

A Week in the Horn 6th July 2012

- **The International Somali Contact Group meeting in Rome.....**
- **.....Security sweep in Mogadishu as AMISOM and TFG extend control**
- **South Sudan – one year on**
- **No forced relocation in Ethiopia's settlement programmes says the EU**
- **UN Officials briefed about human rights situation in Ethiopia**

News and Views (page 8)

- **US sanctions senior Eritrean officials for aiding Somalia terrorists**
- **Aid workers kidnapped from Kenya's Dadaab camp near Somalia**
- **An Al-Shabaab massacre in a Garissa church**
 - **Somaliland military officers graduate from Ethiopia's Defence College**

The International Somali Contact Group meeting in Rome.....

The International Contact Group on Somalia met in Rome this week from 2nd to 3rd July. The meeting, the last before the end of the Somali Transition period, was chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Mahiga, the head of the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), together with the ICG Co-chairs of Norway and the USA. The meeting heard from Italy's Foreign Minister, Giulio Terzi, as well as from several of the Somali Roadmap Signatories – the Speaker of the Parliament, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden; Prime Minister, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali; and representatives of the administrations of Puntland and Galmudug as well as of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a.

In its final communiqué it made clear its firm determination that the Transition must end on 20th August, in accordance with the Transitional Federal Charter, the Djibouti Agreement, the Kampala Accord, the Roadmap and all subsequent consultative meetings. In this context, the ICG welcomed the 22nd June agreement of the Roadmap Signatories to the draft constitution which will now go to the National Constituent Assembly for provisional adoption. The meeting expressed concern over missed deadlines and underlined the necessity of keeping to the latest timelines. These included: The opening of the National Constituent Assembly on 12th July and its closing on 20th July; the selection of members for the new Federal Parliament by 15th July, and their induction by 20th July; the elections of the Speaker and his two deputies for the new Parliament on 4th August; and the election of the President on 20th August.

The ICG therefore called for the immediate activation of the Elders' Arbitration Committee, the Roadmap Signatories Coordination Office, the Technical Facilitation Committee and the Technical Selection Committee as well as the earliest possible conclusion of the selection process. It underlined the need for the new Parliament to meet expectations, in terms of the quality and commitment of its Members, its gender balance, agreement on more effective working practices and the ability to hold the executive to account. It suggested a joint legislative work plan should be developed between the new Parliament and the Government, *inter alia*, to strengthen the legislative framework for the promotion and protection of human rights and justice. The Group offered to assist in building support inside Somalia for respect for all human rights and the rule of law.

It noted progress in many areas of the Roadmap, but called for the remaining tasks to be completed on time. While the current focus is on ending the Transition on schedule, the ICG also suggested the next Government of Somalia within sixty days of its formation should set out its priorities and associated resource requirements. The ICG agreed to hold a preliminary, high-level discussion on emerging priorities in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September.

The ICG commended the recent military advances of AMISOM, the TFG forces and their allies including Ethiopia, in response to the continuing aggression by Al-Shabaab, and paid tribute to their actions. It welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 2036, which expanded the operations and support for AMISOM and raised its troop ceiling to 17,761, and the arrival of personnel from Djibouti, Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It called on Somali authorities to speed up the development of the Somali security forces and welcomed TFG efforts to unify them under national command and control. It acknowledged the pressing need for more and better coordinated international assistance for both AMISOM and Somali security forces, and underlined the need for arrangements of the reintegration for former combatants and their dependants as a prelude to full-scale demobilization and disarmament. It called on Al-Shabaab and all other armed opposition groups to renounce violence and to embrace the peace process.

The ICG also emphasized the need to provide urgent and substantive support for the stabilisation of liberated areas and the development of effective regional, district and local administrations involving democratic and popular participation. This support would have to continue after the transition and the ICG welcomed the TFG's developing strategy for Reconciliation and Stabilisation, and agreed that it should form the basis of the framework for international coordination. Both national and international partners must increase and align efforts to strengthen credible and legitimate local administrations. The meeting discussed an Italian document on District-Based Peace-Building, which it felt could provide a source of inspiration for future programmes. It noted the importance of restoring dispute resolution mechanisms and promoting local and national reconciliation.

The ICG welcomed the progress made by regional administrations and said these efforts should continue to be encouraged. It agreed on the need to support the comprehensive development of the independent justice sector in Somalia, for access to justice for women and vulnerable groups and for the re-establishment of justice and rule of law services in the newly-recovered areas.

The meeting welcomed the outcome of the London Conference in February which had given fresh impetus to the political process, increased support for AMISOM and Somali security forces, and reinvigorated the efforts to tackle piracy and terrorism. It emphasized that the Mutual Accountability Board, to improve financial transparency and accountability and combat corruption, should now be discussed by all relevant Somali and international stakeholders. The Istanbul Conference had underscored the importance of reconciliation, institution-building and reconstruction. It had highlighted the need for large-scale multi-year funding for infrastructure projects, state-building and the uninterrupted delivery of basic services and welcomed the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund for post-Transition financing. The third recent conference in Dubai would help to improve coordination of the efforts to eradicate piracy through a comprehensive land and sea approach.

It was agreed the next meeting should be held in South Africa in early 2013, but the ICG also agreed to consider the establishment of a working group to cover the political process between meetings and with such issues as development, justice and security.

Those attending included the African Union, East African Community, the EU, IGAD, the League of Arab States, NATO, the OIC, the UN and the World Bank as well as Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, and Sudan and 21 other countries, together with the representatives from Somalia.

.....Security sweep in Mogadishu as AMISOM and TFG extend control

The TFG's National Security Agency and the Mogadishu police have launched a major search operation for suspected Al-Shabaab members in the city. More than 3,000 have been held for investigation. The search operation targeted the Yaqshiid and Huriwaa areas of north Mogadishu where a number of Al-Shabaab attacks have occurred in the last three weeks. One was the attack on government bases in Huriwa district on Wednesday [4th July]. The National Security Agency has confirmed that more than 3,000 people were under investigation following the operation which started early on Thursday morning and continued until the afternoon. The National Security Agency commander for the Banadir region, Colonel Khalif Ahmed Ereg, said the operation was conducted jointly by the Security Agency and the Mogadishu police with the backing of military personal as required. The objective, he said, was "to make sure of the security of the capital and to eliminate the remnants of anti-peace elements in Mogadishu".

Following the recent seizure of Balad by units of AMISOM and the Somali National Army, Al-Shabaab has been continuing to retreat further from the Mogadishu area and Benadir region. Balad, 30 kilometres north east of Mogadishu, controls a strategic bridge over the Shebelle River and is a major jumping off point on the route to Jowhar, 10 kilometres further north, and the capital of Middle Shebelle region. It also opens up the possibility of advances further up the river to Jelalaqsi, on the way to Bula Burto and to Belet Weyne, the capital of Hiiraan region which was liberated from Al-Shabaab by Ethiopian troops last December. The Ethiopian forces at Belet Weyne are now being replaced by the battalion of Djibouti troops which have joined AMISOM recently.

Al-Shabaab said last week after it retreated from Balad that it was not proposing to defend Jowhar. This has led to expectations that AMISOM and Somali National Army forces will rapidly move up the Shebelle valley to link up with TFG allied militias and Djibouti troops of AMISOM currently holding Belet Weyne, which are likely to advance south from Belet Weyne to Bula Burto. It also offers the possibility of joining up with government allied forces operating in other central areas to the east of the river.

Balad, like Afgoye to the south west, had been a key centre from which Al-Shabaab launched many of its attacks on Mogadishu and it is a strategic gateway to northern and central areas of the country. One reason for its fall was the earlier seizure by government troops and AMISOM of El Ma'an port north of Mogadishu and the nearby airstrip of Esaley both of which were important entry points to supply Al-Shabaab with arms and ammunition from abroad. With the loss of these, Al-Shabaab's forces in Middle Shebelle faced serious logistical supply problems which certainly contributed to Al-Shabaab's potential difficulty in holding onto Balad despite its importance as a major agricultural and food producing area.

Meanwhile, during the ICG meeting in Rome, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children in its national military forces. The plan, which details concrete steps to be taken by the Government to ensure a child-free national army, was signed by the Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister, Hussein Arab Isse, and by Ambassador Mahiga, on behalf of UNPOS. It calls for the Somali Government to end and prevent recruitment of children into the National Armed Forces. The Government will arrange

for the reintegration into society of all children released from the armed forces with UN support. It will also pass legislation to criminalize recruitment of children, and it will allow unimpeded UN access to military installations for verification purposes. Ambassador Mahiga said the plan would be critical for the professionalization of the security forces, and would contribute positively to the stabilization of Somalia. He called on the ICG countries to provide the necessary funding to cover the costs of the plan and the reintegration of children into civilian life.

South Sudan – one year on

South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, celebrates its first anniversary of independence on Monday 9th July. It has been a difficult year with border conflicts with the Sudan, internal violence, and the shutting down of the oil production on which its economy depends, leading to serious economic problems. The country celebrated its independence a year ago in a state of euphoria. Hopes for the future were high when after more than two decades of war South Sudan officially seceded from Sudan. Unfortunately, in face of what Vice-President, Riek Machar, has called "the unforeseen difficulties we got ourselves into", South Sudan has been unable to build much of the basic infrastructure it needs, whether in terms of roads, or the provision of health and education facilities, or even electricity or water. Adult illiteracy remains high, and secondary school enrolment is very low. There is still a massive shortage of skilled professionals.

Nevertheless, much has been done. Three levels of government, local, state and national, have been established. A meeting of the National Liberation Council of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in March, for the first time since 2008, decided to reform and restructure the ruling party. A civilian disarmament process has been launched as have peace processes in Jonglei State and in parts of Eastern Equatoria as well as preparations for a three-state peace conference between Unity, Lakes and Warrap States.

Inclusive and consultative constitution-making is an essential aspect of state building and a National Constitutional Review Commission has been set up but nearly halfway through its one-year lifespan it has yet to become fully operational though it is developing a work plan for consultations and public hearings on key constitutional issues. The National Elections Bill awaits a Presidential signature but the National Elections Commission has yet to be established. Other legislation passing through the Council of Ministers includes the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financial Bill as well as Taxation Bill 2012. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been able to retrieve misappropriated funds in the order of US\$60 million. There's been legislation covering investment, accountability, financing, budgeting, and the whole process of setting up the government apparatus. The Government has appointed 90 Ambassadors to represent it abroad. It has joined the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). It has applied for membership in the East African Community and the EAC has said it will expedite the verification process of its application and discuss it at the next EAC Summit planned for November. South Sudan has also set up its Conflict Early Warning Unit as part of the IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Network.

It adds up to a lot of progress but at the same time the Government has faced major challenges with multiple security, economic and humanitarian problems, including the looming economic crisis following the shutdown of oil production and loss of nearly all its income, and the major security and protection challenges emanating from the hostilities at the border with the Sudan as well as inter-communal tensions, and the activities of rebel militia groups, the unfolding food security crisis and the problems arising from the closure of the border with the Sudan and

return of South Sudanese from the Sudan. These all remain central to the talks between Sudan and South Sudan in Addis Ababa. The future of South Sudan remains inextricably linked to that of the Sudan where the government in Khartoum is itself facing protests over high prices and insurgencies in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states along the border. Indeed, most of the challenges facing the Government of South Sudan are linked in one way or another to the need for constructive relations with the Sudan, and these require real political will on both sides.

In fact, the year has seen a deteriorating relationship with the Sudan with an outbreak of hostilities on the South Sudan-Sudan border and the economic impact of the shutdown of oil production. These factors have dominated political developments in South Sudan and affected progress in the Government's state-building and reform agenda. The security situation along the border with the Sudan has deteriorated significantly, affecting the progress of the on-going negotiations in Addis Ababa under the mediation of the AU High Level Implementation Panel intended to resolve the outstanding problems left over from the pre-independence Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The issues include financial arrangements regarding oil, nationality and citizenship and border demarcation. In January following failure to reach agreement over the costs of using the pipeline through Sudan to export its crude oil, South Sudan stopped all oil production. As the oil revenues accounted for over 98 per cent of government revenue, over 70 per cent of South Sudan GDP, and nearly 100 per cent of South Sudan foreign exchange, this had a major impact. The economy was largely import oriented with most basic items including food and most manufacturing items imported from neighbouring countries, and requiring foreign currency.

In February the Government approved an austerity budget for the rest of the financial year to June providing for a 27 per cent reduction in expenditure. It also launched a campaign to raise non-oil revenues through tightening up collection of customs and taxes. It also had to make further cuts to both capital and operational costs. Prices of foodstuffs and commodities have been increasing, by even as much as 100-200 per cent in border areas. Food insecurity remains a serious problem. Even before the shut-down of oil production, it was estimated that nearly half the population, about 4.7 million people, would be food insecure during 2012. This number is now rising and malnutrition has increased sharply. Inevitably the introduction of austerity measures has delayed implementation of the South Sudan Development Plan and the Government has had to request international partners to focus on service delivery in health, education, water and sanitation and on reinforcing government functions. Indeed, the Government's reform agenda, in particular security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation are at risk, even though they remain a top priority.

In March, two agreements on Nationality and on Border Demarcation were signed at the Addis Ababa talks but plans for a presidential summit to ratify the agreements collapsed with both parties accusing the other of using proxies for destabilization. In April, the SPLA captured and occupied Heglig, effectively shutting down more than 50 per cent of Sudan's oil. Two weeks later in response to international pressure, South Sudan announced its unconditional withdrawal from Heglig. On 24th April the African Union Peace and Security Council adopted a road map with implementation timelines to resolve outstanding issues. The message from the African Union was that any conflict or potential conflict between Sudan and South Sudan affects everybody and must be seen as a threat to the whole region's peace and security. This was endorsed by the Security Council in Resolution 2046 (2012) on May 2nd calling among other things for a cessation of hostilities and activation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, and a requirement to reach an overall settlement of all disputes within three months.

The African Union High Level Panel (AUHIP) mediated talks between Sudan and South Sudan have been continuing in Addis Ababa. The security discussions resumed yesterday on arrangements to resolve differences over establishing a demilitarised buffer zone along the disputed border. The two sides failed to reach agreement on key security and border issues during the previous round of talks a week earlier, though they did manage to agree to activate the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). The security talks will be followed by further negotiations on other pending issues this week and in high-level political meetings next week. It is expected that Sudan's President, Omar al-Bashir, and South Sudan President, Salva Kiir, will meet on the margins of the African Union Summit next week in Addis Ababa. The two nations have less than a month to resolve their differences before the UN-AU deadline expires on 2nd August. The deadline has given impetus to the negotiations, but progress remains slow despite the very considerable international pressure for results. As UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon said in his latest report on South Sudan, "it is critical that the two States comply with Security Council resolution 2046 (2012), establish the border monitoring mechanisms and reach agreements on outstanding issues as quickly as possible." On Thursday [5th July], the UN Security Council extended the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for another year.

No forced relocation in Ethiopia's settlement programmes says the EU

The European Union has just issued its annual report entitled "Human Rights and Democracy in the world: report on EU action in 2011" in which it says **it can find no evidence of forced relocation or other human rights violations in the implementation of resettlement programmes in Ethiopia, despite allegations by human rights organizations.** The EU's findings, detailed in the report, quote the conclusions of a fact-finding mission carried out last year by donors, including the EU, to assess the programme being implemented by the Ethiopian Government to improve access to basic services for rural populations particularly in Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella and the Southern Regional States. As the report noted, the mission did not find any evidence of systematic forced relocation or other human rights violations.

The Government recognizes that drought, high population pressure, low input subsistence agriculture, small farm size and landlessness, in addition to increasing food insecurity for the population, can also lead to distress migration as well as conflict and increasing land degradation. Equally, the country has massive tracts of underutilized lands which are suitable for farming. It's these areas, under a voluntary resettlement programme, that are being used to resettle small farmers and agro-pastoralists, and are also being made available for larger investment farms and other projects as appropriate.

The resettlement programme rests on four pillars: the first is the principle of choice, to ensure the settlers move voluntarily; they can return to their home areas if they change their minds, and they keep usufructory rights over their land in their home areas for three years. The second pillar relates to the availability of underutilized land. This must be identified by the regional governments and there must be enough land available before the programme starts. The third pillar is consultation with the host communities which have to agree to receive settlers in their areas. The fourth element is the necessity of proper preparation and the requirement that a minimum of infrastructure must be in place before any people move into the resettlement area.

It seems the allegations made by various human rights or advocacy organizations either involve deliberate distortion of the facts or arise from a lack of information as to how the government has approached implementation of these projects and of the whole programme. The fact-

finding mission of donors, including EU representatives, clearly confirmed that the programme was being properly implemented. Indeed, it provides an object lesson for any reports being compiled by such organizations on these or similar issues on how to base their findings on field investigations and on reliable sources.

The EU report points out that Ethiopia has begun to draw up a **national human rights action plan**, due to be finalized this year. This will incorporate recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review and from UN Treaty Bodies. The report welcomed the government's commitments and dedication to capacity building in public administration and to good governance, (including anti-corruption measures), as reflected in its Growth and Transformation Plan. The report says: "This indicates the Government's commitment to achieving an effective civil service and strengthening good governance in democratic and political terms, as the backbone of the national development strategy." It also indicated that the broad objective of agriculture and rural development stipulated in the Growth and Transformation Plan is to achieve accelerated and sustained growth that contributes to poverty eradication and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The EU report makes it clear that the EU appreciates the establishment of a tripartite dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia, donors and civil society. It expresses the EU's readiness to assist in the successful implementation of projects under the Civil Society Fund, including projects and programmes in areas related to human rights and governance.

UN Officials briefed about human rights situation in Ethiopia

The Chairpersons of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties, held their annual twenty-fourth meeting in Addis Ababa from 25th to 29th June. It was the first time they had met outside Geneva. During their visit the group met with various senior officials of the Government from different ministries and, on 28th June, it was briefed on the government's efforts to respect and protect human rights in general and on its implementation of the rights enshrined in the international human rights instruments that the country has endorsed.

The Minister of Justice, Ato Berhan Hailu, listed the regional and international human rights treaties that Ethiopia is a party to, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). He also itemized for the Chairpersons what Ethiopia, within the availability of its limited resources, has been doing to ensure the protection, promotion and enjoyment of human rights by its citizens without any discrimination or limitation. He briefed the Chairpersons on the different measures the Government has taken to carry out its international obligations and the achievements attained so far. One of these is the preparation of the **National Action Plan on Human Rights**. Representatives of various line ministries also briefly explained the efforts made and the achievements attained in their respective sectors.

The Chairpersons' group noted that the briefing had increased their awareness of the human rights handling in the country and thanked the Government for the efforts that it has been making. It emphasized that these sorts of discussions helped to strengthen Ethiopia's engagement with the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies and opened the door for future financial and technical support in human rights. The Treaty Bodies are created in accordance with the

provisions of the treaty that they monitor and the briefing was important to provide a proper understanding of Ethiopia's position. The Treaty Bodies are expected to work in a spirit of impartiality and independence and avoid bias, and the Chairpersons to encourage member states by recognizing their progress in discharging their obligations under human right instruments and the protection of human rights.

News and Views

Timetable for the AU Summit

The African Union Commission has announced the timetable for the 19th Summit of the African Heads of State being held from 9th to 16th July in Addis Ababa. The weeklong series of meetings will commence on Monday 9th July with a two-day meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee. This will deliberate on the report to be submitted to the meeting of the Executive Council (of Foreign Ministers) which will be held from 12th to 13th July. The Ministers will discuss the report and submit the document for the Heads of State Summit which will be held from 15th to 16th July.

One of the key items on the agenda will be the election of the AU Commission Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and the AU Commissioners. The election of the AU Commission Chairperson was postponed to the 19th Summit as neither of the two candidates, the current Chairperson, Dr. Jean Ping, and Dr. Dlamini Zuma, was able to gain more than 50% of the votes during the January Summit. The summit will also discuss reports on the implementation of various decisions and activities of ad-hoc committees. These will include the report by President Sassou Nguesso of Congo, Africa's coordinator to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20); and the report of Prime Minister Meles, Coordinator of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on the Climate Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, COP 18). Progress in 2012 towards the Millennium Development Goals, and approval of the AU's budget will also be items on the agenda. The Sixth African Union Pre-Summit on Gender started yesterday. The two day meeting will discuss the role of women in advancing the development agenda of Africa. It is also expected to discuss AU-financed gender-related projects after hearing a report from the AU's Directorate of Women, Gender and Development. The 19th AU Summit was transferred to Addis Ababa after the withdrawal of Malawi as host, following continued difficulties arising from the ICC indictment of President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan.

US sanctions senior Eritrean officials for aiding Somalia terrorists

On Thursday [5th July], the US government sanctioned another six people for their support, including financial and logistical assistance, to radical Islamist militants, among them the al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab which is designated a "foreign terrorist organization" by the US Department of State. The sanctions are given under an executive order that allows the US administration to impose punitive measures on individuals threatening peace, security or stability in Somalia. They freeze any assets those listed may have in areas under U.S. jurisdictions and ban Americans from doing business with them. Among those now listed are two senior Eritrean government officials. Eritrea's chief of intelligence, Colonel Twolde Habte Negash, and another military officer, Colonel Taeme Abraham Goitom. The statement said Colonel Twolde Habte Negash was the Eritrean government's principal coordinator in assisting armed groups, including al-Shabaab in Somalia since 2004. He had "reportedly provided explosives training to another armed group in Mogadishu in 2006 and he appears to have been indirectly involved in the training of al-Shabaab fighters between 2007 and 2009 at an Eritrean training camp for instruction in suicide bombing and vehicle-borne improvised explosive

devices". Colonel Taeme was included for helping to build the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, an armed group which joined al-Shabaab in 2010 and which had mounted attacks against soldiers of the UN-backed TFG and the African Union force seeking to stabilize Somalia. The sanctions list also includes a Sudanese citizen, Abu Fahris, accused of helping foreign fighters to travel to al-Shabaab training camps; Aboud Rogo Mohammed, a Kenya-based Islamic cleric who advocates radicalization and recruitment of non-Somali Africans for al-Shabaab; the Kenyan-based Abubaker Sharif Ahmed, accused of recruiting young Kenyan Muslims for "action" in Somalia; and a Kenyan national, Omar Awadh Omar, awaiting trial in Uganda on charges of helping to plan the deadly 11th July 2010 bombings in Kampala in which 74 people were killed. A US official said the United States is determined "to target those who are responsible for the on-going bloodshed and instability in Somalia", and that the designation of these individuals was a confirmation that the US is "taking action to support [its] partner governments in East Africa and the African Union Mission in Somalia in their efforts to dismantle al-Shabaab".

Aid workers kidnapped from Kenya's Dadaab camp near Somalia

On Friday last week [29th June], four foreign aid workers from Norway, Canada, Pakistan and the Philippines, and a Kenyan national, were kidnapped from the Dadaab refugee camp complex, about 100 km from the Kenya/Somali border. Dadaab with some 500,000 residents, almost all Somalis, is the world's biggest refugee camp. Those kidnapped were working for the Norwegian Refugee Council whose Secretary-General, Elisabeth Rasmusson, was also travelling in the aid convoy when it was attacked but escaped unharmed. A driver was killed in the ambush, and two other Kenyans were also injured. The kidnappers disappeared towards the border as the Kenyan authorities launched a major search operation deploying military helicopters while vehicles and troops on foot searched the remote scrubland on either side of the border to try and stop the kidnappers crossing the border. On Monday [2nd July], Somali National Army and Kenyan military units found and freed the four aid workers. All were unharmed. They were rescued in a joint raid inside Somalia in an area close to the border town of Dhobley. One of the gunmen was killed in the operation but three others were captured. Although an al-Shabaab's spokesman claimed that al-Shabaab was unaware of the kidnapping, the kidnappers had been aiming to reach Kismayo, al-Shabaab's largest remaining centre in southern Somalia.

An al-Shabaab massacre in a Garissa church

An attack by gunmen on a church in Garissa in north-east Kenya on Sunday [1st July] left seventeen dead and fifty wounded. The attackers killed two policemen guarding the church, snatched their rifles and then opened fire on the congregation. Witnesses reported that there were four gunmen dressed in dark blue outfits and masks. Two entered the church while two others waited outside and when the congregation fled from the attack inside, they ran straight into another hail of bullets from the gunmen outside. At least one grenade was detonated in the attack. A grenade attack on a second church in the city of Garissa also wounded three people. Suspicions of al-Shabaab responsibility were confirmed on Wednesday when al-Shabaab admitted it had carried out the massacre, claiming it was in retaliation for the Kenyan Defence Forces' incursion in Somalia, and warning that it would target major buildings in Nairobi if Kenya continued its participation in AMISOM. Visiting the scene of the tragedy, Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga ruled out the possibility of withdrawing Kenyan troops from Somalia, saying that would be tantamount to surrendering to terrorism. He made it clear that Kenyan troops would not pull out of AMISOM or leave Somalia until that country was liberated and pacified. The Prime Minister assured Kenyans that the terrorists would be tracked down,

arrested and punished. The Head of the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims and Chairman of the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, Adan Wachu, described the attacks as acts of terrorism. Emphasizing that no sectarian division would be allowed in Kenya, Muslim and Christian leaders have insisted that the Garissa attacks had nothing to do with religion. Muslim leaders have agreed to form self-defence groups to help protect churches.

Somaliland military officers graduate from Ethiopia's Defence College

Twelve Somaliland cadets graduated this week from the Ethiopian Defence Engineering College where they have been studying military engineering skills. At a graduation ceremony, also attended by senior Somaliland security officials, Ethiopia's Defence Minister, Siraj Fegesa, awarded a gold medal to Saeed Adan Nur from Somaliland in recognition of his outstanding performance. He was one of only a dozen cadets honoured as Distinguished Graduates with Institute Honours. The cadets have been given Bachelor of Engineering degrees in a number of areas, including electronics, armaments, electrical and aeronautical engineering. As part of the relationship between Ethiopia and Somaliland, the Ethiopian government gives a number of scholarships to students from Somaliland every year. The Defence Engineering College provides training to Ethiopian and military cadets from other African countries in military engineering skills and military ethics. The students from Somaliland have done five years of study including three years for a diploma and another two and a half years of undergraduate work.