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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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The situation of the displaced persons in Somalia In light of the current COVID-19 crisis

Preamble

Forced displacement in Somalia was primarily due to the armed conflict with Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidin terrorist movement and the heavy floods. Recently, the situation got worse and alarming due to the exponential spread of COVID-19 in the whole world. Somalia has not escaped the pandemic, which hit up to 1500 individual, and its death toll reached 60 people by late May 2020, since internally displaced persons in Somalia face great difficulties implementing health protection measures to ensure reducing the impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak, and its expected catastrophic impact in Somalia, where displaced people are particularly and severely endangered.

The situation of the displaced in Somalia after Coronavirus

Over the years of the conflict, Somalia's health system has been severely damaged, and the conflicting parties have hindered and impeded the delivery of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, and many infectious diseases have spread in the country. As a result of this conflict, thousands of civilians have been killed, more than 2.6 million people have been internally displaced, and since the beginning of 2020 until May of the same year, more than 220,000 Somalis were internally displaced. Natural and climate-related disasters, such as droughts and floods, are among the factors that increase the suffering of Somalis and force them to flee in search of their right to live¹. Focusing on the causes of displacement in recent months, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights would like to refer to:

In South and Central Somalia, flash floods and the beginnings of riverine flooding caused by the seasonal Gurains have already displaced an estimated 90,000 with additional displacement expected, worsening significant pre-existing humanitarian needs faced by IDPs and host communities.² Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights expresses its fear that this year's rains give every indication that they could pose the same catastrophic threat as the Deyr rains of 2019, which led to more than 400,000 people being forced to flee their homes.

In particular, thousands of families have been displaced by the flooding of the Shabelle River in the city of Beledweyne, the center of the Hiraaan region, in Hersheby, and are suffering from deteriorating health conditions. The camps of the "Ayl Jally" area also suffer from poor health conditions. Concerns are growing about the new Coronavirus outbreaks in overcrowded camps, in light of the urgent need for clean water and shelter.³

The flooding also threatens to cut off the main road connecting Beledweyne to the airport which could disrupt deliveries of emergency humanitarian supplies to the town. Nearly 40% of the people in Jowhar, a smaller center of about 20,000 residents, have been displaced from their homes, according to the Somali government's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management in Hirshabelle state.⁴

Since the beginning of 2020, about 137,000 have been displaced due to conflicts. In March and April, the armed operations against Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidin terrorist movement were resumed in Lower Shabelle, causing more than 50,000 people to flee their homes. Residents were directly exposed to exchanges of fire, mortar attacks in their villages, and roadside explosions as they fled. In Gedo, Gopaland State, fighting in early March between the parties

¹ Conflict and heavy floods force tens of thousands of people to flee their homes in Somalia, amidst COVID-19 threat", UNHCR, 08 May 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2WIOePe>

² UNHCR, op.cit.

³ معاناة النازحين من الفيضانات في مدينة بلدوين"، الصومال الجديد، 2020/05/14، على الرابط التالي <https://bit.ly/3dZoIuQ>

⁴ الأمم المتحدة: فيضانات وسط الصومال تجتاح نحو مليون شخص"، الرؤية، 18 مايو 2020، على الرابط التالي <https://bit.ly/3g4DKRIU>

to the conflict in the region forced an estimated 40,000 people to flee their homes in Belet Xau. In late March 2020, the Nabadon camp hosted about 3 thousand families, who were displaced from Lower Shabelle in southern Somalia after the intensification of armed hostilities in the region and the American airstrikes.⁵

The right to health: Somali displaced people in crisis

Somalia's health system and economy have collapsed, the conflicting parties hindered the humanitarian response repeatedly and blatantly, which led to routine destruction of health care facilities and high rates of killing and injury among medical personnel, and this has contributed to widespread suffering for civilians, migrants, and internally displaced persons, and has made the country more vulnerable to health disasters such as those expected due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Today in Somalia, more than half of the health facilities are broken, and barely basic supplies and equipment are available, including medicines, personal protective equipment, and artificial respirators.

It is worth noting that Somalia is ranked 194 out of 195 countries in the Global Health Security Index, while some areas in Somalia scored a zero in the criteria for pandemic preparedness and the like, according to the latest ranking in 2019, "Johns Hopkins".⁶ The number of health workers in parts of the country is two per 100,000 people compared to international standards that require 25 people per 100,000 people. This means that "only less than 20 percent of health facilities are equipped with supplies required to manage epidemics."⁷

In view of the above, Maat for Peace cautions that there could be a possible human disaster in the camps for the displaced, especially since Somalia lacks the necessary respiratory equipment for corona injuries (COVID-19). Somalia's Minister of Health, Fawzia Ibkir, in her statement, says that the whole country contains no more than 20 intensive care beds,⁸ so, how the health conditions of the displaced will be in light of this poor condition and the lack of equipped field hospitals. Somalia does not have the COVID-19 diagnostic testing machines or tools, so the tested positive cases of Coronavirus are sent out of Somalia, and it takes a week until the result comes back, which means that there is an increase in the infected cases that have not been counted yet.

It should be noted that there are some cases tested positive of Covid-19 in "Sidka" camp in Mogadishu, which would jeopardize the lives of the other residents in case it spread out in the camp, especially since medical assistance is out of reach. The camp residents will not be able to afford the costs of preventing the disease, even if it spreads, there are no respirators in the camps due to the fragility of the infrastructure and the deterioration of the health system.⁹

Coronavirus (COVID 19) didn't only impact the economy and in-kind assistance of food, but also suspended the humanitarian and charitable movements that are often active in the weeks leading up to Ramadan to support the poor and needy in Somalia. No relief items are provided for residents in IDP camps in Mogadishu outskirts, and the squares and places designated for distributing aid have turned into rest areas for the displaced, hoping to obtain aid in light of the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID 19).¹⁰

⁵ لاجئو مقديشو «ينتظرون الموت» مع وصول كورونا (كوفيد 19) إلى الصومال"، موقع الرؤية، 24 مارس 2020، <https://bit.ly/2WO97sp> على الرابط التالي

⁶ كورونا (كوفيد 19) في الصومال.. مخاوف من تكرار كابوس الكوليرا"، الشروق، 30 مارس 2020، على الرابط التالي <https://bit.ly/3bKxIZV>

⁷ الصومال يسجل 21 إصابة بكوفيد-19 وأول وفاة، فيما تسارع الوكالات الإنسانية للمساعدة في ظل قيود إضافية <https://bit.ly/2XaKncO> مفروضة بسبب الجائحة"، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، 13 نيسان/أبريل 2020، على الرابط التالي

⁸ المرجع السابق

⁹ فيروس كورونا (كوفيد 19) مأساة أخرى تضاف إلى يوميات اللاجئين الصوماليين"، يورو نيوز، 30/03/2020، على الرابط التالي <https://bit.ly/2WMtbuU>

¹⁰ تقرير .. عيون نازحي مقديشو تترقب معونات رمضان في ظل جائحة كورونا (كوفيد 19)"، المرصد الصومالي <https://bit.ly/3cNOEv3> للعمل الإنساني، 17

The humanitarian situation is expected to worsen with the spread of the Coronavirus and this threatens most of the 2.6 million displaced people in Somalia who live in crowded random camps. The newly arrived refugees living in makeshift shelters made from plastic bags, cardboard, and sticks. So, physical and social isolation is almost impossible, and there is rarely enough clean water to drink, let alone wash hands, creating the perfect conditions for the spread of the virus.

Recommendations

- Maat urges the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of the human rights of internally displaced people to pay special attention to the situation of internally displaced persons, especially those who already suffer serious violations of their right to food, as is the case in Somalia.
- Take additional measures to handle the floods, so that the catastrophic threat of Deyr rains of 2019 wouldn't happen again.
- Provide more health aid for the affected IDPs in the Hiraan region, in Hersheby, as well as in the camps of "Ayl Jally", due to their poor health conditions.
- Secure the main road connecting Beledweyne to the airport, which was severely damaged by floods, since it is critical in the deliverer of humanitarian aid for the displaced.
- Pay more attention to the IDPs displaced by the armed operations, whose number exceeded 137,000 since the beginning of the year, especially those who were hosted in the Nabadon camp, while keeping safe distances between them.
- There is an urgent need to establish field hospitals more prepared and equipped with Coronavirus testing measures, as to be close to refugee camps.
- Get Coronavirus testing tools and equipment, instead of sending tests to other countries to be evaluated
- Pay more attention to the Sidka IDP camp, in which a number of cases were tested positive of Covid-19.
