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Somalia: Forced evictions in Mogadishu put thousands of displaced at even greater risk

Thousands of people are being forcibly evicted from makeshift camps in Mogadishu as the government presses ahead with plans to clean up the capital, Amnesty said in a briefing released today. Forced evictions have continued and gathered pace in recent months despite the authorities' failure to find an alternative safe location.

“It is completely unacceptable for people who have fled to the capital for protection to be forcibly evicted. It has resulted in large scale human rights abuses. The government has a responsibility to protect this vulnerable sector of society and ensure their security,” said Gemma Davies, Amnesty International’s Somalia researcher.

More than 300,000 live in settlements in Mogadishu where they are sheltering from cyclical drought, famine and a two-decades-long armed conflict which have already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

In January 2013 the Somali government announced a plan to relocate hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) from Mogadishu to proposed camps outside the city to make way for reconstruction and development of the capital.

The government plan turned out to be inherently flawed in terms of process, timeline and choice of insecure areas for relocation.

“Despite security improvements, large areas of Mogadishu remain profoundly unsafe, particularly in areas where the government hasn’t managed to gain full control which include the places displaced people are expected to go.” said Gemma Davies.

Preparation work at the chosen relocation site, Daynille, north of the city is on hold because of security concerns, yet forced evictions have continued and gathered pace in recent months despite the failure to

find an alternative safe location.

In recent weeks, Amnesty International researchers in Mogadishu spoke with dozens of internally displaced people who had been evicted from their camps in central Mogadishu without adequate notice and often by force.

Fatima is 60 years old and works in Bakara Market in central Mogadishu, she told Amnesty International:

‘It was early morning, around 8am, my children called me and told me our shelter had been destroyed, that they were outside. When I arrived, everything was destroyed. There were around four armed men still there, otherwise everything had been demolished. I sat on the ground - I didn’t know what to do. I have lost most things. I reconstructed a makeshift shelter, in the same area - I don’t know what to do. I have no place I can go.’

In Mogadishu Amnesty International delegates saw evidence that a large number of shelters had been destroyed, pieces of cloth and plastic sheeting which had been used to make shelters strewn across churned-up earth.

On 14 August 2013, an eight year old child and a mother of nine were killed when members of the armed forces opened fire in response to a protest by the residents facing eviction.

Amnesty International urges the Somali government to halt all evictions until necessary safeguards are in place in line with its obligations under international human rights law. When IDPs must be relocated, safe and adequate alternatives must be provided.

“For decades, Somalia’s people have been pushed from place to place by conflict, famine and drought,” said Gemma Davies.

“Now the country finally has a central government, it’s high time to focus on a durable solution for Somalia’s displaced that allows them to be part of the country’s reconstruction.”