

Somalia

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key words

Match the words from the text with their definitions:

1. lawless
 2. anarchy
 3. to overthrow
 4. shack
 5. warlord
 6. elders
 7. cadet
 8. militia
 9. no-go zone
 10. sharia
-
- a the leader of a group involved in fighting
 - b to force a leader or government out of their position
 - c a young person training to become a police officer or military officer
 - d without laws or with laws that no-one obeys
 - e the most senior members of a clan or tribe
 - e a situation in which there is no government or social control in a country
 - g an area which is too dangerous to visit
 - h a small, plain building, usually made of wood or metal
 - i traditional Islamic law
 - j an unofficial army

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible:

1. What is the capital of Somalia? _____
2. Who was the last dictator of Somalia? _____
3. When was he overthrown? _____
4. How many police cadets are being trained in Somalia at the moment?

5. What does UNDP stand for? _____
6. How many militiamen are there in Baidoa? _____

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Somalia's fledgling security force / Xan Rice sees a glimmer of hope in the world's most lawless country as the first police cadets graduate

It is an everyday sight in Somalia: a man lies dying under a tree. Then there is a very rare sight in the world's most lawless country: the police arrive. A white Toyota car stops suddenly and half a dozen uniformed officers jump out. Three chase a man and arrest him. The others cordon off the area and inspect the body. Another officer finds a bloody axe in a bush nearby and says: 'Evidence'.

This was a training exercise, one of the last before the 134 men and 19 women of the Armo Police Academy, in northern Somalia, graduated last month. They have become the first home-trained police in the country since it descended into a state of anarchy 15 years ago. 'You are the beginning of hope for the Somali police,' said Bashir Jama, 52, the deputy police commissioner, speaking to the new graduates.

Hope is a word which is not often heard in Somalia, a broken country. Since 1991, when the dictator Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown, there has been no central government. At least 13 attempts to form a government have failed. Outside the Somaliland region, which claims independence, there are no state schools, hospitals or social services. More than 400,000 people live in shacks as internal refugees. The only control comes from warlords and their gangs; what law there is comes from the barrel of an AK-47. 'We have one religion, one ethnic group, so we are one family, really,' said Abdinur Yusuf, 70, a senior policeman who is helping out at Armo. 'Our problem is that many people want to be head of that family.'

In the latest attempt to establish a national government, elders elected the 275-member transitional federal government in October 2004. Led by Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, the president, it is filled with most of the warlords who have kept the country in a state of chaos for 15 years. But the government does not control a single large city; it has no ministries and no money.

A country that once said it had the best police force in sub-Saharan Africa now has just a few hundred proper officers and no army. The government cannot guarantee its own security, let alone that of the population. Which is why the establishment of a police training academy was seen as so urgent. Located in the small highway town of Armo, an hour's drive south of the Red Sea port of Bossaso, the academy was built last year with support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

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Training at the academy, led by three Ugandan police working for the UNDP, has ranged from recording crime in a logbook to a detailed study of the law of evidence. The trainee police were not trained with guns, because of an arms embargo since 1992, so the 'alternative to violence procedures' course may be the most useful. The trainers worry that the four-month course is too short. But there is no doubt that the trainees are enthusiastic. Andrew Kaweesi, 32, an assistant superintendent in the Ugandan police, said: 'The cadets who've never been in the militia are the easiest to teach. Some of the militia have bad morals . . . like taking money from people at roadblocks.'

In the end, however, members of the militia will have to be recruited into the police and eventually the army. Tens of thousands of young men work for private militias and the only way to encourage them to give up their weapons will be to offer them something else. In the next few weeks about 100 of the Armo graduates will fly to the government's base at Baidoa in central Somalia. There they will be joined by 200 other police officers who are being trained in Kenya; this will form the basis for what the government hopes will grow to a 12,000-strong police force.

In Baidoa the officers will see the challenges facing them across the country. At least 3,000 freelance militiamen wander the streets of the town and tensions are running high. Last month two guards with a World Food Programme convoy were killed near the town in a militia ambush. Seven men were killed after an argument over a mobile phone. But compared with Mogadishu, Baidoa could be Geneva. Probably the world's most dangerous capital city for a foreigner, Mogadishu is a no-go zone for the government too. Two heavily armed groups are trying to gain control: one a group of warlords/government ministers, who call themselves the Anti-Terror Coalition in an attempt to get US support, are in conflict with the sharia courts, set up by the clan elders, and many people believe that their numbers include Islamic extremists responsible for more than 12 assassinations in the past year.

What is certain is that both groups have plenty of guns from Yemen and Ethiopia, and both strongly oppose the president's regime, which would threaten their highly profitable control of ports, airfields and roadblocks. 'If we sent these policemen there now, they would be killed,' said Garad Nur Adbulle, the deputy head of the Armo academy. 'No doubt.'

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the information in the text:

1. Why is Somalia described as a broken country?
a there are more than 400,000 refugees
b it is very violent
c there is no government, no law and order, and no social services
2. Who controls Somalia?
a the army
b warlords and their militias
c the UN
3. Which of these is true according to the text?
a Baidoa is more dangerous than Mogadishu
b Mogadishu is more dangerous than Baidoa
c Mogadishu is much more dangerous than Baidoa
4. What would happen if the police graduates were sent to Mogadishu?
a the warlords would lose their profitable control of ports, airfields and roadblocks
b the president's regime would oppose it
c they would be killed

4 Vocabulary 1: collocations

Match words from the left-hand column with those from the right-hand column to form collocations:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1 training | a force |
| 2 state | b block |
| 3 police | c programme |
| 4 arms | d exercise |
| 5 capital | e minister |
| 6 road | f embargo |
| 7 development | g city |
| 8 government | h school |

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5 Vocabulary 2: prepositions

Which prepositions follow these words? Check your answers in the text:

1. responsible _____
2. hope _____
3. head _____
4. filled _____
5. alternative _____
6. basis _____
7. argument _____
8. in conflict _____

6 Vocabulary 3: Word building

Complete the table:

	Verb	Noun
1	argue	_____
2	fail	_____
3	attempt	_____
4	establish	_____
5	proceed	_____
6	encourage	_____
7	threaten	_____
8	challenge	_____

7 Discussion

Imagine your country without a police force or army. What would it be like? What would people do?