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Posted on Fri, Jul. 28, 2006

Somali riots erupt after minister shot

MOHAMED OLAD HASSAN
Associated Press

BAIDOA, Somalia - Hundreds of people rioted Friday near the headquarters of Somalia's weak government after a Cabinet minister was fatally shot outside a mosque. People began streaming into the streets and setting fires just hours after the killing of Abdallah Isaaq Deerow, Somalia's minister for constitutional and federal affairs.

A gunman shot Deerow several times in the chest, then escaped. A 35-year-old man was later arrested, said Baidoa police chief Aadin Biid.

"We condemn this wicked action, and the government will chase the murderers and treat them with an iron hand," said the government's information minister, Mohamed Abdi Hayir.

The shooting was the second this week of a lawmaker in Baidoa, the only town controlled by the fragile administration. Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed, chairman of the parliamentary committee for constitutional affairs, was wounded Wednesday night.

It was not clear whether the shootings were connected or related to politics in this chaotic Horn of Africa nation.

The government, which has no military, has watched helplessly in recent months as Islamic militants have taken over the capital and much of southern Somalia. On Thursday, 18 top ministers resigned, saying the government has failed to bring peace. Deerow was not among those who resigned.

The lawmakers said they were opposed to troops from neighboring Ethiopia who were sent here to protect the government from the Islamic group. Ethiopia is Somalia's traditional enemy, although Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf has asked for its support - a decision that enraged many Somalis.

About 5,000 people turned out for an anti-Ethiopia demonstration in the capital, Mogadishu.

"We will launch a holy war against the aggressors," said protester Abdirisak Hassan. "We shall go to heaven if we die and they will suffer in hell if they die."

Also Friday, Islamic fighters closed roads around the capital's airport and chased away onlookers while a plane was unloaded. A similar aircraft delivered goods Wednesday, and officials from the government accused Eritrea of sending arms to the militants on that flight.

Islamic officials and Eritrea both denied the accusation. Eritrea and Ethiopia have been accused of supporting opposite sides in the Somali standoff, using the country as a battleground in their own rivalry.

"We have seen that the government cannot carry out national reconciliation and development," said the resignation letter issued by 18 key ministers in the 102-member Cabinet.

Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Gedi accused the former ministers of trying to bring down his government, but said it would not be affected.

The Islamic militants' increasing power has prompted grave concerns in the United States, which accuses the group of harboring al-Qaida leaders responsible for deadly 1998 bombings at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The Islamic group's imposition of strict religious courts also has raised fears of an emerging Taliban-style regime.

Associated Press writer Mohamed Sheikh Nor contributed to this report from Mogadishu.

Somalis riot after politician shot dead outside mosque

28/07/2006 - 5:59:49 PM

A member of Somalia's virtually powerless government was assassinated today as he walked out of a mosque, enraging hundreds of Somalis who rioted in the streets screaming, "We want a government that can restore law and order!"

It was the second shooting of a politician this week and the latest blow to an administration that has watched helplessly as Islamic militants with alleged links to al Qaida took control of the capital and much of southern Somalia.

People began streaming into the streets just hours after a gunman opened fire on Abdallah Isaaq Deerow, the minister for constitutional and federal affairs.

A 35-year-old man was arrested but authorities had no further details, said Police Chief Aadin Biid.

"We condemn this wicked action, and the government will chase the murderers and treat them with an iron hand," the government's information minister, Mohamed Abdi Hayir, said today.

Two days earlier, Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed, chairman of the parliamentary committee for constitutional affairs, was shot and wounded. It was not immediately clear whether the shootings were connected, although the men had worked together.

"If we don't express our anger we are afraid the killings may continue. We want to encourage the government to identify the culprits," said Baidoa resident Shafarah Younis, as nearly 400 people shouted and set fires near the presidential compound.

Somalia has been without an effective central government since warlords toppled dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 and then turned on each other, carving much of the country into armed camps ruled by violence and clan law.

The government was established nearly two years ago with the support of the UN but has failed to assert any power outside its base in Baidoa, 155 miles from the capital, Mogadishu.

The administration started unravelling this week when 18 key ministers resigned, saying the government has failed to bring peace.

The Islamic militia, meanwhile, has steadily gained power and influence, raising fears of an emerging Taliban-style regime. The United States accuses the group of harbouring al Qaida leaders responsible for deadly 1998 bombings at the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The militia, known as the Supreme Islamic Courts Council, has rallied even more supporters by condemning reports that troops from neighbouring Ethiopia have entered the country to protect the fragile government.

Ethiopia is Somalia's traditional enemy, although Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf has asked for its support – a decision that infuriated many Somalis.

"We will launch a holy war against the aggressors," said Abdirisak Hassan, among 5,000 people who turned out today for an anti-Ethiopia demonstration in the capital, Mogadishu.

“We shall go to heaven if we die and they will suffer in hell if they die.”

Deerow, the politician who was killed today, was “an ardent supporter of close ties with Ethiopia,” his friend, Ali Mohamed Ahmed Daon, said.

Deerow was a secondary school teacher before entering politics in the 1990s.

The UN special envoy to Somalia, Francois Lonseny Fall, said he was appalled at the shooting.

“I offer my condolences to Mr Deerow’s family and appeal for calm in what is already a turbulent moment in Somalia’s recent history,” he said.

Islamic fighters closed roads around the capital’s airport and chased away onlookers while a plane was unloaded today. A similar aircraft delivered goods on Wednesday, and officials from the government accused Eritrea of sending arms to the militants on that flight.

Islamic officials and Eritrea both denied the accusation. Eritrea and Ethiopia have been accused of supporting opposite sides in the Somali stand-off, using the country as a battleground in their own rivalry.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/28/AR2006072801709_pf.html

Somalis Riot in Streets After Official Is Slain

By Guled Mohamed
Reuters
Saturday, July 29, 2006; A14

BAIDOA, Somalia -- Gunmen shot dead a Somali cabinet minister outside a mosque Friday, triggering riots by pro-government demonstrators who threw rocks and burned tires in the interim administration's base of Baidoa.

Witnesses said assailants opened fire on Constitution and Federalism Minister Abdallah Deerow Isaq as he left prayers, an attack sure to heighten tensions in the violence-plagued nation, which many fear is sliding toward war.

"It looks like an organized assassination," Information Minister Mohamed Abdi Hayr said.

A Baidoa hospital nurse said Isaq, a former schoolteacher, was brought in with four bullet wounds in the heart and chest.

After the attack, the government blocked roads out of the town, and about 1,000 protesters took to the streets with sticks, knives and stones, witnesses said. Scores of shops were looted in several hours of chaos. "Bring out the killers!" protesters chanted outside a police station, where officials said two suspects were being held.

The U.N.-backed government was formed in 2004 in the 14th attempt to restore central rule to Somalia since the 1991 ouster of a military dictator. Its authority has recently been challenged by an Islamic militia that took Mogadishu in June after defeating U.S.-backed warlords.

The militia, born out of Islamic courts created to restore order to Mogadishu during a period of anarchy and violence, has since expanded its control to other towns.

With Ethiopian troops now said to be in Somalia to support the government, and Eritrea believed by many to be arming the militia, many Somalis are bracing for full-scale conflict.

Islamic rulers in Mogadishu denied involvement and said Ethiopia was behind Friday's killing to destabilize its neighbor. Ethiopia did not immediately respond to the accusation but charged that Eritrea actively supported the Somali militia.

A no-confidence motion on Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi is due to be debated in parliament Saturday. Eighteen ministers and other top officials quit the government Thursday.

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Posted on Sat, Jul. 29, 2006

Somalis riot after lawmaker fatally shot

MOHAMED OLAD HASSAN
Associated Press

BAIDOA, Somalia - A Cabinet member was assassinated Friday as he left a mosque, enraging hundreds of Somalis who rioted in the streets screaming, "We want a government that can restore law and order!"

It was the second shooting of a lawmaker this week and the latest blow to an administration that has watched helplessly as Islamic militants with alleged links to al-Qaida took control of the capital and much of southern Somalia.

People began streaming into the streets just hours after a gunman opened fire on Abdallah Isaaq Deerow, the minister for constitutional and federal affairs. Seven people were arrested in the killing, but authorities had no further details, said Police Chief Aadin Biid.

"We condemn this wicked action, and the government will chase the murderers and treat them with an iron hand," the government's information minister, Mohamed Abdi Hayir, said Friday.

Two days earlier, Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed, chairman of the parliamentary committee for constitutional affairs, was shot and wounded. It was not immediately clear whether the shootings were connected, although the men had worked together.

"If we don't express our anger we are afraid the killings may continue. We want to encourage the government to identify the culprits," said Baidoa resident Shafarah Younis, as nearly 400 people shouted and set fires near the presidential compound.

Somalia has been without an effective central government since warlords toppled dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 and then turned on each other, carving much of the country into armed camps ruled by violence and clan law.

The government was established nearly two years ago with the support of the U.N. but has failed to assert any power outside its base in Baidoa, 155 miles from the capital, Mogadishu. The administration started unraveling this week when 18 key ministers resigned, saying the government has failed to bring peace.

The Islamic militia, meanwhile, has steadily gained power and influence, raising fears of an emerging Taliban-style regime. The United States accuses the group of harboring al-Qaida leaders responsible for deadly 1998 bombings at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The militia, known as the Supreme Islamic Courts Council, has rallied even more supporters by condemning reports that troops from neighboring Ethiopia have entered the country to protect the fragile government.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200607310394.html>

Somalia On the Brink

The Reporter (Addis Ababa)

NEWS

July 29, 2006

Posted to the web July 31, 2006

By Namrud Berhane

Ethiopia will handle the problem in Somalia if the international community soon does not, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said in an interview with the BBC.

Meles said that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) had weak defense capabilities, that it needs to be supported and that his government was willing to send in troops if the TFG made requests.

"[The Transitional Federal Government] is defenseless. We are prepared to send forces if and when we are invited by the transitional government and if there is no peace keeping operation that would obviate the need for us to do so."

Meles' statement comes as a series of worrying episodes are unfolding in Somalia.

Wednesday's Iluyshin-76 - a massive transport plane capable of carrying more than 50 tons of cargo- has landed in Mogadishu for the second time. Many believe it is from Eritrea. This time around the plane was carrying anti-aircraft guns, uniforms, AK47s and several senior Eritrean officers, reports indicate.

On its first flight into Mogadishu, the plane took mines, grenades and long range guns.

Observers say Eritrea and Ethiopia are about to wage a proxy war in Somalia.

The United Nations and the United States have warned both countries to refrain from interfering.

The State Department said Ethiopia and Eritrea should avoid actions that might harm peace talks whilst a UN envoy Francois L. Fall said he did not want to see them fight a proxy war.

The Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, said earlier this week: "There are external parties involved on all sides, this is a problem."

Ethiopia fears the long and porous border with Somalia will allow possible militant elements to take advantage of the latter's lawlessness.

The existence of its own active rebel groups - namely the Oromo Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (a group of Somali origin) - has exacerbated these fears.

The UN Security council arms embargo monitoring group had last month included in its report that Eritrea was operating within Somalia by supporting and facilitating the collaboration between the UIC and rebel groups from Ethiopia.

Somalia's weak interim government whose foothold has not been able to move further than Baidowa was dealt a blow when on Thursday, 19 ministers and other government officials resigned.

The officials resigned, according to reports because of "dissatisfaction" at the way Ali Mohamed Ghedi, the prime minister, was handling the negotiations with the UIC.

Some ministers are also against the idea of allowing peace keeping mission into the country.

Tensions rose to a fever pitch on Friday when a minister of the government was shot dead by unidentified gun men in Baidowa.

"Hundreds of people were rioting [that day] near the headquarters of Somalia's interim government after Abdallah Isaaq Deerow, Somalia's Minister for Constitutional and Federal Affairs was fatally shot outside a mosque. People began streaming into the streets and setting fires just hours after an unidentified gunman fired several shots at Deerow. The gunman escaped," an AP writer reported from Baidowa.