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

Tension is fast rising in Mogadishu, particularly in recent days as the TFG claims to secure the city. The number of security incidents involving hand grenades and explosive devices in Mogadishu, as well as targeted killings, continue to rise. On 26 May, Mogadishu's two deputy Mayors escaped a road side bomb attack, while on 3 June, Prime Minister Gedi survived yet another assassination attempt as a car loaded with explosives detonated outside his private residence. A suicide car bomb on 4 June targeted an Ethiopian base between K4 and K5.

On 6 June, a major security crackdown was reported in Mogadishu with house-to-house search for weapons followed by hundreds of arrests including that of Abdi Imaan, Chairman of the Hawiye elders (later released), and the closing down of three major media houses accused of supporting anti-TFG factions. According to reports, the disarmament activities are bringing normal movement and business activities in the city to a complete standstill, particularly in the north. Residents are reportedly subject to intimidation and random arrests.

There are unconfirmed reports of casualties around Bargal (Puntland) following the reported U.S military airstrike on the area on 1 June 2007.

As a follow-up to the Emergency Relief Coordinator's visit to Mogadishu on 12 May, an UN inter-agency mission traveled to the city on 29-30 May to discuss next steps in the delivery of assistance. Meeting with various stakeholders, including the authorities, the mission clarified that while the first phase of the IDP response had prioritised delivery of assistance to the most vulnerable, the focus will now shift to provision of basic services to include and benefit the community as a whole. The mission also underlined the impartial and neutral nature of all humanitarian action. Any discussion related to resettlement plans will only take place in the framework of the National Reconciliation Process.

According to FAO/FSAU, findings from a rapid nutrition assessment conducted in mid-May in five IDP settlements in Baidoa district (hosting recently displaced from Mogadishu) indicate a very worrying nutrition situation with 18.6% of 1,106 assessed children acutely malnourished, and 4.3% severely malnourished. Additionally, preliminary findings from three nutrition assessments conducted in April in Gedo highlight a persisting critical nutrition situation in the area with 16.7-19.9% Global Acute Malnutrition. The results noted some limited recovery from the last nutrition assessment in March 2006.

Displacement and Returns

Since the lull in the fighting at the end of April, reports received indicate that around 90,000 people have returned to Mogadishu, although the number is likely much higher and could range between 100,000 and 200,000. The vast majority - and those who did not live in public buildings or settlements - are returning from areas around Mogadishu in Lower and Middle Shabelle. The majority of those who fled to areas such as Galgadud, Hiran, Bay and Bakool (where the displaced have sought either clan protection or have returned to their areas of origin) remain in these areas.

Since the heightened tension in Mogadishu, some back-and-forth movement of people out of Mogadishu has been reported although this is hard to quantify.

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Access and Response

Following on from an initial IDP profiling exercise in Mogadishu in February/March 2007, a rapid survey will soon be conducted to collect more updated information on the dynamics and underlying causes of displacement during the recent fighting in Mogadishu, as well as the intentions of IDPs. The findings will help in the development and prioritization of response activities. The rapid survey was postponed due to events in the last week.

Subsequent to the recent CERF allocation of US\$ 2.9 million to WFP to subsidize humanitarian cargo and passenger flights into Somalia, UNCAS has started to receive booking requests. Funding for cargo flights is expected to last two months, while subsidized funding for passenger flights is expected to last two/three months. As part of the same allocation, repair works at Wajid airstrip have commenced. While work is ongoing no aircraft larger than a caravan will land on the temporary airstrip. Passenger flights are routed through Baidoa.

Meanwhile, following a temporary suspension on 25 May, air services to Buale airstrip resumed on 29 May following mediation efforts. However, Galkayo airstrips remains closed for UNCAS flights due to continued security concerns on the ground.

Incidents of hijacking and attempted hijacking of commercial vessels continued during the reporting period. Should incidents of piracy persist, organizations might have to review alternative and additional supply routes into Somalia. Meanwhile, in the last week of May and for a second time in the month, Kismayo port was closed again by local militias for 48 hours. The port opened on 31 May following local clan mediation.

In addition to the above mentioned CERF allocation, three other projects for South/Central Somalia have received CERF funds in May, amounting to roughly US\$ 7.7 million. As reported in the last situation report, UNICEF (US\$1.7 million) and UNHCR (US\$1 million) will assist IDPs who recently fled or have been affected by the conflict in Mogadishu. UNICEF's project will target 180,000 people with shelter material and non-food items (NFIs), while UNHCR's project will provide emergency shelter, NFIs and support to basic services infrastructure for 90,000 new IDPs. The fourth, and recently approved contribution, is for US\$2.1 million to replenish the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF). These allocations are part of the US\$10 million recently set aside for Somalia by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes.

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