

Devin Morrow, MIGS Desk Officer for Somalia
21 August 2012: Special Election Coverage



Sources:

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Radio Gaalkacyo

On August 20, 2012, Somalia voted its first new parliament in twenty years. Two hundred fifteen of the 275 parliamentarians have been sworn in after being chosen by a committee, and once the House is complete they will elect a new president.

The previous administration has been strewn with constant allegations of corruption, which have followed many of the presidential frontrunners into the election, including current president Sharif Ahmed, Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, and parliament speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden.

Outside observers who assisted in drafting the new constitution prior to the election (including the United Nations and the African Union) hope the elections and eventual appointment of the President, Prime Minister, and cabinet will lead to a lasting peace in Somalia.

But the unique process of electing a government in Somalia is complicated by clans who divide the country. Each clan is entitled to a number of parliamentary seats and members, and rifts between clans are further reflected in perceived inequalities of numbers of seats. It is not only clan-based: Somali women are entitled to 30 per cent of the available seats, but have yet to see these promises come to fruition.

The hope that the new constitution will bring peace to Somalia is not shared by everyone. Sadia Ali Aden, a human rights advocate and freelance writer wrote for Think Africa Press on August 14, 2012, that the inadequacies of the constitution may only lead to further disruption across the country. She argues that because the constitution was largely designed by external actors associated with international organizations and the UN, it is not conducive to the actual situation in Somalia, which is fragmented by clan conflict and civil violence. Despite the attempts to fairly divide the country's parliamentary seats by clan, she believes it will only bring greater instability due to constant in-fighting between clans. Further, the inability of the government to maintain control over the entirety of the country will undermine the capacity of the constitution to achieve its goals, she writes.

Finally, the constitution maintains that individuals associated with warlords cannot be members of the new parliament. However *Radio Gaalkacyo* was already reporting on the day of the election that the current president of the Transitional Federal Government (whose term ended the day of the election) had disagreements with the UN Special Envoy to Somalia, Augustine Mahiga, regarding the selection of allegedly warlord-affiliated parliamentarians. Whether this will continue to be an issue as the new parliament selects a new president remains to be seen.

The Speaker of the new parliament will be elected on 26 August, followed by the election of the new president.