

# On the humanitarian situation in Somalia

by Heinrich Frei\*



Heinrich Frei.  
(Picture manova.news)

Somalia has a population of 18.7 million, with around three million living in the capital Mogadishu. Somalia is more than 15 times larger than Switzerland and about 1.8 times the size of Germany. More than 3.8 million people in Somalia

have been forced to flee their region due to the war, which has been raging for more than 30 years, and natural disasters. They live in camps on the outskirts of the major cities under catastrophic conditions. Women and children make up 80 per cent of the internally displaced persons and are exposed to great risks.

Northern Somalia: Somaliland and Puntland are relatively peaceful areas. Somaliland is autonomously governed and would like to become independent. It was formerly under British colonial rule.

Southern Somalia: Rural areas are still partly controlled by the Islamist group *Al Shabab*. Recently, Somali government troops and the AMISOM troops of the African Union Mission have been fighting them with increasing success. *Al Shabab* continues to carry out attacks in Mogadishu and other cities. Southern Somalia was formerly under Italian colonial rule.

Merka, where the Swiss aid organisation *Swisso Kalmo* has been running a clinic for over 35 years, is home to around 100,000 people, including many internally displaced persons.<sup>1</sup>

## Information from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Last year, 2023, Somalia experienced the worst drought in decades. The drought was followed by floods the likes of which Somalia has not



Somalia is located on the Indian Ocean. It borders Kenya to the south, Ethiopia to the west, and Djibouti to the north.

(Picture wikipedia)

seen in generations, writes the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA.<sup>2</sup>

Around 6.7 million Somalis were threatened by hunger last year. More than half a million children were suffering from life-threatening malnutrition. Malnutrition in the first two years of life is very dangerous for a child. The brain can only develop poorly, so that later the child can learn much less well than one that has been well nourished.



Internally displaced persons on the outskirts of the city of Merka. (Picture Swisso Kalmo)

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*The city of Merka on the Indian Ocean.  
(Picture Swisso Kalmo)*

### **Flooding also in Merka, information from Swisso Kalmo**

In November 2023, we received a report from Swisso Kalmo about river flooding in Merka. Several villages in Merka district in Lower Shabelle province were hit by heavy rainfall on 22 November 2023. Houses and farms were destroyed, and residents were forced to flee after trying in vain to stem the flood.

### **2024 – Information from the OCHA: “The situation in Somalia has improved but is still precarious”**

Although the situation in Somalia has improved this year, the need for humanitarian aid remains very high, as the UN OCHA organisation reports. In March, almost one in five Somalis was unable to feed themselves sufficiently, an estimated 4 million people. Many children are affected by acute malnutrition. 1.7 million children in Somalia aged between 6 and 59 months will have too little



*Temporary shelters in Twfiq Camp for internally displaced  
people in the district Jowhar. (Picture OCHA)*

to eat between January and December of this year, 430,000 of whom will probably be severely malnourished.

### **UN humanitarian aid plan for Somalia needs \$1.6 billion in 2024**

The UN's Somali humanitarian aid plan for 2024 needs \$1.6 billion to help 5.2 million people. Aid is being provided to the areas most affected by the crisis. However, attacks on aid workers and their infrastructure are complicating relief operations.

It will certainly be difficult for the UN to raise these funds for humanitarian aid in Somalia, given the other disasters befalling Africa, including the war in Sudan.

*Source: <https://ifor-mir.ch/zur-humanitaeren-lage-in-somalia/>, 15 September 2024*

*(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)*

<sup>1</sup> [www.swisso-kalmo.ch](http://www.swisso-kalmo.ch)

<sup>2</sup> *Somalia | OCHA (unocha.org)*