

new head of the religious police has tried to reduce incidents of abuse by his officers, but reports continue of the Muttawa taking advantage of their power.

Judicial Reform

Within the Saudi criminal justice system legal safeguards, such as guaranteed access to lawyers and evidence as well as public trials and juries, do not exist. Judges apply their own interpretation of Sharia law. There is no codified legal system, leading to wide variations in punishment for the same offence.

In 2009, the new Minister of Justice continued efforts to reform the Saudi legal system. Most of these efforts focused on administrative changes and have had little immediate impact in addressing international concern over the judicial process.

In June, the first sentences were handed down in 660 cases from the height of the terrorist campaign in 2003–5. The detainees had been held without trial for up to six years. Many prisoners arrested at the same time remain in prison. The trials themselves took place behind closed doors and like all trials in Saudi Arabia took place without a jury. Concerns were expressed about the quality of judicial procedures in these cases, with HRW and Amnesty International criticising many aspects of Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy. While we continue to push for open trials, we welcome the commencement of trials in these cases.

Somalia



Somalia has had no functioning government since its collapse in 1991. In late January, the Transitional Federal Parliament of Somalia elected Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as the new

President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). He subsequently appointed a new cabinet of ministers. Despite significant international support and signs of political progress, implementation of the UN-led Djibouti Peace Agreement (August 2008) remains limited and Somalia's human rights situation remains very poor. The Djibouti Peace Agreement aims to ensure the cessation of all armed confrontation and a political settlement, promote peace and protect the population, and enable the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The TFG has established a permanent presence in Mogadishu but continues to have little or no control over most of Somalia. Despite adopting a positive stance on human rights and acknowledging the need to integrate human rights into the work it undertakes, there has been no tangible implementation. The Somali people continue to face a dire humanitarian situation. Somaliland and Puntland in the north offer greater stability but reports of human rights abuses, albeit less severe, are commonplace.



An internally displaced Somali girl receives food aid at a camp in Mogadishu on 12 December

Lack of access for the UK and the wider international community, caused by the security situation, has remained the greatest obstacle to obtaining first-hand assessments or pushing for improvements in the human rights situation. The points at which we can apply pressure for change and improvement are very limited and, in the main, consist of the TFG and regional administrations. There are large parts of Somalia under the control of organisations and individuals with whom we have no contact. The TFG has extremely limited influence and is understandably focused on improving security, establishing functioning institutions and political reconciliation, which should improve the human rights situation in the long-term.

To be effective and have a sustainable impact, measures to combat human rights abuses must be part of a broader approach to peace building. In Nairobi, we continue to hold regular meetings and consultations with the UN Political Office for Somalia, including with the two British nationals seconded to it during 2009, to ensure a coordinated approach to our support to Somalia. We also engage regularly with the TFG at a variety of levels. However, we do not have sufficient information to make an accurate assessment of the TFG's consideration of human rights issues as it tries to establish its presence in Somalia.

This year, the UN Political Office for Somalia opened a dedicated human rights unit to urge the TFG to ensure that human rights are at the core of all aspects

of government. In August, it hosted a conference on impunity, which was a key first step towards a possible Commission of Inquiry to look at Somali human rights abuses, both past and present. The conference was attended by TFG representatives. We will continue to support the initiative for a Commission of Inquiry, but believe it must be a Somali-led process.

Fighting and Instability

In January, Ethiopian troops withdrew from Somalia. This positive development saw tens of thousands of internally displaced persons return to their homes in Mogadishu. However, insurgent groups then began to target the TFG and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Local clashes and low-level violence between clans has continued throughout the year. Following an upsurge of anti-government fighting in May, violent attacks in civilian areas have continued intermittently, causing hundreds of deaths and forcing those who had returned, plus over 200,000 more, from their homes. A suicide bombing at a graduation ceremony in Mogadishu on 3 December was further evidence of insurgent groups' complete disregard for human life and their desire to prevent progress in Somalia.

Together with our international partners we have sought to make significant improvements in the security situation, through coordinated support to both AMISOM and the TFG. The UK has provided



An Islamist hardliner publicly flogs a teenager accused of rape in September

financial and practical support to AMISOM, both directly and through the UN Trust Fund, including provision of medical supplies.

We understand that the use of child soldiers remains common across the country. We remain unable to monitor this or take steps to prevent it. A key priority for the UK will be working with the Somali authorities, the UN and AMISOM to build a sustainable and more accountable security sector, based on a coherent plan, incorporating respect for human rights.

Half of the population in south and central Somalia have urgent humanitarian needs. In the first nine months of financial year 2009–10, DFID delivered more than £11.5 million to support humanitarian efforts through the UN and international NGOs.

Media

International and local media reporting in Somalia is limited and operates in extremely difficult circumstances. Radio stations are often suppressed and journalists are regularly threatened and occasionally kidnapped or killed. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, nine journalists were killed in Somalia in 2009.

Minority Groups

Many groups continue to face persecution in Somalia. We do not have sufficient accurate reporting to assess whether particular groups are specifically targeted, although we are aware of some reports that minority clans and religions face persecution. Violence against women, including rape, is understood to be widespread.

Access to Justice

Somalia continues to operate without functioning institutions. The approach to law enforcement at local and national level is normally based on Sharia law. Our lack of access means that details of local arrangements are unknown. Until a manageable level of security and stability is established and in place, this will remain the case.

The Somali parliament adopted Sharia law in March. This was an initiative by the new TFG to demonstrate its Islamic credentials to the Somali people. We do not know how this will be implemented but we will monitor this with respect to the upholding of human rights standards, including, in the longer term, the process of creating a functioning judiciary.

Frequent and disturbing human rights abuses by insurgent groups, including disproportionate punishments such as amputations and death by stoning, remain unpunished.

Piracy

We are concerned by the continuing threat of kidnap and hostage-taking posed by pirates off the Somali coast. Pirates usually target large commercial vessels and hold captured cargo and crew for ransom. International efforts to protect shipping in this area have been relatively effective, but the threat remains. The UK has been at the forefront of the EU Mission, Operation ATALANTA, which launched in December 2008 and had its mandate extended in 2009 for 12 months until December 2010. In coordination with NATO and international navies, this operation protects vulnerable shipping, including the delivery of essential aid to Somalia.

Somaliland

Somaliland's human rights record is poor. We have serious concerns about arbitrary arrests and detention by "security committees" outside of judicial structures, media restrictions and the freedom of speech and association. The UK supports poverty reduction, governance, stability, democracy and service-delivery programmes in Somaliland, and channels approximately 40 per cent of its development aid for Somalia as a whole to that region. In 2009, the UK continued to support efforts to improve healthcare and education in the region. This included the training of healthcare professionals and working through the UN to improve access to education by increasing school enrolment, the distribution of textbooks and the provision of alternative education programmes.

Attention this year has been on its Presidential elections, which have experienced repeated delays for a variety of reasons. The UK provided support to the voter-registration process and in resolving issues between the parties through facilitating the 30 September agreement, which set out a path to successful elections. All parties are now agreed on the process and we look forward to elections in 2010, which we anticipate will be closely contested. We hope that they will be carried out freely and fairly with respect to the human rights of the Somali people. After the elections, we will encourage the elected government through direct dialogue to address human rights concerns and to ensure adherence to its laws and constitution.