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Somalia: A New Beginning Or a Return to Anarchy? Challenges and Prospects for the Newly 'Elected' Government

by
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Introduction

It is expected that the election of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed¹ as President of Somalia in October 2004 and the subsequent appointment of Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Ghedi² a month later will finally set the stage for the restoration of order in Somalia. Since the demise of the Siad Barre's regime in 1991, the Somali state has been virtually non-existent. Over the last 15 years, a total of 13 peace initiatives and two attempts at constituting a government failed to achieve any progress. The question that has lingered in the minds of Somalis and the international community for a very long time is whether this 14th attempt at achieving peace will succeed where previous efforts failed. Will the new government finally bring about democracy and stability?

However, the scepticism about the Somalia peace process did not seem to be shared by Yusuf Ahmed who wasted no time in appointing Ghedi as Prime Minister. But still

¹ Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed is the 71 year old former leader of the Somali region of Puntland declared semi-autonomous in 1998. In the 1960s he studied in Italy and the former Soviet Union while still an army commander. He led unsuccessful guerrilla movements in the 1970s and 1980s aimed at ousting the Somali dictator Siad Barre. He escaped to Ethiopia where he was jailed and later released when Ethiopia's Soviet-backed regime fell in 1991. In the 1990s he returned to his native Puntland, and soon emerged as the region's pre-eminent leader. In 2001 he was deposed in Puntland, but recaptured the territory a year later due in part to Ethiopia's support. Mr Ahmed hails from one of Somalia's six major clans, the *Darod*.

² Ali Mohamed Ghedi is a 53 year old veterinary surgeon and former African Union official. Mr Ghedi studied veterinary medicine at universities in Somalia and Italy. Until the outbreak of the Somali civil war, he was a lecturer and researcher at the Somali National University. During the civil war, he was a special advisor and marketing consultant to various regional livestock bodies where he oversaw an internationally funded animal disease control programme for Somalia. Mr Ghedi has also been a committed campaigner for the reconciliation process and as such he is a founding member and President of the Somalia NGO Consortium, an umbrella group of non-governmental organisations in Somalia. Mr Ghedi comes from the *Hawiye* clan.

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