

SOMALIA

Ages 10-12



- *The light blue background of the flag is said to have been based on the UN flag, but today, it is said to represent the sky and the Indian Ocean on the Eastern coast of this African nation.*
- *The five points on the star represent the five regions in the horn of Africa that are inhabited by Somali people. The first of these two regions are British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland, which make up present day Somalia. The third is Ogaden in Ethiopia. The fourth is Djibouti and the fifth is the Northern Frontier District in Kenya.*



- *Somalia's neighbours Ethiopia and Kenya to the west, the Gulf of Aden to the north and the Indian Ocean to the east.*
- *Mogadishu is the capital city of Somalia and it has a population of roughly 1.353 million people. The overall population of the country is 9 925 640.*
- *Its climate is hot, with irregular and scarce rainfall and frequent droughts.*
- *The northern terrain of the country is predominantly hilly, reaching altitudes of 4 000 ft.; while the south is mainly flat.*

DECADES OF GOVERNANCE- PRE AND POST INDEPENDENCE

Modern day Somalia is the result of the merging of what was known as British Somaliland, a territory occupied by the British; and *Somalia Italiana*, a territory occupied by the Italians. British Somaliland was in the north and *Somalia Italiana* was in the south.

The British Somalis were allowed to follow the customs and traditional procedures of their nomadic clans. With regards to government, the people of British Somali had some influence and control of their society. This was not the case in Italian Somalia in the south. The southern Somalis were forced to adopt Italian laws, and, unlike the people in northern Somalia, they were not permitted to use their nomadic customs and traditions for conflict resolution. The Northerners were better educated than those in the south.

The capital city of the country (Mogadishu) was located in the South. The majority of the political positions in the government went to the southerners. The differences that existed between the Somali people led to differences in political styles. The southerners wanted to stake claim on the neighbouring areas where Somalis lived, (Kenya and Ethiopia); the northerners were more interested in economic and social development and improved relations with other African nations. The northerners were ``modernists`` while the southerner`s were spurred on by the ideology of a ``greater Somalia``.

The table below highlights key events during this time.

YEAR(S)	EVENT
June 26, 1960	British Somaliland gained Independence
July 1, 1960	British Somaliland joins <i>Somalia Italiana</i> and formed the Somali Republic. The two were faced with language barriers because there was no common written language in which to carry out administrative work. The country was run by a civilian government.
1967-1969	The Somali Youth League assumed a dominant position in government under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammed Ibrahim Egal. Relations with Kenya and Ethiopia were greatly improved.
1969	The last multiparty elections were held and more than 60 parties competed. Somali clan politics resulted in the formation of parties based on clanship and not on common political platforms.
1969	Army General Mohamed Siyad Barré seized power in a bloodless coup and he established the Somali Democratic Republic. Prime Minister Egal was thrown in jail for 12 years. Barre became Head of State and chairman of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC)- the group that organized the coup.
1970	The SRC regime made Somali a written language.
1974	Barré signed a treaty of cooperation with the Soviet Union and a Marxist dictatorship was put in place.

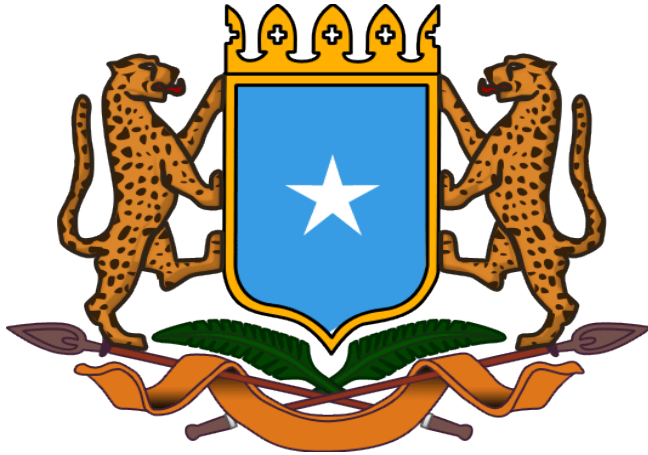
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- 1988 The Somali National Movement (SNM), which was formed in 1981, organized guerrilla operations out of Ethiopia against the Barré regime and a civil war, developed.
- 1991 The Somali Civil War led to the collapse of the Barré regime. He and his loyalists were driven out of Mogadishu by rebels. Since the demise of the regime there has been no central government, despite some attempts to establish one. This led to more civil strife and the formation of other opposition movements. These opposition groups were based on differences in clans. The Somali army was divided into factions who were focused on stopping the rival clan leaders from trying to maintain power by gaining control of whatever resources were left of the war-torn country.
- 1992 *Operation Restore Hope*, was launched by the UN to stop the humanitarian disaster created by the civil war. This operation tried to bring some peace to the country, but it failed.
- August 2004 After years of attempts at reconciliation by Somalia's neighbours, a breakthrough was made and a transitional federal parliament was selected. By October, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed became the interim president. In December, the president appointed Ali Mohammed Gedi as prime minister. However, this transitional government was met with resistance.
- 2006 Factional fighting developed between Islamic radicals and the leaders of the transitional government. By mid-year the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) came into power and by December controlled the majority of the south. *Sharia* law was imposed.
- January 2007 By this time, the Ethiopian army, which had been protecting the Transitional Federal Government, drove the Islamic militia out of Mogadishu. Ethiopian troops remained in Somalia until 2009.



Somalia Italiana Coat of Arms (1949-1956)



British Somaliland Coat of Arms (1950-1960)



To the left: the Coat of Arms of the Independent Somali Republic. It was adopted on October 10, 1956.

The shield in the center is the flag of Somali. It is supported by leopards on either side. The leopard is the National symbol of the country.

ECONOMY

Somalia's economy is largely based on agriculture and livestock, money transfer companies and telecommunications.

Livestock has been one of the most profitable sectors of Somalia's economy. However, the lack of efficient veterinary health facilities in the country has led to increased disease in livestock. 80% of the Somali population are nomadic or semi-nomadic. Livestock accounts for 45% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and surplus of 50% of export earnings. Agriculture accounts for roughly 65% the country's GDP and employs the same percentage of the country's workforce.

The most important agricultural commercial crop in the south comes from the banana plantations which are controlled by American and Italian companies. The following are other export products:

- Fish
- Charcoal

Sugar, sorghum and corn are the agricultural products for the domestic market. Somalia is also a major supplier of fragrances such as frankincense and myrrh.

According to a 2007 British Chamber of Commerce report, the public service sector became more successful after the civil war due to private investments in commercial activities believed to be funded by Somalis abroad. These private sectors include trade and marketing, money transfer services, transportation, communications, airlines, telecommunications, education, health, construction and hotels.

43% of the population live on less than 1US dollar a day. 24% of these live in urban areas and 54% in rural areas.

CULTURE

The culture of Somalia is a melting pot of traditions that have been developed over thousands of years of Somali civilizations interacting with others such as Ethiopia their neighbour, Yemen, India and Persia.

Their exotic cuisine, which varies from region to region, contains Southeast Asian influences. It is a mixture of native Somali, Ethiopian, Persian, Turkish, and Italian influences. Below is a list of some Somali words pertaining to cuisine.

ENGLISH	SOMALI
Breakfast	<i>Quraac</i>
Tea	<i>Shah</i>
Stew	<i>Maraq</i>
Pancake-like bread	<i>canjeero</i>
Goat meat	<i>Hilib ari</i>
Lunch	<i>Qado</i>
Rice	<i>Bariis</i>
Cornmeal	<i>Soor</i>
Pasta	<i>Baasto</i>
Mango	<i>Cambe</i>
Dinner	<i>Casho</i>
Dinner dish made of azuki beans, butter and sugar	<i>cambuulo</i>

Clan groupings is a very important aspect of Somali culture. Clans are patrilineal (descended through the male line) and are divided into sub-clans and sub-sub clans. This results in extended families. The following are the main clans in Somalia:

- *Darod*- a clan principally in the north
- *Dir*- located in southwestern Somalia and Djibouti
- *Hawiye*- located primarily in central and southern Somalia
- *Isaaq*- one of the main Somali clans and are mainly located in the northwestern Somaliland region of Somalia
- *Rahanweyn*- it is composed of two major sub-clans, the *digil* and the *mirifle*. It is one of the major clans residing in the *Horn of Africa*.

ACHIEVEMENTS

In the literary world, Somali is known as “a nation of poets”. This title is one of the many achievements that has come from this nation in the Horn of Africa. Somali poetry or oral verse, is “central to Somali life”, as was said by Said Sheikh Samatar, a Somali scholar. Poetry has been the country’s primary means of mass communication and has, in many cases, substituted for history books and some forms of media.

Some well-known Somali poets and literary minds

POET	WORKS
Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hasan	<i>Used his poetry to unify Somalis in the fight against British colonialism</i>
Salaan Arrabay	<i>Used as an anti-war weapon. His most popular work is "O Kinsman, Stop the War".</i>
Nurudin Farah	<i>Acclaimed Somali English-language novelist. He is known to connect the mythical with the local in his work. Author of From a Crooked Rib. Farah won the 1998 Neustadt International Prize for literature.</i>
Mohamed Warsame Ibrahim	<i>Poet and playwright who was jailed during the Barré regime for his politically critical writings.</i>

There are many prominent and influential Somalis living abroad who are making their homeland proud.

Asha Said Jama- is a prominent Somali Canadian activist who is a former Somali T.V reporter. She was born in the city of Merca, and attained a degree in journalism from the Somali National University. Currently, she is the president of the Calgary Somali Women organization and takes the lead on many initiatives that support Somalis in Canada and in the Homeland.

Warsame Ali- he is a Somali scientist and assistant professor at Prairie View A&M University in Texas. He specializes in aerospace technology and has previously worked for NASA. He is also a graduate of the Somali National University. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering at the King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. He went on to achieve his Masters and doctorate degrees in the US.

Abdulqawi Yusuf- he is a prominent Somali international lawyer. As of February 6, 2009 he became a member of the International Court of Justice. Throughout his career, Yusuf has held legal positions within the different branches of the United Nations. He is the founder and General Editor of the African Yearbook of International Law and is a member of the Institut de Droit international in Geneva.

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