

SOMALIA, 1991-PRESENT



Since 1991, clan warfare has besieged Somalia, resulting in more than 700,000 refugees in what the UN calls the "world's worst humanitarian disaster."

Where?

The Republic of Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa and is slightly smaller than Texas, with an estimated population of 10 million. In 1991, clans declared an independent Republic of Somaliland in the northwest. Puntland is a self-declared, self-governing state in the northeast Somalia, unable to create a legitimate, representative government due to border disputes with neighboring Somaliland.

When?

In 1991, the Somali government was overthrown by opposing clans. The clans failed to agree on a replacement for the national leader and Somalia plunged into turmoil, clan warfare, and lawlessness. Power struggles between clan warlords displaced, wounded, and killed thousands of civilians.

In August 2000, a transitional government was appointed to reconcile warring militias, but little progress was made. During peace talks, a new parliament was established and elected a president to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia. The TFG was tasked with establishing a new Somali constitution. This administration was Somalia's fourteenth attempt to establish a central government since 1991.

In 2006, militias loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts gained control of much of the south. Peace talks began in Sudan, Ethiopia militarily backed the administration, fighting continued, and Ethiopia withdrew in 2009. The TFG mandate was extended and continues to build capacity to work toward national elections. In 2010, the African Union appealed to the UN for an air and naval blockade of Somalia, insisting that such an action was necessary to curb the flow of weapons to Islamist militants. The AU also called for an additional 12,000 AU peacekeepers to be deployed to Somalia, up from the current deployment of 8,000.

How?

Somali insurgents, the transitional government's armed forces, and intervening Ethiopian troops have destroyed the lives of tens of thousands civilians throughout the country with bombings and crimes against humanity. These violations include indiscriminate attacks, killings, rape, use of civilians as human shields, and looting. More than 1 million people have been displaced, and aid agencies report that 4 million people – or about one-third of the population – need food aid. Increasing attacks on aid workers in past years have severely limited relief operations and contributed to an emerging humanitarian crisis.



. In 2007 the United States carried out air strikes in southern Somalia, targeting suspected Al-Qaeda members. Though the strikes were supported and defended by Somalia's government, they ultimately killed innocent civilians.

The Aftermath

This conflict has involved a number of different international organizations. Multiple countries have intervened and attempted to resolve the conflict. Despite these attempts at resolution, the violence continues.