



# UNHCR

## The UN Refugee Agency

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YEARS

**Geneva:** Tuesday 4 October 2011

**Briefer:** Adrian Edwards / UNHCR Spokesman

**Topics:** 1 - New clashes menace Somali refugees, force more into displacement

This is a summary of what was said by the UNHCR spokesperson at today's Palais des Nations press briefing in Geneva. Further information can be found on the UNHCR websites, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) and [www.unhcr.fr](http://www.unhcr.fr), which should also be checked for regular media updates on non-briefing days.

### 1 - New clashes menace Somali refugees, force more into displacement

UNHCR is very concerned by the latest escalation of violence in southern Somalia. The renewed clashes are between opposing armed groups and are further exacerbating the already severe humanitarian situation. We urge all armed groups and forces in Somalia to avoid targeting civilian areas and to ensure that civilians are not being placed in harm's way.

We have received initial, unconfirmed reports of deaths and scores of injured people. We are especially worried about the fighting and worsening situation around the town of Doble, on the Somali-Kenyan border. Doble is the main transit point for Somalis en route to Dadaab refugee camps.

We particularly fear for the well-being and safety of displaced Somalis who are likely to get caught in fighting while fleeing through this part of the country. Our partners in tracking the movements of populations inside Somalia report that some 65 families make the journey from Doble to Liboi in Kenya each day en route to Dadaab. Many also use alternate routes through Diif and Degelema on the Somali side and Dhadag Bulla in Kenya. On average, 1,000 new Somali refugees continue to arrive in Dadaab camps every day. These camps are now home to more than 456,000 refugees.

Although we are yet to ascertain the number of people fleeing from Doble, we estimate the new displacement to be significant. In addition to having its own local population, Doble was also a temporary shelter for many internally displaced people (IDPs) from other parts of southern Somalia (Mogadishu, Kismayo, Bay and Bakool regions) and farmers displaced from areas around Doble. Our partners on the ground report that people are moving to the neighbouring districts of Afmadow, Kismayo, Baydhaba and Bardheere, and possibly into Kenya.

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Relentless fighting, human rights abuses, crippling drought and famine have forced more than 300,000 Somalis to leave their country since the beginning of the year. Two thirds of this number fled over the past four months alone. Many died inside Somalia. Others perished either en route to safety or upon reaching the camps - weakened by hunger, the grueling journey on foot, and disease.

Before the latest episode of violence, several aid agencies were providing assistance in Doble, distributing Emergency Assistance Packages (EAPs) to the vulnerable population.

Meanwhile, there are dozens of new Somali arrivals at the Kenyan border town of Liboi, where they are awaiting transport to the Dadaab refugee camps some 80 kilometres away. Due to heightened tensions and insecurity in the border area humanitarian agencies have not been traveling to Liboi for several days now. We hope the convoys transporting weak and exhausted Somali refugees from the border to Dadaab camps will resume as soon as possible.

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