



8 May 2017

Ambassador Francisco Madeira  
Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia  
African Union  
Mogadishu  
Somalia

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

I am writing to you to present a summary of the International Refugee Rights Initiative's research findings on civilian perspectives on the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and to request a response to those findings and our questions.

International Refugees Rights Initiative (IRRI) is an international NGO with a mandate to enhance the rights of those excluded from state protection as a result of forced displacement, conflict, discriminatory violence and statelessness. In order to increase understanding of mechanisms available to international and regional actors to respond to conflict and displacement, IRRI conducted three case studies on civilian perspectives on peacekeeping. After publishing reports on the [United Nations Mission in South Sudan](#) (UNMISS) and the [United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur](#) (UNAMID), IRRI focused its attention on AMISOM.

Between July 2016 and April 2017, IRRI interviewed, in person, over the phone and through local actors, 53 Somali citizens in Kenya (Dadaab refugee camp), Somalia (Mogadishu, Beledweyne, Kismayo and Marka) and Uganda.

#### Research Findings

Many people interviewed by IRRI about their perception of AMISOM said there was a clear lack of understanding among Somalis as to AMISOM's mandate. Most were aware that AMISOM is tasked to conduct offensive operations against *Al-Shabaab* and to protect government institutions, however, other aspects of the mandate were far less known. This lack of proper understanding of the mandate contributed to the criticism of the mission by some, especially those living in areas with high levels of insecurity.

Interviewees expressed distrust of the foreign presence in general, but more specifically of several national contingents, in particular those coming from Ethiopia and Kenya. Other contingents, such as those from Djibouti, were much better regarded, mainly because of their efforts to build community relations and provide services to nearby communities.

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The majority of interviewees stated their discontent with the results achieved by AMISOM to date, especially its failure to protect civilians, given its more than decade-long presence in the country. Others did acknowledge the positive achievements by the mission and the difficult context in which it has to carry out its mandate.

While in principle interviewees held the opinion that the Somali security services are better placed to provide security and confront security threats, most held the pragmatic view that they were not ready yet to take over AMISOM's responsibility, given their lack of capacity, inclusiveness and accountability. Supporting the development of the Somali security sector was seen as a key activity for international and regional actors, as a precondition for AMISOM's troop reduction or departure, and thus as a vital part of its exit strategy.

A common observation was that AMISOM fails to sustain its gains against *Al-Shabaab*. This was especially apparent in the city of Marka where, for example, inhabitants complained that the poorly trained and equipped national security forces could not defend the town, and it therefore shifted hands multiple times between *Al-Shabaab* and AMISOM/government forces, accompanied by reprisals by *Al-Shabaab* against civilians accused of collaborating with the latter.

Many interviewees testified about crimes and other abuses committed by AMISOM forces, including sexual violence, arbitrary detention and incidents leading to the deaths of civilians. There was a perception that no credible investigations had taken place into those allegations, severely affecting the evaluation people made of the mission. IRRI was unable to verify most of those allegations.

Last, former Somali employees of the mission complained about discrimination during their employment and the lack of protection both during and after their employment with AMISOM.

### Questions

1. What efforts does the mission undertake to conduct outreach to communities and inform them about the mandate of AMISOM? Does the mission consult communities prior to mandate renewal and/or inform them about any changes following the adoption of a new mandate?
2. How does the mission address any negative perceptions that could exist about national contingents within AMISOM? How does it ensure coordination and exchange of good practices among the national contingents, including on protection of civilians, outreach and service-delivery?
3. How does the mission organise a political dialogue with the troop contributing countries about their unilateral activities in Somalia, about the functioning of its troops and about accountability for abuses?
4. What is the mission's strategy to provide protection of civilians? How is this strategy implemented by the different national contingents within AMISOM?
5. How does the mission provide support to the national security forces, and how is this incorporated in the mission's exit strategy?
6. Which strategy is in place to ensure that areas regained from *Al-Shabaab* are stabilised and do not fall back into the hands of the group?

7. What mechanisms are in place for citizens to report abuses, file complaints and demand reparations? Could the mission give an overview of investigations, disciplinary and/or legal action against AMISOM elements and any sanctions imposed on them? How are results of investigations, prosecutions and disciplinary action communicated to victims and their communities?
8. What type of pre-mission training on international human rights and humanitarian law is provided for AMISOM forces? How does the mission leadership sensitise its troops about the importance of respecting such international standards, and about accountability?
9. How does the mission ensure that national Somali staff members are treated equally, are allowed to issue complaints and are adequately protected, even after leaving the mission?

The research findings will be published in a forthcoming report. We would be grateful if you could respond to our findings and questions by 29 May 2017, and would be happy to provide more information, if needed.

Thank you in advance for your response,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andie Lambe', written in a cursive style.

Andie Lambe  
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