incidents said to have occurred after May 1988, when the war intensified. (Two interviewees reported the deaths of Ethiopian refugees in UN refugee camps – these are described in a later section.)

The refugee reports concerning SNM human rights abuses fell into distinct categories, which are presented in the following order:

- Attacks on asylum/sanctuary seekers
- Civilians killed near battle areas
- Burao executions
- Attacks on UNHCR refugee camps

In the following pages, each of these patterns of conduct and statistical analysis for them are described.

In addition, three (6%) of the randomly selected interviewees in northern Somalia reported incidents of deaths of civilians attributed to the Somali Armed Forces or to the (non-Governmental) Gadabursi Front clan militia. A synthesis of these reports appears at the conclusion of this section.

### **Attacks on Sanctuary/Asylum Seekers**

Two (4%) of the 52 randomly-selected northern Somali interviewees reported witnessing two incidents which resulted in the killing of five unarmed civilians as they were fleeing on foot from conflict areas in search of sanctuary in northern Somalia. Four of the victims were identified by name. All five were non-Issaks and were killed by gunshots. Both incidents took place between May 27 and August 31, 1988.

Both incidents reportedly took place at SNM checkpoints along the road. In the first case, a woman was shot by SNM combatants when she resisted the looting of the belongings she was carrying. Two men who protested her killing were themselves killed in the same manner. In a second incident, two men were stopped at a checkpoint, asked to identify their clan (they were non-Issaks), taken away and later killed.

### **Civilians Killed Near Battle Areas**

Five (10%) of the randomly selected 52 Somali interviewees reported eyewitness or credible, detailed accounts of five incidents of killings of noncombatants by the SNM involving the deaths of 21 non-Issaks, of whom 50% were identified by name, and 80% were men, 20% women. Three of the reported incidents happened in Hargeisa and Burao, two in rural areas. The motives for these killings were not known, although two of the interviewee reports indicate that SNM combatants were seeking out non-Issak males randomly for execution.

### **Burao Executions**

At the outset of the assessment, the author received reports through independent human rights sources concerning alleged systematic execution of prisoners by the SNM in Burao during the period when the battle for that city was being waged. Some of these reports suggested that Somali Armed forces and Government officials of Burao had been the victims of these incidents. Upon arrival in Burao, the author visited the buildings and sites allegedly used for detentions and executions. At the author's request, Government authorities in Burao identified eyewitnesses to the alleged detentions and/or executions, each of whom the author interviewed individually and privately. Four of these individuals were interviewed in Burao; a fifth witness was interviewed in Mogadishu.

The accounts reported by these five men in Burao and Mogadishu were detailed, credible and consistent, as well as mutually corroborative in many respects. All five reported that they had been detained by the SNM in Burao. The specific characteristics of these five men were:

<u>Interviewee</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Clan</u>
Number 1	20	Taxidriver	Hawiya
Number 2	22	Small trader	Ogadeni Born in Burao
Number 3	42	Businessman	Dolbahante
Number 4	42	Businessman	Dolbahante
Number 5	35	Government Tourist Office Employee	Warsenghelli

### Substance of Reports

The five interviewee accounts appeared highly credible and are synthesized as follows:

Within days of the May 27, 1988 arrival of the SNM in Burao, these men and several hundred others were rounded up by SNM combatants. Some of those detained were Issaks who then either joined forces with the SNM or were released. But in these five and probably in the vast majority of cases, the men appeared to have been arrested principally because they were non-Issaks. In some cases they were identified or denounced to SNM combatants by local Issak civilians.

The five interviewees reported that many of the detainees remained in custody until a short time after the SNM withdrew from its attack on Burao. During that period the detainees apparently received food once daily and were permitted out of their detention rooms at routine times twice daily. The five interviewees did not report witnessing incidents of ill-treatment of detainees.

In some cases, it appears that a type of preemptory court martial was conducted. One of the interviewees received such a judicial process, which he described as having a duration of ten minutes. According to his account, he was accused of being an officer in the Somali Armed Forces but was given no opportunity to respond. A sentence of death was pronounced immediately and he was removed from the proceedings. (This interviewee was apparently a civilian who had never served in the Somali Armed Forces or held a government or political party position.)

Of the several hundred men who were detained, it appears that about fifty were executed, three of whom were identified by name by the five interviewees. A few individuals who complained about the detention or the theft of their money were killed individually on the spot. But most were executed more systematically: they were shot in a pit dug in the earth under a tree near the buildings in which many of the detainees were kept. One reported that he had escaped from the pit just as he was about to be killed. These reports suggest that at least some of the detainees were civilian businessmen and others who had played no role whatsoever in government or politics. When the SNM position in Burao collapsed, a significant proportion of the detainees were apparently taken to Ethiopia and released unharmed.

### **SNM Tactics in Hargeisa Attack**

Some Issak and non-Issak interviewees in northern Somalia – as well as Issak refugees in Ethiopia – reported that as it began its attack on Hargeisa and increasingly as the battle evolved, the SNM dispersed its combatants throughout the densely populated, principally Issak residential areas of Hargeisa. This placed civilian residents in the immediate line of fire between the two sides. Some SNM combatants were said to be wearing distinct uniforms; some wore civilian clothes with a distinctive sash to identify themselves as SNM combatants. But others wore only civilian clothes or were not readily distinguishable from ordinary civilians. Some SNM combatants also were said to occupy empty houses in civilian neighborhoods which were still densely populated by non-combatants.

Civilian crossfire deaths in Hargeisa may have ascended into the thousands. Both the Somali Armed Forces and the SNM were reported to have used artillery in the Hargeisa battle, although the more powerful artillery was used by the Somali Armed Forces. The Somali Armed Forces also used military aircraft to strafe and bomb residential areas in which SNM forces were dispersed.

### **SNM Attacks on UNHCR Refugee Camps**

Of the 57 Somali interviewees, 14 (25%) fled to UNHCR refugee camps near their towns and villages when the conflict erupted. They did so because they believed that refugee camps established under international auspices would be immune to the hostilities. The next section of this report will address the issue of SNM violence against such camps. The data of two of the 57 Somali interviewees who provided reports of deaths in UNHCR refugee camps in which they had sought sanctuary are taken into account in the findings and conclusions.

### **Deaths Attributed to Somali Armed Forces**

Two northern Somali interviewees reported two incidents in which fifteen individuals had been killed by the Somali Armed Forces. The victims, none of whom were identified by name, were said to include five men, three women and seven children.

In one incident, Somali Armed Forces reportedly returned to a small town which earlier had been the scene of a battle and fired on five unarmed men who fled when they saw the soldiers coming. Four of the victims were non-Issaks, one was an Issak. In a second incident, soldiers were said to have fired on a group of Issak women and children who were apparently sanctuary seekers.

### **Deaths Attributed to the Gadabursi Front**

One Issak refugee reported that her brother, who suffered from mental retardation, was apprehended by members of the Gadabursi Front clan militia and executed, in an apparent anti-SNM reprisal killing. The Gadabursi Front is a loose amalgam of Gadabursi men who are armed and whose objective is to protect Gadabursi clan interests. Although it has at times received arms from the Somali Armed Forces, it operates under its own direction.



**RECAPITULATION:****CONFLICT VIOLENCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE SNM**

Seven interviewees (about 14%) of the 52 randomly selected northern Somalia interviewees and all of the five non-randomly selected interviewees reported witnessing killings of unarmed civilian non-combatants which they attributed to the SNM. All of the incidents were said to have occurred during the May 27/August 31, 1988 period.

The fifty-two randomly selected interviewees in northern Somalia provided eyewitness and/or credible detailed accounts of the killings of twenty-six unarmed, non-combatant Somali civilians by SNM combatants. Of the twenty-six who were killed, half were identified by name, and 80% were men. Twenty-one (81%) of the deaths were described as killings near battle areas; five (19%) had civilians seeking sanctuary as their victims.

The five non-randomly selected interviewees provided credible eyewitness accounts of the detention in Burao of several hundred men and the summary execution of approximately fifty of them, including civilians with no links to government, politics or the conflict.

Killings attributed to the SNM are recapitulated in the following chart:

<b><u>Context</u></b>	<b><u>Number/Percentage of Deaths</u></b>	
Attacks on Sanctuary/Asylum Seekers	5	6%
Civilians killed near battle areas	21	28%
Burao Executions	50	66%
	_____	_____
TOTAL	76 deaths	100%

Two (4%) of the interviewees reported two incidents of the killing of civilians attributed to the Somali Armed Forces; one (2%) of the interviewees reported a death attributed to the Gadabursi Front clan militia.

## **REPORTS FROM ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN NORTHERN SOMALIA**

For up to ten years, as many as several hundred thousand Ethiopian refugees who fled a war between Somalia and Ethiopia have resided in twelve refugee camps established in northern Somalia (of a total of forty-one such camps established throughout Somalia) under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The first part of this section of the report describes the locations in which 65 Ethiopian refugees were interviewed in northern Somalia and some characteristics of this group. The second part of this section describes and quantifies the reports which these refugees provided.

### **Categories of Interviewees**

The sixty-five refugee interviewees whose reports are included in this section fell into the following categories:

- Ten of the interviewees were residents of two UNHCR refugee camps, Dawaale and Darimaan, which had not been the objects of attack or the scene of conflict-related violence.
- Twenty-five of the interviewees had resided in four UNHCR refugee camps which were said to have been attacked once, after which they had fled to other sites.
- Thirty of the refugees had resided in five UNHCR refugee camps which had been attacked several times. Some had been forced to flee after these attacks to second locations thought to offer greater safety. Five of these refugees had felt obligated to flee once again to third locations because of security or assistance problems.

### **Interview Locations**

In some cases, refugee interviews were conducted in the refugee camps where the interviewees resided. In most cases, either because the camp offered insufficiently private interview sites or because security did not permit lengthy presence in the camp, it was necessary to travel with the refugees who had been randomly selected to nearby towns where conditions were more appropriate. Because of security constraints on road travel, eight of the sixty-five interviewees – in particular of those who were previous residents of Biyoley and Bixen refugee camps – were selected by the author from a group which was pre-selected by Government officials.

The sixty-five interviews were conducted in the following locations:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Boroma	23 interviews (35%)
Berbera	17 interviews (26%)
Hargeisa	13 interviews (20%)
Darimaan	8 interviews (12%)
Dila	<u>4 interviews (6%)</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	65 interviews (100%)

### Refugee Camp Residence

The refugee camps in which refugee interviewees had been residing until May 27, 1988, were as follows:

<u>UNHCR Refugee Camp</u>	<u>No./Percentage</u>	
Adiades	3	5%
Agabar	9	14%
Arapsio	4	6%
Bixin	7	11%
Biyoley	7	11%
Dam	8	12%
Darimaan	8	12%
Dawaale	2	3%
Las Dhure	8	12%
Sabaad	5	8%
Tug Wajale	<u>4</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	65	100%

### Age

The ages of the 65 interviewees were as follows:

18 and under	0%
19 – 29 years	22%
30 – 39 years	23%
40 – 49 years	28%
50 and over	<u>28%</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	100%

### **Sex of Interviewees**

Of these 65 Ethiopian refugees interviewed in northern Somalia, 48 (74%) were men, 17 (26%) were women.

### **Marital Status**

Of the 65 interviewees, some 97% described themselves as currently married. Of the married men, 70% reported being married to one woman, 30% to two women.

### **Home of Origin**

The 65 Ethiopian refugee interviewees were selected without respect to the location of their homes of origin. Virtually all identified their home areas in the Degeh Bur/Harar region of eastern Ethiopia.

### **Clan Identification**

The Ethiopian refugee interviewees identified themselves as members of the following clans or ethnic groups:

<b><u>Clan</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Ogadeni	29%
Oromo	26%
Gadabursi	<u>19%</u>
Subtotal	74%
Gueri	8%
Shekhash	6%
Hawiya	<u>5%</u>
Subtotal	19%
Abaskul	
Akisha	
Bartire	
Dir	
Subtotal	<u>7%</u>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	100%

### **Formal Education**

The 65 refugees interviewed in northern Somalia reported that they had participated in formal education or schooling for the following numbers of years:

<b><u>No. Years Education</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
None	92%
1 – 2 years	2%
3 – 6 years	0%
7 – 9 years	6%
10 years and over	<u>0%</u>
Total	100%

### **Occupation**

The 65 individuals interviewed in northern Somalia identified their principal source of support as resources provided to them by the UNHCR assistance program. Most of the refugees supplemented these resources by working as daily laborers or through small trades like collecting and selling firewood.

### **Roles in Somalia/Ethiopia War**

Eleven (23%) of the forty-eight refugee men who were interviewees identified themselves as ex-combatants who had been associated with either the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) or the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The WSLF had been active in the war between Somalia and Ethiopia; the OLF is an insurgency which to some degree remains active in Ethiopia.

### **Attacks Against United Nations Refugee Camps**

Ethiopian refugees who had until May 27, 1988, resided in eleven different United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee camps were interviewed during the assessment. Of these eleven refugee camps, two (18%) of the camps (accounting for ten of the interviewees) had not been the objects of conflict violence. Nine (82%) of the camps (accounting for fifty-five of the interviewees) were reported to have been the objects of at least one and usually several violent attacks which took place between May 27 and December 31, 1988. The attacks against these interviewees from these camps provided eyewitness accounts of such attacks, all of which were attributed to the SNM.

The fifty-five Ethiopian refugees who resided in the nine camps which had been attacked reported that they observed the deaths of 241 unarmed civilian refugees during these attacks. Refugees from one particular camp did not eyewitness deaths during the attack which they experienced. The camps reported to have been attacked and the number and proportion of reported refugee victims were as follows:

<b><u>UN Camps Attacked</u></b>	<b><u>No./Percentage Victims</u></b>	
Adiades	38	16%
Agabar	18	7%
Arapsio	0	0%
Bixin	33	14%
Biyoley	36	15%
Dam	52	21%
Las Dhure	25	10%
Sabaad	38	16%
Tug Wajale	<u>1</u>	<u>1%</u>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	241	100%

Of the 241 victims, 66% were identified by name. About 59% of the victims were reported to be men, including elderly men, 17% women, 21% children. The sex and age of seven (3%) of the victims were inadvertently not noted. Some refugees reported that while shooting appeared indiscriminate, the attackers seemed to give higher priority as targets to the Ethiopian refugee men.

About 90% of the victims were said to have been killed by gunshots; 5% by artillery shell explosions; 3% by knifing; and 2% by other means. About 80% of the killings reportedly took place in the immediate context of an armed attack on the refugee camps. About 8% were said to have been summary execution killings of people selected only because they were refugee men, and 11% were reported to have taken place on roads outside the camps as the refugees were attempting to flee to safety.

Two Hargeisa residents who are Somali citizens and had fled for sanctuary to Dam refugee camp also reported the deaths of four refugees (a woman and three children) in these attacks. Three of the victims were identified by name.

### **Camp Defenses**

Each of the camps was said by its residents to have had about twelve armed refugee civilians who were employed as food warehouse guards by a humanitarian agency responsible for food distribution and logistics. In addition to providing warehouse security, they were described as assisting in the maintenance of order on food distribution days. It appeared that this group performed virtually no strategic defense role for the camps. In most cases, they were said to have fled from the camps together with the refugees themselves at the onset of the SNM attacks.

In a small fraction of the attacks it was reported that detachments of twelve to thirty Somali Armed Forces soldiers or civilian militia were present, usually also around the food warehouses; however, they reportedly offered no more than token response to the attacks. After many of the attacks on the camps had been underway for some time, interviewees said that the Somali Armed Forces arrived to defend them, usually after many refugees were reported to have been killed.

According to the refugee accounts, although the tactics for each attack varied a bit, they invariably began with indiscriminate artillery and/or ground fire by heavily armed SNM combatants against the residential sections of the camps where not even the token guard forces were present.

It appears from the refugee accounts that four of the camps were abandoned by their residents after the first SNM attack. These four camps were located fairly close to Government controlled towns such as Dila and Boroma, which were not attacked by the SNM and to which many of the refugees fled for sanctuary.

In the cases of five of the nine camps, after repeated attacks, the refugees asserted that they had demanded that the Government of Somalia deploy sufficient military forces in the camps to deter and defend against such attacks. The United Nations, under whose auspices the camps are established, is not mandated to provide physical protection for them. The protection of these United Nations camps is the responsibility of the Government of Somalia. Government authorities assert that because its armed forces at that time were fully engaged combating the SNM offensive, Somali Armed Forces units could not be assigned to the defense of the refugee camps.

Consequently, the refugees insisted that the Government provide them directly with weapons for their own self-defense. The refugee interviewees explained that although ultimately the Government complied with their demand, the weapons had come too late to prevent the worst attacks, and that too few weapons – and weapons of poor quality in comparison with those of their attackers – had been delivered. The refugees said that both before and after they received these weapons, they had been actively searching for and collecting weapons from dead combatants of both the Somali Armed Forces and the SNM.

Of the 241 refugee deaths witnessed by the refugee interviewees, 90% were said to have taken place before the camps received arms with which to defend themselves; 10% were said to have taken place thereafter. The refugees asserted that their self-defense efforts had deterred SNM attacks or limited the number of refugee deaths arising out of them.

### **Agabar and Las Dhure – The First Attacks**

Two United Nations refugee camps, Agabar and Las Dhure, were the first of the refugee camps to be attacked by the SNM. The camps are located within miles of each other, northwest of Hargeisa. According to refugee reports and corroborating information, it appears that the SNM attacked these camps on May 30 or 31, a few days after the SNM attack on Burao and within about one day of its attack on Hargeisa. The timing and manner of this attack suggested that it had been an integral part of the SNM plan of attack in that region.

Both Agabar and Las Dhure were described as having their respective complements of twelve warehouse guards. The reports suggest that, in addition, after the attacks began, a detachment of thirty Somali Armed Forces soldiers was dispatched to defend the two camps. The unit was said to be present first in one, then in the other camp. But it was withdrawn from the entire area soon thereafter. All of the deaths reported by the Agabar and Las Dhure refugees were said to have taken place when this detachment was far from the camps or after it had been fully withdrawn from the area.



Refugee and other reports indicate that the refugees in Agabar and Las Dhure camps had not been armed for self-defense at any time before these attacks, nor had refugees from these camps played active roles in opposing the SNM offensive in the area, which had only begun within hours of these actions.

The method and objective of the SNM attack on these camps appeared to be to employ violence to force the refugees out of the area. The SNM prohibited the refugees from taking any of their personal belongings with them as they left. It appears that at least in some cases the SNM stopped them along the road and took the few belongings they attempted to carry away.

According to the refugee accounts of these attacks in Agabar and Las Dhure, fourteen refugees were killed through indiscriminate shooting inside the camps; thirteen were rounded up and summarily executed; and sixteen were killed on the road outside the camps as they were complying with the order to evacuate. Of these, eleven of those forced out of the camp were witnessed to have been massacred on the road after they complied with an SNM checkpoint order to stop.

Of the 43 unarmed refugee deaths reported for Agabar and Las Dhure, 40% were identified by name; 63% were men, 37% women and children. Over 90% were killed by shooting. Three refugee children died of dehydration on the forced march which took place after the SNM forced the Agabar/Las Dhure refugees out of their camps.

## **Ethiopian Refugee-Combatants**

It has been alleged that, in violation of the conditions which govern their internationally protected status, significant numbers of Ethiopian refugees from United Nations refugee camps in Somalia were forced or induced to become members of the Somali Armed Forces or associated para-military groups. These allegations contend that these "refugee combatants" became actively engaged in the conflict in northern Somalia against the SNM.

Each of the two allegations – of forced conscription and of induced participation of refugees in the war – was examined separately.

### **Forced Conscription**

During the assessment, the author had the opportunity to privately interview in four different locations thirty Ethiopians who had for many years resided in eight different United Nations refugee camps in southern Somalia and who had recently repatriated to their homes in Ethiopia under UNHCR auspices. The eight UN camps in southern Somalia in which they had lived were:

Ali Matan  
Ban Mandule  
Bur Dhubo  
Dorialey  
Halba I  
Malka Hiday  
Suriye

Twenty-four (80%) of these returnees reported eyewitness accounts of one or more instances of involuntary recruitment of Ethiopian refugees by the Somali Armed Forces. Of these twenty-four returnees, four had at least once themselves experienced this involuntary recruitment; they had later either been rejected from active service because of physical deficiencies or had escaped from the army training center.

Six of these interviewees reported that Somali Armed Forces soldiers had wounded or killed male and female refugees inside the United Nations refugee camps during the recruitment roundups. Three of the interviewees knew of involuntarily conscripted refugees who had been killed in action in the war in northern Somalia following its intensification in May 1988.

Forced conscription appears to have been conducted inside the UN refugee camps over a period of many years. Several of the interviewees witnessed or experienced more than one instance of this recruitment. The number of reported cases and the time periods in which they occurred were as follows:

### **SOMALI ARMY CONSCRIPTION IN UNHCR REFUGEE CAMPS**

<b><u>Time Period</u></b>	<b><u>No. Reported Instances</u></b>
Through 1982	4
1983 – 1985	13
1986	5
1987	7
January/May 1988	3
June 1988/March 1989	3

There are reports of six additional eyewitnessed or experienced accounts of conscription of Ethiopian refugees outside the UN camps during 1988. These involved refugees who had been traveling to a market, to Mogadishu, or, in one instance, to a UNHCR agricultural project site.

This small sample appears to corroborate allegations that over the years, in violation of their internationally protected status, and despite vigorous UNHCR protests, a large number of Ethiopian refugees were systematically and involuntarily conscripted into the Somali Armed Forces. Some of these "refugee-combatants" appear to have played an active role in the Somali Armed Forces military operations against the SNM since May 1988.

The sixty-five Ethiopian refugees interviewed in northern Somalia reported very few cases of conscription which affected refugees who lived in their refugee camps. Other authoritative sources reported that the frequency and magnitude of such conscriptions were somewhat greater than the interviewees had indicated.

## **Induced Participation**

It has been alleged that almost immediately following the SNM attacks on Burao and Hargeisa in May 1988, men who had been residing as refugees in some of the UN refugee camps in northern Somalia were induced to assist the Somali Armed Forces as para-military combatants to fight outside the camps against the SNM. This allegation was in part corroborated by refugee interviews in Ethiopia and by authoritative independent sources, but generally denied by most Ethiopian refugees residing in UN refugee camps in northern Somalia.

### **Ethiopia Interviews**

Seven Issak interviewees in Daror and Cam Aboker UN camps in eastern Ethiopia, and one Hawiya returnee who had just repatriated from a refugee camp in northern Somalia to southern Ethiopia, provided eyewitness accounts which suggest circumstantially that, at least in part, the allegations were correct. Five Issak sources reported observing the fulltime presence in Berbera of refugee combatants from Bixin, Biyoley and Adiades refugee camps. A sixth Issak source reported that in Erigavo he saw refugee para-military groups from Sabaad refugee camp. A seventh reported SNM summary executions of prisoners of war which included refugees from Sabaad refugee camp who were members of such para-military units.

For example, one of the sources said that he had routinely employed and supervised the work of Bixin/Biyoley refugees in the port town of Berbera before May 1988 and knew some of them by name and by face. In Berbera immediately after May 1988, he recognized some of them he named – who had lived in Bixin, Biyoley and Adiades refugee camps wearing military uniforms, carrying arms, and assisting Somali Armed Forces personnel in the roundup and jailing of Issaks in Berbera. Several other former residents of Berbera reported witnessing armed, uniformed refugees from Bixin and Biyoley performing this function.

A truck owner reported that before May 1988 one of the routine commercial activities of his truck was to carry refugee passengers and cargo between Berbera town and Bixin refugee camp. He asserts that after the SNM attack on Burao, his truck was stolen by "Ogadeni refugees" whom he recognized in Berbera five days later – armed and in uniform – in the same truck.

Five accounts consistently stated that: (a) men who were refugees living in UN camps before May 1988 were seen in Berbera armed and in uniform shortly thereafter, in some cases performing police functions, but also that (b) none witnessed the participation of such refugees in combat.

A sixth Issak source reported very credible eyewitness accounts of SNM prisoner of war executions (reported in an earlier section). This source identified six of the executed prisoners as Ogadeni refugees who, according to his account of their statements, had been residents before May 1988 of Sabaad refugee camp.

A seventh source – the Hawiya returnee in southern Ethiopia – claimed that he had made a visit to Biyoley refugee camp some time after the war began. While he was there he said that he witnessed an SNM attack. He claimed that many refugees in the camp had been armed by the Government. He had on two days seen armed refugees leaving the camp by truck headed for a combat area – but he added that he was certain that they had not engaged in combat at that time. He said that half of these armed refugees departed the camp for these purposes only under duress.

Three Issak refugees reported that “Ogadeni refugees” who had been armed by the Government after the war had looted them of livestock or other property. None of the three witnessed killings in connection with these incidents, although one had later heard from former neighbors that some of the looting victims had died in these incidents. These reports point credibly to abuses of local populations around the camps by armed refugees but not to the military roles, if any, which such refugees may also have been playing.

Finally, just after the beginnings of the SNM offensive there, authoritative independent sources eyewitnessed the delivery in Hargeisa of weapons to a relatively small number of refugees whom they knew as residents of nearby refugee camps.

### **Refutation of Allegations**

Two interviewees said that they knew refugee men who had left the UN camps to fight in the conflict after the May 1988 SNM offensive began. These refugees were apparently affiliated with the WSLF and OLF.

Most of the sixty-five refugees residing in northern Somalia denied that they had witnessed refugee men from their camps who had joined these paramilitary combatant forces. They also argued that the men would not have abandoned their families' defense to fight in behalf of the Government in a war which was not their own. They emphasized that this would have been particularly true when it became clear that the refugee camps were targets of repeated, violent SNM attacks which occasioned heavy casualties and could force all the refugees empty-handed from their homes.

## **Repatriation to Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian refugee interviewees in northern Somalia were asked about their possible interest in repatriation under UNHCR auspices to their home areas in Ethiopia. At this time, the UNHCR is implementing a repatriation program for Ethiopian refugees living in UN refugee camps in southern Somalia who want to return to their homes in southern Ethiopia. The procedures of this program were explained to the northern Somalia interviewees. They include a system of advance screening by Ethiopian government authorities of the applications of those who wish to return and a UNHCR-financed transportation and assistance package which assists the refugees to accelerate their economic reactivation in their home areas.

Of the group of sixty-five interviewees as a whole, 62% indicated a readiness for immediate repatriation on condition that this be in conjunction with the UNHCR repatriation package (positive response). Another 21% expressed interest in considering the possibility but were undecided (undetermined response). Seventeen per cent said they would not be interested in returning to Ethiopia (negative response).

For those who indicated a readiness to repatriate, the advance screening of their repatriation applications by Ethiopian Government authorities was perceived by them to be the single most vital element of the process. Having fled during a divisive and violent war from Ethiopia to a country which was Ethiopia's antagonist in that war, they felt it important that the Ethiopian authorities be advised that they wished to return peacefully and that they be assured in advance that they were welcome.

The variations in refugee responses to the possibility of repatriation are reported below.

### **Camp Security**

Variations in responses concerning the prospects of repatriation were observed in camps which had never been attacked; which had been attacked once and immediately evacuated; and attacked several times.

<b><u>No. Attacks</u></b>	<b><u>Positive</u></b>	<b><u>Undetermined</u></b>	<b><u>Negative</u></b>
Never attacked	30%	20%	50%
Attacked once and evacuated	65%	22%	13%
Several Attacks	80%	12%	22%
All refugees	62%	21%	17%

### **Clan Variations**

Variations by clan in response to questions about repatriation follow.

<b><u>Clan</u></b>	<b><u>Positive</u></b>	<b><u>Undetermined</u></b>	<b><u>Negative</u></b>
Ogadeni	74%	10%	16%
Oromo	50%	19%	31%
Gadabursi	45%	22%	33%
Gueri	60%	40%	0%
Shekhash	75%	25%	0%
Hawiya	100%	0%	0%
Other	60%	0%	40%
All refugees	62%	21%	17%

### **Previous WSLF/OLF Association**

Variations in responses concerning the prospects of repatriation were observed between the group of eleven previous WSLF or OLF combatants and other refugees.

<b><u>WSLF/OLF Status</u></b>	<b><u>Positive</u></b>	<b><u>Undetermined</u></b>	<b><u>Negative</u></b>
Ex-WSLF/OLF	40%	10%	50%
Others	67%	18%	15%
All refugees	62%	21%	17%

### **Immediate Family Killed in Ethiopian-Somali War**

Variations in responses concerning the prospects of repatriation were observed between interviewees whose immediate family members had and had not been killed in the 1977 Somalia/Ethiopia war, although they seemed to be minimal.

<b><u>Family Deaths</u></b>	<b><u>Positive</u></b>	<b><u>Undetermined</u></b>	<b><u>Negative</u></b>
Family killed	69%	8%	23%
No family killed	60%	19%	21%
All refugees	62%	21%	17%



## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

These findings are based principally on interviews with over two hundred and fifty residents and former residents of northern Somalia, including Issaks who have fled to Ethiopia and Kenya, and non-Issaks and Issaks who have remained in Somalia and who have been affected by the intensification of the civil conflict there since May 1988. These interviews were conducted in three countries in twenty-four locations, many of which were hundreds of miles from each other. They are based also on information received from national and international personnel who witnessed some of the events discussed in this report or who have had daily contact with the conflict victims. These reports, if accurate, compel certain unavoidable findings and conclusions by the author.

For clarity in presentation, the findings and conclusions are organized in four parts: those concerning the conduct of the Somali Armed Forces in the conflict; those concerning the Somali National Movement; those concerning the conduct of both parties; and other findings and conclusions.

### **SOMALI ARMED FORCES CONDUCT IN THE CONFLICT**

1. In response to the SNM's May 1988 intensification of the civil conflict in northern Somalia, the Somali Armed Forces appears to have engaged in a widespread, systematic and extremely violent assault on the unarmed civilian Issak population of northern Somalia in places where and at times when neither resistance to these actions nor danger to the Somali Armed Forces was present.
2. The Somali Armed Forces conducted what appears to be a systematic pattern of attacks against unarmed, civilian Issak villages, watering points and grazing areas of northern Somalia, killing many of their residents and forcing the survivors to flee for safety to remote areas within Somalia or to other countries.
3. Simultaneously, the Somali Armed Forces engaged in a pattern of roundups, summary executions and massacres of many hundreds, if not more, unarmed civilian Issaks. Some of these actions appear to have been reprisals for acts committed by the SNM; the motives for others are not clear. But the appearance that victims were selected for these killings principally because of their ethnic identity is unmistakable.

4. In an additional pattern of systematic, organized and sustained Somali Armed Forces actions in Berbera, which has not been the object of an SNM attack or the scene of conflict, at least five hundred, and perhaps many more Issak men were systematically rounded up and murdered, mainly by having their throats cut, and then buried in mass graves, during the four months following the intensification of the conflict, apparently solely because they were Issaks.
5. In the course of battles with the SNM in the towns of Hargeisa and Burao, Somali Armed Forces soldiers sometimes engaged in the looting and killing of unarmed civilians in areas fairly well removed from the immediate scene of danger or battle.
6. While some survivors of these kinds of actions, as well as civilians simply escaping the major battles in Hargeisa and Burao, were attempting to flee to sanctuary in Ethiopia, they were attacked by Somali ground and air forces, which probably resulted in the deaths of hundreds of asylum seekers.
7. Civilian detainees in Somali Government prisons accused of supporting the SNM appear to have been, at least at times routinely, the objects of ill-treatment, including severe beatings, stabbing, prolonged choking, use of metal clips and electric shock on flesh and testicles, and immersion in excrement. This ill-treatment sometimes resulted in death.
8. It is conservatively estimated that at least 5,000 unarmed civilian Issaks were purposefully murdered by the Somali Armed Forces between May 1988 and March 1989, in the absence of resistance and in contexts which presented no immediate danger to these forces.
9. About 70% of the Issak refugees interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya reported witnessing Somali Armed Forces murders. The 130 refugees reported over six hundred such murders, excluding the Berbera mass killings and the execution of prisoners in Government prisons, an average of 4.8 killings each.
10. Of the over six hundred killings described above, about 70% were said to have taken place during the May 27/August 31, 1988 period. Five per cent were attributed to the September/December 1988 period, and about thirteen per cent were attributed to the January/March 1989 period.
11. The overwhelming majority of the hundreds of thousands of Issak refugees who eventually arrived in UNHCR refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia did so by September 1988, by which time most internally displaced Issaks were already in remote interior locations in northern Somalia. By September 1988, these migrations placed the majority of Issaks far from most areas in which the Somali Armed Forces military operations were conducted.

## **CONDUCT OF THE SOMALI NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN THE CONFLICT**

1. During the first three months of its 1988 offensive in northern Somalia, SNM combatants killed unarmed civilians in individual instances which together may have resulted in the deaths of at least several hundred or more persons. These killings occurred when neither resistance to these actions nor danger to the SNM was present. The victims included civilians fleeing conflict areas who resisted looting and men sought out and killed apparently only because they were not Issaks. In one region, the SNM was also reported to execute prisoners of war following their interrogation.
2. Fourteen per cent of the randomly selected Somali interviewees in northern Somalia reported witnessing 26 SNM murders of Somalis, excluding the Burao executions, an average of 0.5 killings each. Eighty-six per cent of the interviewees reported witnessing no murders by the SNM.
3. During its presence in Burao, the SNM conducted summary executions of fifty or more prisoners, some after perfunctory court martials. Some of the victims may have been Somali Armed Forces soldiers or officers, while others were civilians who had played no role whatsoever in government, the military or politics. Events surrounding these killings suggest that SNM commanders must have been aware of and at least condoned these executions.
4. All of the killings attributed to the SNM were said to have taken place between May 27 and August 31, 1988.

## **CONDUCT OF BOTH PARTIES**

### **.....CONCERNING UN REFUGEE CAMPS**

1. Both parties to the conflict systematically engaged in grave violations of the internationally-protected status of the Ethiopian refugees in United Nations refugee camps. The SNM conducted systematic violent attacks against camps which in at least some cases were defenseless and whose residents had played no role in the conflict. Four hundred or more refugees were killed in the process. The Government of Somalia routinely and forcibly conscripted refugees from UN camps into its Armed Forces and after May 1988 induced some residents of camps in northern Somalia to participate in the conflict. These actions have created a serious humanitarian emergency which at this time faces the Ethiopian refugees and the international community.
2. Beginning about May 30 and continuing through the balance of 1988, the SNM conducted dozens of attacks against United Nations refugee camps in which it is conservatively estimated that at least four hundred unarmed civilian refugees were killed. About 60% of those reported killed were men, including elderly men, and about 40% were women and children. The sixty-five United Nations refugee camp residents – which included ten who resided in camps which were not attacked – reported 241 killings in SNM attacks, an average of 3.7 killings each.
3. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), under whose auspices the refugee camps in northern Somalia were established, is not mandated to provide armed protection for them. This is the responsibility of the Government of Somalia, whose armed forces were said to be so fully engaged elsewhere combating the SNM that they could not be assigned to defend the camps against SNM attacks. Consequently, at the refugees' insistence, and after many SNM attacks on the camps, the Government of Somalia provided residents of some of them with weapons for their own self-defense, which the refugees asserted deterred or limited the number of deaths in later attacks. About 90% of the reported refugee deaths were said to have occurred before the distribution of these weapons.
4. In violation of the conditions which govern their internationally protected status, and notwithstanding vigorous protests by the UNHCR, a large number of Ethiopian refugees were systematically and involuntarily conscripted during many years before May 1988 by and into the Somali Armed Forces. Once conscripted, they no longer resided in the refugee camps. Although reports concerning a second issue vary, it also appears that after May 27, 1988, at least several hundred and perhaps more of the 100,000 or more refugees said to reside in United Nations camps in northern Somalia were provided weapons and induced by the Somali Armed Forces to become active in paramilitary operations of undetermined scale and frequency outside the camps in behalf of the Government.

5. Provocation for some of the later SNM attacks might have been present in a few of the refugee camps if the refugee groups which participated in para-military operations outside their camps had repeatedly used their camps as a base. For example, if such groups routinely departed from a camp for combat operations, remained outside the camp for several days, and then returned to the camp for several days of rest, such camps could have been considered partially militarized. But the author was unable to determine whether, where and to what degree this may or may not have taken place in camps which were the objects of later attacks. Nonetheless, it appears that at least some of these later SNM attacks were aimed primarily at undefended sections of the camps and at their unarmed civilian population.
6. At least two camps which were the objects of the first SNM attacks had been neither armed for their own defense nor had their residents been induced to participate in para-military forces when the attacks occurred. Attacks on these two camps were among the first SNM military operations in the offensive. Thus, whether or not the camps were armed for their own defense or whether their residents had been induced to participate in para-military operations did not appear to be decisive factors in the SNM's preparedness to take such camps as targets of violent attacks.

.....**CONCERNING THE BATTLE FOR HARGEISA**

1. One SNM tactic had particularly profound consequences for the civilian population of Hargeisa. By dispersing its combatants in military and civilian dress throughout many of the densely populated, principally Issak residential areas of Hargeisa, the SNM placed this population in the immediate line of fire between the two sides. Civilian deaths resulting in part from this factor may have ascended into the thousands.
2. Some reports have attributed responsibility for the high casualty figures in Hargeisa exclusively to the Somali Armed Forces, citing its lack of restraint – or its lack of intent or ability to pinpoint targets within these areas to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties. The refugee reports suggest factors which might mitigate the absolute nature of such judgments without absolving either side of proportionate responsibility for avoidable actions which affected Hargeisa's civilian non-combatants.

## **.....CONCERNING THE PRESENCE OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS**

The northern Somalia conflict has to date been waged principally in the traditional Issak clan areas of the region. Until the war forced their evacuation, the population of the major towns – for example, Hargeisa and Burao – was considered to be predominantly Issak; the population of the rural areas is reported to have been overwhelmingly – in many cases almost exclusively – Issak. Once the non-Issak populations had evacuated the major towns, the principal concentrations of non-Issaks in the region were the UN refugee camps. The proportionate presence and geographical distribution of populations which were the potential victims of both sides in this clan-oriented conflict are among the factors which can be considered in the evaluation of the reports concerning the conduct of both parties to the conflict.

## **OTHER FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

1. More than 60% of the Ethiopian refugee interviewees in northern Somalia expressed readiness for peaceful repatriation under UNHCR auspices to their homes in Ethiopia. An additional twenty per cent expressed a willingness to consider such a decision. They all asserted that a vital element of a repatriation program would be a screening process which would inform local Ethiopian Government authorities of their desire to return home and would, in their view, assure their protection once they arrived. Ethiopian Government readiness to receive returnees in a timely manner would be a vital part of this humanitarian effort.

Unimpeded and secure private UNHCR access to these refugee families in Somalia would be required for implementation of such a program. Donor countries of the UNHCR would have to be prepared to make available the resources which would provide the trucks, reception centers, re-integration assistance and UNHCR program staff required to return the refugees safely to their homes and to resolve a serious costly long-standing humanitarian problem.

2. None of the Issak refugee interviewees in eastern Ethiopia or in Kenya indicated a readiness to return to Somalia under current circumstances.
3. Although this information was not generally elicited, several of the interviewees who provided information concerning the northern Somalia conflict cited instances of heroic efforts in which non-Issak civilians saved the lives of Issak civilians and of heroic actions in which Issak civilians saved the lives of non-Issaks in similar circumstances.