



EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S WORK TO PROTECT SOMALIA'S PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a summary of the external evaluation of Amnesty International's work to protect Somalia's People on the Move. The external evaluation was commissioned to identify key learning from the campaign for AI as well as to meet a requirement of NRK Norwegian Telethon that funded Amnesty International's work.

BACKGROUND

The premise behind the project is that there is a widening gap between conditions in Somalia – “constant threat of human rights violations and... disastrous humanitarian conditions”¹ – and the intensification of efforts to return refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in turn stoked by a false narrative of security threats and by xenophobic aggression towards people of Somali origin in the main refugee host state, Kenya.

The project developed through pulling together two strands of work: the Somalia Team's own focus on conflict-related human rights abuses and work led by the Refugee Team on people on the move, of which Somalia formed a part. This process of rationalising work streams and taking a refugee and IDP focus reflected the conclusions of an analysis of scenarios, which clearly and concisely laid out the likely evolution of the situation on the ground and the best response for AI to take in each case. The favoured scenario assumed that the overall level of conflict in Somalia would remain more or less the same. While a deterioration in the level of violence would demand a switch to a 'purer' conflict focus, the situation in the country left enough space for pursuing a thematic focus, all the more so because of the need to challenge the prevailing narrative that Somalia was stabilising and that returns of IDPs within Somalia and refugees from Kenya and beyond were justifiable.

The project initially assumed a focus only on Somalia, but a broadening of its scope made sense both in terms of internal capacity – gaps and overstretch in the East Africa Team – and external circumstances – negotiations between Somalia and other states, especially Kenya, created a logic for treating Somali IDPs and refugees within a single framework.

The project has operated to a strategic assumption that it would be counter-productive to have outside sections engage the government of Kenya directly. Advocacy towards the government of Kenya was quite tightly controlled, with outside sections steered towards their own governments as an avenue for indirect pressure on the government of Kenya, with a particular focus on those which have some form of political or financial leverage.

In addition to this basic strategic logic, this approach reflects a broader organizational shift away from a model of international campaigning by Northern members towards southern governments to one of predominant engagement of Southern governments directly and via actors closer to them (neighbouring states and regional inter-governmental organizations) and a concomitant re-directing of northern section / membership energies towards their own governments. This shift has important implications for positioning with an assumption, driven too by the move closer to the ground and the establishment of the Nairobi office, that advocacy should be based on a closer understanding of context and more regular interaction with targets. If it was ever the case that AI tended towards 'finger-wagging' from afar, being based in

¹ *Terms of Reference External Evaluation Of Amnesty International's Work On Protection Of Somalia's People On The Move (Refugees, IDPs And Migrants)*, p1.



East Africa suggests, implicitly at least, a potentially more 'insider' form of advocacy including "recognition of the realities that the government of Kenya faces and its legitimate concerns".²

Being based in Nairobi has a second, profound impact on strategy with the country team developing a track of encouraging positive change in political and public discourse in Kenya to create a more favourable context for direct advocacy. While there are no illusions that influencing public discourse is either easy or likely to bear fruit over anything but the long-term, the addition of this track presupposes both that it is feasible to affect public opinion and the positions taken by media in Kenya and that the government of Kenya is susceptible to pressure from public and media channels. It is arguable too that seeking to affect media and public opinion requires forms of campaigning within Kenya which may run against an emphasis on more or less insider advocacy.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation draws on three main sources of data:

- a review of documentation, including external publications, project strategies and internal reports;
- a context analysis of the factors driving the problems which the project seeks to address and the extent of positive developments in policy, practice and attitudes; and
- a total of thirty-three semi-structured, non-attributable interviews according to the following categories:

The majority of interviews were carried out in person during a visit of two members of the evaluation team to Nairobi in the second week of June.

The evaluation team were unable to secure the input of representatives of the governments of Kenya or Somalia. It has, however, been able to draw upon good insight into the interests and positions of these governments from other sources.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The project is well-founded on an analysis of external opportunity and threat. But, while the thinking that has gone into the project is rigorous, the process of translating this thinking into a written strategy involved planning tools that were disproportionately heavy. This has hindered understanding of, and engagement in, the strategy among other AI stakeholders.

Low levels of staffing as well as the limited campaign experience of the researcher who was sole team member for much of the first half of the period under review, steered the project down a path of research plus direct advocacy. Local campaign and profile-raising activities were added in the last year, but AI is still working through the implications of the move to Nairobi on positioning towards the government of Kenya, added value to local civil society and, as part of this, the role that the Regional Office should play in local campaigning and mobilization.

The project imagines a virtuous circle in which policy and practice change is supported by change in political and public discourse in Kenya. There is not, however, a clear picture of the dynamic between the government, the mainstream media and 'public opinion', nor of how AI can affect this dynamic. I Define Me is illustrative of uncertainty over the Regional Office's role in local campaigning. The plan for I Define Me is unclear and there is not yet confidence that AI can expect others to take on responsibility for it.

AI's name, clout and international reach are key elements of the added value that it brings to Kenyan and Somali NGOs. In Kenya, AI is appreciated for being able to say what some other groups, particularly those that are UNHCR-funded, prefer not to. Working with AI makes Somali NGOs less isolated and more likely to be listened to by the

² Where not otherwise referenced, quotes are taken from interviews. Respondents are not named, but distinctions are drawn between those based in different AI entities and external stakeholders where this does not compromise anonymity.



government. AI brings a human rights perspective and the capability to synthesize information which other international NGOs present in Kenya and Somalia do not have. It places human rights violations within a broader context, speaking with authority and capturing the attention of government and IGO targets.

Policy outputs are sound and credible and AI's research is recognized as being authoritative. In Somalia, AI's reports have become reference material and are used by IGOs in further advocacy and action on IDP issues. What criticism there has been of reports is a reflection of AI causing discomfort among targets. AI should remain confident in the quality of its research.

Measured against objectives, outcomes in Kenya have been limited. But AI has played a useful role in highlighting the egregious consequences of Kenyan government policy and rhetoric. It has kept UNHCR on its toes, flagged the weaknesses of the court challenge to the government's second relocation directive and maintained a steady stream of outputs to stem surges in xenophobia.

It is questionable how strong a signal of likely impact policy outcomes in Somalia are. Accession to the AU IDPs Convention, adoption of an IDP policy framework and appointment of an IDP Agency are likely to have had little material impact on the welfare and security of IDPs. But AI can at least reasonably claim to have caught the eye of IGOs and donors regarding forced evictions and people with disabilities.

Work on Somalia formed a case study useful to advocacy for EU policy change relating to due diligence in humanitarian interventions and human rights as an aspect of migration policy. AI has not, however, been able to shift donors from a position that returns to Somalia is a key element of policy.

The move to Nairobi has been beneficial to this project in terms of relationships with, allies, media and targets. It has, however, created expectations among NGOs which the Somalia Team has sometimes struggled to meet. Dealing with walk-ins has been time-consuming, although the pressure on country teams has eased following the appointment of a Refugee Officer.

While there have been no cases of mis-coordination of engagement of the government of Kenya, the question of the border between the East Africa and Somalia Teams has been deferred rather than resolved. As both teams are newly constituted, clarifying where the border lies should be a priority, also taking into account the role of the Refugee Officer.

The Regional Office and AI Kenya have operated in different spheres with the effect that tensions over roles have not arisen internally, even if the division of roles is unclear externally. Tensions can be predicted, however, when AI Kenya takes up other work streams and / or if it became a section.

The Regional Office has struggled to establish clear working relationships with other parts of the IS. Relationships have improved with the Law & Policy Program, but there is further to go to tighten ways of working with the Media Program.

There has not always been proportionate engagement of outside sections, primarily reflecting these sections' difficulties in investing much in an intractable, hard-to-sell situation. There have been moments when greater section advocacy for bilateral pressure on the government of Kenya would have been helpful. It is ultimately an institutional problem that AI cannot apply resources in proportion to severity of violations, but has its agenda skewed according to those issues and countries which have international attention.

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