



Background: Britain withdrew from British Somaliland in 1960 to allow it to join with Italian Somaliland, forming a new nation of Somalia. In 1969, a coup ushered in an authoritarian socialist rule that imposed some stability in the country for a couple of decades. After the regime's overthrow early in 1991, Somalia descended into turmoil and anarchy. Northern clans declared some regions as the independent Republic of Somaliland. Although not recognized by any government, this entity has maintained a stable existence. Puntland, which has been self-governing since 1998, does not aim at independence but disputes its border with Somaliland. UN humanitarian effort was able to alleviate famine conditions, but when it withdrew in 1995, order still had not been restored. A two-year peace process under the auspices of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) concluded in October 2004 and led to the formation of a transitional government, the Somalia Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs).

- **Location:** Eastern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean, east of Ethiopia.
- **Area comparative:** 9 times the size of Ireland.
- **Climate:** Principally desert; northeast monsoon (December to February), moderate temperatures in north and very hot in south; southwest monsoon (May to October), torrid in the north and hot in the south, irregular rainfall, hot and between monsoons.
- **Natural resources:** Uranium and largely unexploited reserves of iron ore, tin, gypsum, bauxite, copper, salt, natural gas, likely oil reserves.
- **Natural hazards:** Recurring droughts; frequent dust storms over eastern plains in summer; floods during rainy season.
- **Environment issues:** Famine; use of contaminated water contributes to human health problems; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification.

- **Population:** 8,863,338
- **Birth rate:** 45.13 births per 1,000
- **Infant mortality:** 114.89 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 48.5 years, *male:* 46.7 years, *female:* 50.3 years.



Religion: Sunni Muslim.

Government:

- **Type of government:** No permanent national government; transitional, parliamentary federal government.
- **Administrative divisions:** 18 regions.
- **Independence:** 1 July 1960.
- **National holiday:** Foundation of the Somali Republic, 1 July; 26 June in Somaliland.

Economy:

- **Unemployment:** No information.
- **Population below the poverty line:** No information.
- **Agricultural products:** Bananas, sorghum, corn, coconuts, rice, sugarcane, mangoes, sesame seeds, beans; cattle, sheep, goats; fish.
- **Industries:** A few light industries, including sugar refining, textiles, wireless communication.

Education:

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write. *Total population:* 37.8%, *male:* 49.7%, *female:* 25.8%.
- **Language:** Somali (official), Arabic, Italian, English.

Communication:

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines: 100,000, Mobile lines: 500,000.
- **TV stations:** 4
- **Internet users:** 89,000

Asylum: In 2005 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that there were 387 applications for asylum in Ireland from Somali nationals.

Internally Displaced Persons: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated in Sept 2006 that Somalia had 400,000 internally displaced persons.

Migration: In the first ten months of 2006 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment issued no work permits to Somali nationals.

Sources:

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