

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

MASTER OF LAWS (LLM) IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION IN AFRICA 2006

REPORT ON FAMILIARISATION TOUR TO SOMALILAND

I BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

LLM trips

In November 2005, the Centre for Human Rights began investigating the possibility of a third destination for the LLM field trip. The reasons for increasing the number of field trip destinations to include Somaliland include the following:

- Somaliland is a state in the making; it would be ideal for students on the programme to have a first hand experience of this.
- Somaliland is being rebuilt after many years of conflict during which time it experienced serious human rights violation including the killing of thousands of people and devastation of its infrastructure.
- The field trip to Somaliland would be ideal for the students on the LLM programme because it would expose them to the democratisation efforts of a small African country, which is trying to make progress with very little external assistance (self-sustainability is a theme that features regularly in contemporary discourse on human rights and democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa).
- Somaliland is not very well known. Although it has been seeking international recognition for many years, no country has yet given it formal recognition. The students would therefore familiarise themselves with the efforts that are being made in this regard and this is likely to hone their advocacy skills as human rights lawyers.
- The field trip to Somaliland would enable the students to visit various institutions of government, national NGOs, academic institutions and allow the students to interact with ordinary Somalilanders.

Based on the above reasons a familiarisation visit to Somaliland took place from 7 to 12 January 2006. The two members of staff were Norman Taku (Assistant Director of the Centre for Human Rights) and Martin Nsibirwa (Programme Manager of the LLM Programme).

In the planning stages for this visit the team met Dr Iqbal Jhazbhay, lecturer at the University of South Africa. Dr Jhazbhay briefed us on Somaliland, especially on efforts for Somaliland to get international recognition. He provided us with literature about Somaliland and, thereafter, he was very instrumental in ensuring that our arrangements for the trip went ahead very well. He contacted individuals and organisations on our behalf and helped with practical matters such as visas. His assistance proved invaluable.

II INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS VISITED

1. ACADEMY FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (APD)

Mr Boobe Yusuf Duale, Programme Coordinator at APD, was responsible for finalising our schedule during our stay in Somaliland. He organised all the meetings and went with us to some of the meetings.

Mr Ali, Senior researcher at APD, was our guide and provided us with excellent in-depth analysis of Somaliland.

The APD is a dynamic, well-respected and prominent NGO based in Hargeisa, which conducts research into various aspects of Somaliland including its economy and politics. APD coordinates similar efforts by smaller organisations and many of its senior staff are closely associated with the liberation movement and the efforts at national reconciliation and reconstruction.

In view of the fact that the main organiser of our trip was the APD, we visited their offices on a number of occasions. We met the Director of APD and most of the staff members. Their level of organisation and the facilities that they have and the research that they have carried out particularly impressed us. The APD struck us as a very influential organisation in Somaliland due to the work that it was doing for the country. We also had an opportunity to watch a number of videos at the APD offices and these included the political history of Somaliland and the economic life of the country. These videos also gave us an insight into the life outside Hargeisa and the APD were kind enough to make copies of these videos to bring back to South Africa. They also gave us some books, which we intend to share with students and others who would be interested in learning more about Somaliland.



The offices of the Academy for Peace and Development in Hargeisa.

2. PARLIAMENT

2.1 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Honourable Mr Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and two deputies told us about the work of the House of Representatives, which like most public institutions in Somaliland, functions with very little funding.



Meeting the speaker of Parliament (centre) and his two deputies (extreme left and right)

2.2 HOUSE OF ELDERS

We met with the **Honourable Mr Sheikh Ahmed Nuh, Deputy Speaker of the House of Elders, Heads of Committees and other elders**. They told us about the role that the elders had played in bringing about peace in Somaliland. They also took us around the building that houses the Parliament. Some of the elders also said that they had been to South Africa and invited us for dinner where they told us about their experiences when they visited South Africa and the support that South Africa has shown for Somaliland's recognition as a state.



Parliament building



Some members of the House of Elders posing for a photo with us

3. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

We met **Mrs Edna Adan Ismael, Minister of Foreign Affairs** and the **Minister of State for Foreign Affairs**. Mrs Adan told us about the difficulties that Somaliland had gone through in an effort to gain recognition and the devastation that it had suffered during the civil war the preceded its declaration of sovereignty. Mrs Adan also explained that Somaliland had always existed as an entity and the formal agreements of union with Somalia had never been properly concluded and that there was no doubt that Somaliland deserved to be recognised as a state.



Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Edna Adan (second from left) and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (far left)

4. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

Mr Ismail Adam, Minister of Interior, met us briefly despite his busy schedule. The Minister was receptive of our efforts and indicated that he would be willing to help if at all necessary.

5. EDNA ADAN MATERNITY HOSPITAL

We had the privilege to visit the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital built by Mrs Edna Adan (Minister of Foreign Affairs) who is also a qualified nurse and midwife, and retired from international civil service. She used her pension from the United Nations to fund the building of the hospital, which was her childhood dream. Its size, cleanliness and the professionalism of staff were very impressive. We also spent time with Mrs Adan, who lives in the hospital, and watched a video showing the devastation of Hargeisa during the war that led to the downfall of the former president of Somalia Mohammed Siad Barre.



The Edna Adan Maternity Hospital

6. MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Mr Hussein Ali Duale, Minister of Finance, welcomed us at his house due to a bout of flu where we also had the opportunity to meet the Chief of Police. We spent a considerable amount of time with the Minister during which he shared with us some of the history of Somaliland. The Minister also indicated that even though Somaliland was not recognised and was therefore unable to borrow money from international lending institutions, it was nevertheless trying to do its best to make ends meet within the limited budget that it has. His vast experience as former ambassador for Somalia is clearly an asset to the current government of Somaliland.



Meeting with the Minister of Finance Mr Hussein Ali Duale (second from left)

7. WAR CRIMES COMMITTEE

Mr Rashid Sheikh Abdillahi, Chairman of the War Crimes Committee, and other staff exposed to us the war crimes that had been committed in Somaliland and the efforts that were underway to have proper records (including the involvement of the United Nations in forensic tests) and reburials of those who had been killed. The staff also arranged for us to visit mass graves within Hargeisa.



Some human remains at one of the sites where killings took place

8. UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

We visited the University of Hargeisa where we met the **Rector, Vice Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Law and other staff members**. We had a long meeting with them exploring possible avenues of cooperation through the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition by having members of staff attend some of the short courses offered by the Centre for Human Rights and in sending students to study on the LLM programme. We also agreed that the University of Hargeisa would be the coordinating institution in the April field trip by LLM students during which opportunity for students from both universities to interact formally and informally.

The following people attended the meeting:

Mr Abdi Haybe Elmi (Vice Chancellor, University of Hargeisa) email: abdihaybe1@hotmail.com
Mr Mohammed Farah (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Head of Administration) mfarah992003@yahoo.com
Eng Yusuf Ainab Muse (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Head of academics)
Mr Mohamoud Hussein Farah (Dean of Law) salin100@yahoo.com
Mr Mohammed (Director of Human Rights Legal Clinic) dhayo02@yahoo.com
Mr Adam Haji Ali (Director of Legal Awareness, Faculty of Law) aademhaji@yahoo.com
Mr Waris Mohammed (Lecturer, Faculty of Law) mwaris@yahoo.co.uk
Mrs Amman Ali Hais (Administrator) amranali52@hotmail.com or hooy52_111152@yahoo.co.uk



Management and members of staff at the University of Hargeisa



University of Hargeisa

10. NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

We were very well received at the Commission where we met two Commissioners of the Electoral Commission. Our visit exposed us to the work experience and challenges of the Commission, which has successfully organised three elections (National, parliamentary and local). We also learnt about the involvement of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa in helping Somaliland hold its elections.



Outside the offices of the National Electoral Commission with some of the Commissioners

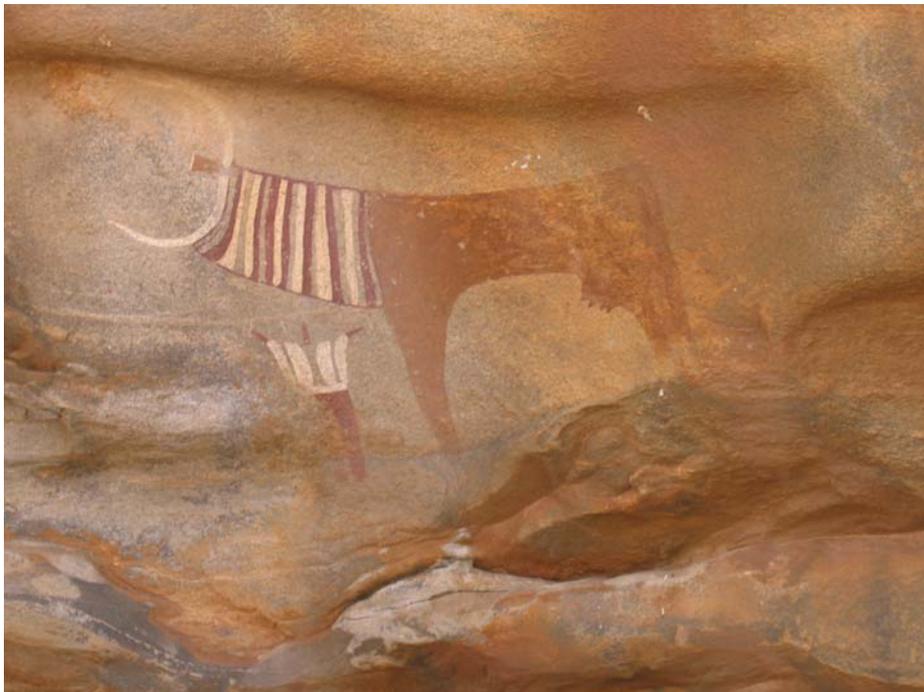
11. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Coordinated by **Mrs Su'Ad Ibrahim, a Researcher at APD** and held at the APD offices, we met a cross section of the NGOs including • Network for Peace and Governance • Somaliland Human Rights Network • Somaliland National Youth Umbrella • Committee of Concerned Women. They told us about their work and the important role that NGOs are playing in complementing the government departments. There are 44 NGOs working with women, children and on minority issues.

12. BERBERA

Arrangements were made for us to visit Berbera, Somaliland's second largest town and port.

About 20 kilometres outside of Hargeisa we visited some recently discovered caves with rock paintings dating to 3500 years ago. The rock paintings are in pristine condition and the surroundings at the sites have now been improved and facilities such as toilets for visitors are available.



One of the rock paintings in the caves on the way to Berbera

Berbera itself is a beautiful place and the port, which is the main supply line for import and export for Somaliland. A planned visit Sheikh was to abandoned due to time constraints. The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden are very beautiful.



The guns in Somaliland have fallen silent as can be seen from these guns on the coast in Berbera

13. POLITICAL PARTIES

We met with representatives of the political parties in Somaliland. These are **UDUB** (the ruling party), **Kulmiye** and **UCID** (opposition parties). We met all the parties at the offices of APD. The parties seemed to work very well together and the representative of the ruling party confirmed this. In view of the fact that the opposition parties have the majority in parliament (42 seats compared to 32 by UDUB) we were struck by the amicable relationship that exists between them. The political parties also informed us that they had difficulties in getting funding because only a small part of the population was able to contribute to their work.



A photo with some members of political parties

14. CENTRE FOR CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

We held a meeting with the Dr Hussein Bulhan the Director of the Centre for Creative Solutions who was involved in the rebuilding of Somaliland. He told us about the devastation that Somaliland had suffered and the fact that in spite of all the difficulties and lack of access to external funding, the Somalilanders had been able to rebuild their country with not much help from outside.

15. CATHOLIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

We met Dr Adam Abokor the Director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations (Somaliland Country office) for dinner. He is a very knowledgeable on the history of Somaliland in view of the fact that he took part in development initiatives even during the times of Mohammed Siad Barre. He was imprisoned (in solitary confinement) as a result.

16. PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC

His Excellency Mr Ahmed Yusuf Yasin, Vice President of Somaliland, we had the opportunity to meet the Vice President on our last day. We met him at the President's Office just before a cabinet meeting. He welcomed us very warmly and was interested in knowing about our work and welcomed future groups that planned to visit Somaliland.



Meeting with the Vice President Mr Ahmed Yusuf Yasin (centre).

III LOGISTICS:

1. Visas

Travel into Somaliland requires one to have a multiple entry visa for Ethiopia (due to having to transit there twice) and secondly a visa for Somaliland. The Ethiopian visa is issued in Pretoria and takes just one day. Mr Jhazbhay helped to arrange the Somaliland visas and these were issued in Somaliland and sent as attachments to an email. Payment for these visas was made upon arrival at Hargeisa International Airport in Somaliland.

2. Getting to Hargeisa:

Hargeisa is the capital city of Somaliland and the best way to get to Hargeisa from Johannesburg is on Ethiopian Airlines. First we flew to Addis Ababa where we spent two nights and then took a smaller Ethiopian Airlines plane to Hargeisa. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Airlines arranges accommodation but the quality of accommodation is not good and the airport shuttle to the hotel can be very delayed, so it would be advisable to make private arrangements for both a hotel and the shuttle from and back to the airport.

The tickets to Hargeisa are reasonably priced and staying in Somaliland is affordable when compared to Rwanda, Tanzania and Sierra Leone to which LLM students travel.

The tickets to Hargeisa can be bought through travel agencies in Pretoria but bookings need to be made as early as possible in view of the fact that the flight between Addis Ababa and Hargeisa is on a Fokker 50 which carries only about 50 passengers. There are, however, six flights per week between Addis Ababa and Hargeisa. Due to the fact that there are United Nations agencies and various NGOs operating in Somaliland there is a constant flow of people to and from Hargeisa and it could be difficult to book the entire group if this is left too late. The immigration service at Hargeisa International Airport is efficient and friendly.

3. Living in Hargeisa

Hargeisa is the capital city of Somaliland and even though it was razed to the ground, a lot of effort has gone into reconstruction. Basic services are available and it is very safe with ladies selling hundreds of thousands of US dollars worth of 21 carat gold jewellery on the street with no form of protection.



Part of the skyline of Hargeisa with its landmark: twin hills, which are commonly known as Nasa Hablod (“breasts of the maiden”).

We stayed at Maansoor Hotel, which is a very comfortable hotel.



Maansoor Hotel

The rooms were very clean with no interruptions of electricity and water. The staff at the hotel was extremely professional and the food in Somaliland was superb. The discounted room rate for bed and breakfast was US\$30 per night, which is quite affordable and the hotel was in a quiet part of town and very safe. The hotel also has a business centre with fast Internet service.



One of the rooms in Maansoor Hotel.

Another hotel where the students could stay is Ambassador Hotel Hargeisa. We visited this hotel to have a look at its facilities. The rooms were very nice and clean. Maansoor Hotel, however, is closeness to the city centre and smaller (which often means a better quality of service).

The roads in Hargeisa are good. The main roads have tarmac and most of the feeder roads are dust roads but are well maintained. There was no major traffic jams and traffic was well monitored by traffic police at major junctions so the group can move around easily.

We hired a car for the duration of our stay. A driver was also provided and he was available all the time. It would therefore be ideal that the group of students going to Somaliland should hire cars (perhaps one car for four students) because we think this is the best way to get around Hargeisa. Also in view of the fact that students might be spilt into groups with different assignments, it might be inconvenient for the group if they were not divided into smaller groups for purposes of transportation.

4. Dates for the field trip

The current dates (3-13 April) for the field trip might have to be revised if the current flight dates for Somaliland remain the same in April. This is because the connecting flight to Hargeisa is on Saturday and the return flight is on Thursday. However, this might need to be looked at more carefully. The most important consideration is flights to Hargeisa:

Norman Taku and Martin Nsibirwa