

Humanitarian impact of withdrawal of armed forces

eight locations in Bakool taken control

Paris, Washington DC, , 29.10.2016, 23:12 Time

USPA NEWS - Since July 2016, non-state armed actors have taken control of eight locations in Bakool, Galgaduug and Hiraan regions of Somalia following the departure of international troops. The takeover by non-state armed groups has exposed civilians to significant protection risks.

The withdrawals have raised serious concerns among humanitarian organizations operating in the affected areas. Since July 2016, non-state armed actors have taken control of eight locations in Bakool, Galgaduug and Hiraan regions of Somalia following the departure of international troops.

The takeover by non-state armed groups has exposed civilians to significant protection risks and further reduced humanitarian access in areas that are already hard to reach.

The locations include Rab Dhuure, Bur Dhuxelne, Garas Weyne and Tayeeglow in Bakool region; Budbud and Galcad in Galgaduud region; Moqokori, Ceel Cali and Halgan in Hiraan region.

The takeover by non-state armed actors has triggered displacements of thousands of people, including some who were already displaced. Civilians remaining in these locations have reportedly been subjected to retribution attacks, including apprehension, torture, killings and forced recruitments.-----

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT AND NEEDS

The withdrawals have raised serious concerns among humanitarian organizations operating in the affected areas. In Tayeeglow in Bakool region which previously hosted 7,200 internally displaced people, humanitarian partners have temporarily suspended operations due to concerns over staff safety and assets. Similar troop withdrawals in early 2013 resulted in some 5,000 to 10,000 civilians fleeing to Ceel Barde, some 90 kilometers north of Tayeeglow along the Somali-Ethiopian border. The withdrawals from locations in Galgaduud and Hiraan regions have resulted in the displacement of over 4,000 people, including to the three locations in Bakool region, as civilians flee to avoid retribution by non-state armed actors. Further potential withdrawals from Bakool region could result in significantly more displacements. Humanitarian partners continue to monitor the situation in Xudur and Wajid which combined host more than 10,000 internally displaced people. Humanitarian partners continue to advocate for protection of and sustained access to people in need, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. When troop realignment and reconfiguration entail troop withdrawals with minimal or no advance warning, it leaves the local population and humanitarian organizations vulnerable as militias move in and occupy the vacated locations. Disruption of humanitarian projects often leaves people in the affected locations with no alternative means to meet their needs.-----

Suspension, disruption and relocation of humanitarian programmes and withdrawal of humanitarian personnel linked to troop withdrawals and subsequent assumption of control of the respective areas by armed groups in Somalia has been ongoing in recent years. Most recently, incidents were recorded in Bakool, Gedo, Hiraan, Juba Hoose and Shabelle Hoose regions in 2015, the first quarter of 2016 and June and July 2016. Source Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-9789/humanitarian-impact-of-withdrawal-of-armed-forces.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619