"They Say They're Not Here to Protect Us."
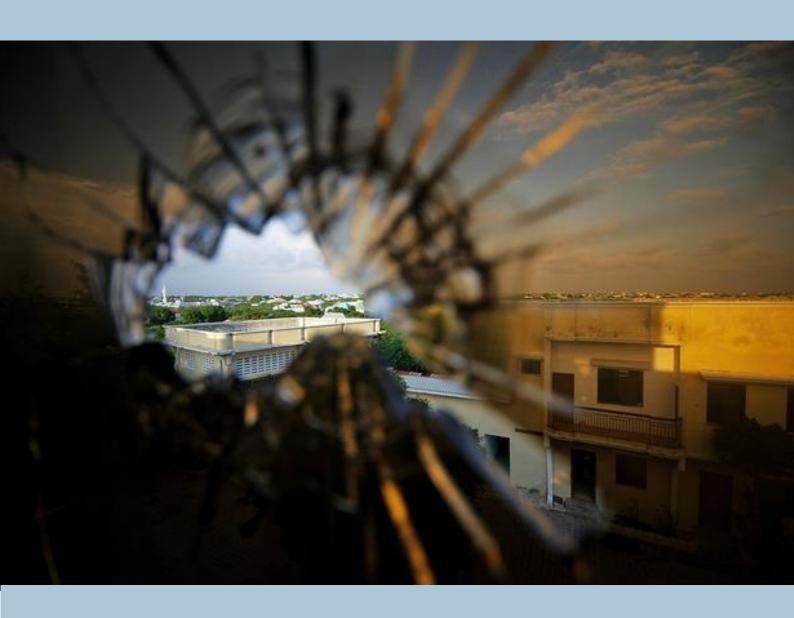
Civilian perspectives on the African Union Mission in Somalia

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE

May 2017

About the International Refugee Rights Initiative

The International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) was founded in 2004 to inform and improve responses to the cycles of violence and displacement that are at the heart of large-scale human rights violations.

Over the last 13 years, we have developed a holistic approach to the protection of human rights before, during, and in the aftermath of displacement, by focusing on:
•   identifying the violations that cause displacement and exile,
•   protecting the rights of those who are displaced, and
•   ensuring the solutions to their displacement are durable, rights respecting, safe and timely.

We work to ensure the voices of the displaced and conflict affected communities are not only heard but heeded at the international level through our evidence based advocacy that is built on solid field based research and analysis.

We are registered as a non-profit organisation in the US, the UK and Uganda.

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Background to the Paper

This report is based on field research conducted by International Refugee Rights Initiative in Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. Olivia Bueno and Thijs Van Laer were among the primary drafters of the report, with input and support from Lucy Hovil and Andie Lambe. The team would like to express enormous gratitude to all those who gave their time and participated in the study.

Front cover photo: AMISOM Battalion in Mogadishu, November 2011 © United Nations Photo.

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Executive Summary

This report explores some of the key challenges facing the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) from the perspective of civilians living in the midst of the conflict. Based on interviews with 64 Somali citizens, it shows that many people in Somalia hold views that are critical towards the peacekeeping mission.

The majority of interviewees expressed their discontent with the results achieved by AMISOM, especially its failure to protect civilians against attacks by *Al-Shabaab* and other armed groups. Its limited results were contrasted with its decade-long presence in the country. AMISOM was created in 2007, and gradually developed into a force with a maximum of 22,126 troops, mandated primarily to reduce the threat posed by *Al-Shabaab* and to provide security to government institutions and humanitarian actors.

Other citizens acknowledged the positive achievements by the mission and the difficult context in which it has to carry out its mandate. While large swathes of the territory are still vulnerable to attacks by *Al-Shabaab* and other violence, important security gains have been made. Over the years, AMISOM troops have made serious sacrifices.

Many people interviewed by IRRI said there was a clear lack of understanding among Somalis as to AMISOM's mandate. While most knew that AMISOM is tasked to conduct offensive operations against *Al-Shabaab* and to protect government institutions, other aspects of the mandate were far less known. This lack of proper understanding of the mandate contributed to severe criticism by some, especially those living in areas with high levels of insecurity. Several respondents told IRRI that they felt the mission had been unable to provide protection of civilians, which, although not part of their mandate, is a matter of concern for the mission.

Interviewees also expressed general distrust of the foreign presence that AMISOM represents, but specifically highlighted concerns with several national contingents, in particular Ethiopia and Kenya. Both countries have a history of unilateral intervention and difficult civil-military relations in Somalia. Other contingents, such as those from Djibouti, were much better regarded, mainly because of their efforts to build community relations and provide services to nearby communities.

While interviewees held the opinion that the Somali security services are better placed than AMISOM to provide security, they also acknowledged that they lack sufficient capacity and inclusivity. Views on AMISOM's exit differed. AMISOM is mandated to enable the handing over of responsibilities to the national security services, and to conduct joint operations with the Somali military. Supporting the development of the Somali security sector was seen as a key activity for international and regional actors, and a precondition for troop reduction or the mission's withdrawal. The AU has announced that the withdrawal of forces will begin in 2018. However, given that troop-contributing countries have announced their intention to start pulling out even sooner, it is vital that the AU, UN and donors increase their efforts in the field of security sector development. During a conference in London in May 2017, the Somali government and its international partners confirmed the intention to start withdrawing AMISOM troops in 2018, and to step up efforts by the government and its partners to strengthen the Somali security services.

A common observation was that AMISOM fails to sustain its gains against *Al-Shabaab*. Inhabitants of the city of Marka, for example, complained about the lack of follow-up when their town was taken over by AMISOM. The poorly trained and equipped national security forces could not defend the town, and it therefore shifted hands multiple times between *Al-Shabaab* and AMISOM/government forces, accompanied by reprisals by *Al-Shabaab* against civilians accused of collaborating with the latter.

Finally, many interviewees testified about abuses committed by AMISOM forces, including sexual violence, arbitrary detention, incidents leading to the deaths of civilians and the discrimination against Somalis working for the mission. IRRI was unable to independently verify most of those allegations, but observed a strong deterioration of the perception of the mission by victims of abuses or their families. This was further reinforced by a perception that no credible investigations had taken place and that no perpetrators had been brought to justice. While several mechanisms were set up to deal with such abuses, it seems that there was a lack of awareness of these mechanisms among those affected.

International Refugees Rights Initiative requested a meeting and sent a letter with a summary of its findings to AMISOM, but received no response.

In sum, the findings make it clear that AMISOM needs to address the commonly held perception that it is unable to protect civilians and ensure more effective communication with the local population about the mission's mandate, activities and exit strategy. The UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council should strengthen the mission's mandate on civilian protection and build on the London conference to work with the Somali authorities and donors on effective security sector development and with troop-contributing countries on their bilateral activities and accountability for abuses by their troops.

Recommendations

To the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM):

-   Make protection of civilians a core priority in the mission's activities, ensure coherence in terms of protection efforts among all contingents and address the commonly held perception that AMISOM is unable to protect civilians;
-   Ensure more effective communication with the local population about the mission's mandate, activities and exit strategy. This can be done in various ways, including by engaging Somali-speaking community liaison assistants for all AMISOM sites and by organizing information sessions;
-   Share and ensure the application of best practices amongst the different national contingents and provide regular training to the national contingents on international human rights and humanitarian law and on how to improve protection of civilians, community outreach and provision of services;
-   Ensure that all allegations of abuse and misconduct are investigated; suspend alleged perpetrators pending investigations, and prosecute and/or sanction them appropriately. Clearly communicate results of investigations, prosecution and/or disciplinary action to the affected communities and provide mechanisms for victims and/or family members to demand remedy, in liaison with the Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell (CCTARC);
-   Continue to support the Somali security forces by providing training, counsel and political dialogue on accountability and inclusiveness;
-   Develop a clear stabilisation strategy to be implemented when an area is recaptured, including by maintaining AMISOM presence, supporting national security forces and reinforcing civilian state presence.

To the government of Somalia:

-   Train, equip and reform the Somali national army and police so they are able to take over the responsibility of providing security from AMISOM. Ensure that the security organs are seen as sufficiently inclusive, that all forces have received training on international human rights and humanitarian law and that appropriate accountability mechanisms are in place;
-   Continue building Somalia's institutions and (re)establish state authority, including provision of services, in areas retaken by AMISOM and national security forces;
-   Step up effective mediation in local conflicts and efforts to promote good governance in all state institutions.

To the members of the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council:

-   Make protection of civilians an explicit part of the mission's mandate;
-   Further strengthen the mandate language on security sector development and engage in political dialogue on the need for political support from the new Somali government and international partners on this reform process, building on the London conference and putting an emphasis on the need for inclusiveness and accountability of all branches of the security system;

- Engage in a dialogue with troop-contributing countries about bilateral activities parallel to their AMISOM contribution, and encourage them to step up effective investigations, and where appropriate, national prosecution efforts for abuses;
- Strengthen the mandate language on accountability for abuses by AMISOM forces and provide political and material support to accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure that the AU-UN review of AMISOM includes the voices of Somali citizens, and that transition from AMISOM to the Somali security forces is linked to benchmarks about effective protection of civilians.

To the troop contributing countries (Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia):
- Ensure that troop levels are kept at current levels in accordance with requests by the African Union;
- Provide appropriate equipment and pre-deployment training to peacekeeping forces, including on international human rights and humanitarian law, protection of civilians and community relations;
- Ensure that independent investigations take place into allegations of abuses by their forces. Suspend alleged perpetrators pending investigations and ensure that these cases are referred to national prosecution and/or disciplinary bodies, if appropriate.

To Somalia's donors, partner governments and regional organisations:
- Step up support for security sector development, by providing capacity-building for the different branches of the security system and by engaging in a political dialogue with the Somali government, including about the need for inclusiveness and accountability for its forces;
- Urge AMISOM and its troop-contributing countries to ensure accountability for abuses committed by AMISOM elements, to step up efforts on protection of civilians and on building community relations;
- Provide adequate resources for AMISOM, as requested by the African Union.

Background

A History of Conflict and Failed Intervention

In February 2017, Somalia's new president, Mohamed Abdullahi, popularly known as "Farmaajo", was sworn in after winning (indirect) elections the same month. The ceremony took place in the heavily secured airport of Mogadishu, the country's capital, fearing attacks by *Al-Shabaab*, the Islamist armed group that continues to attack key strategic positions and individuals, create a high level of insecurity and commit human rights abuses across the country. It was only in 2011 that the armed group was driven out of Mogadishu, and in 2012 that, after numerous failed attempts, the first elected and internationally recognised federal government was established in Somalia.[1]

UN map

Somalia's recent history has been marred by conflict, famine and state collapse. In January 1991, Somalia's President Siad Barre was overthrown after ruling the country since a *coup d'état* in 1969. Soon after, the fragile coalition that had ousted Barre from power began to disintegrate and political infighting quickly descended into armed conflict. A transitional government was formed in November 1991, with Ali Mahdi Mohammed at its head, but his legitimacy was soon challenged when a rival government was created in Mogadishu, headed by General Mohammed Farah Aydid. The two governments began fighting for control.[2]

The ensuing violence among rival factions, alongside widespread famine across the country, led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Somalis and displaced hundreds of thousands more.[3] It was in this context that the UN Security Council (UNSC) established the first United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I) in 1992. The operation began with the deployment of 50 unarmed monitors.[4] Later, 500 peacekeepers were

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[1] Insight on Conflict, "Somalia: Conflict profile", January 2014, available at https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/somalia/conflict-profile/ (accessed on: 7 March 2017). The analysis of each and every one of these attempts is beyond the scope of this paper.

[2] B. Pouligny, *Peace Operations Seen from Below: UN Missions and Local People*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield CT, 2006, p. 46.

[3] J. Hirsch & R. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, United State Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 1995, pp. 17-24.

[4] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 751, S/RES/751, 24 April 1992, available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/751%20%281992%29&Area=RESOLUTION. (accessed on: 10 March 2017); S. Crawford, "UN Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia," *Transnational Law and & Contemporary Problems* 3, 1993, pp. 277-278; J. Hirsch & R. Oakley, 1995, pp. 17-33.

deployed out of an authorised troop ceiling of 3,500,[5] but they faced constant looting, banditry and violence, and the operation proved ineffective in addressing the situation.[6]

UNOSOM I was followed in December 1992 by a UNSC authorised, US-led operation to secure relief operations in Somalia – the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), also known as Operation Restore Hope.[7] UNITAF consisted of around 37,000 troops from more than 30 countries and was conceived as a transitional force to cover operations until a new UN-controlled mission (UNOSOM II) was established. UNITAF was dissolved in May 1993 after which UNOSOM II took over responsibility, tasked with the "consolidation, expansion and maintenance" of security in the country.[8] From mid-1993, clashes between troops of General Aydid and UN forces intensified, prompting the UN to engage in an unsuccessful operation to hunt for Aydid.[9] In a now notorious incident in October 1993, Aydid's forces shot down an American Black Hawk helicopter and killed eighteen US soldiers in the incident. The body of one of the slain American soldiers was dragged around the streets of Mogadishu, with images broadcast on all major international news channels. The then US President Bill Clinton initially deployed additional troops, but the US was ultimately forced, in March 1994, to withdraw its forces from the operation. The US withdrawal was soon followed by other western troop-contributing countries.[10] Although UNOSOM II's focus on humanitarian efforts initially bore some fruit, violence increased in the absence of a political resolution and the whole mission withdrew in March 1995.[11]

For the ten years following the withdrawal of UNOSOM II, there was little progress in obtaining a negotiated peace settlement in Somalia.[12] Instead, clan-based politics and fighting dominated the country, and traditional leaders turned to one of the only perceived viable ways to restore order – religion. Increasingly *sharia* (Islamic law) was adopted as a mechanism for enforcing law and order, as clan elders created Islamic courts to control the militias.[13]

In all, since 1991 Somalia has witnessed 15 attempts by Somalis and the international community to reconstitute a central government.[14] The fifteenth attempt resulted in the formation of a Transitional Federal Government (TFG), established in 2004 after two years of negotiations in Kenya.[15] Although there was strong international support, the TFG gained little legitimacy in Somalia and operated for a year in exile before finally establishing itself inside the country in 2005, but still outside the capital, Mogadishu.[16]

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[5] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 751, S/RES/751, 24 April 1992, available at
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/751%20%281992%29&Area=RESOLUTION, (accessed on: 10 March 2017); S. Crawford, 1993, pp. 277-278; P. Hirsch & J. Oakley, 1995, pp. 17-33.

[6] P. Hirsch & J. Oakley, 1995, pp. 17-33, P. Diehl, "With the Best of Intentions: Lessons from UNOSOM I and II," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 19, 1996, p. 155;

[7] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 794, S/Res/794, 3 December 1992, available at
http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Chap%20VII%20SRES%20794.pdf (accessed on 10 March 2017). Crawford, 1993, 279.

[8] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 814, S/Res/814, 26 March 1993, available at
http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Chap%20VII%20SRES%20814.pdf (accessed on 10 March 2017).Crawford, 1993, 279-280.

[9] P. Diehl, "With the Best of Intentions: Lessons from UNSOM I and II," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 19, 1996, pp. 156-157.

[10] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

[11] Ibid.

[12] R. Adjovi, "Introductory Note to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2093 on the situation in Somalia," *International Legal Materials*, 53 1185 (2013).

[13] CIVIC & UNHCR, "Civilian Harm in Somalia: Creating an Appropriate Response," 2011, available at
http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/7141~v~Civilian_Harm_in_Somalia__Creating_an_Appropriate_Response.pdf (accessed on: 10 March 2017).

[14] J. Peter Pham, "State Collapse, Insurgency, and Famine in the Horn of Africa: Legitimacy and the Ongoing Somali Crisis," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 2:2, 2011, pp. 153-187.

[15] K. Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts," *African Affairs*, 106 (424), 2007, pp. 359-365.

[16] I. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, Hurst & Company, London, 2008, pp. 83-85 (Lewis, 2008). P. Pham, 2011, pp. 162-163.

Being seen by Somalis as manifestly pro-Ethiopian – Somalia's neighbour has a history of controversial military intervention and occupation in the country – and anti-Islamist, the TFG ended up indirectly generating renewed support for the Islamist movement in Somalia.[17] The Islamic court structure that had been set up for the maintenance of law and order rapidly took on a more robust political agenda. The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) was born and quickly expanded to control seven out of ten regions in southern Somalia.[18] Following this evolution, in December 2006 and after several months of increasing tensions, the Ethiopian army sent troops into Somalia to support the TFG with the intention to crush the ICU, which Ethiopia perceived as a threat.[19] Although the intervention was broadly successful in defeating the ICU, its militia, known as *Al-Shabaab* (the "youth"), not only survived but was strengthened.[20] In the following years it became the leading group in the fight against the TFG and its foreign backers and was able to establish control over large areas of south-central Somalia, which it administered according to *sharia* law.[21] Given the Islamist and jihadist orientations of the ICU and *Al-Shabaab*, the international community increasingly approached the situation in Somalia through the lens of fighting terrorism.

AMISOM

The Ethiopian government grew increasingly aware that its military presence was undermining the TFG, but was unwilling to withdraw its troops without a credible alternative in place. Thus it took a key role in initiating a joint African Union-UN mission that became known as African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).[22] The UNSC authorised AMISOM in early 2007 and mandated the mission with protecting the TFG, supporting dialogue and reconciliation, assisting in the implementation of the National Security and Stabilisation Plan for Somalia (the national plan of action laying out priorities for the transitional period),[23] conducting offensive operations against *Al-Shabaab* and other actors intent on destroying the TFG and supporting and training Somali security forces, among other things.[24] The mission's first troops - 1,650 Ugandan peacekeepers - were deployed in March 2007 and were subsequently joined by Burundian troops in late 2007.[25]

During the mission's first years, Uganda and Burundi were the only countries willing to contribute troops, as the deteriorating security situation deterred other countries from doing so.[26] In mid-2010, *Al-Shabaab* carried out two suicide bombings in Kampala, killing over 74 people,[27] but rather than pulling its troops out of AMISOM, Uganda reacted by deploying additional troops. The UNSC later requested the African Union (AU) to increase AMISOM's force strength to 12,000 troops, in order to enhance the mission's ability in fulfilling its mandate.[28] The mission took a more

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[17] K. Menkhaus, 2007, pp. 364-369.

[18] CIVIC & UNHCR, 2011.

[19] International Crisis Group, "Somalia: To Move Beyond the Failed State," 23 December 2008, pp. 3-4, available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/somalia-move-beyond-failed-state, (accessed on: 6 April 2017)

[20] P. Pham, 2011, p. 169.

[21] Ibid., p. 170.

[22] P. Williams, "Fighting for Peace in Somalia: AMISOM's Seven Strategic Challenges," *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 17, 2013, p. 228.

[23] B. Bruton & P. Williams, *Counterinsurgency in Somalia: Lessons Learned from the African Union Mission in Somalia, 2007-2013*, JSOU Report 14-5, Joint Special Operations University, Macdill, 2014, p. 44. United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1744, S/RES/1744, 21 February 2007, available at www.amisom-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Resolution%201744%20%282007%29.pdf (accessed on: 6 April 2017).

[24] P. Williams, "The African Union Mission in Somalia and Civilian Protection Challenges," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2(2): 39, 2013, available at http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.bz/. (accessed on: 29 December 2016)

[25] B. Bruton & P. Williams, 2014, 44-46.

[26] K. Menkhaus, 2007, 384.

[27] Xan Rice, "Uganda bomb blasts kill at least 74." *The Guardian*, 12 July 2010, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/12/uganda-kampala-bombs-explosions-attacks. (accessed on: 7 March 2017).

[28] United Nations Security Council, resolution 1964, S/RES/1964 (2010), 22 December 2010, available at https://unsos.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s-res-1964.pdf. (accessed on: 7 March 2017).

aggressive posture, conducting numerous operations against *Al-Shabaab*. By mid-2011, in total around 10,000 troops were deployed and AMISOM and the TFG security forces were able to significantly weaken *Al-Shabaab* throughout 2011 as a result.[29] By August 2011, *Al-Shabaab* had retreated from Mogadishu.[30]

Following kidnappings by *Al-Shabaab* inside Kenya in September and October 2011 and the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees in Kenyan refugee camps, Kenya intervened unilaterally in Somalia in late 2011. Although Somalia and Kenya had signed a joint communiqué agreeing to coordinate their efforts against *Al-Shabaab*, the Somali president criticised Kenya's military offensive for infringing upon his country's sovereignty.[31] In December 2011, Ethiopia also made a unilateral decision to send troops, advancing on a number of key *Al-Shabaab* strongholds.[32]

Between mid-2012 and early 2014, many of the Kenyan and Ethiopian forces were integrated into AMISOM, although both countries also continued to operate in Somalia independently of AMISOM.[33] The integration of the Kenyan and Ethiopian forces brought the AMISOM troop numbers to over 20,000. With this increase in capacity AMISOM was able to expand its presence beyond Mogadishu, and now covers a significant part of the country, divided in five sectors.[34]

In 2012, (indirect) elections were held, after which the Federal Government of Somalia[35] (FGS) was sworn in, replacing the TFG and headed by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new president. Then on 21 September 2013, *Al-Shabaab* militants staged an attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi, killing an estimated 67 people.[36] This incident, which received worldwide media attention, only solidified the international view that addressing the situation in Somalia was key to the global fight against terrorism. To enhance AMISOM's military capacity, in November 2013, the UNSC again increased the authorised troop levels for AMISOM, to 22,126.[37] Since then, AMISOM's mandate has been renewed every year with the same troop ceiling, most recently in May 2017.[38] Meanwhile Uganda, which provides the biggest contingent of soldiers, announced its plans to withdraw its troops[39] stating that it has achieved its goal to

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[29] B. Bruton & P. Williams, 2014, 45.

[30] P. Williams, 2013.

[31] The New York Times, "Kenya Offensive is not welcome Somalia's President says," 24 October 2011, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/world/africa/grenade-attack-on-kenyan-bar-raises-fear-of-widening-conflict.html. (accessed on: 6 April 2017). Also see International Crisis Group, "The Kenyan Military Intervention in Somalia," 15 February 2012, available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenyan-military-intervention-somalia. (accessed on: 7 March 2017).

[32] P. Williams, 2013, p. 226.

[33] P. Williams & A. Hashi, "Exit Strategy Challenges for the AU Mission in Somalia," *The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies*, February 2016.

[34] United Nations Security Council, resolution 2036, S/RES/2036 (2012), 22 February 2012, available at https://unsos.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s-res-2036-2012.pdf. (accessed on: 6 April 2017). B. Bruton & P. Williams, 2014, p. 63.

[35] All Africa, "Somalia: UN Envoy Says Inauguration of New Parliament in Somalia 'Historic Moment," 21 August 2016, available at http://allafrica.com/stories/201208220474.html. (accessed on: 10 March 2017).

[36] T. Connell, "Close your eyes and pretend to be dead: What really happened two years ago in the bloody attack on Nairobi's Westgate Mall," *Foreign Policy*, 20 September 2015, available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/20/nairobi-kenya-westgate-mall-attack-al-shabab/. (accessed on: 30 December 2016).

[37] United Nations Security Council, resolution 2124, S/RES/2124, 12 November 2013, available at http://amisom-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/UNSCR-2124-12-Nov-2013.pdf. (accessed on 6 April 2017); B. Bruton & P. Williams, 2014, 66-69.

[38] United Nations Security Council, resolution 2297, S/RES/2297, 7 July 2016, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2297(2016). (accessed on 6 April 2017)

[39] BBC, "Uganda to withdraw troops from Somalia's Amisom force," 23 June 2016, available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36606194. (accessed on: 6 April 2017).

stabilise Somalia.[40] In addition, multiple withdrawals[41] of the Ethiopia National Defense Force units from Somalia took place in late 2016. Subsequently, many of the areas vacated by these Ethiopian troops were retaken by *Al-Shabaab*.[42]

Although the mission has managed to significantly weaken *Al-Shabaab* and has increased the Somali government's capacity, *Al-Shabaab* remains a significant threat. The UN Monitoring Group on Somali and Eritrea noted in October 2016 that the group "retained the operational capacity to launch large-scale attacks against African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) contingents."[43] Indeed, the group launched possibly its deadliest attack in January 2016, overrunning AMISOM's forward base at El Adde. Although the number of casualties is unclear, it has been said to be "at least" 141.[44] In addition, the group has continued to launch attacks in Mogadishu and according to the UN Monitoring Group, retains capacity to launch attacks abroad.[45]

The end of 2016 was also marked by a new round of elections in Somalia. Although one person, one vote elections had been promised, an indirect system was adopted albeit with a significantly larger pool of voters than participated in the previous indirect elections in 2012.[46] In February 2017, lawmakers elected President Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmaajo", ousting incumbent President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The new president vowed to attack *Al-Shabaab* and liberate the areas they are in, while offering amnesty to its fighters if they surrendered within 60 days.[47] With the ongoing help of international actors, the country has renewed military efforts against the armed group, killing a regional leader, after a US special operations commando was killed by the group in early May.[48]

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[40] Business Insider, "Uganda plans to withdraw troops from Somalia by end of 2017," 24 June 2016, available at http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-uganda-plans-to-withdraw-troops-from-somalia-by-end-of-2017-2016-6?IR=T, (accessed on: 6 April 2017).
[41] African Arguments, "What Ethiopia's withdrawals from AMISOM mean for Somalia," 27 October 2016, available at http://africanarguments.org/2016/10/27/what-ethiopias-withdrawal-from-amisom-means-for-somalia/, (accessed on: 6 April 2017).
[42] James Jeffrey, "Ethiopian troop withdrawal from Somalia exposes peacekeeping problems," *France 24*, 15 December 2016, available at http://www.france24.com/en/20161215-ethiopian-troops-withdraw-highlighting-peacekeeping-internationally-funded-peacekeeping. (accessed on: 30 December 2016).
[43] United Nations Security Council, "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2244 (2015): Somalia", 6 October 2016, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1630079.pdf, (accessed on: 30 December 2016).
[44] P. Williams, "The Battle at El Adde: the Kenya Defence Forces, al Shabaab and Unanswered Questions," *International Peace Institute*, July 2016, available at https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1607_Battle-at-El-Adde.pdf. (accessed on: 30 December 2016).
[45] United Nations Security Council, 2016.
[46] African Arguments, "Somalia's elections: A small, stumbling step on the road to democracy," 5 October 2016, available at http://africanarguments.org/2016/10/05/somalias-elections-a-small-stumbling-step-on-the-road-to-democracy/. (accessed on: 30 December 2016).
[47] New York Times, "Somalia's President Declares War on Shabab Militants", 6 April 2017, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/world/africa/somalia-shabab.html. (accessed on: 9 May 2017).
[48] Associated Press, "Somalia Raid Kills Shabab Leader and 3 Associates", 7 May 2017, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/07/world/africa/somalia-al-shabab.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSomalia&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection. (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

BOX 1: AMISOM's mandate

On 26 May 2017, the UNSC decided to authorise maintaining AMISOM until 31 August 2017, at the same troop levels and with the mandate from 2016.[49]

UNSC resolution 2297, adopted on 7 July 2016, mandates AMISOM to carry out the following priority tasks:

(a) To continue to conduct offensive operations against Al Shabaab and other armed opposition groups;
(b) To maintain a presence in the sectors set out in the AMISOM Concept of Operations in order to establish conditions for effective and legitimate governance across Somalia, in coordination with the Somali security forces;
(c) To assist with the free movement, safe passage and protection of all those involved with the peace and reconciliation process in Somalia, and ensure the security of the electoral process in Somalia as a key requirement
d) To secure key supply routes including to areas recovered from Al Shabaab, in particular those essential to improving the humanitarian situation, and those critical for logistical support to AMISOM, underscoring that the delivery of logistics remains a joint responsibility between the United Nations and AU;

In addition to those "priority tasks" it also has to carry out the following "essential tasks":
(a) To conduct joint operations with the Somali security forces, within its capabilities, in coordination with other parties, as part of the implementation of the Somali national security plans and to contribute to the wider effort of training and mentoring of the security forces of the FGS;
(b) To contribute, within its capabilities as may be requested, to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance;
(c) To engage with communities in recovered areas, and promote understanding between AMISOM and local populations, within its capabilities, which will allow for longer term stabilisation by the United Nations Country Team and other actors;
(d) To provide and assist, as appropriate, protection to the Somali authorities to help them carry out their functions of government, and security for key infrastructure;
(e) To protect its personnel, facilities, installations, equipment and mission, and to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, as well as of United Nations personnel carrying out functions mandated by the Security Council;
(f) To receive on a transitory basis, defectors, as appropriate, and in coordination with the United Nations;[50]

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[49] United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Authorizes African Union to Maintain Mission's Deployment in Somalia until 31 August, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2355 (2017)," 26 May 2017, available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12843.doc.htm (accessed on: 29 May 2017).

[50] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2297, 7 July 2016, available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2297.php (accessed on: 29 May 2017).

Methodology

The report draws on 62 interviews with Somali civilians. IRRI interviewed 34 individuals in Mogadishu (including with persons displaced from other areas) in July, September, October and November 2016 and 11 people in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya in August 2016. IRRI also conducted interviews by phone and Skype with 3 individuals in Beledweyne and Kismayo in December 2016. Four interviews were carried out in October and November 2016 by local partners working with IRRI in the town of Marka, a town inaccessible to IRRI researchers for security reasons. Ten interviews were carried out in Uganda (Kampala and Nakivale refugee camp). IRRI also interviewed diplomatic, UN and AMISOM staff and human rights activists. For reasons of security, the identities of all interviewees have been withheld.

On 25 and 26 July 2016, IRRI requested meetings with AMISOM, and on 8 May 2017, IRRI wrote a letter to the AMISOM leadership, presenting a summary of findings and requesting a response. IRRI did not receive a response to those meetings requests or to the letter.

Understanding the Mandate

A critical element to ensuring public support for any intervention is to make sure the population knows and understands the mandate of the force. This promotes realistic expectations and lays the groundwork for garnering community support. While people in Somalia, have a broad notion that AMISOM's mandate is to fight *Al-Shabaab,* the findings indicate that more work is needed to explain what this means in practice. In addition, the population is, for the most part, ignorant as to the other aspect of the mission's mandate and *modus operandi* .

The overall perception amongst the Somalis interviewed by IRRI is that the key focus of the operation's mandate is the fight against *Al-Shabaab* and to provide support to the Somali government to enhance the overall security situation in the country. In the words of one woman: "They've been mandated to keep security and now fight *Al-Shabaab*."[51] This was also reflected by a refugee in Dadaab, who said: "AMISOM's job is to fight *Al-Shabaab*."[52] However, some did understand the mandate in a slightly broader way, "they are here to help us with peace in Somalia and give support to the government."[53] Likewise, as a man living in Marka said, "they are peacekeepers sent in to assist the Somali government."[54]

 Beyond this broad understanding, however, people generally knew little about AMISOM's mandate. As one woman said, "we need to increase people's understanding of AMISOM. Even in Mogadishu some people can't tell you why they [AMISOM] are here and what they do."[55] A man added, "People in rural parts don't know what peacekeeping means. They say you can only keep the peace if you have it, and we don't." [56] This confusion reflects the mixed messaging about AMISOM. The mission is often presented as a "peacekeeping mission", but yet it is not a peacekeeping mission in any traditional sense of the term, given the ongoing fighting in the country and the occupation by *Al-Shabaab* of large swathes of the country. Rather than being a neutral peacekeeping force, in reality AMISOM's responsibility to protect the government and conduct offensive operations against *Al-Shabaab* has made it a party to the conflict.

> "We need to increase people's understanding of AMISOM."

Insofar as the mandate is perceived to be about fighting *Al-Shabaab* and supporting the government, this is in line with the way in which the mission presents itself. AMISOM's strategic objectives are the reduction of the threat posed by *Al-Shabaab* and other armed opposition groups, to provide security and to enable "the gradual handing over of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security forces."[57] Most interviewees seemed to be unaware that the mission is also tasked to secure key supply routes and humanitarian assistance, to engage with communities and receive defectors of *Al-Shabaab* and other groups.

Broadly, when asked about these objectives, Somalis interviewed for this research were supportive of the mission's mandate. In the words of a woman from Marka, "by fighting *Al-Shabaab* and defeating them they'll be getting rid of a big problem and we will be indebted to them."[58] In addition, people were aware that, in this regard, the task faced

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[51] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 21 July 2016.
[52] Interview with elderly man, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-19 August 2016.
[53] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 19 November 2016.
[54] Interview with man, Marka, 18 November 2016.
[55] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016.
[56] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 23 July 2016.
[57] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2297, 7 July 2016, available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2297.php (accessed on: 11 May 2017).
[58] Interview with woman from Marka, Mogadishu, 8 November 2016.

by AMISOM is not an easy one. As a man in Mogadishu said, this is in part because "they are working to assist a country that was in war for so long and still is. There has been a lot of destruction."[59]

Assessing the Mission

Despite recognition of the difficult context in which AMISOM is operating, many still felt the mission was not effective in delivering on their mandate and there were significant criticisms of their action and inaction. A Somali woman working with AMISOM reflected, "…all civilians know is that they've [AMISOM] been sent to keep safety and security but instead do nothing… people feel abandoned."[60] A Somali refugee living in Dadaab indicated a similar lack of faith: "I wouldn't rely on AMISOM for my safety. They don't leave their camps."[61]

> "When peacekeepers can't keep themselves safe, how can you return people and say it is safe to return?"

Most interviewees criticised AMISOM for not adequately guaranteeing general security. Many drew their conclusions from the frequent large scale attacks by *Al-Shabaab* affecting civilians and AMISOM, particularly in Mogadishu, and the lack of a robust response: "I don't think Somali forces or the peacekeepers are doing anything. Every day we hear of another attack. The important thing is security and Somalia doesn't have that."[62]

Another added, "I can see the situation in Mogadishu and in other parts of Somalia is still not good. There are assassinations, clan clashes…. It doesn't look like anything is being done. I wouldn't trust AMISOM to keep me safe. They are failing to do their job."[63]

Some interviewees referred to direct attacks on AMISOM troops by *Al-Shabaab* to show AMISOM's limited results on security. "This year alone, they [AMISOM] have had their bases attacked two or three times and lost 50 to100 troops each time. All the more reason they should work towards defeating *Al-Shabaab* but it is not happening."[64]

Al-Shabaab demonstrated its ability to overrun AMISOM bases when it captured El Adde base on 15 January 2016. An elderly man in Dadaab refugee camp mentioned this attack in his opposition to the return of Somalian refugees, saying "Look at El Adde? When peacekeepers can't keep themselves safe, how can you return people and say it is

AMISOM Captain hands out books to students in Mogadishu, 2014 © AMISOM

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[59] Interview with man from Marka, Mogadishu, 14 November 2016.

[60] Interview with woman working with AMISOM, Mogadishu, 21 July 2016.

[61] Interview with man, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-19 August 2016.

[62] Interview with woman, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-19 August 2016.

[63] Interview with man, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-19 August 2016.

[64] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

safe to return?"[65] More recently, in June2017, *Al-Shabaab* has claimed to have killed 43 soldiers in an attack on an AMISOM base manned by Ethiopian troops in the town of Halgan, in the Hiraan region of central Somalia.[66]

Several people who spoke to IRRI pointed to the contrast between the length of time AMISOM has been in Somalia and the lack of progress on the security situation. A woman said:

> I used to think that AMISOM would achieve so much and that the Somali people could finally rest and stop being fearful. ...but I have noticed they are not working as hard and are recovering fewer areas than before. They need the same energy and motivation as they had three or four years ago.[67]

A displaced man in Mogadishu was more critical: "In fact, they are creating conflict and taking no action to improve the situation. I can say that, because in 10 years, what have we seen? Yes, attacks are less but for ten years we expect more. We expect complete restoration of peace, which they would achieve if they did their jobs.[68] A woman from Marka suggested to set targets: "It is taking a very long time so I don't think they have been as effective as they can be. Targets need to be set."[69]

In recent years, AMISOM has been credited with some successes, including pushing *Al-Shabaab* out of Mogadishu in 2011, though they continue to be able to perpetrate attacks within Mogadishu, and substantially reducing the area outside Mogadishu that *Al-Shabaab* controls. Some testimonies reflected this positive assessment. In the words of one woman:

> I remember the time when there was limited movement. You couldn't walk around the cities; stay out too long or after a certain time. *Al-Shabaab* still controlled parts of Mogadishu. The government couldn't do much about the security in their area, let alone in other parts of the city. AMISOM has worked hard to improve the situation and they've been sent by God. Most people I speak to note the improvement and the positive changes in recent years.[70]

This was reinforced by another interviewee based in Mogadishu who said, "I really think they have done a lot. There is peace. It's not like it was before. They have trained a lot of troops and helped the community. They have

" I've seen the good they are doing "

people working with the community. When they arrived, I thought they had their own motives. But I know now that my view then was wrong. I've seen the good they are doing. I also think parts of the community have changed their view between when they first came and now." [71]

A few Somalis mentioned the sacrifices of AMISOM troops, and the ongoing threats against the mission. As a man from the town of Marka said:

> The biggest challenge AMISOM faces is that of death and injury. They are targets for *Al-Shabaab* and that means many soldiers lose their lives, in a country that is not theirs. If our Somali soldiers lose their lives it is

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[65] Interview with elderly man, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-19 August 2016.

[66] Al Jazeera, "Somalia raid: Al-Shabab says 43 Ethiopian troops killed", 9 June 2016, available at http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/al-shabab-claims-killing-43-soldiers-ethiopian-base-160609061024588.html. (accessed on: 1 February 2017).

[67] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 18 November 2016.

[68] Interview with displaced man, Mogadishu, 1 October 2016.

[69] Interview with woman from Marka, Mogadishu, 8 November 2016

[70] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 26 September 2016

[71] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 14 September 2016.

terrible but people take comfort in the fact they did for their country. That's not the case for AMISOM. They have been hit with big losses and there's not much they can do about it. These attacks are unpredictable and can take place at any time.[72]

Protection of Civilians

Throughout the research the core concern expressed by civilians related to their own security and the extent to which AMISOM was (un)able to provide protection. AMISOM's mandate makes very little reference to protection of civilians and only provides for the assistance of "free movement, safe passage and protection of all those involved with the peace and reconciliation process" and for the contribution "to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance." The mission's initial rules of engagement did allow for the use of force, "to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence"[73] and its 2011 Mission Implementation Plan identified protection of civilians as one of AMISOM's five key diplomatic and political tasks.[74] In 2012, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) passed a resolution saying that protection of civilians "must form part of the mandate of future AU missions," referring to Somalia and Sudan.[75] While this has not been incorporated into the mandate, the mission has an obligation to respect and uphold international humanitarian law and to contribute to the protection of the civilian population in the areas where it operates.[76] In May 2013, after calls from the AU and UNSC, a mission wide protection of civilians strategy was approved.[77]

The extent to which the mission was able to protect civilians was a key component of the way in which IRRI's respondents judged the mission. Those who felt positive about their personal security situation were more likely to take a positive view of AMISOM; and those who felt insecure (the majority) tended to point to the failures of AMISOM to provide security.

Many interviewees said AMISOM only provided protection for themselves and for government institutions. A woman voiced her frustration about their lack of protective actions: "All they do is protect themselves not us. I heard them say they're not here to protect civilians. [They said] that it's not their job. They're here to provide security to the airport and statehouse."[78] The frustration about the primary focus on state institutions was also reflected by a man interviewed in Mogadishu: "If you are in the government or a member of parliament, AMISOM will keep you safe. But if you are an ordinary citizen like me, they won't. They are peacekeepers but only for the government."[79]

When asked what they thought the reason behind the lack of progress was, a significant number of interviewees stated that the mission had no clear strategy to keep control over a town as soon as they chased out *Al-Shabaab*: "They leave these cities or leave a small Somali army contingent, which is not enough. When *Al-Shabaab* returns they do far worse than they did before. I know so many people who say that even though life is hard under *Al-Shabaab*

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[72] Interview with man from Marka, Mogadishu, 12 November 2016.

[73] P. Williams, 2013, pp. 1-17.

[74] AMISOM Rules of Engagement, cited in P. Williams, 2013, pp. 1-17.

[75] AU Press Statement, AU document PSC/PR/BR/1, 26 June 2012, cited in P. Williams, 2013, pp. 1-17.

[76] O. Davies & S. Abiola, "TfP/ACCORD conduct AMISOM Protection of Civilians Strategy Implementation Workshop", 10 December 2013, available at http://www.accord.org.za/news/tfpaccord-conduct-amisom-protection-civilians-strategy-implementation-workshop/ (accessed on: 9 May 2016).

[77] AU, Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia, submitted pursuant to paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 2093 (2013), 24 June 2013, p. 13, available at http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/report-chairperson-african-union-commission-situation-somalia-and-implementation (accessed on: 23 May 2017).

[78] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016

[79] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 1 October 2016.

"Even though life is hard under *Al-Shabaab,* they prefer it to AMISOM coming in and then giving up control."

they prefer it to AMISOM coming in and then giving up control."[80] Another woman even urged AMISOM not to recover areas which they wouldn't be able to keep, as she said that *Al-Shabaab* would take revenge after the population for cooperating with the AU mission.

A significant number of the interviews were carried out with civilians based in Marka, Lower Shabelle, where most described the security situation of the town to be, at best, unpredictable.[81] There is constant fighting between clans and control over the town has regularly switched between AMISOM and *Al-Shabaab*.[82] This has subjected AMISOM to much criticism. As one interviewee put: "Marka this year [in 2016] has exchanged hands so many times and that's because AMISOM withdrew when stability had not been fully achieved or *Al-Shabaab* fully dealt with. This increases the number of displaced people and many are scared *Al-Shabaab* will keep coming back, because AMISOM is failing to change its tactics. They must engage *Al-Shabaab* and make sure they do not leave before a town or city is ready."[83]

In a report about major developments in Somalia between September and December 2016, the AU acknowledged the problem of re-emergence of *Al-Shabaab* in key towns after the withdrawal of AMISOM, noting that "these incidents suggest that the lack of sustained holding operations will continue to undermine security gains in the country."[84]

Several respondents also criticised the fact that AMISOM often responded to attack by indiscriminately shooting into the direction of the attackers, often hitting civilians in the process. As a student from Mogadishu said:

AMISOM Djiboutian Contingent in Belet Weyne, 2012 © AMISOM

> All we've seen them do is stay in their cars and fire bullets. They don't care who they hit and most of the time hit innocent civilians who are nearby. They are more concerned about keeping themselves safe than fighting the enemy and protecting civilians. They don't value life."[85]

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[80] Interview with displaced woman, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

[81] Interview with woman, Marka, 31 October 2016.

[82] Interview with woman, Marka, 31 October 2016; Interview with displaced man from Marka, Mogadishu, 30 October 2016.

[83] Interview with displaced man from Marka, Mogadishu, 30 October 2016.

[84] African Union, "Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the situation in Somalia and the implementation of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia, annexed to letter dated 31 January 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council", p. 7.

[85] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

Foreign Intervention

Several people interviewed by IRRI expressed concern not about the mandate per se, but about the fact that these responsibilities had been assigned to foreigners. At present, AMISOM's military component is constituted by troops from five troop-contributing countries (TCCs): Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.[86] Sierra Leone contributed troops in April 2013, but was forced to withdraw them in December 2014 following the Ebola crisis in West Africa.[87]

A man in Mogadishu explained his reservations about the presence of foreign troops:

> Just to be clear, Somalis in the community like me never asked for foreign troops to be brought in. It was a decision made by the government at the time. For me, it would have been better to dedicate more time to the troops we have and bring them up to speed rather than bringing in outsiders. Imagine what level our troops would be at now. They would have achieved ten times more than they have today. AMISOM has never been able to do anything on their own. It is always our troops that place themselves in danger, that die for the country. [88]

According to observers, "the mission is seen as a foreign invading force by many and this is used in *Al-Shabaab*'s propaganda."[89] However, It is also important to note that a number of Somalis interviewed for this research were of the view that the Somali National Army was not ready to take over the responsibility of providing security from AMISOM and would need additional support before they could do so.

From the outset, a critical challenge facing AMISOM has been the lack of coordination between the TCCs. A teacher in Mogadishu even defined this as their biggest challenge: "They are made up of many different countries. [...] With different countries having different priorities, it must be a challenge, because they are not united in their view."[90] As the number of TCCs expanded from 2011, so did the challenges of coordinating these diverse troops over the large geographic area of Somalia.[91] "Rather than taking full command and control of the mission, AMISOM's force headquarters has generally played a coordinating role but has often failed to ensure effective coordination across the mission's different sectors."[92] An additional problem has been the seeming pursuit, by some TCCs, of independent agendas which has been at best, unhelpful and at worse, at the expense of the mission's credibility, efficacy and priorities. For example, in the aftermath of its unilateral intervention in 2011, Kenya was reluctant to publicly share information about the number and nature of its troops in Somalia.[93]

The entrenched views on the presence of foreign forces inside Somalia have negatively affected the perception of effectiveness of the mission. In the words of one interviewee: "Some civilians don't understand they [AMISOM] are here to help them. Those civilians see them as foreigners and think that they are taking whatever they want from the country. That is a challenge for AMISOM. They are not seen as independent."[94]

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[86] In addition, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana Sierra Leone and South-Africa have provided police officers for AMISOM's police component.

[87] P. Williams & A. Hashi, 2016.

[88] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 3 October 2016.

[89] Interview with aid worker, Mogadishu, 22 July 2016.

[90] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

[91] P. Williams, 2013.

[92] P. Williams & A. Hashi, 2016.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 3 October 2016.

A number of interviewees suggested that the troops constituting AMISOM had other interests than implementing the mandate. As an interviewee said: "They might be here under a mandate, but some of them are here to serve own interests."[95] Some even went as far as to suggest that AMISOM was not carrying out its responsibilities in order to remain in the country longer, so that its mandate would continue to be extended and its forces would continue to earn their higher salaries.[96] An interviewee from Marka said: "They will tell you that they are here to work on securing Somalia's peace and that they want Somalia to get to a stage where it no longer requires peacekeepers. But my opinion is that they have their own goals. They want to earn an income and provide for their families back home. They are planning their future. This is not necessarily a bad thing but it does mean that their motivation is not to help the Somali people."[97] Others complained about the "high quality" of life of peacekeepers in comparison to most Somalis, or only saw the added value of the money the peacekeepers injected in the country's economy. A businesswoman told IRRI: "We have benefitted from their presence. They inject money into the economy. This is an additional benefit not really linked to their mandate."[98]

Many of the people interviewed held especially negative views about the Ethiopian and Kenyan contingents. An said: "I hold the view that the Ethiopians and Kenyans are here to pursue their own agendas. I don't know to what extent that would apply to the troops that are part of AMISOM, but it is definitely the case for those troops that are here on their own, and operate only under their government."[99]

A man from Beledweyne stated, about the Ethiopian troops:

> You hear that people are scared and worried about the Ethiopians. They shoot first and ask questions later. People will run away because they do not feel safe and do not believe for a second that the Ethiopians are here to help them. There is a long history between Ethiopians and Somalis but Ethiopians have done many things to civilians, which justifies how they feel. [...] I think similarly to the Ethiopians, there have been many problems with the Kenyans. People are distrustful of both because in addition to being part of AMISOM they have their own troops who do not report to or come under the African Union. They only answer to their governments which Somalis have issues with. It is very problematic.[100]

Another said: "They [Ethiopians] have no interest in preserving peace in Somalia. They are the worst in terms of abuses. Ethiopians interfere with our governance and tell governors what they should do, threatening that they will arm militias."[101] He also mentioned high numbers of Ethiopian troops in Somalia, but IRRI was not able to independently verify the number of Ethiopian soldiers currently in Somalia operating outside of AMISOM. The number is believed to be much lower after withdrawals took place in 2016.

"Some of them are here to serve their own interests."

Despite much criticism, a number of positive aspects of Ethiopia's actions were also highlighted during the research. Although Ethiopia has been widely criticised for its unilateral actions, Ethiopian troops are also purported to be more effective than some other contingents when it comes to combating *Al-Shabaab*. As a refugee in Kenya told IRRI: "the Ethiopians are in Baidoa. They are based in the

[95] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 21 July 2016.

[96] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 17 November 2016.

[97] Interview with man, Marka, 8 November 2016.

[98] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

[99] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 26 July 2016

[100] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.

[101] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 26 July 2016

airport. I think they do a good job... *Al-Shabaab* are scared of them. I think they have tactics and strategies to fight them. I do know that more people would say they want them out though. That stems from Somalia's distrust of foreigners, which is even worse in the case of Ethiopians."[102]

The lack of appreciation of their presence in Somalia also seemed to have been part of the reason for the decision by the Ethiopian government to withdraw its troops in 2016. An Ethiopian political analyst explained: "It wasn't just the money. [...] The Ethiopian government felt it didn't have the diplomatic support it should have and that its efforts hadn't been recognised."[103]

Similar views were held about the Kenyan troops. A refugee in Uganda told IRRI: "With the Kenyans, there are many problems. That is because of how close Kenya is to Somalia and the lack of border control. Kenyans arrest Somalis and that gives *Al-Shabaab* the chance to recruit people who have been targeted and feel like they are treated as criminals, when they are not." Many others mentioned the difficult relations between the communities and the Kenyans soldiers, and the abuses committed by the latter, playing into the hands of *Al-Shabaab* recruiters.

It is fair to assume that some of these views are the result of historical relations between Somalia and these two countries, which have been tense and marred by territorial disputes. Recognising these historical tensions, the AU and UN initially stated that AMISOM should not include troops from neighbouring countries "because of the potential for unleashing unhelpful political dynamics". However, this decision was later overturned due to Djibouti's willingness to send troops.[104]

Interviewees also reflected on the presence of TCCs other than the Kenyan and Ethiopian contingents. The general consensus about the Djiboutian contingent was strongly positive. As one man from Beledweyne said:

> Here we don't call the Djiboutians. We call them "heel walaal" ["brothers who support us"]. [...] They have a very good relationship with the people. We all honestly feel they are working hard to help us. I think AMISOM in general is helping but I would say the situation in the town of Beledweyne is particularly unique, because we have [Djiboutian] soldiers who understand our values and culture and know how to best interact with Somalis.[105]

Another interviewee recommended studying the situation in Beledweyne, a town in south-central Somalia, where a contingent from Djibouti is based, as an example of best practice for how AMISOM should operate and how these successes can be replicated in other areas.[106] "As Somalis, we get a lot of compassion and support from our Djibouti brothers. They are like the people, have empathy for them and want to make their situation better. We do not receive the same treatment from the other contingents."[107] The reasons for these views – compared to those of Kenya and Ethiopia – are, as mentioned, in part historical, but might also be related to the assistance provided

"They are like the people, have empathy for them and want to make their situation better."

[102] Interview with man, Dadaab refugee camp, 16-18 August 2016.

[103] France 24, "Ethiopian troop withdrawal from Somalia exposes peacekeeping problems," 16 December 2016, available at http://www.france24.com/en/20161215-ethiopian-troops-withdraw-highlighting-peacekeeping-internationally-funded-peacekeeping. (accessed on: 26 December 2016).

[104] P. Williams & A. Hashi, 2016.

[105] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.

[106] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.

[107] Interview with displaced man, Mogadishu, 1 October 2016.

by the Djibouti contingent during floods in May and June 2016, and by their setting up of youth centres in parts of the Hiran region, of which Beledweyne is the capital city.[108]

The relationship with the Burundian and Ugandan contingents was slightly better than with the Kenyans and Ethiopians. Several people from Mogadishu that lived near a Burundian base told IRRI that they appreciated their presence and their relations with the community. A woman from Baidoa told IRRI:

> I live near a compound occupied by the Burundians and the relationship with the population is great. Anytime anyone is sick, we can go to them and they can provide us with medical assistance. One night over a month ago, an unknown man came into the area and was harassing the women in the area. We reported the issue and the next day the Burundians came to interview us and asked us what happened. They were taking the matter seriously and protecting us which we all appreciated. There is trust and we believe they will protect us.[109]

A student from Mogadishu confirmed this better judgement of the Burundian and Ugandan peacekeepers, but also mentioned their involvement in abuses in the past, an observation shared by other people: "I would say in the country the Ugandans and the Burundians are better than the rest. The Kenyans and Ethiopians have a lot of hate for the Somali people. But a few years back, it was the Ugandans and Burundians who were found to be guilty of raping women on their bases."[110]

An AMISOM soldier looks at a destroyed vehicle, 2012 ©AMISOM

Abuses & Misconduct

Throughout the interviews, many Somalis mentioned allegations of serious abuses committed by AMISOM, including incidents leading to the deaths of civilians, sexual exploitation of vulnerable women and girls, arbitrary detention and discrimination against Somalis. While IRRI was unable to verify these claims, such allegations clearly impacted people's perceptions of AMISOM as a whole, creating a picture of a force that has not only failed to protect civilians, but has, at times, been seen as also a direct threat to those civilians it failed to protect.

The allegations of sexual exploitation, in particular, were mentioned by many of those interviewed. As one man reported: They [AMISOM peacekeepers] have raped women and have forced many to sleep with them, in exchange for things they need. I do think these cases are true.[111] A woman added "there are girls who have been tricked [into sexual relations]. They have been told they will get jobs and are then forced to sleep with the troops."[112]

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[108] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 23 July 2016. See also: AMISOM, "AMISOM Djibouti Contingent Distributes Food To Flood Victims In Hiiraan Region", available at http://amisom-au.org/2016/06/amisom-djibouti-contingent-distributes-food-to-flood-victims-in-hiiraan-region/ (accessed: 29 May 2017).

[109] Interview with displaced woman from Baidoa, Mogadishu, 26 September 2016.

[110] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016. .

[111] Interview with displaced man, Mogadishu, 1 October 2016.

[112] Interview with a woman, Mogadishu, 17 November 2016.

A Somali human rights defender confirmed these rumours to IRRI: "Some girls have been taken to Uganda and are in a dire situation now. A few girls have been infected with HIV. Sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation are common."[113] Human rights groups such as Amnesty International[114] and Human Rights Watch[115] have also confirmed allegations of sexual violence at the hands of peacekeepers. Following a Human Rights Watch report in 2014, the AU set up an emergency helpline, an assessment panel to guide policy and an investigation team. The investigation team confirmed two out of 21 cases documented in the Human Rights Watch report and addressed several recommendations to the AU, but TCCs had not cooperated, denying access to alleged perpetrators and officers.[116] The force commander told a UN Human Rights Council expert that "camps had been sealed against any unnecessary interaction with the civilian population" and that "businesses had been removed from within the camps, thus reducing contacts between civilians and soldiers."[117] While it is possible that this might help to minimise the opportunities for sexual violence, it also widens the "them and us" perceptions between the mission and Somali citizens, which, as shown above, was criticised by multiple people interviewed by IRRI.

In addition to sexual exploitation, there was also frequent mention of misconduct by AMISOM resulting in the deaths of civilians. One incident that was repeatedly brought up, particularly by interviewees from Marka, was the killing of six men by Ugandan troops at a wedding in July 2015. [118] A youth activist told IRRI: "In Marka, they killed innocent people celebrating a wedding. They [also] have run over many people with their convoys. You can't say every time it is an accident." Human Rights Watch documented this incident and reported on AMISOM's failure to investigate or compensate the victims of another incident that took place in July 2016, where there was the alleged unlawful killing of 14 civilians in Somalia's Bay region by Ethiopian forces.[119]

Between 1 September 2015 and 31 May 2016, the UN confirmed 25 civilian deaths in which AMISOM was implicated, yet only in two of those instances was there any public acknowledgement made by the mission. AMISOM was accused in several incidents of killing civilians, "through the indiscriminate and/or disproportionate use of force in response to an attack on their forces, or the commission of deliberate acts of retaliation or punishment".[120] In his most recent report on Somalia, the UN Secretary-General attributed 37 deaths and injuries to AMISOM, including an incident with Ethiopian AMISOM troops on 17 July 2016 in Wardinle near Baidoa, which reportedly left 14 civilians dead and three injured.[121] After an attack on a civilian vehicle mistakenly thought to be *Al-Shabaab* in April 2016, AMISOM promised to set up a board of inquiry.[122]

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[113] Interview with Somali human rights defender, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016.

[114] Amnesty International, "Rape and Sexual Violence in Somalia – An Ongoing Epidemic", 30 August 2013, available at https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/12000/afr520092013en.pdf. (accessed on 9 May 2017)

[115] Human Rights Watch, "The Power These Men Have Over Us - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia", 8 September 2014, available at https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/09/08/power-these-men-have-over-us/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-african-union-forces. (accessed on 9 May 2017)

[116] African Union, "The African Union releases the key findings and recommendations of the report of investigations on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Somalia", available at http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/the-african-union-releases-the-key-findings-and-recommendations-of-the-report-of-investigations-on-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-somalia#sthash.2Uhm8PvA.dpuf. (accessed on: May 9, 2017) & Human Rights Council, "Report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Bahame Tom Nyanduga", 29 September 2015, available at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A-HRC-30-57_en.docx. (accessed on: 9 May 2017).

[117] Human Rights Council, 2016.

[118] Human Rights Watch, "Somalia: AU Forces Linked to Wedding Killings," 13 August 2015, available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/13/somalia-au-forces-linked-wedding-killings. (accessed on: 2 February 2017).

[119] Human Rights Watch, Somalia: AU Should Release Investigation into 14 Civilian Deaths, 25 January 2017, available at https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/25/somalia-au-should-release-investigation-14-civilian-deaths, (accessed on: 2 February 2017).

[120] United Nations Security Council, 2016, p. 164.

[121] United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia," S/2017/21, 9 January 2017, p. 9.

[122] Human Rights Council, 2016, p. 18.

A man in Mogadishu, interviewed by IRRI, detailed the circumstances of his son's death in 2014, which he attributed to AMISOM: "My son was brought to my house by members of the community after he had been run over by AMISOM. There were so many witnesses. I was told an AMISOM police tank had run him over. Someone had noted down the license plate. The officers in the car were wearing uniforms with the Ugandan flag. They were travelling very fast and ran over him completely. They didn't even stop. There was nothing we could do for him." While AMISOM did follow up on the allegations and interviewed the family, there has been no further action at the time of the research.[123]

One woman said that hit and run accidents frequently happen, and explained that this was because AMISOM troops were scared they would be attacked or ambushed if they stopped.[124] Another interviewee complained about indiscriminate firing during attacks: "When their base is attacked or troops get attacked, they come out and start firing at people. They don't distinguish between *Al-Shabaab* and civilians."[125]

Interviewees also reported arbitrary detention by the hands of AMISOM. One man detailed his personal experience in mid-2016:

> In May [2016], the Ugandan special unit of AMISOM came to our district Waaberi and arrested and detained us. They took pictures of us, blindfolded us and removed our shirts. [...] They came together with some Somalis and other foreigners. They came in the middle of the night and only took the youths out of the houses. They were laughing at us the whole time and pushed us on our knees. At eight in the morning, they brought in ten men who I believe used to be part of *Al-Shabaab,* and asked them to point out other members [of *Al-Shabaab*]. These men were scared and were covering their faces. Those they [AMISOM] picked out were taken away and the rest of us were released. We later heard they took the ones they picked to Godka Jilicow, a notorious prison. We all know the families then have to pay a bribe to secure their release. It's all about the money. [...]This is the kind of thing that alienates people."[126]

There have also been some unconfirmed allegations from interviewees that AMISOM, whose responsibility it is to combat *Al-Shabaab*, was in fact working with the group. One interviewee said: "We have seen them sell weapons on the black market to *Al-Shabaab*. There is a relationship between them."[127] Six other Somalis confirmed to IRRI that AMISOM had illegally sold weapons.[128]

"If they are committing these violations on our land, we need to hold them to account. To date this hasn't happened."

Despite many people mentioning allegations of abuses, very few had any information about investigations or accountability.

Many interviewees expressed their outrage about the lack of investigations, accountability and reparations for the abuses mentioned above. One woman said, "AMISOM says Somali laws don't apply to them, which is a problem. If they are committing these violations on our land, we need to hold them to account. To date this hasn't happened. They just send officers back and we don't know what happens. I'm sure no investigation ever takes place."[129] Except

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[123] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016.

[124] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 26 September 2016.

[125] Interview with man, Marka, 8 November 2016.

[126] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 23 July 2016.

[127] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 6 October 2016.

[128] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 23 July 2016; Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016; interview with woman, Mogadishu, 17 November 2016; Interview with woman from Barawe, Mogadishu, 21 September 2016; Interview with man, Mogadishu, 1 October 2016. Interview with man, Mogadishu, 3 October 2016.

[129] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016.

for one man from Mogadishu, who said that some rape victims had been compensated, nobody had any information about any remedies to victims or their families.[130]

These incidents and the lack of accountability negatively influenced the perception of AMISOM by the population. As a woman told IRRI, "the community do not think they can trust [AMISOM] and approach them. AMISOM has not made any efforts to challenge that view. In fact that view has been reinforced for some people when they hear of the misconduct AMISOM has been responsible for."[131] Some even told IRRI that, because of the abuses, they prefer the presence of *Al-Shabaab* to that of AMISOM.

According to an aid worker, "AMISOM has accepted that accountability needs to take place and is trying to set up a mechanism to compensate those that have experienced losses. It is something it has wanted to do for a while but there is no mechanism or budget."[132] In 2016, Uganda held the first court martial of an AMISOM soldier in Mogadishu and although the proceedings related to theft, rather than to violations committed against a civilian, it was encouraging that there has been some move towards accountability.[133]

In an attempt to respond to these numerous allegations, in 2015 AMISOM set up the Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis, and Response Cell (CCTARC) mechanism through which civilians can report incidents. However, TCCs are reluctant to cooperate with this mechanism, a problem that appears to have been exacerbated by the lack of outreach and training for AMISOM contingents on CCTARCs objectives and functioning.[134] The UN reported in January that there had been progress on formal responses by AMISOM to allegations, but emphasised the ongoing need for mitigation, accountability and remedies.[135] According to the AU, several mechanisms have been set up to deal with abuses: the force commander issued a directive about the international obligations of his operational commanders, a board of inquiry was set up "where credible allegations of abuse have been raised", and a crisis telephone line was created to report instances of sexual and gender-based violence. [136] Overall, however, none of these mechanisms are providing the necessary accountability.

BOX 2: Somali AMISOM staff

IRRI interviewed four Somalis who worked for AMISOM as interpreters. One of them reported facing mistreatment in the workplace as a result of being Somali:

"I filed a complaint after not being paid for one year, despite repeated promises. After I found no relief, I went higher-up, to the force commander, to highlight the situation. He ordered my request to be dealt with and verbally reprimanded the troops. Less than a week later, when I thought everything had been resolved, I received a termination letter which said I would get paid my remaining salary... I have not received a penny. This was all because the troops felt I humiliated them and that I shouldn't have challenged them. The force commander I complained to, was no longer there, so I couldn't do anything about it.... Since I've been terminated I'm out in the open and without protection. I have received threats from *Al-Shabaab* and don't know what to do. I would like my job back which provided an income and security for me and my family."[137]

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[130] Interview with man from Marka, Mogadishu, 12 November 2016.

[131] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 18 November 2016.

[132] Interview with key informant, Mogadishu, 21 July 2016.

[133] United Nations Security Council, 2016, p. 168.

[134] Ibid. p. 167.

[135] United Nations, 2017, p. 14.

[136] African Union, 2017, pp. 9 -10.

[137] Interview with former AMISOM staff member, Mogadishu, 24 July 2016.

Services and Outreach

In some locations, AMISOM has been involved in the provision of services to civilians, such as healthcare and access to water. While this is not an official task of AMISOM, their mandate does foresee "the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance."[138]

The provision of services positively impacted the perception of the mission: those who have benefitted from these types of activities viewed the mission in a far more positive light than those who had not. Several who positively regarded the mission mentioned the provision of services as a one of the first issues. A direct beneficiary shared a positive experience with IRRI: "There was a time my young boy was sick and I went to the AMISOM compound to get him checked out. Their doctors examined him and they gave him some medication which helped him recover. I am indebted to them forever for this." [139] As already mentioned, the Djibouti contingent has been specifically complimented by inhabitants of the city of Beledweyne for building wells to help communities collect more water[140] while recognising that it was not a core part of their mandate, others requested the mission to do more in terms of humanitarian aid, especially in relation to returning displaced people.[141]

The provision of humanitarian assistance and services not only proved to be beneficial in and of itself, but also helped in bringing AMISOM's forces closer to the population. Many interviewees judged the mission on their accessibility, those that found AMISOM to be inaccessible were more critical of the mission. Some interviewees – particularly those in Mogadishu – expressed the view that AMISOM isolated itself deliberately and unnecessarily limited its interactions with the local population. One woman, for instance, stated that this perception of isolation meant that reporting issues to them was very difficult. "You can only interact and report issues when there is a good relationship. If you don't trust someone and see that he is not looking out for you, why would you go to him?" [142]

> "I am indebted to them forever for this."

The reasons given for this distance were varied. Some felt it was as a result of AMISOM's lack of understanding of the dynamics in Somalia and about how to approach communities.[143] A man from Marka said: "I have never spoken to them and I don't think I will. There's clearly a language barrier. [...] They have no business with the population, and don't need anything from them. AMISOM and the population operate independently of each other." He held the view that AMISOM was, in fact, suspicious of the population and that troops were deliberately distancing themselves as a form of self-protection.[144] This was reiterated by another interview who recommended that AMISOM, "instead of being suspicious of the general population, they [should] work with them. The population is the best ally. They [AMISOM] won't achieve anything without the support and information of the population. Their approach at the moment is wrong."[145] Another emphasised the need for AMISOM to address the negative perception people have and the importance of improving relations with the Somali people.[146] It was a widely shared view that AMISOM should put more efforts in community relations, which would also benefit the mission's effectiveness.

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[138] AMISOM, "AMISOM mandate", available at http://amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/. (accessed on: 3 March 2017)

[139] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 26 September 2016.

[140] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 19 December 2016.

[141] Interview with man, Beledwyne, 7 December 2016.

[142] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 17 November 2016.

[143] Cinterview with woman, Mogadishu,18 November 2016

[144] Interview with man, Marka, 8 November 2016.

[145] Interview with man, Mogadishu, 3 October 2016.

[146] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 18 November 2016.

Some did, however, note some positive improvements. A man interviewed in Mogadishu said the nearby AMISOM contingents had started to come out of their bases more and interacted with the community, creating a better relationship: "When something goes wrong, they speak to the community about it. For example, last month there was a man they were suspicious of and asked to stop. He didn't and he was then shot. The following morning before people started talking, they came and explained what happened, and the reason why the man was shot. People used to be scared of AMISOM in the past, but not anymore – not in recent years. And that has a lot to do with a change in their approach."[147]

Again, the situation in Beledweyne demonstrated a positive example. Many residents saw the mission there as more accessible than those from Mogadishu. As one man stated, "people feel comfortable to report any issues and [are] confident they [AMISOM] will act. We have seen that a lot. They have resolved clan clashes. There was someone run over and they assumed responsibility and contacted the family. The relationship is very open."[148]

Supporting Somali Troops

One issue on which those citizens interviewed by IRRI and international actors involved in Somalia agree, is the importance of rebuilding Somalia's security sector, especially its army. Having a functioning and accountable army is seen as a prerequisite for any strategy to prepare for AMISOM's troop reduction and, eventually, its withdrawal. As the former head of AMISOM, Dr Maman Sidikou, stated: "Let me underline here and now that AMISOM cannot remain in Somalia indefinitely. We have an exit strategy and this is hinged on supporting our Somali brothers and sisters to assume primary responsibility for their country, their present and their future. This is the first and most important issue."[149]

The implementation of this exit strategy seems to have become a matter of urgency, as dates for troop reduction or withdrawal are increasingly coming closer. At the 27th AU summit in July 2016, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui noted that "in October 2018 we will start the drawdown of AU forces in Somalia" with AMISOM handing over responsibility to the Somali National Army (SNA) by December 2020.[150] A number of country contingents have already announced their plans to withdraw sooner. Uganda has said it will pull its soldiers out of the mission by December 2017. Kenya had threatened to withdraw its troops from Somalia if the UN did not offer funding to support the mission,[151] but President Kenyatta has recently stated that Kenyan troops will stay in Somalia as long as the Somali army is not ready to take over.[152] The Ethiopians have withdrawn forces which operated

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[147] Interview with man from Marka, Mogadishu, 12 November 2016.

[148] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.

[149] M. Sidikou, "Securing Stability in Somalia: AMISOM's Evolving Role and Regional Implications," *Africa Programme Transcript*, Chatham House, 1 April 2015, available at
https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/15%2004%2001%20AMISOM%20transcript.pdf. (accessed on: 6 April 2017).

[150] Reliefweb, "Can AMISOM exit Somalia responsibly by 2020?" 24 August 2016, available at http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/can-amisom-exit-somalia-responsibly-2020. (accessed on: 6 April 2017)

[151] BBC, "Uganda to withdraw troops from Somalia's Amisom force," 23 June 2016, available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36606194. (accessed on: 6 April 2017)

[152] A. Mutambo, "KDF to stay in Somalia until Kenya is secure — Uhuru Kenyatta," *Daily Nation*, 10 May 2017, available at http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Uhuru-leaves-for-London-to-discuss-Somalia-1056-3920868-vs4xd7z/ (accessed on: 29 May 2017).

independently from AMISOM from several areas.[153] The Burundi government also threatened to withdraw its troops from AMISOM, prompted by the refusal of the European Union (EU) to channel its funding for the Burundi AMISOM peacekeepers through the government following a series of sanctions due to the country's political crisis and human rights abuses. After an agreement was reached with the AU, it dropped its threats.[154]

Among Somalis interviewed for this report, views around the timing of troop reduction and withdrawal differed with. Some declared that AMISOM should leave as soon as possible, while others felt that a period of transition was needed.[155] One issue everyone did seem to agree on was that whilst the SNA still suffers from multiple challenges, at some point it needs to take over the responsibility for state security from AMISOM.

A refugee in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, who was among those advocating for a quick transfer of responsibility from AMISOM to the Somali army, stated: "Somali soldiers do not get paid. It takes months for them to receive anything. [But] No one will be more invested in restoring security to Somalia than its own people. We need to train Somalis and treat them better. [...] This can also help in weakening *Al-Shabaab*. More [*Al-Shabaab*] would defect if they could see the government doing more for its people." [156] In the same focus group discussion, another woman stated that AMISOM should leave immediately, because the "[Somali] soldiers have the intelligence and the links to the people. The Somali problem is complex and cannot be understood by soldiers coming from the outside."[157] A man based in Marka said, "I would say next year would be a good time for them to leave. This would be enough time for a transition and would give the SNA an opportunity to step up."[158]

AMISOM commander addressing troops, Afgoye
© Amisom Public Information, 2012

Others however, despite being highly critical of AMISOM, also acknowledged that the SNA were not yet ready to take on this responsibility and that AMISOM needed to remain in Somalia for the time being. One interviewee told IRRI: "People will say the majority have a negative view – that close to 100% or an overwhelming majority do not like AMISOM. Those same people will however say AMISOM should not leave, because otherwise *Al-Shabaab* will take over. And it's true: if AMISOM leaves [the cities of] Beledweyne, Baidoa and Kismayo, we're at risk. There is nothing in place to replace AMISOM. Our own forces are not ready to take on that responsibility."[159] An interviewee from Beledweyne said: "We risk going back to the way we were if they leave too soon. I would say their job is about 50% done."[160] A woman in Mogadishu said: "This is not a popular view, but I would say to truly defeat *Al-Shabaab* we need more troops. We should not be talking about AMISOM leaving. Now is not the time."[161]

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[153] J. Jeffrey, "Ethiopian troop withdrawal from Somalia exposes peacekeeping problems, "*France 24,* 16 December 2016, available at http://www.france24.com/en/20161215-ethiopian-troops-withdraw-highlighting-peacekeeping-internationally-funded-peacekeeping (accessed on: 29 May 2017).

[154] AFP, "Burundi drops threat to quit peacekeeping in Somalia", 20 January 2017, available at www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Burundi-troops-withdrawal-from-Somalia/2558-3718954-e3qk95/index.html, (accessed on: 11 May 2017)

[155] Interview with man, Marka, 8 November 2016.

[156] Interview with woman, Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, 16-19 August 2016.

[157] Interview with woman, Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, 16-19 August 2016.

[158] Interview with man from Marka, Mogadishu, 12 November 2016.

[159] Interview with activist, Mogadishu, 4 October 2016

[160] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.

[161] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 26 September 2016.

What is of course vital is that this handover process is not expedited for political reasons, but is undertaken when the SNA is truly able to provide the necessary security. For example, the Ethiopian withdrawal in 2016 from several areas resulted in those areas being quickly taken over by *Al-Shabaab,* thus undermining all the gains made by the troops and allowing the group to regain strength.[162]

While people's assessments differed in the detail, there was consensus that the SNA still suffers serious shortcomings in terms of capacity and legitimacy, a view also shared by most international observers: "[t]oday, the Somali National Army is in no position to take the leading role in the fight against *Al-Shabaab.*"[163] The first transitional governments (installed in 2006 and 2009) were widely seen by Somalis as neither legitimate (but rather foisted on Somalis by foreigners) nor effective (as little was done in terms of improving access to services).[164] The national troops in this period were far from an effective ally, and were criticised for a lack of inclusiveness, for operating essentially as private armies and of more concern, for selling their weapons and sensitive intelligence to opponents.[165] Although this situation had improved by 2012, there is still a high level of distrust and other major challenges, such as the continued primacy of clan loyalties[166] in the transitional forces, unclear command and control structures, poor financing and inadequate weaponry.[167]

Most citizens were generally critical about the national army, not only about its capacity but also about its inclusiveness. A woman from Mogadishu told IRRI: "First we need a national army. We have a Somali National Army but I'm not sure whether it's truly national. It is predominately from one major clan. We don't have enough representatives from different regional administrations. They need to be properly equipped and trained. Then, they will have good morale and I am sure we will get back to the Somalia we used to be."[168]

One of the most common complaints of the respondents was the perceived lack of support of the wider international community for the SNA, which they also see as one of the primary reasons for its lack of capacity and effectiveness. Several respondents suggested spending the budget for AMISOM[169] on support to the national Somali army. "For me it would be better if the money that is being spent on AMISOM – who never leave their base and sit in their camps – went to the government troops," said one woman.[170] A man from Beledweyne pointed to the difference in treatment between the SNA and AMISOM: "the SNA has many problems: no money, no salary, and no support. They see how much AMISOM is paid and this causes more grievances. They are wounded and feel

> **"The SNA has many problems: no money, no salary, and no support."**

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[162] Critical threats, "Ethiopian AMISOM withdrawals", 4 November 2016, available at: https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/ethiopian-amisom-withdrawals, (accessed on: 6 April 2017)

[163] P. Williams & A. Hashi, 2016.

[164] P. Williams, 2013.

[165] P. Williams, 2013, p. 232.

[166] Every Somali (except members of few minority groups) knows his or her patrilineage generations back. At the highest level of this system is the clan family, and at the bottom, one's father or grandfather. There are five clan families – Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, Daarood, that are all pastoralists, and Digil-Mirifleh, also known as Digil and Rahanweyn – each comprising of different clans. Minority groups do not strictly belong to these genealogies, but live among them, and some have assimilated. These groups include the Jareer, the Boni, the Shidle and the Shebelle and the Eyle.

[167] P. Williams, 2013.

[168] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 8 October 2016.

[169] AMISOM's annual budget is around 900 million USD, and is financed by contributions from AU member states, AU and UN trust funds and other partners. The European Union, who is contributing to the peacekeeper's monthly salaries, recently decided to reduce its monthly payment per soldier and has also attempted to prevent any contribution of going to the Burundian government, following sanctions because of the country's political crisis. See P. Williams, "Paying for AMISOM: Are Politics and Bureaucracy Undermining the AU's Largest Peace Operation?" 11 January 2017, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/01/amisom-african-union-peacekeeping-financing/. (accessed on: 11 May 2017).

[170] Interview with a woman, Mogadishu, 17 November 2016.

they don't get as much care as AMISOM do. No one really talks about it. They are in need of additional support."[171] This differential treatment was also one of the reasons, according to several of IRRI's interlocutors, that there was a difficult relation between AMISOM and the SNA. According to some, the AMISOM forces did not fully respect the national forces, but put them at most risk when conducting joint operations.

Several multilateral actors, including AMISOM, the UN, the EU and bilateral donors, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey, have developed activities to support Somali's security sector.[172] International actors have identified several non-capacity related challenges, such as the lack of political will to support army reform and to map out a political roadmap for the transformation of clan-based militias into a truly national army. In the words of the former head of AMISOM, "until Somalis determine that it is for them to build, equip and maintain a well-motivated and a truly national army and police whose allegiance is to country and not to any particular clan or region, then we will continue to struggle to secure Somalia's stability."[173]

On May 11, the Federal Republic of Somalia and its international partners signed a "security pact", outlining Somalia's efforts on security sector reform and the commitments by international partners to support this process. Regarding AMISOM, it stated that "the transition from AMISOM to Somali security forces from 2018 should be conditions-based and with clear target dates linked to the security sector reform milestones set out in this Pact." More detailed recommendations are left to the UN-AU review of AMISOM, planned from May to June 2017, which will then be incorporated in a UNSC resolution.[174]

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[171] Interview with man, Beledweyne, 7 December 2016.
[172] ISSAT, "Somalia SSR Background Note", 12 February 2015, available at http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Country-Profiles/Somalia-SSR-Background-Note. (accessed on: 11 May 2017)
[173] M. Sidikou, 2015.
[174] Security Pact, adopted on 11 May 2017, available at
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/613720/london-somalia-conference-2017-security-pact.pdf
(accessed on: 29 May 2017).

Conclusion

As the findings have shown, Somali citizens have various criticisms about AMISOM. Its failure to provide security has caused a negative perception by many Somalis interviewed for this report, although others also recognised the contribution of AMISOM in the advances made over the years. Citizens criticised the lack of a follow-up strategy after recapturing areas from *Al-Shabaab* and the limited results, given its decade-long presence in the country. Its failure, and even perception of unwillingness, to protect civilians came up multiple times. To address this, AMISOM needs an explicit mandate to protect civilians and the adequate means to implement this.

Part of the negative perception of AMISOM related to a general lack of understanding among many of those interviewed about the mission's mandate, which has led to a degree of confusion about its presence. To manage expectations, the mission therefore needs to increase its efforts to inform and consult Somali communities about its mandate, activities and exit strategy.

Abuses by peacekeepers and the lack of investigations and accountability – or at least a lack of communication about any such actions and their results – have further strained relations between AMISOM and Somali citizens. A real commitment should be made to ensure accountability for all abuses by setting up an independent and effective mechanism to deal with all cases.

Most criticism was directed specifically to the Kenyan and Ethiopian contingents of AMISOM – two countries with a past of unilateral interventions and difficult relations with the Somali population. However, overall, the population's perception differed according to the local security situation and the efforts by AMISOM troops to provide services or engage positively with the population. A political dialogue with all troop-contributing countries about their unilateral activities and impunity for abuses, and increased sharing of best practices among the different contingents about how to deal with civilian protection, prevention of abuses and community outreach could assist in addressing these disparities in perception.

With dates proposed by the AU and TCCS for troop reduction and withdrawal coming closer, it seems paramount to substantially increase support to the Somali security forces, a view shared by both citizens and international actors. This will require a common effort by Somalia's partners, coordinated by the UN, but also a clear commitment by the new Somali government to engage in effective security sector reform, by addressing accountability issues and creating a truly national, inclusive force. Such commitment was given – at least on paper – by the Somali government and its international partners during the London conference in May 2017, linking this to the AMISOM withdrawal. What is important now, is its implementation, as a businesswoman in Mogadishu told IRRI: "We need to invest time and money into our Somali forces, as in the long term that is what we need. A peacekeeping mission won't stay forever."[175]

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[175] Interview with woman, Mogadishu, 20 September 2016.