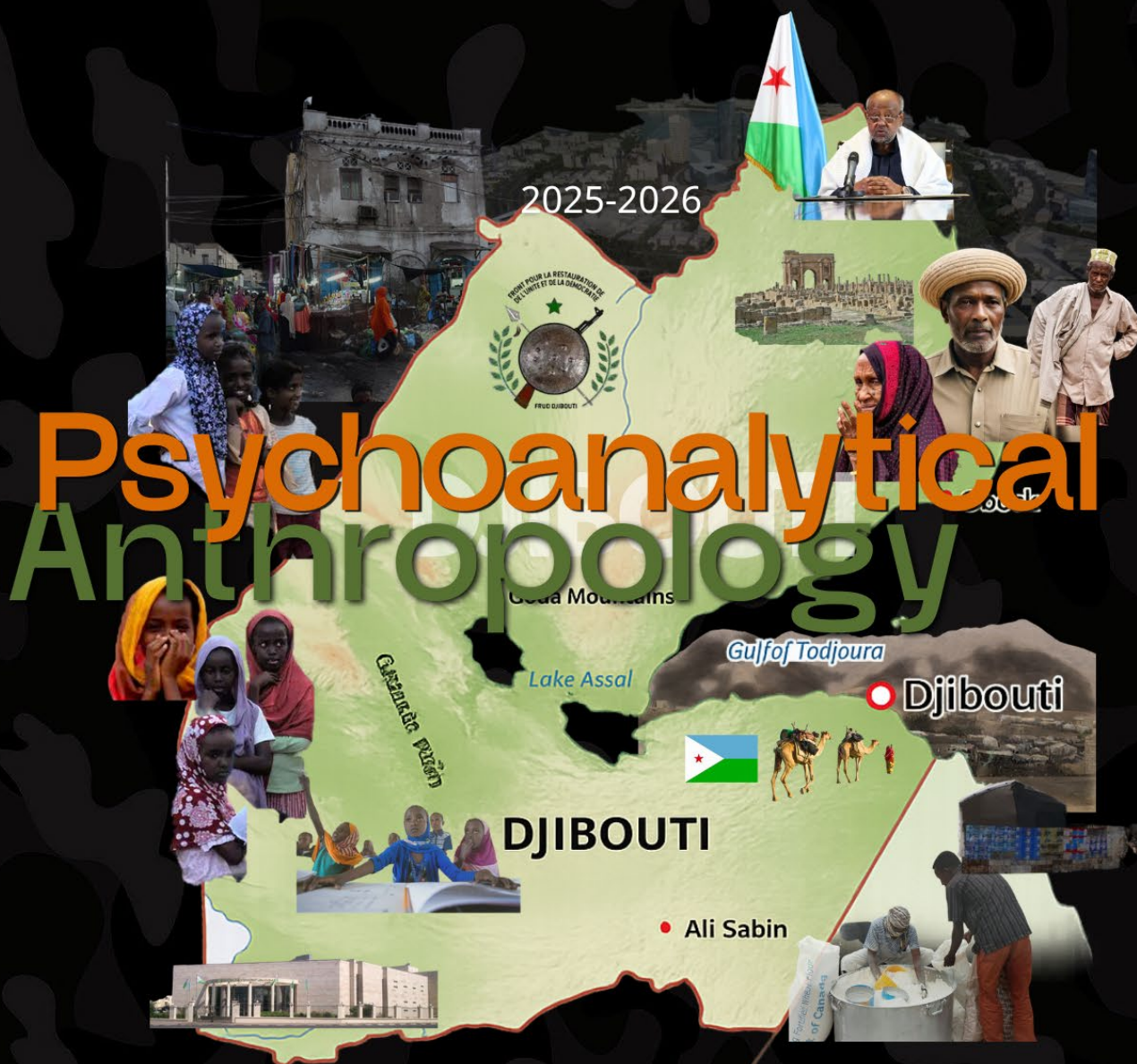


PsychoSocial Profile

Audience Analysis

DJIBOUTI



Psychoanalysis of Conflict Participants



PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNTRY CONDITIONS – DJIBOUTI

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Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal”, relating to Expert evidence. I have received and read the relevant extract from MOJ and Others (Return to Mogadishu) Somalia CG [2014] UKUT 00442 (IAC). I have also reviewed the summary of the relevant Civil Procedure Rule (CPR) 35 on Expert Evidence and related Practice Direction. I am aware that, in providing this report, my overriding duty is to the court. I believe that the facts stated in this report are true, and that the opinions I have expressed are correct. I believe that I have dealt fully with those issues which have been drawn to my attention or which seem relevant to my understanding of this case. I have not omitted any facts of which I am aware which would have had a material effect on my conclusions as stated above. The absence of an expressed opinion on any point should not be construed as meaning that I have no opinion on that point. I would be happy to assist the court by clarifying any matter raised herein. My fee is not dependent on the outcome. I declare under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct: My expert qualifications as a psychological anthropologist in the field of ethnic and cultural conflict as well as my field experiences are documented in Appendix B Curriculum Vitae.

1. Disclaimers & Clarifications.

- 1.1 I have never spoken with the asylum claimant. I am a non-political research scientist and neither favour nor disfavour immigration and or asylum policies in any country. Those country-of-origin cases that I do accept, I do so because of the academic interest only, as the financial remuneration is significantly below my normal rates.
- 1.2 The American base in Djibouti, Camp Lemonier, was my base support station while I was deployed to East Africa for several combat tours of duty.
 - 1.2.1 I was assigned to advise and train the Sudan Liberation Army (Fur, Masalit, & Zaghawa) rebels in the genocidal war in Darfur Sudan in 2004. In this assignment, I was in support of the rebels and in opposition to the government.
 - 1.2.2 I was assigned to train, advise, assist, and accompany Ethiopian Special Forces units fighting Al Shabaab, Ogadin Liberation Front, and Oromo Liberation Army militants in the regions surrounding Djibouti in 2005. In this assignment, I was in support of the government and working to disarm and demobilise the rebels.
 - 1.2.3 During those years, I did not, however, have direct contact with the Afar Liberation Front of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti.
- 1.3 My research is based entirely upon primary and secondary research on country conditions in the region generally and in Djibouti specifically.
- 1.4 I would like to be clear that I am not a medical practitioner, a mental health clinician, a psychiatrist, or a social worker. I do not present myself as such.

- 1.5 I am a country-of-origin expert providing information about the psychosocial-emotional conditions of the host population related to the ongoing changes in an ethnically based, culturally unique, system of social order and governance that may or may not be causing members of its citizens to flee into exile. This includes the dichotomy between national versus indigenous and tribal systems of justice, governance, physical and mental pathology & treatment, and psychosocial development and sustainment.
- 1.6 In this respect, I am qualified to understand the USA APA DSM-5 and, through field research and analysis, apply it (translate) to indigenous communities outside of western psychological theory language.
2. **Assigned Research.** I have been asked to provide an expert opinion on the following specific issues by Solicitor Hamida Shah, Legal Justice Solutions, Unit 2, 12 O' Clock Court, 21 Attercliffe Road, Sheffield, S4 7WW.
- 2.1 **DJIBOUTIAN NATIONALITY:** *"Are you able to comment on the nationality laws of Djibouti? How can our client acquire citizenship in Djibouti in the absence of any ID/residence documents which prove he has a connection to the country?"*
- 2.2 **RISK OF RETURN:** *"Risk on return to the client's life if forced to return to a country (Djibouti) he is not a national of?"*
- 2.3 **COUNTRIES OUTSIDE OF CLAIMED ORIGIN:** *"Are you able to comment on the nationality laws of Somalia and Ethiopia which are countries our client claims his parents are from. How can a person in our client's position acquire nationality in any of these countries in the absence of any documentation showing any connections?"*
3. **Materials Provided.** For the preparation of this report, I have been prepared with a letter of instruction and a packet of documents that included claimant's statement, The UK Home Office Packet, and letters of instruction from the solicitor.
4. **Restatement of the Substance of the Case.** Mr. REDACTED presents as a potentially mixed ethnicity of Somali and Ethiopian (Amhara, Tigrayan, Oromo, or Somali-Ogadin). It does not appear that claimant knows his mother's ethnicity, only her nationality of Ethiopian and his father's nationality of Somalian. His parents are deceased, and he was orphaned without his birth being registered in Djibouti. He remembers living in Djibouti until puberty where he lived as a homeless street child unconnected to family. He was routinely swept up in regular police roundups of Djibouti's homeless street children, which usually occurs when international attention is focused on the issue. Claimant remembers seeking assistance from the church in obtaining identity documents to no avail. He remembers living at times between a Somali, an Arab, and a maternal uncle's family during his early years in Djibouti but often slept on the streets with other street children. When he was between 13-15 years old, he found his way to Saudi Arabia in the illegal immigrant flows and obtained forged work documents in Riyadh, where he worked fixing glass and windows of shops and other commercial buildings for between 5-6 years. He was eventually discovered by Saudi immigration and deported to his deceased mother's home nation of Ethiopia. He was denied leave to remain in Ethiopia and claimant travelled to Egypt where he again, lived and worked illegally for around 8 months, on a farm, caring for livestock and harvesting fruit and vegetables.

The owner of the farm allowed him to sleep in a container on the farm and he was allowed to eat the food that he helped to grow. Claimant reports receiving some remuneration for his work. Thereafter, claimant arrived in the United Kingdom and claimed asylum as a stateless person.

5. **Direct Responses to Assigned Questions.** My responses below are directly based on Appendix A (Country-Region Conditions) to this report.

5.1 **Djiboutian nationality.** Claimant is a young man of uncertain ethnic descent and unclaimed by any ethnic community, much less any subtribe or clan. My duty to the Court is to research and illustrate the respondent's claims against the actual phenomenological reality within his region and country of origin. This is often complex and difficult because meaning of concepts can radically differ from a western based understanding of society to a tribal or clan-based system, which adopts western terms to redescribe pre-existing, often ancient, structures of society, political behaviour, and crime and punishment. Thus, I offer the clearest description of a Respondent's condition as possible.

5.2 **Djiboutian Nationality.** Officially, Djibouti has a robust system of e-Governance that articulates the requirements and procedures to obtain a national identity card, access health and social services, enrol in educational institutions,

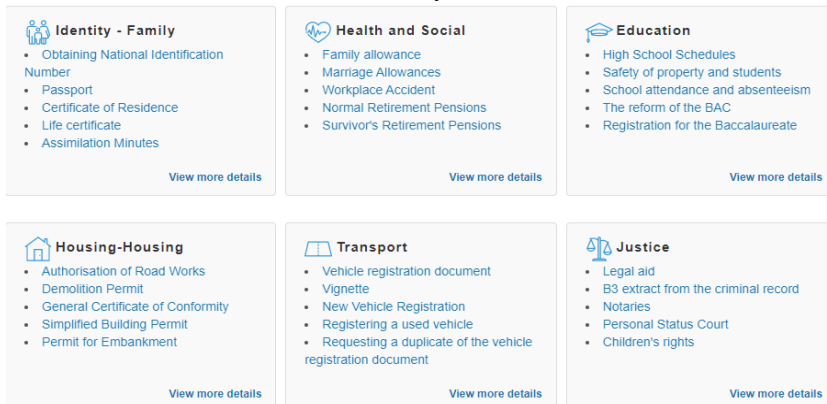
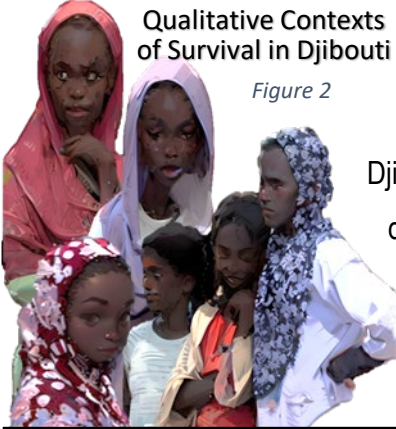


Figure 1 Screenshot from Djibouti's e-Governance Website



Qualitative Contexts of Survival in Djibouti

Figure 2



"When I was twelve, I walked for one month and two days from Ethiopia to Djibouti. I survived on the food that was given to me by strangers. I thought there would be more work in Djibouti. I am willing to do anything here – wash cars, clean windows – but I rarely find any jobs." – 16-year-old boy

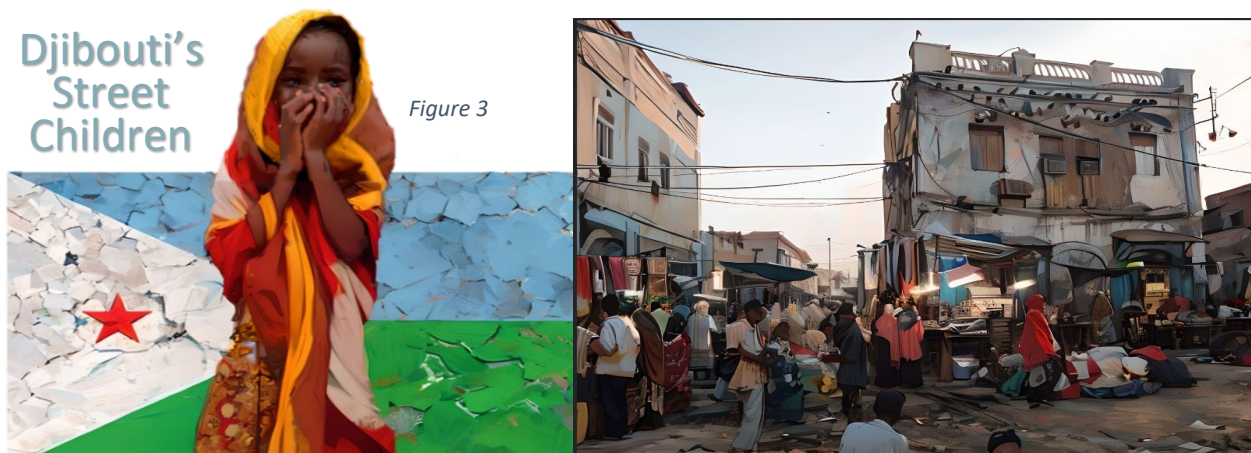
"I came here four years ago when I was twelve. I was living with my grandmother in Ethiopia who had nothing and could not afford to send me to school. I heard from my friends that life is better here so I took the train the border. Then I walked for five days through open land. There were a lot of difficulties. I was beaten, hungry and thirsty. When I arrived, I found a family who I worked for four years, cleaning and cooking for them. When they stopped paying, I left to live on the street. I sleep on the beach and have not been able to find any work. I want out of this life. But I have nowhere to go" -17-year old girl

"I came here with my mother, but when she moved on to work in Saudi Arabia, I stayed here. I have not seen her in eight years. She wanted to bring me with her but I was too scared to go. I wash cars to make money, but I dream of being a pilot one day and meeting my mom in Ethiopia. I don't remember Ethiopia but I would like to go back one day." – 17-year-old girl

obtain housing, transportation, and justice. According to Djibouti's e-Governance website, access to these services begin with being identified as Djiboutian through the issuance of a national identification number to any natural person registered in a civil registry of the Djiboutian government.¹ Every legal citizen of Djibouti must be registered. The registration of demographic data is mandatory for all legal citizens, regardless of their age. Biometric enrolment is mandatory for legal citizens of Djibouti from the age of 18. The birth of a legal citizen-child is declared by the father, or failing that, by the health personnel or by the person with whom the child was delivered when the mother gave birth outside her home. The declaration must be made within three days of delivery. The deadline is clear. The day of delivery does not count towards this period. For example, for a child born on July 1, 2018, the declaration must be made no later than July 4, 2018. When a person has not been registered within the legal period, the civil registrar may record him or her in his or her registers only by virtue of a judgment handed down by the court in whose jurisdiction the child was born. There does exist a process for naturalisation or 'assimilation' of citizens who live in Djibouti but were never registered in civil judicial proceedings, or others such as a person who marries a Djiboutian national or a person who intends to live in Djibouti permanently. To apply for naturalisation/assimilation, the applicant must demonstrate through reading and writing, that they possess sufficient knowledge of the Djiboutian language (French & Arabic), history, culture and society and the rights and duties conferred by Djiboutian nationality. Assimilation also assumes that the applicant demonstrates his or her adherence to the values of Djiboutian society. Interested persons in living and or working in Djibouti, must complete the naturalisation applications, and provide certificates of 'non-conviction' of crimes, medical health examination, marriage documentation, national identity documents of parents and children. The failure possess sufficient reading, writing, and educational skills to fill out the naturalisation application, or prove non-conviction of crimes, or the national identity status of parents and children, result in the naturalisation application being denied, or not processed. Djibouti law does provide for orphaned children found on Djibouti soil to be granted legal citizenship, providing that the child and or its finder, comply with the provisions above. The literacy rate among Djibouti's population segments is estimated at

¹ (Agence Nationale des Systemes d'Information de l'Etat, 2024)

approximately 67% while 50% of the total can speak the national language of French.² For all of Djibouti's population that does not currently have a formal certificate of birth and or a national identity number, the chances of them obtaining one appears to be marginal. By his own admission, the claimant in this case may or may not have been born in Djibouti and is of potential mixed ethnicity and mixed national origin. If he is Somali and Ethiopian, he could be of pure Dir clan Somali ethnicity as the Dir clan are divided between Djibouti, Somaliland, and Ethiopia's Somali-Ogadin. He could also be mixed Somali and Oromo, or even mixed Somali and Afar. None of this will matter to the Djibouti government, outside of his ability to comply with the requirements for legal citizenship at birth, or requesting legal naturalisation through assimilation as described above. The specific description of the Claimant's narrative of life as an orphan, child of the streets, whose parents were of Ethiopian and Somali ethnicity, is entirely consistent with historical and contemporaneous conditions of life in Djibouti, a major transit location for refugees and migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia, who seek to cross over to Yemen and beyond into the countries of the Arab Peninsula. The children of those adults who perish during their exile, often end up in the gritty streets of Djibouti, where their survival depends on begging, scrubbing cars, shining shoes, or selling their bodies on the street for sex or labour. But Djibouti is only a stopover for these street children, as police routinely round up and move them along when their numbers become too noticeable. At any one time, their numbers on the streets of Djibouti city would number between 1,000 at a low to upwards of 3,000. The International Organisation for Migration surveyed 1,137 children recently, discovering where they came from, how they fared, and their chances for survival. To be sure, there are non-governmental organisations working to ameliorate these refugees' conditions, but the need far outweighs the capacity. One such organization is the Catholic Church and its Order of Friars Minor that the Bishop of Djibouti, Giorgio Bertin, uses to minister to those children that they can reach. The church offers three meals a day and an afternoon snack, as well as clothing and hygiene products. Another organisation helping is called Caritas and has been working with street children in Djibouti for the last 18 years. Presently, they have nearly 1,000 street children registered with their organisation, and most all of them are children of migrants whose parents are in Ethiopia, Somalia, and beyond. Eighty-five per cent of them are from Ethiopia's Oromia region, with the rest being split



² (Agence Nationale des Systemes d'Information de l'Etat, 2024; Éditions Gallimard, 2013; World Bank, 2024)

equally between Somalis and locals. Their age ranges between 8 and 18 years and the vast majority – 90 per cent – are boys. Those that Caritas and the Catholic diocese of Djibouti are able to help, however, are a small portion of the overall problem. A proposal to register the children with the government’s Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Woman and Family was among the major recommendations that came out of a study conducted in 2018, with funding from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa. The proposal was resisted by the government of Djibouti as doing so could place responsibility for these undocumented Djiboutian children at the feet of the government. The Republic of Djibouti’s geographical location places it in the centre of strong migration flows to and from the Arabian Peninsula and the tiny country hosts approximately 31,528 involuntarily displaced people including over 23,493 refugees and 8,035 asylum-seekers living in the refugee villages of Ali Addeh (53%), Holl-Holl (24%) and Markazi (8%), as well as in Djibouti City (15%), mainly from Somalia (42.9%), Ethiopia (41.3%) and Yemen (10.8%). Of these, 67% are women and children. While the Djiboutian government has cooperated with the United Nations agencies and programs, the pressure on the government is significant with little end in sight. Djibouti has ratified several fundamental instruments on the rights of the child of those refugees and asylum seekers who the government sees as the responsibility of the international community (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2020). Nationality in Djibouti is governed by Title II of the Civil Code adopted in 2018; the provisions are for the most part the same as those adopted by the 2004 Code de la nationalité djiboutienne, which significantly reformed the first nationality law of independent Djibouti, adopted in 1981.³ Since 2004 the law has provided for nationality to be attributed at birth to a child whose father or mother is a citizen, whether the birth takes place inside or outside the country. While the constitution does not protect the right to a nationality, a law on the legal protection of minors adopted in 2015 provides that “every child shall be registered at birth and shall have from birth the right to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by his or her parents”. No rights to nationality are provided based on birth in the territory, although children of unknown parents are presumed to be Djiboutian. Despite the foregoing, by law, orphans or abandoned children found on the territory of the country, whose parents are unknown, are legally considered to be Djiboutian. Because the claimant left the country without having any documentation of his birth in Djibouti, he would not likely be granted citizenship based on that clause of Title II law. When the claimant attempted to gain assistance from the Catholic Church in gaining documentation of his citizenship, the inability would likely seem a denying factor in claimant being accepted for repatriation. Claimant’s previous work history and illiteracy into his middle age would not offer him advantage to be allowed into the country to acquire citizenship. Djibouti annually receives around 180,000 irregular border crossers each year from Somalia and Ethiopia and at any given time, around 150,000 non-Djiboutians are living on Djiboutian soil, mostly in refugee camps operated by the United Nations and western NGOs. Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers per day are making their way across Djibouti’s arid land to the coastal town of Obock, on the Gulf of Aden, where they

³ (Agence Nationale des Systemes d’Information de l’Etat, 2024; Freedom House Staff Research Team, 2023; World Data Staff, 2023)

embark on small fishing boats across the Bab el Mandeb Strait linking the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula. Bab el Mandeb means ‘The Place Where the People Cry’, because of the treacherous waters where over 3,300 African migrants have died since 2006. IOM reported 95 died last year, all bound for Yemen. Despite the raging conflict in Yemen, tens of thousands of Ethiopians pass through Djibouti annually, seeking access to the Arabian Peninsula, driven by the growing violent conflict between Somali, Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrayan peoples. According to Djibouti’s Title II laws, they would not be under any obligation to accept his repatriation given his lack of documentation. Against the backdrop of tens of thousands of new refugees arriving from Ethiopia and Somalia, one more mixed ethnicity refugee without family connection and belonging in Djibouti would not be of interest. If the UK Government prevailed on the Djiboutian government to admit this undocumented asylum claimant from the UK, the Djiboutian authorities would almost certainly assign him to one of the many refugee camps housing existing Somalis, Ethiopians, and Yemenis. It is unlikely, in my professional opinion, that the Djiboutian government would offer claimant citizenship and would certainly not take over the care and maintenance of an undocumented immigrant when they are unable to care for their own homeless street children who overflow the capital city. I can not speak for what diplomatic arrangements that the UK Foreign Office might be able to make with the immigration authorities of Djibouti, Somalia, or Ethiopia, but I can speak to the fact that in any of these cases, the asylum claimant will simply end up as one more internally displaced refugee in camps that are already overflowing with people fleeing from violence, and beset by famine and medical insecurity. **Conclusion:** There is little to no legal pathway for this asylum claimant to gain legal citizenship in Djibouti. His lack of any documentation and individual(s) in loco parentis able to speak for him, alone disqualify him from being considered. But even if he were allowed to apply for naturalisation as a legal citizen, his illiteracy, lack of education, and lack of required language skills would preclude his acceptance

into Djiboutian society. If the Guelleh government of Djibouti were to accept his entrance into the country, he would likely be taken to the refugee camp that most closely aligns with claimant’s ethnic background mix.

Risk of Return. Unlike return to

Somalia, forced repatriation to Djibouti would not likely result in the murder and or weaponised recruitment by violent extremists. The stable security situation in Djibouti allows the United Nations and related organisations (intergovernmental and nongovernmental) to operate with safety. In the UNHCR operated Ali Addeh Camp, Djibouti has

Figure 4



taken in over 27,000 refugees from four neighbouring countries (Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, & Eritrea), and large numbers of adults in the camps were born there and have never lived in their country of origins. The Guelleh government has worked closely to support the UNHCR's efforts at receiving and caring for the refugees in its various camps. Several camps, Ali Addeh included, have nearly merged with the previously existing residents, without undue political discomfort. This is because mo



st of the villages outside of Djibouti city are populated by residents who are outside of the existing system of legal citizenship described above, and thus pose no practical electoral challenge to the dominant political party. The Ali Addeh camp was expanded with the establishment of Holl-Holl Camp at the start of the Somalia conflict in 1992 and is home to more than 15,000 Somali refugees, many of whom were born there. The Guelleh government in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which consists of eight Eastern Horn of Africa countries to integrate refugees into their national education systems and let them earn certificates that are recognized throughout the region. While technically camps, the populations are not restricted to the camp/village, and could, if offered, accept work in Djibouti. The UNHCR Filippo Grandi, stated in a UNHCR report that:

“This is extremely important as it means that refugees will have freedom of movement and can access public services and whenever possible, jobs,” said Grandi. “Djibouti has always been a very open country, but the fact that they announced it and this follows some very progressive legislation that the country has been issuing in the last few months, is extraordinary.”

The government services available to legal residents who have a NMI Card (plastic or electronic) do not apply to those without an NMI to include large segments of the population who do not have documentation of their legal status. The incoming refugees allowed into the camps/villages by the Guelleh administration remain the financial and resource



burden of the United Nations and their home countries. Djibouti has an estimated population of over 1.1 million people, including documented and undocumented persons and is the smallest landmass country in Africa at about 1,000 square kilometers. Despite Commissioner Grandi's exuberant reports on the conditions of refugees in Djibouti, the actuality is somewhat different. Somali refugee Amina Ahmed Ali, her husband, and their 7 children share a basic one-room hut that is lined with mattresses for sleeping,

eating, studying, and working. "Life in the camp is very tough and it is difficult to find enough water and food for my family," says Amina, because planting is impossible in the dry, saline soil, and she has to rely on monthly World Food Programme rations and some occasional additions bought with her small salary from her social work in the camp.

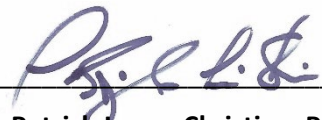
Nevertheless, the UNHCR counts Djibouti's support for education as a win, with Commissioner Grandi telling the IGAD's regional education conference that President Guelleh's actions are "so important because it recognizes that education is not just a right, but also an instrument of dignity and identity and also a very important investment to the future." Like the Guelleh administration's support of international military bases that work to secure/control the



critical waterways between the Arabian Peninsula and the African Continent, their support of the UNHCR's refugee problems creates opportunities for the ruling elite. The United Nations funding that flows with the care and feeding of refugees eventually adds to the overall gross domestic product of the country but without adding to financial responsibility of the growing populations or the challenges to changes in a growing electoral base. Where the Guelleh administration leases space to the USA, France, Japan, China, and NATO countries for military bases and ports (which it then provides protected base support services to), the administration essentially leases its land to house refugees who will never become legal citizens, and who mix with preexisting residents of undetermined citizenship. For the Guelleh family and governance, the lack of addition to the electoral base while increasing their taxable revenue is clearly good business that has the approval of the UN and most western governments.

5.3 Countries outside of Claimed Origin. As an expert country of origin investigator, I can speak authoritatively that an asylum claimant's deportation to Mogadishu would be inherently more dangerous than Djibouti.

I, Patrick James Christian, confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.



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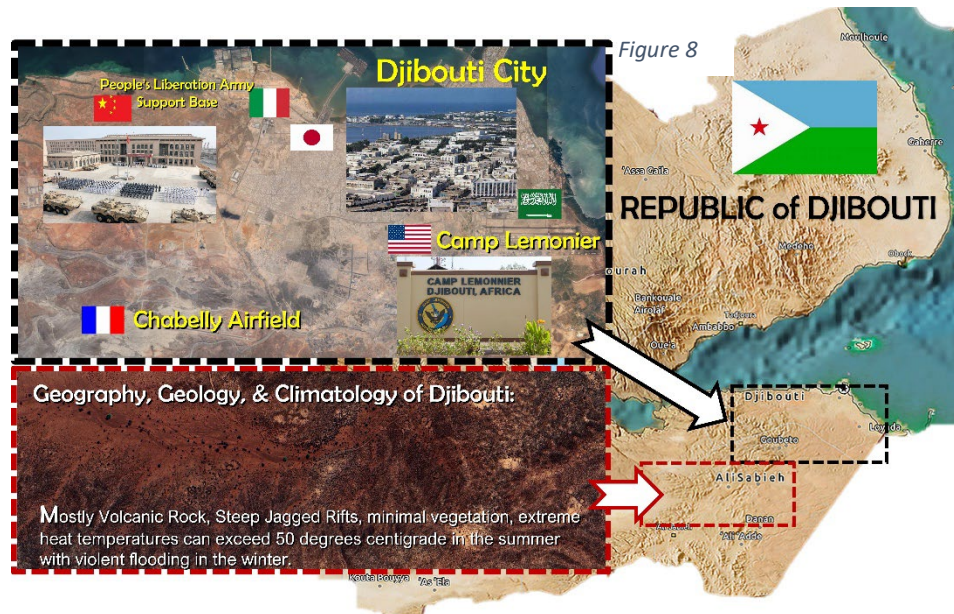
7th of December 2024

APPENDIX A: Country-Region context of Djibouti.

§A1. Djibouti's strategic placement in Africa and International Security

Djibouti's strategic placement in Africa and International Security are important factors in understanding the Djiboutian government and the relative position of democratic opposition groups. The Republic of Djibouti is a tiny country located in the Horn of Africa at the centre of the narrowest point of passage in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, across from war torn Yemen's southern capital of Aden. Its strategic geographical location places it at the entrance to the Suez Canal, as a chokepoint, sharing territorial control of the strait and the Gulf of Aden. In contrast to its neighbours, Djibouti is an oasis in a very violent neighbourhood with an array of national military forces operating to contain violent extremism and maintain strategic interests. To Djibouti's southeast lies the unrecognised countries of Somaliland and Puntland, and the embattled nation of

Somalia, ravaged by Al Shabaab. The combined military forces of the African Union, USA, UK, UAE, Turkey, and NATO work to deal with the intractable civil conflicts there. To its south lies Somali Ogadin, home of the Ogadin Liberation Front (OLF) and neighbouring Oromia, home of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), both of which are at war with an unstable government of Ethiopia.⁴ To Djibouti's north is the splinter state of Eritrea, which has been embroiled in violent conflict with Ethiopia and with violent extremists within. Across the strait is Yemen, whose civil war refugees populate the displaced persons camps along with those from Somaliland/Puntland/Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eretria.⁵ Former colonial power France maintains a significant military presence. The country also hosts America's largest military base in Africa, China's first overseas military base and Japan's first military base since the Second World War. Djibouti serves as the main gateway for trade for its giant neighbour, landlocked Ethiopia. Djibouti is more 'City-State' than actual country, and the areas around Djibouti City are the only developed areas outside of the host of foreign military bases who build their own infrastructure. Outside of these areas, Djibouti's geography, geology, and climate, make most of its land nearly uninhabitable by anyone other than the Afar tribes. The highs in the summer months often rise into the 150-degree Fahrenheit range, baking the earth into hard clay. The winter rains are minimal, but, sufficient to wash away anything that is not elevated into the ocean.



⁴ Disclaimer: researcher served as a combat advisor to the government military forces of Ethiopia fighting Al-Shabaab, the OLF, and the OLA.

⁵ Disclaimer: researcher served as a combat advisor and field researcher to USA, UAE, AU, and NATO forces operating in Yemen.

Djibouti's principal economic engine is the presence of a host of international military bases representing the national interests of France, America, China, Japan, Italy, and Spain. Between the land rentals, base services, and international transfers, Djibouti represents a unique by-product of West-East national interests in Africa and the Middle East. The graphic in figure 2 illustrates Djibouti's challenges and opportunities that have brought its government into violent conflict with its own civil population segments. The purpose of this graphic aid in figure 2 is to illustrate that that most of the usable land lies within a very small portion of the country, dominated by Djibouti City and the host of international military bases. In the northern regions, contiguous to Eritrea and Ethiopia, Afar-ethnic nomadic pastoralists and agrarian clans exist in a subsistence level of social life, mostly unchanged for a millennium or more. Tribal, clan-based subsistence social collectives live in and around any natural water sources in a semi-nomadic cycle of movement and survival in all areas outside of the city and base areas where human engineering enables the support of sedentary life. There are also permanent or semi-permanent areas of tribal life in the mountains in the north, which have been designated as national parklands by the government. At best, the mountains, which harbour a unique high desert arid forest, supports a subsistence level of life for the indigenous Afar peoples.⁶

§A2. Djibouti Socioeconomic Construction & National Identity.

The distinction between ethnic identity and national identity in Djibouti specifically and east Africa generally is much more distinct than in Europe or North America. Djibouti consists of one majority ethnic identity, Somali, and two minority ethnic identities, Afar and Arab. Appendix A (Country-Region Context), §A2 (Social Construction of Djibouti) explains the regional ethnic construction in detail. The graphic image in figure 1, offers a useful tool to illustrate Djibouti's artificial (non-organic) construction. The tiny state was carved out of historically Somali and Afar ethnic territories by European colonial powers who depended on the ports of Djibouti City for access and control of the Bab-el-Mandeb, which translates to the 'Gate of Lamentation' in Arabic and to 'The Gate of Grief or the Gate of Tears' in Tigrinya. This sea gate is a waterway strait between Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa. It connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and by extension the Indian Ocean. The United States and its 5-Eye allies, the French, Japan, China, and other international powers maintain advanced operating military bases in Djibouti's crowded harbours and 'use' the Djibouti state's small size and politico-military weakness to ensure their access to those bases and the critical waterway that it straddles. The central Dir and Isaaq Somali population occupy most of Djibouti's city and surrounding lands, while the Afar inhabit the mountain regions bordering Ethiopia, where

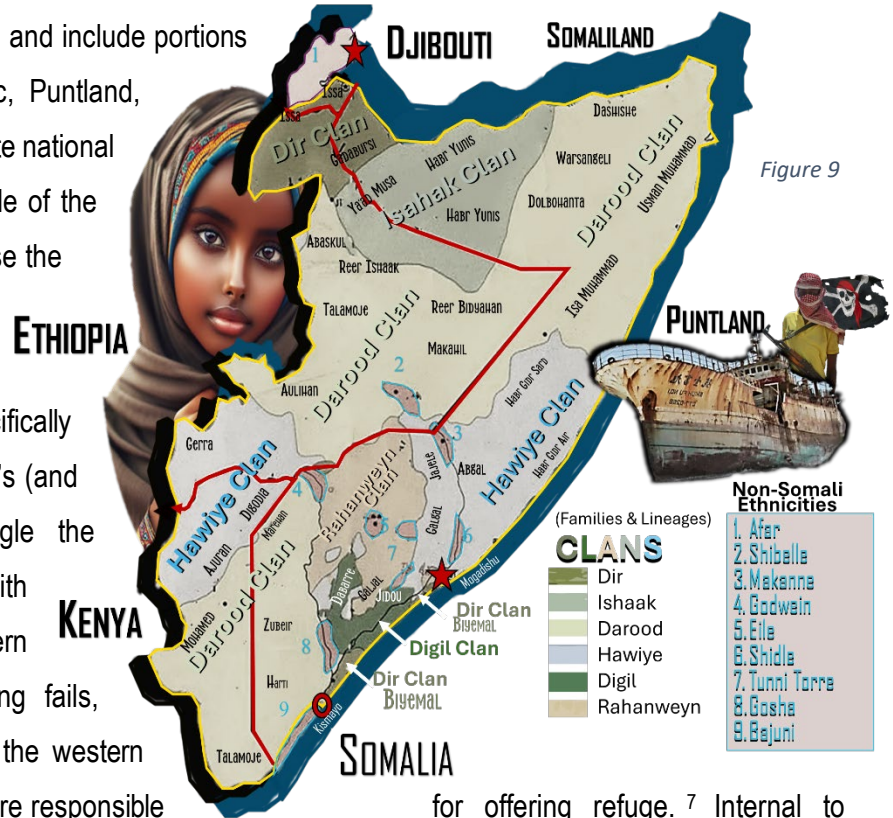
Djibouti's population is (majority) Somali and Afar (minority) ethnic peoples. Socially, the Afar are organized into clan families led by elders and two main classes: the *asaimara* ('reds') who are the dominant class politically, and the *adoimara* ('whites') who are a working class and are found in the Mabla Mountains. Clans can be fluid and even include outsiders like the (Issa clan). In addition, the Afar are reputed for their martial prowess. Men traditionally carry the *jile*, a famous curved knife. They also have an extensive repertoire of battle songs.

The Afar are mainly livestock holders, primarily raising camels but also tending to goats, sheep, and cattle. However, shrinking pastures for their livestock and environmental degradation have made some Afar instead turn to cultivation, migrant labour, and trade.

⁶ (Wam, 2005)

they wage a low-level armed resistance movement for ethnic independence. From the graphic aid in figure 1, you can see that Djibouti was historically a part of the Dir clan's home areas, in the same way that Ethiopia's portion of the Horn of Africa (Somali-Ogadin) was carved out of historically Hawiye, Darood, Isaaq, and Dir clan homelands. Why this is important is because Somali people perceive their belonging based on clan and subclan affiliation, rather than artificial, western induced political state boundaries. If the Somali people were to describe their overarching national identity beyond their clan/subclan identity, it would be Somalia, and include portions

of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somali Federal Republic, Puntland, Somaliland, and Djibouti. This trans-political state national identity would not include the lands and people of the Afar, the Oromo, Tigrayan, or Amhara. Because the artificial political state-nations that created Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and the various segments of the former Somalia are specifically western (European & North American), Somali's (and other indigenous peoples) mentally comingle the concepts of political-state-national-identity with Europe and the Americas. When the western construct of state-nation-governance-belonging fails, those forced into exile naturally assume that the western centres' that created those political structures are responsible



for offering refuge.⁷ Internal to Djibouti (and most other countries), when asked what is your national identity, respondents uniformly respond with Afar, Arab, Somali, Dir, or Isaaq, followed by differing levels of subclans and family descent groups. Their awareness of national political identity is most codified in the psychosocial thought and behaviour of elites who routinely travel internationally for business, education, or pleasure. For the rest of Djiboutian society, western political state identity remains a purely conceptual idea separate from the struggles of daily life and belonging. Djibouti is one of the smallest countries in Africa. The size of its economy limits its ability to diversify production and increases its reliance on foreign markets, making it more vulnerable to market downturns and hampering its access to external capital. Djibouti also has less than 1,000 square kilometres of arable land (0.04 percent of its total land area) and average annual rainfall of only 130 millimetres. It depends almost completely on imports to meet its food needs. Djibouti's Dir and Isaaq elites (social, political, military) generate all of their income by the presence of foreign military bases and their operations. The Factionalized elites

⁷ This question of, 'who do you believe is responsible for you in exile?' is one of my principal qualitative inquiries into the psychosocial-emotional conditions of target audience analysis.

indicator for Djibouti offers insight into the social structure of the political state, which currently stands at 7.7 for 2024, an



1st President of Djibouti
1977 to 1999
Hassan Gouled Aptidon
Issa Clan, Elaye Tribe,
Mamassan Family



2nd President of Djibouti
1999 to Present
Ismail Omar Guelleh
Issa Clan, Elaye Tribe,
Mamassan Family

Figure 10

increase from 7.3 in 2023. The factionalised elites indicator (C2) is one of 12 indicators that make up the fragile states index maintained by the Fund for Peace.⁸ This FEI C2 considers the fragmentation of state social, economic, and political institutions along ethnic, class, clan, racial or religious lines.. The higher the value, the more fragmented are the institutions in the country. What we find in Djibouti is a high risk of over-indebtedness by a very small elite segment of the population that is increasingly dependent on Ethiopia and China for major trade goods. The base of the economy and the vast majority of the population exists via a large informal economy with high poverty and endemic unemployment. The segmentation between elites and the base population grows more distinct each year, as the ruling government-family, tightens its control over the increasingly profitable foreign military bases trade that power the economy. Besides the Afar-ethnic peoples living primarily in the northern region of Djibouti, and Yemeni Arab, the majority of the Djiboutian population is Somali ethnicity, with representation from two of the six Somali Clans: Dir (Issa & Gadaboursi) and Isaaq.⁹ These two Somali clans are large regional communities, and their populations are in Djibouti, Somaliland, Puntland, Somalia, Kenya, and Somali-Ogadin region of

Ethiopia.¹⁰ In Somali Clan culture, all value and decision making (economic, social, political, memorial, and associational) is inextricable from bloodlines and family relationship. Because of Somalia's historical narratives of competitive survival, the normal aspects of ethnic meta-contrast do not apply. Djibouti's majority Somali Clan is of the Dir/Issa, with smaller representative families from the Isaaq and Gadaboursi clans. Within Djibouti's Dir/Issa, control of the clan and of the country has resided with the Mamassan subclan and Aptidon/Guelleh family. A second Issa subclan, the Furlaba were once aligned with the Mamassan and served in powerful positions within the ruling subclan business in Djibouti. When political power began to become consolidated within the immediate family of then President Aptidon and his nephew Guelleh, disagreements between families of the Mamassan and Furlaba led to the latter being forced out and alienated from government access.



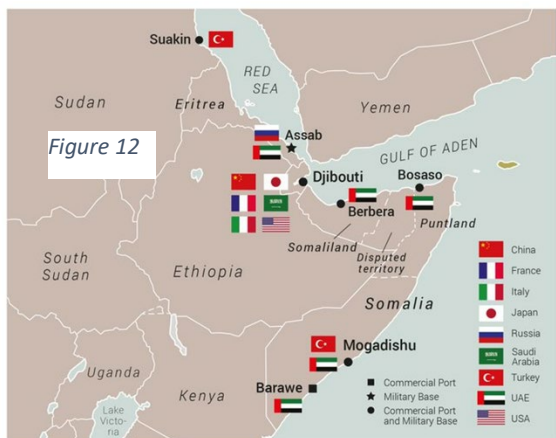
Figure 11 Subversive political cartoon
banned by the administration

Under Aptidon and his nephew, President Guelleh, Djiboutian politics operates along the lines of 'winner takes all' form of social organisation. President (uncle) Aptidon and President (nephew) Guelleh are members of this Mamassan Family sub-sub clan of Somali Issa Clan, and they have built a powerful political structure of aligned internal and external interests that depend on a well-controlled security environment. President Guelleh's successful handling of the country's primary economy (military basing and servicing) has ensured his re-elections without serious contest. More importantly to the Guelleh administration is that the underlying tension between Djibouti's rival clients (China, USA, Japan, KSA, Italy, France) not spill over into pre-existing

⁸ (The Fund for Peace, 2024; The Global Economy, 2024)

⁹ (RefWorld Staff Research Team, 2004)

¹⁰ (Research Directorate, 1990)



cleavages between Somali and Afar, and between Somali clans vying for placement in its rigid social order. The Guelleh government, for instance, has agreed to take on public debt worth around 88 percent of the country's overall \$1.72 billion GDP, with China owning the lion's share of it, according to a report published in March by the Center for Global Development.¹¹ The Djiboutian government has been keen to work with Beijing. It partnered with China Merchants Ports Holdings Company, or CMPort—the same state-owned corporation that gained control of the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka—to build the Doraleh Multipurpose Port.¹² That project was

completed in May 2017, and, unlike Sri Lanka, Djibouti appears to have avoided the pitfalls that led to Sri Lanka's forfeiture of the Hambantota Port. Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh is now planning a new Djibouti International Free Trade Zone, a \$3.5-billion venture with China, as a "hope for thousands of young jobseekers." (Hirt, 2020) The importance of this last paragraph is the added pressure on the Guelleh government to maintain an outward public assertion of solid control over the population, governance, and decision making necessary for long-term follow through with a diverse range of stakeholders, who represent competing interests.

§A3. Djibouti Incorporated. *A wholly owned subsidiary of the Mamassan Guelleh Family.*

All of this clarifies that Djibouti's socio-political life revolves around a very small piece of land that its regional neighbours and the international community have made profitable beyond normal levels of economic life found in the north in Eritrea or the southeast in Somaliland/Puntland/Somalia. The Republic of Djibouti gained its independence from France in the late 1970s and has been of strategic importance and value ever since. In its 45 years as an independent democratic state, Djibouti has had only two presidents. The first was Hassan Gouled Aptidon (1977-1999) and the second was Aptidon's chief of staff/security chief, the current President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh (1999-present). President Aptidon was elected to three, six-year terms as the new nation's first president. His successor, current President Guelleh, has just been re-elected for his fifth six-year term. In early 2011, the Djiboutian citizenry took part in a series of protests of the long-serving government in the backdrop of the larger Arab Spring Movement. Despite the protests, Guelleh was re-elected to a fourth term later that year, with 80.63% of the vote, and to a fifth term with 97% of the vote in 2021.¹³ President Guelleh's hold over the political, social, and economic life of Djibouti depends on a web of family connections which has been woven around his family and the family of his wife, Kadra Mahamoud Haid. The First Lady of Djibouti acts as a family-national vice-president, while their two daughters, presidential adviser Haibado and businesswoman Fatouma-Awo, serve as the

¹¹ Mordechai Chaziza, 2021, China Consolidates Its Commercial Foothold in Djibouti, *The Diplomat*, [China Consolidates Its Commercial Foothold in Djibouti – The Diplomat](#)

¹² (Chaziza, 2021; Morrow, 2022)

¹³ Clelia Oziel and Frances Kerry (2021) Djibouti's President Guelleh wins fifth term with 97% of votes, Reuters, Nairobi. (Reuters Staff, 2021)

nucleus of executive power. While an heir apparent to Ismail Omar Guelleh is not in discussion, the first lady is discreetly preparing her son from a first marriage, Naguib Abdallah Kamil for high political responsibilities which will likely involve one of the top positions in government, possibly as a replacement for Prime Minister Abdouldader Kamil Mohamed.¹⁴

President Guelleh himself has business interests in common with several of his numerous half-brothers, particularly with Saad Omar Guelleh, director general of the Port of Djibouti, which is a major source of income for the country and the presidency. Having strategically positioned his close relatives in all key positions, this strategy had allowed his tightly-knit community of Mamassan to dominate the entire system and solidify his authority. Despite facing criticism, Guelleh has



Figure 13 Guelleh Family

rewarded his relatives with crucial positions within his administration. According to several government officials speaking on condition of anonymity, the Guelleh's close relatives and family members exercise control over critical economic and revenue sources, including the ports and domestic finances, contributing to widespread poverty. The following is a working list of some of the key positions held by Guelleh's relatives that I've been able to discover, using investigative journalism by the Horn Examiner and Africa Intelligence sources as starting points.¹⁵ The lists are still growing as additional investigation continues. This first group serves as Guelleh's closest inner circle, and despite the absence of any meaningfully independent investigative reporting in Djibouti, the list keeps getting longer.

President Ismael Omar Guelleh's relatives in senior positions in the Djiboutian Government:

Ms. Haibado Ismael Omar, presidential daughter, is the Presidential Advisor on economy and administration.¹⁶

Mr. Saad Omar Guelleh, presidential brother, is the Director General of the Port of Djibouti.

Mr. Gouled Ahmed Youssouf, presidential cousin, is the Director of Customs.

Mr. Djama Ali Guelleh, presidential cousin, is the Director of National Electricity Company.¹⁷

Mr. Guelleh Idriss Omar Guelleh, presidential nephew, is the Director of Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸

Mr. Aboubaker Omar Hadi, presidential half-brother, is the Chairman of Port Authorities and Free Zone.¹⁹

¹⁴ (Galindo et al., 2015)

¹⁵ (Galindo et al., 2015; Horn Examiner Staff, 2023)

¹⁶ Haibado exercises more power and influence than the Finance Minister, overshadowing him by making crucial decisions within the Ministry and the overall economic portfolio.

¹⁷ State-owned Electricite de Djibouti (EDD).

¹⁸ President's nephew and has taken over the responsibilities of the Foreign Minister, reducing the latter to a mere figurehead with a ceremonial role who lacks any real authority.

¹⁹ Approximately 80% of the personnel responsible for overseeing Ports are relatives of President Guelleh

Mr. Djama Ibrahim Dharar, presidential cousin, is the Director General of Douraleh Multipurpose Port

Mr. Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed, presidential in-law married to Saadia Aïnaché Guelleh, serves as Prime Minister of Djibouti.

President Guelleh has no sons, and his wife's son from a previous marriage may well become a viable option. Currently, President Guelleh's brothers, nephews, cousins, and in-laws run most Djiboutian enterprises, both public and private.²⁰ In the event of President Guelleh's death, there is speculation within Djibouti that First Lady Kadra might ascend to the office of presidency with her son becoming the Prime Minister who would run Djibouti Incorporated alongside his mother. Alternatively, speculation suggests that it will be her son Naguib Kamil who succeeds President Guelleh, although her husbands' male relatives may well react negatively to a shift in patriarchal succession. Even at the time of this writing, the president's family and the first lady's family members in government appear to be struggling for power. The president's daughter Haibado has reportedly taken most of the responsibilities of the finance minister, Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh, away. First lady Kadra's daughter in law is the finance minister's niece and unconfirmed reports suggest that Haibado is ensuring that the family company's finances remain opaque to her mother's side of the family.

First Lady Dadra Mahamoud Haid's relatives in senior positions in the Djiboutian Government:

Mr. Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh, First Lady Kadra's in-law, uncle to son Naguib's wife Fatouma Saïd Dawaleh, is the Minister of Finance for Djibouti.

Mr. Ali Hassan Bahdon [inlaw married to Nasli Abdullahi Mohamed Kamil, the First Lady's daughter] is Djibouti's Minister of Justice.

Ms. Amina REDACTED Aden [immediate family of Mrs Guelleh] is the Minister of Urban Planning and Housing

Mr. Mustafa Mohamed Mohamud [immediate family of Mrs Guelleh] Minister of Education

President and Mrs Guelleh's loyalists dominate nearly all ministries in a recently implemented Cabinet reshuffle replacing members from other communities. This has raised concerns about nepotism and the exclusion of qualified and capable individuals as his loyalists, enjoyed their positions for extended periods. This practice only perpetuates the concentration of power within a select few. The President's verbal assurances of his commitment to democratic governance and accountability are completely in opposition to the make up of the government and internal struggles over power and position within his and his wife's blood related families. Such power concentration within a tightly knit inner circle erodes transparency and inclusivity of Djibouti's political system. Moreover, the complete immunity from

²⁰ (Djibouti Staff Research Team, 2021; Horn Observer Staff researchers, 2021)

prosecution over the widespread corruption practices enjoyed by Guelleh's close relatives throughout his reign has further exacerbated the situation. My research suggests that the entire mid-grade and senior officer corps of Djibouti's intelligence and security services are drawn from this single sub sub clan of Mamassan Somali Dir/Issa. Further, it appears that many of the most senior leaders are in some manner, related by blood or marriage to the president, assuring him of unquestioned loyalty and obedience within a Somali cultural context.²¹

Dir/Issa Mamassan subclan members of the Djiboutian Government:

Hassan Said Khaireh is the Director of National Intelligence.

Major General Zakaria Cheikh Ibrahim is the Chief of Defence Forces.

Colonel Mohamed Djama Doualeh is the Commander of the Republican Guard.

Colonel Wais Omar Bogoreh is the Commander of Coastal Guards.

Colonel Ahmed Daher Djama is the Commander of the National Marine Forces.

Colonel AbdouREDACTED Ali Kahin: Director General of Police Forces & close relative of President Guelleh.²²

Colonel Wahib Moussa Kalinleh is the Commander of Air Forces.

Mohamed REDACTEDIlahi Wais: Chief of Staff of the Presidency.

Youssef Aouled Farah: Director of Prime Minister's Office.

AMB. Mohamed Siad Doualeh: Ambassador to the United States of America and the United Nations

Mr. Cheikh Houssein Ali is the head of Dawah and Propaganda.

My research continues to uncover blood relations, and or relations from in-law on various sides of the family of President Guelleh's daughters, brothers, nephews and nieces, and their spouses, as well as blood and in-law relationships to his wife, the First Lady. The sheer number of Djiboutian national leaders who are dependent on the Guelleh regime's continuation make it likely that any internal threat to the president's rule will be swiftly and harshly dealt with.

Non-Mamassan members of the Somali Isaaq with particularly close relationships with President Guelleh from the Habar Awal sub sub clan and in senior positions of government.

²¹ (Abdisamad, 2023)

²² Former Police Chief Abdullahi Abdi was replaced by Guelleh family member Colonel Ali Kahin. Unconfirmed reporting suggested that the former police commander had been insufficiently aggressive against opponents of the Guelleh regime. No official charges have ever been presented against him and he remains in prison. According to his family, his years-long continued detention not only raises questions about the due process but also highlights Guelleh's willingness to replace key positions with family members to maintain control.

AMB REDACTED Mahmoud Ibe, Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to Ethiopia/ Permanent Representative to African Union and UNECA, is a member of the Isaaq/Habar Awal.

Mr. Houssein Ahmed Houssein is the General Manager of Horizon Port and is a member of the Isaaq/Habar Awal.

Mr. Ahmed Osman Ali is the Governor of Central Bank and is a member of the Isaaq/Habar Awal.

Mr. Hassan Issa Sultan is the State Inspector General and is a member of the Isaaq/Habar Awal.

Mr. Almis Mohamed REDACTEDllahi is the General Secretary of the Government at the Presidency and is a member of the Isaaq/Habar Awal.²³

Mr. Mohamed Assoweh Bouh is the Director General of Djibouti Telecom, and the only Isaaq/Furlaba still serving in the Djiboutian Government that I would find.²⁴

Djiboutian social and political life under the Guelleh led Mamassan family clan is one of competitive merger and control, operated as a family-owned corporation and using the entirety of state power to maintain order and discipline over the remaining majority of the population.

§A4. Civil War & Ethnic Reconciliation.

Even before French rule in Djibouti (first as French Somaliland and then as French Territory of the ethnic Afar and the Somali Issa), there have been ethnic tensions in Djibouti between the majority Somali Issa, and the minority ethnic Afar. Following independence in 1977, the Somali Issa-dominated People's Rally for Progress (PRP) party ruled Djibouti as a de facto one-party state for all its existence. For the first decade or so, the PRP was the only authorized party. Many Afar and Issa families outside this one-party system felt marginalized. In the early years of the Djiboutian statehood, several political and armed opposition groups merged into what became known as FRUD or the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy. While the FRUD was often characterised as an armed political movement of the Afar peoples, in fact, there were and are, Somali Issa in this movement and there are Afar clans aligned with the Somali Issa dominated PRP in power. Djibouti President Aptidon and his successor Ismail Guelleh, organised the government to include several political positions that were designated as Afar, most of the Afar and much of the Somali Issa remain outside of political access. Currently, political power is shared by a Somali Issa president and an Afar prime minister, with cabinet posts roughly



Figure 14 Outlawed FRUD Party

²³ in Djibouti, the Head of State is also the Head of Government.

²⁴ Mr. Bouh holds a significant position in the company and enjoys a close relationship with the president, as they are related on his maternal side. He is also married to a Mamassan woman who shares a close association with the president.

divided.²⁵ However, it is the Somali Issa who dominate the government, civil service, and the ruling party, a situation that has bred resentment and political competition between the Somali Issa and the Afar. The government is dominated by the Somali Issa elites, who enjoy broad support of the Somali clans, especially the Somali Isaaq (the clan of the current president's wife) and the Somali Gadabuursi Dir (who are the second most prominent Somali clan in Djibouti politics). Resentment exploded in the Djiboutian Civil War which ravaged the country from 1991 to 1994. The war ended with the FRUD transforming into a political only organisation and began working to meet its needs through political and legal channels. After the civil war of 1991-1994 ended, the FRUD party split into two factions: a moderate wing, led by FRUD President Ali Mohamed Daoud and FRUD Secretary General Ougoure Kifle Ahmed, who signed the December 1994 peace agreement. The other wing was led by Ahmed Dini Ahmed, who denounced this agreement and continued armed resistance. The Daoud faction aligned itself with President Aptidon's government and its top two leaders were rewarded with ministerial positions (Daoud as Minister of Health and Social Affairs and Ougoure as Minister of Health & Water Resources. Daoud and Ougoure worked to isolate the other faction's top leadership—Ahmed Dini and its Vice-President Mohamed Adayta Youssouf—deciding that they could not "speak on behalf of the FRUD or to commit it in any manner. The moderate faction of FRUD grew into an elected 153-member National Council with a 21-member Executive Committee. Although the party continued to be led by Daoud, who is an Afar, the composition of the leadership transformed into a multi-ethnic base that eventually challenged Aptidon/Guelleh's ruling PRP. A Somali Issa was elected as FRUD's First Vice-President, a Gadabursi as Second VP, and the powerful executive committee included a balanced mix of Afar, Somali Issa, Gadabursi, Arabs, and even Somali Isaaq members of President Guelleh's wife's Somali clan. During the 1999 elections, then presidential candidate Guelleh, inheriting Aptidon's PRP party, found himself having to align with the newly emergent FRUD party to secure a majority win. During the December 1997 parliamentary election, the ruling PRP party formed this alliance with FRUD and won 78.5% of the vote, taking all 65 seats in the National Assembly.

§A5. Rise of Authoritarian Governance & Foreign Military Competition.

Decades of marginal progress however, despite constant increases in government revenues, led to a resurgence of Ahmed Dini's faction which had never stood down, despite making its own peace accord with the Guelleh government in 2001. After the party's split, Ahmed Dini's FRUD faction held a congress in northern Djibouti for six days in late September 1994, and it announced on 30 September 1994 that the congress delegates "unanimously reaffirmed their determination to pursue armed struggle until their political goals are satisfied," while electing Dini at the head of the faction's executive committee. The first FRUD splinter groups that resorted back to noticeable violence were helped in response to growing

²⁵ The current Prime Minister is related by marriage to President Guelleh's wife, Kadra. The Djibouti First Lady is of the Isaaq Clan but was previously married to an Afar man and whose son and daughters are half Afar. Because of his partial Afar ethnicity, the son is reputedly being groomed for the next prime minister's position.

resentment of President Guelleh's changing the constitution to allow his fourth, and then fifth presidential terms. The first such attack was in January of 2021, as part of the national presidential election (which saw President Guelleh win his fifth six-year term) when a police officer was reportedly killed by a FRUD aligned person or persons. Then, in October of 2022, a splinter group claiming to be aligned to FRUD, clashed with Djiboutian soldiers killing 7, wounding 4, and kidnapping 6 additional soldiers. A statement from the defence ministry on Saturday said the attack occurred a day earlier at an army base in Garabtisan, in the Tadjourah region of Djibouti. FRUD leaders deny involvement in the attacks and have condemned them, however, Djibouti's security services have a record of persecuting Issa and Afar members of the FRUD who have family members in the rebel factions that are opposed to the government. During the interwar period between the '91-'94 civil war and the newest outbreak of violence in 2021, the Djiboutian government kept a tight control over the population with special consideration given to anyone with connections to the FRUD, whether they be Somali Issa or Afar ethnicity. *"Members of the FRUD, including Issa and Afars, who have family members in the FRUD faction still opposed to the régime and who are opposed to the government would have difficulties. There are members of the FRUD who are not involved in violent operations against the security forces but remain opposed to the régime. Whether a member of the FRUD has family members in the faction conducting military operations is not relevant to the treatment received from the government; whether a person is actively opposed to the régime is the important element."*²⁶ In response to the most recent attack, the National Assembly of Djibouti characterised the attackers as being the 'armed wing' of the FRUD political party and classified it as "the FRUD-Armé" despite objections by FRUD leaders that the attackers were not part of their political party. Within the Djibouti security services, officers describe the attackers as the new FRUD army that operates as terrorists in remote areas near Ethiopia and Eritrea where they reportedly have a terrorist training camp. These officials suggested that their intelligence, investigation, and responses will henceforth be harsher for **"all those found guilty of association, complicity or collaboration"** with the FRUD-armé.²⁷ Above all, the Djiboutian government will also be able to issue international arrest warrants against the exiled leaders of the movement, via Interpol. This development by the ruling UMD government against the "FRUD-Army" is startling because the provocation (an attack on an outlying military post) was minimal yet the political ramifications are enormous for the central identity of the FRUD part of the UMD coalition. The FRUD's popular support has been steadily increasing as a centrist multi-ethnic party that did not, does not, place great weight on Somali Issa/Isaaq identity. Throughout the last two decades, the moderate faction of FRUD has continued to be a part of the UMP, or Union for Presidential Majority, the ruling coalition.²⁸ International observers consistently accept the Djiboutian government's as being "free and fair", yet only a small percentage of the population of Djibouti votes or has their votes counted, leaving significant room for political organisation, armed or otherwise.²⁹ The United Nations and

²⁶ Statèment of official representative of the Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie (FRUD) in France

²⁷ Emphasis added based on dialogue during my interview with my former colleagues in Djibouti.

²⁸ Citation

²⁹ (Staff Research Team, 2023)

African Union have both urged the Government of Djibouti to take action to increase civil participation in voting and voter awareness education. Only about 150,000 Djiboutians voted in the 2021 election out of a population that exceeds 1M. While the Djiboutian government's slide into authoritarianism has been restrained by its allies and some foreign military clients (USA, Japan, Italy), its governing structure (legal, justice, security services) has already transitioned into a more controlling, reactive set of interactive institutions as part of their demonstration to foreign military clients that Djibouti is a safe investment as an international security platform for competing national players.³⁰ For example, significant human rights issues have been rising that include credible reports of arbitrary arrest or detention and arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy in the pursuit of quashing protest or disagreement with the UMD.³¹ Security services have an extensive history and openly admitted practice of punishment of family members for offenses allegedly committed by an individual as part of tribal ideologies of collective punishment.

§A6. Guelleh Regime's Control: Economy, Information, and Sociopolitical Participation.

Year by year, UN, AU, US, and other organisations have documented increasingly serious restrictions on free expression and media, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, censorship, and enforcement of criminal libel laws to limit expression of opposition to the UMD generally and to President Guelleh's reign specifically. Watchdog organisations have been documenting increasingly serious restrictions on internet freedom made possible by Djibouti's security services advances in technology supplied by its foreign military clients.³² Djibouti's security services have quietly established substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on political organisations, evening within its own ruling coalition parties.³³ The UMD dominated legislature and executive agencies have greatly restricted the organization, funding, or operations of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, to the point of diminishing important protections that helped manage government and society participation in human trafficking of children and women, as well as the worst forms of child labour.³⁴ Djibouti's democratic allies complain that government officials feel free to act with total impunity in the absence of military client intervention.³⁵ The government seldom takes steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, or punish corrupt officials or those who committed human right abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in the government. Corruption is a serious problem that is enabled and sustained by the dominant position of President Guelleh and his ruling party in every aspect of public administration. All significant business deals reportedly go through the president himself. State bodies tasked with combating corruption lack the resources and independence to function effectively. Prosecutions of senior officials are rare. The government operates in an opaque manner and resists attempts to shed light on its policymaking,

³⁰ (Bertelsmann Stiftung Staff Writers, n.d.)

³¹ (Horn Observer Staff researchers, 2021)

³² (BBC Monitoring Staff, 2023)

³³ (Freedom House Staff Research Team, 2023)

³⁴ (Hocker, 2017)

³⁵ (Abdisamad, 2023)

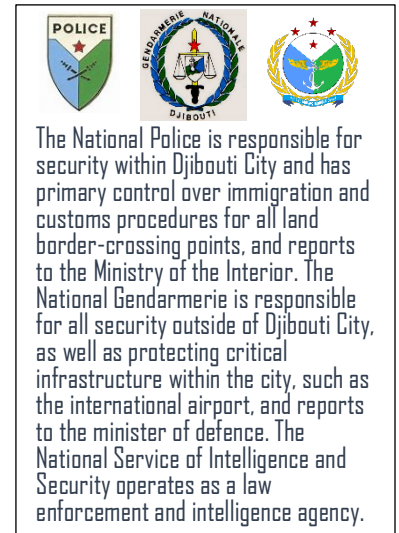
budgetary, and contracting decisions which defeats attempts by political and social interests in understanding the flows of government revenues versus private companies' revenues and the interactivity between both. As there is no legal requirement for the Djiboutian government to allow public access to information, the Djiboutian society have little idea of how its government receives and spends hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues it collects from foreign powers that lease land for military bases in Djibouti, including the United States, China, and France. More concerning for the United States and NATO allies is the opacity of President Guelleh's investment deals with China, which has provided Djibouti with loans, built critical infrastructure, and operates special economic zones. The agreements have resulted in a massive amount of public debt—China alone is owed the equivalent of more than 70 percent of Djibouti's gross domestic product—and threatens ongoing allied military operations of Camp Lemonier, the principal US and coalition military base in Africa.

6.1 Patterns of Social and Political Control. After President Guelleh changed the constitution to permit his fourth and fifth term of office, discord spread amongst local communities that were not consulted on the location or terms of foreign development projects that cut into the little arable land available in Djibouti. Demands for transparency of ongoing and future planning of land use concessions by the government were either ignored or quashed by security services. President Guelleh's ruling party dominates the state apparatus and uses security forces and other administrative resources to marginalize, disrupt, and suppress independent political, judicial, security, and information activity within Djibouti. The constitution and law prohibit such practices, but investigative reporting suggests that government officials employ practices to control and dilute opposition to the regime. There are reports, for example, that security forces arrested and abused journalists, opposition members, and demonstrators. For example, police arrested Mohammed Omar Nour in March for criticizing the court process against a former minister of budget; he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for inciting violence. After his release due to a presidential pardon, he posted a video alleging abuse. Impunity was a problem, especially in security and law enforcement sectors. The government seldom took steps to identify, investigate, or prosecute officials in the security forces for abuses. Additionally, the limited space for free press and civil society offered few tools to identify, report, and fight impunity. Security and law enforcement personnel received training to increase respect for human rights. The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, but the government seldom respected these provisions. There were reports of security officials arbitrarily arresting journalists, bloggers, opposition members, and demonstrators. On May 30th, 2021, the DNP detained the vice president of the opposition political party, the Republican Alliance for Development (ARD), Hassan Mohamed "Tourab" Hassan, for his criticism of the government's response to fires in the Balbala neighbourhood.³⁶

§A7. Press.

³⁶ (USA DOS BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, 2022)

Despite constitutional protections, journalists were forced to engage in self-censorship or risk judicial and or extrajudicial actions by the security services. Under the 1992 communications law, defamation and distribution of false information are criminal offenses, and the practice of enforcement became a central means of controlling news and media. The National Communication Commission, authorized by the Ministry of Communication, grants and cancels broadcasting and print licenses to media outlets based on approvals by the National Security Service. The government owns the dominant newspaper, television station, and radio broadcaster, as well as printing presses.³⁷ Reporters Without Borders, an international NGO banned in Djibouti, reports that domestic media content generally reflects government views. Journalists affiliated



with outlets based abroad or small opposition publications are subject to harassment and arbitrary arrest. The government typically places few restrictions on the internet, but the websites of the overseas opposition radio station La Voix de Djibouti, run by exiles in Europe, and the Association for Respect for Human Rights in Djibouti (ARDHD) are sometimes blocked by the state-owned internet service provider.³⁸ Djibouti's media environment is dominated by the state. There are no private TV or radio stations, and the government owns the main newspaper and the national broadcaster *Radio-diffusion Television de Djibouti* (RTD). Reporters Without Borders says local journalists "live in fear." The few opposition media outlets are based outside the country.³⁹

§A7. Political Activism.

While Djibouti technically has a multiparty political system, parties must register with the government to operate legally. The authorities have denied recognition to opposition parties including the Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development (MRD), the Rally for Democratic Action and Ecological Development (RADDE), and the Movement for Development and Liberty (MoDEL), whose members have been periodically harassed, arrested, and prosecuted. The law requires the leaders of political parties to have clean criminal records, and the government has pursued spurious charges against opposition figures to disqualify them or their parties. Open discussion of sensitive political issues is impeded by restrictive laws on defamation and other such offenses. The government reportedly monitors social media and conducts surveillance on perceived opponents.⁴⁰ Individuals are subject to arrest for posting critical content about the government online. Local human rights groups that work on politically sensitive matters cannot operate freely, face difficulties in registering with the authorities, and are subject to government harassment. Organizations that focus on social and economic development, including women's rights groups, are generally tolerated by the government. Individual activists

³⁷ (Horn Observer Staff researchers, 2021)

³⁸ (Abdisamad, 2023)

³⁹ (BBC Monitoring Staff, 2023)

⁴⁰ (Galindo et al., 2015)

are regularly arrested for their work.⁴¹ Anticorruption activist Degmo Ali REDACTED, for example, was arrested in July 2019 after making a speech that implicated senior government officials.⁴² The government has also suspended the travel privileges of political opponents. In March 2019, for example, AbdouREDACTED Mohamed Guelleh, leader of the RADDE, had his passport returned after it was held by the authorities for three years.⁴³ In 2018, police raided the RADDE headquarters, confiscated equipment, and arrested one person as the party was preparing demonstrations.⁴⁴ Also that year, five members of MoDEL were reportedly detained for opening a training school for party activists, and the Republican Alliance for Development (ARD) lost its recognition after an internal leadership dispute caused a temporary split in the party.⁴⁵

§A8. Judicial Independence.

Djibouti's legal system is not independent of the government with Supreme Court judges appointed by President Guelleh. Although the constitution stipulates that judges are appointed with the advice of a judicial council, it is dominated by presidential and UMP nominees. The president and parliamentary majority also control appointments to the Constitutional Council. Perhaps the most well-known exercise of presidential control over Djibouti's judiciary occurred in 2019, when President Guelleh directed Djibouti's Supreme Court to nullify a judgment of the London Court of International Arbitration.⁴⁶ The LCIA had issued a ruling requiring the Guelleh government to pay more than \$500 million in compensation to DP World, the Dubai-based port operator. The dispute dated to 2012, when Djibouti sold part of its concession in the Doraleh Container Terminal to a Chinese state-owned competitor of DP World, the original concession partner.⁴⁷ In 2018, Djibouti cancelled its contract with DP World and nationalized the company's assets at the port. The government has similarly rejected previous unfavourable international rulings in the case.

§A9. Security Services Impartiality.

⁴¹ A core element of the 2014 political agreement—meant to end the opposition's boycott of the legislature following deeply flawed elections in 2013—was a pledge to reform the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which the opposition has accused of bias. These reforms had not been carried out as of 2019. Other electoral provisions disproportionately advantage Guelleh's ruling party, for example by awarding at least 80 percent of the seats in each multimember parliamentary district to the party that wins a majority in that district. The opposition's ability to operate is severely constrained, and journalists and activists who air criticism of Guelleh or the UMP are regularly harassed or arrested. The lead-up to presidential elections features restrictions on the media and the harassment or detention of opposition figures. On election days, opposition parties regularly report that their monitors are turned away from polling sites.

⁴² (Hocker, 2017)

⁴³ Djibouti In: Africa Yearbook Volume 16 Author: Nicole Hirt Type: Chapter Pages: 314–319 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004430013_033

⁴⁴ (Freedom House Staff Research Team, 2023)

⁴⁵ Djibouti In: Africa Yearbook Volume 16 Author: Nicole Hirt Type: Chapter Pages: 314–319 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004430013_033

⁴⁶ (Morrow, 2022)

⁴⁷ Web news report DP World wins latest judgement in Hong Kong Court over Djibouti concession. <https://www.dpworld.com/news/releases/dp-world-wins-latest-judgement-over-djibouti-concession/>

Security forces frequently make arrests without the required court approval, and lengthy pretrial detention is a problem, with detainees often waiting years to go to trial.⁴⁸ Allegations of politically motivated prosecutions are common, and opposition groups consistently accuse the government of sanctioning arbitrary arrests and detentions.⁴⁹ The Guelleh regime uses its counterterrorism laws to target political opponents, via threats of assigning sponsorship of the FRUD-Armeé to political activist organisations that defy government control.⁵⁰ Security forces regularly engage in physical abuse and torture during arrest and detention. Prison conditions are reportedly poor, with pretrial and convicted prisoners often held together due to overcrowding. Though the law provides for equal treatment of all Djiboutian citizens, minority ethnic groups and clans suffer from discrimination that contributes to their social and economic marginalization. Women have fewer employment opportunities and are paid less than men for the same work. While the law requires at least 20 percent of upper-level public service positions to be held by women, this rule has not been enforced. Civilian movement is restricted in militarized border areas due to past activity by the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD-Armé), a rebel group, and tensions with Eritrea.

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⁴⁸ (Freedom House Staff Research Team, 2023)

⁴⁹ (Galindo et al., 2015)

⁵⁰ (Djibouti Staff Research Team, 2021; Horn Observer Staff researchers, 2021)(BBC Monitoring Staff, 2023; Galindo et al., 2015)

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