



TOPIC

Towards Durable Solutions

for Refugees, IDPs and Returnees
in Somalia and the **Horn of Africa Region**

Guest Speaker

Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey

UNHCR's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa

PDRC TALKS NOVEMBER 2019

BACKGROUND TO THE PDRCTALKS

In March 2019, the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC) initiated a monthly event dubbed PDRCTalks. This event is a new initiative to spread ideas, messages, and awareness on issues related to the betterment of Somalia. These issues cover topics ranging from governance, democratization, peace, and development, which are the key PDRC's focus areas.

PDRCTalks is an interactive platform in which prominent Somali scholars, veteran politicians and/or retired civil servants are hosted once a month to serve as guest speakers and to deliver an expert presentation at a uniquely themed talk-event at PDRC. PDRCTalks aim to spark conversation within the Somali community and, through this useful dialogue, change the attitudes and lives of Somalis. Social media is used to spread the messages throughout Somali communities living in the diaspora and within the country through live streams. PDRCTalks has been received well and has featured prominent figures in Somali society to bring to the fore a multi-faceted number of topics in politics, economics, social issues as well as cultural themes.

PDRCTalks is a value-addition component to PDRC's vision as a solutions-oriented organization that prides itself on offering useful tools to bring about peaceful coexistence and economic development by all Somalis.

PDRCTalks 7

The seventh PDRCTalks on the theme 'Towards Durable Solution for Refugees, IDPs and Returnees in Somalia and the Horn of Africa Region' took place at PDRC on 20th November, 2019 with Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey, as the Guest Speaker.

Ambassador Affey previously served as the Special Envoy to Somalia for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In this capacity, he worked closely with the regional body IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) to develop and implement the "Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action."

He previously held senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Kenya, serving as

Kenya's Deputy Minister and later as Kenya's Ambassador to Somalia. From March 2008 to February 2013, as a Member of Parliament in the Kenya National Assembly, Ambassador Affey sponsored several motions seeking to support the stabilization of Somalia by the African Union at the African, Caribbean, Pacific/European Union (ACP/EU) joint parliamentary assembly.

Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey is currently, the UNHCR Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, whose appointment reflects recent developments, including the agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as other States in the region, which have the potential for progress towards finding solutions for the over 1.5 million refugees in the Horn of Africa.

Since Somalia descended into civil war in 1991, the country has experienced a protracted multi-faceted crisis characterised by clan conflicts and droughts affecting millions who have fled from their homes. The civil war was followed by a period of massive internal and cross-border displacement resulting in an influx of the displaced population of Somalis within and without the nation's borders. The majority of those who fled from the conflict in the south, crossed the Kenyan border to seek refuge forming Africa's most populous refugee camp and the largest refugee camp in the world "Dadaab." Others resettled in the neighbouring countries, including Ethiopia, Djibouti, and even beyond the continent.

Somalia continues to experience violent extremism, clan conflicts, and recurring droughts, which have led to massive displacement, resulting in many internally displaced persons within the country (IDPs) living in difficult conditions in the outskirts of most urban centres. Mogadishu continues to host the largest displaced population inside the country. The number of displaced persons in Somalia continues to grow, every

year, and UNHCR estimates that at least 2.6 million people are locally displaced in Somalia while another 800,000 are in exile, which means 30% of the country's population is displaced.

In light of the growing number of Somali refugees and internally displaced persons, Puntland Development and Research Centre organised the 7th PDRCTALKS themed "Towards Durable Solution for Refugees, IDPs and Returnees in Somalia and the Horn of Africa Region.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT

The 7th PDRCTalks event was held on 20th November 2019 at the PDRC compound, Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia. The event included a lecture by the keynote speaker Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey, followed by a panel discussion and audience Q&A interaction. The event's significance was also boosted by live State TV coverage and other social media outlets. The event was fully backed by diverse audience due to its unique importance for both internally displaced community as well as the host community.

The event was attended by more than 180 participants, drawn from the government, civil society groups, human rights and advocacy groups, local government, women, youth politicians, and senior citizens.

The event was streamed live on Facebook with live updates on Twitter to reach a cross-section of audiences all over the world. PDRCTalks prides itself on giving ample time to the guest speaker, panellists and contributors, and, most importantly, the audience to exchange ideas learn from each other, and further to deepen their understanding of the subject of discussion.

Introductory Remarks



The Mayor of the state's capital Garowe (Ahmed Bare), praised the role played by PDRC in creating such an important platform that often spark discussions on fundamental issues that are of interest to the Somali population. Before the eruption of the civil war, the only IDP, returnees, and/or refugee crisis the country had experienced was the displacement from the Ethiopian-Somalia border conflict that affected communities residing on the Somalia-Ethiopia border towns. Most of those who fled, moved to the mainland in search of safety and better living conditions. The Somali government made strenuous efforts to resettle these people and fully integrate them with host communities by providing permanent shelters and the creation of employment opportunities, particularly in the agriculture and fishing sectors. However, the civil war that erupted in 1991 led to massive human displacement, forcing many people to either seek refuge in the neighbouring countries or move to safer regions within the country, many of whom are here today, including the mayor himself. It is important to note that the civil war created a paradigm shift of the displacement matrix, leading to a massive internal influx. These affected people have been forced to live in the outskirts of urban centres under challenging conditions in non-conducive environments.

Nevertheless, with the support of UNHCR's durable solutions program, 1,100 homes, with latrines, running water, and electricity, were constructed, making it possible for the displaced people to live in somewhat better conditions. The local government believes that IDPs, Returnees, and Refugees deserve to live in dignified conditions and access opportunities available to the rest of the population. To achieve this, the local government has provided public land and appealed to the UNHCR and other international organisations to support the construction of facilities for the displaced population. The local government is working towards the eradication of the social stigma associated with IDPs, and through its integration strategy, that seeks to ensure that host communities and IDPs live together in the same environment under similar conditions. In each new IDP settlement, the local government allocates 30% of the constructed houses to the host community and 70% to the IDP community.

Remarks by the Deputy Interior Minister

(Abdiwali Mire Hersi)



The Deputy Minister in his remarks indicated that it was indeed a pleasure to participate in such meaningful discussion and listen to what the special envoy of the High Commissioner on matters pertaining Somali IDPs, Returnees and Refugees in the region and in particular Somalia had to say. The Deputy Minister stated that the Puntland State of Somalia has always provided safe space for internally displaced people from other regions/states of the country. The government has continually provided a secure environment, essential services, and economic opportunities for those fleeing conflicts and droughts from other states. Puntland is equally experiencing an influx of inbound refugees/returnees' from neighbouring countries, including Yemen and the Oromo exodus from Ethiopia. At the present, Puntland was currently hosting an estimated quarter of million IDPs and refugees, with most of them having been resettled through the support of the UNHCR's durable solutions program, which is overseeing the construction of 250 permanent two-bedroomed houses including other public amenities in Bossaso for IDPs families.

The ministry has developed policies and procedures to safeguard the displaced persons in Somalia. According to Puntland's policy, "IDPs in Puntland shall enjoy, in full equality, the rights and freedoms enjoyed by other residents in Puntland as stipulated in the Puntland constitution. They shall not be discriminated against on the ground that they are IDPs". (Puntland IDPs Policy 2019).

Puntland's 2012 resettlement policy classifies IDPs, into three categories for those with well-founded fear:

- (a) Persons willing to integrate with the host community;
- (b) Persons with skills and who would prefer to be relocated to areas where they can create opportunities such as coastal areas;
- (c) Persons who are willing to be repatriated back to their place of origin when security conditions permit.

Puntland's Ministry of Interior, Federalism Affairs and Democratisation is cognizant of the efforts and the continued support made by the High Commissioner and to this end, it appeals to the High Commissioner and other international organisations to continue supporting efforts addressing the challenges of IDPs, Refugees and Returnees in Somalia and Puntland in particular.

The Keynote Speech



The UNHCR Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the former IGAD envoy to Somalia as well as Kenya's Ambassador to Somalia Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey commended PDRCTalks for initiating this novel idea, and for facilitating the PDRCTalks, such discussions he noted are in recognition of the importance and centrality of durable solutions for Somali IDPs, refugees, and internally displaced persons. These talks are an excellent opportunity to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including policy-makers, civil society, IDPs, humanitarian, and development actors. The event presented an opportunity for everyone to learn about the specific issues faced by refugees, IDPs, and

returnees living in Somalia; and to share experiences and issues of concern to all regions.

Ambassador Affey indicated that prior to his appointment as the Special Envoy for the UNHCR, he served as the IGAD envoy to Somalia and Kenya's Ambassador to Somalia and Member of Parliament in Kenya. His experiences have given him a unique opportunity to understand the challenges faced by the displaced Somali population in the country and as refugees in the region.

As the last act in his previous assignment, the Ambassador held the first-ever assembly meeting of IGAD heads of States in Mogadishu, in 2015 in which the Somali Refugees issue was the central agenda.

A few months after this conference, Ambassador Affey was appointed as UNHCR's Special Envoy for Somali Refugees in September 2016, and in 2018 he was promoted to be the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa following the reconciliation between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the subsequent positive developments in the region.

Legal Framework

UNHCR is primarily mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance and to seek permanent solutions for persons within its core mandate of responsibilities.

The 1951 Refugees convention and its 1967 Protocol are the critical legal documents that form the basis of UNHCR's work. The 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa builds on the 1951 Convention and influenced the Kampala Convention on IDPs, adopted in 2009 by UNHCR also addresses the problems of statelessness.

It should be noted that the African Union dedicated the year 2019 as the Year of refugees, returnees, and IDPs to bring more support for the displaced population in Africa. In Somalia, particularly in Puntland, a significant development in creating a favourable protection

environment was made through drafting IDP Policy, Refugee Act, and Local Integration Strategy.

Somali Refugees in the Region

Following the civil war in 1991 in Somalia, and the destruction of state institutions, Somalia has become a unique example of global displacement. Millions have left the country in search of safety in the neighbouring countries and beyond, while many more have become IDPs within their own country.

Besides, the country has experienced multiple displacements driven by factors ranging from conflict, environmental degradation, natural and human-made disasters, changing livelihood strategies in an evolving political economy, poverty, and progressive depletion of coping mechanisms available to the displaced and host communities.

As of November 2019:

- There were an estimated 2.6 million Somalis internally displaced persons with a majority in the capital and the capitals of Federal Member States like Garowe and over 800,000 in exile;
- Nearly 30% of the Somali population is displaced, with a majority between the ages of 3 to 16 years;
- There are close to one million Somali refugees in exile in the neighbouring countries, with a majority in refugee camps and several others in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Djibouti, and Kampala;
- The displaced Somali populations in the region stands at 260,000 in Kenya; 180,000 in Ethiopia; 250,000 in Yemen in a very precarious situation as Yemen is currently involved in the civil war, 35,000 in Uganda and 13,000 in Djibouti. Many others in Southern Africa, and a substantial number trapped in Libya in severe conditions.

The Somali situation is unique due to the protracted conflict where sections of the population have been displaced for the last 28 years, to the point where families are being raised in refugee camps. The protracted nature of the Somali refugee situation comes with unique challenges, namely:

- a- Donor fatigue where resources to support refugees continue to dwindle considerably;
- b- Global attention diversion as the focus shifts to other emerging and active crisis that have a new crop of refugees, such as Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, etc.;
- c- Host Country fatigue is an emerging phenomenon, where host nations feel isolated with limited support from the international community resulting in the reduction of the support provided to refugees.

The Ambassador from his experience indicated that some of the challenges he has personally witnessed in all refugees' camps in the horn, and Yemen, include:

- ➔ Education: lack of proper access to quality education (i.e. Facilities, books, curriculum, pupil/teacher ratio, etc.
- ➔ Livelihoods and job opportunities
- ➔ Food and nutrition
- ➔ The lack of freedom of movement

It is, therefore, apparent that the Somali refugees in the region will continue to need the support and solidarity of the host countries and relevant stakeholders until the situation in Somalia is stabilized to allow large scale voluntary return.

The IGAD Process

Following his appointment as Special Envoy, UNHCR engaged with countries neighbouring Somalia intending to have a regional conversation and share best practices on how best to continue giving support to refugees as more efforts and focus are made to support the Somali Government to create better conditions for their return.

IGAD, in close cooperation with UHPCR, convened the Nairobi summit in March 2017, where all Heads of States of the Region, met for the first time to assess and consider challenges faced by Somali refugees in host countries, which become a game-changer in the way the Somali refugee situation has come to be perceived and later on for all the refugee population in the Horn of Africa, including South Sudanese, Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Sudanese, etc.

This Summit came up with the "Nairobi Declaration and its Action Plan." It made it possible for thematic

conferences to be organised in furtherance of refugee protection and welfare, namely the Djibouti Declaration, which focused on quality education for refugees and host communities, and the Kampala Declaration on self-reliance, job opportunities and freedom of movement for refugees.

The Summit also focused on the search for global solidarity with the Somali Government to create better conditions to enable the return of its population. For voluntary and dignified return to be sustainable, efforts must be made to build the necessary infrastructures, security, create livelihood opportunities, education, and shelter in the areas of the country of origin.

Today it is not easy to have a massive return of all the population, given the uncondusive conditions inside the country. According to the Ambassador, a key component of durable solutions that will boost the return of Somalis and give them hope is a stable, functional national government that can secure its territory and protect its citizens. Peace and stabilization should be a goal of both the Government and the Federal Member States.

Somali Government Ownership

Somalia is one country that, despite the challenges, continues to receive refugees, including Yemenis, who have found a home in Somalia, particularly in Puntland. As of 31st October, 2019, Somalia was hosting almost 36, 000 refugees and asylum-seekers. The Federal Government of Somalia in recognition of the challenges faced by returnees and the search for durable solutions; organised a national consultation with UNHCR, which led to the adoption of a National Plan in July 2017.

The Ambassador noted that the UNHCR launched the first-ever Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 in Geneva, as prescribed by the Global Refugee Compact. This forum aimed to appeal for solidarity and allow Member States to showcase their best practices and seek for more support, with a special session dedicated to IGAD countries, where they exchanged knowledge, experiences and learned from each other.

As one of the components of durable solutions, UNHCR is advocating for an increase in resettlement

opportunities for the most vulnerable in the refugee camps in the Horn of Africa. Resettled refugees have contributed immensely to the political, economic, and social wellbeing of the communities they settled in (Honourable Ilhan Omar (USA) and Honourable Ahmed Hussein, Minister of Immigration in Canada) case in point.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Affey appealed to the Somali population in the country and beyond to be cognizant of the large number of Somalis still stuck in exile who continue to depend on the generosity of host countries and the international community.

PANEL DISCUSSION



The PDRCTalks platform is designed a way in which the audience and the keynote speaker aided by a panel of experts have two-way interaction, which is central to the discussions. The second part of the session (panel discussion) offers an opportunity for the participants to interact with the guest speaker and ask questions.

Hon. Abdiwali, the Deputy Minister of Interior, Federalism, and Democratisation, noted that the ministry was drafting strategies that would soon inform government policies that will address the fate of the IDPs, Returnees and Refugees. One of the issues to be particularly addressed will be the duration of one being an IDP and in what conditions they will live. The policies are further expected to address the human rights and habitual residency conditions of displaced persons, encompass resettlement strategies, and encourage IDPs to re-instate their normal livelihoods in a conducive secure environment.

Yasmin Mahamud, in her contributions, indicated that many Somali IDPs, returnees, and refugees from the neighbouring countries fleeing from conflicts, persecutions, and droughts have sought refuge in Puntland and found space to actualise their dreams as equal citizens in terms of protection of human rights, economic opportunities, and services. Cognisance of their status, the hosted displaced persons, are equally given an opportunity in the decision-making platforms and participate in discussions pertaining to their future arrangements such this (PDRCTalks). She also added that Puntland is known for its generosity in supporting people in dire need, such as those affected by the recent floods in Beledweyne in 2019.

Ambassador Affey, in contributing to the panel discussion, gave an overview of the tripartite agreement signed on 10th November 2013 between the Government of Kenya, the Somali Government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the voluntary return of Somali refugees in Kenya to Somalia. The overarching objective of the agreement was to find a solution to address the host countries' fatigue due to the protracted Somali refugee situation, leading to refugees living in camps for more than 25 years, further worsening the state of the affected populations. In the agreement, all parties agreed that there would be no one forced to return. The agreement stipulated the role to be played by each party, fundamentally to ensure that there was a conducive and safer environment for returnees to be repatriated. A substantial number of refugees have returned to their places of origin, resumed normal living conditions, and are active members of the society.



Haji Muse, an IDP elder giving his remarks.

Haji Muse Osman, an IDP Elder who spoke expressed his appreciation to PDRC for hosting the talks, thus allowing

IDPs to interact with decision-makers and members of the host community. For the past 19 years that he has been an IDP in Puntland, they have been treated well by the host community, but he decried the lack of government institutions in the camps, particularly law enforcement and the judiciary. Disputes in the camps are settled by the elders, an initiative of the then President Faroole who urged them (IDPs) to establish their own customary dispute resolution mechanism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel made some key recommendations to address the challenges of the IDPs, Returnees, and Refugees as prescribed in the durable solution principles, which are:

- An exchange of best practices is crucial especially from the countries that have emerged from similar challenges including Rwanda and Ethiopia;
- All stakeholders need to increase integration efforts for displaced persons by providing entrepreneurship skills, employment opportunities, and public services and tap to unlock the skills they bring with;
- There needs to be a robust public participation in the formulation of policies and plans that address the IDPs and Refugee crisis in Somalia;
- Continuous consultations and collaboration among actors with regards to interventions to be implemented to avoid duplication and wastage of resources;
- Accommodate the needs and priorities of the concerned persons in the design of projects;
- IDPs need to be the development or design of durable solutions interventions that speak to their needs and preferences;
- Host communities and the government need to recognize this trend as economic opportunity and not a threat.