

Western governments offer Somalia U.N. trusteeship, but not food

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Unless the nations of Africa find the courage to stand up to the genocidal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the political pressures coming from western capitals, they need only look to the condition of Somalia to see their future. That future is not only the death of millions of people through starvation and war, but the final takeover of destroyed nations by foreign occupying powers, as heralded by demands from London that Somalia be placed under United Nations trusteeship.

The political disintegration of Somalia and the consequent death of hundreds of thousands of citizens by starvation, particularly its younger children, is no natural occurrence. They are the deadly result of a combination of the "Project Democracy" campaign of Washington, and calculated inaction by western government agencies, including the United Nations.

According to the Sept. 16 congressional testimony of Gerald Jones, international director of the American Red Cross, 1.5 million people in Somalia are "at risk of death by starvation, and another 4.5 million [are] in need of some form of assistance." Jones testified that out of the 6.5 to 8 million Somalians, "the malnourished account for 95% of the population, with fully 75% suffering from severe malnutrition. Almost 15% of the population has sought refuge abroad in neighboring countries. . . . 75% of the population has been displaced." Upon returning from Somalia, U.S. Rep. Mervyn Dymally reported that it is believed that 25% of all Somali children under five have already died of starvation and consequent disease.

Jones also told the U.S. Congress that Somalia requires a minimum of 60,000 metric tons of food assistance per month, far below the 20,000 metric tons it is now receiving. The Red Cross is now feeding over a million people a day through 600 kitchens in south and central Somalia, but Jones reported that the lack of food means that rations doled out are "65% of the nutritional goal" of 2,400 calories a day. That is to say, that starved and weakened people who have survived the long treks to the soup kitchens are not even receiving enough food to survive.

The millions who are not serviced by the soup kitchens have a far worse plight. Dymally reported that in the area around Baidoa in central Somalia, refugees are not in camps,

but out in the open, without means to cook the tiny amounts of rice and dry beans they may get from airlifts. Baidoa is a "land of the living dead." Women and children "are so weakened from the prolonged famine" that without medical help, "all the food in the world would not save them," Dymally told the press.

How the plug was pulled

The destruction of Somalia is the direct result of actions taken by western governments, beginning with Washington, over the last two years. The political and economic disintegration of the country is the result of the civil war which resulted in the ouster of President Siad Barre in January 1991. Barre had ruled Somalia for 20 years. As Kevin Henry of the CARE charity, which is active in Somalia, testified to Congress on Sept. 16, "Since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime, the Somali state, in existence since independence was achieved in 1960, has effectively disintegrated. There is no government which is recognized within the country on a national basis. Groups in the former British Somaliland last year declared secession from Somalia, while a number of other clan-based political and military groups control different regions of the country. There is no civil administration in the country to speak of; social services are virtually nonexistent, and much of the country's economic and social infrastructure has either decayed or been destroyed."

This disintegration of Somalia's political structure was entirely predictable in 1990, when western governments "pulled the plug" on Barre. The impetus was given by the loud publicity suddenly given Barre's alleged human rights abuses. In 1989, the U.S. government, feeling more secure in the region with the disintegration of U.S.S.R.-Ethiopian ties, ended all aid to the Barre regime, citing human rights as the reason. Meanwhile, in London and Rome, conferences were called of the Somalian opposition to Barre. At the time, it was known by the western governments, that *there existed no viable, national institution to replace Barre, but only a plethora of deeply divided, regionally based opposition warlords.* The plug was pulled anyway.

In January 1991, Siad Barre was ousted by the rebels of the United Somalian Congress (USC), after a bitter fight. Bands of marauding followers of Barre continue to wreak

devastation and commit murder among the civilian population. Since the summer of 1991, a merciless war has developed within the USC among hostile clans of the Hawiye, between the followers of the businessman Ali Mahdi Mohammed, who was named the Interim President, and the followers of Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidede, who claims, in the meantime, to have joined forces with three other rebel groups and to control two-thirds of the land.

The backdrop for Somalia's disintegration is a series of orchestrated wars that have ravaged the Horn of Africa since the mid-1970s. From July 1977 until spring 1978, the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia was waged with massive support from the former Soviet Union to the Ethiopian government of Miriam Mengistu. In the following years, neither Somalia nor Ethiopia could recover from this war of extermination. Indeed, Ethiopia was provided with weapons by the Soviet Union and Somalia by the United States, because of their geopolitical significance at times of East-West confrontation.

At the same time, the possibility of sustained economic development was denied to the entire region in the course of the subjugation of all countries to the austerity conditions of the International Monetary Fund. Also, after the fall in May 1991 of the dictator Mengistu, who had been kept in power up to then by Moscow, Ethiopia has received no opportunity for economic reconstruction and could decline into chaotic civil war just as Somalia has. In Ethiopia today, the population in the south and east is threatened with famine, due to the drought that has afflicted the entire eastern African coast.

The same fate is encountered by Eritrea, which after a 30-year civil war has finally obtained its political independence, but has received no opportunity for economic development, which it cannot accomplish on its own strength. It has been known since June of this year, that people are now starving to death in Eritrea.

This catastrophe is the direct result of the economic policies of the western governments, beginning with their demand that African countries be subjugated by the IMF and World Bank.

When the Horn of Africa countries were already completely ruined in the 1980s, the West insisted without compromise upon the fulfillment of the IMF dictates and payment of the foreign debts. From 1980 to 1990, the debts of the countries in the Horn more than tripled from \$1.5 billion to over \$5.4 billion. Correspondingly, the raw materials exports have also increased through service of the debt. From 1980 to 1990, the foreign debt owed by Ethiopia increased from \$804 million to \$3.02 billion, and for Somalia from \$660 million to \$2.2 billion.

The colonial gameplan

Western pressures succeeded in destroying Somalia—but to what purpose? The colonial gameplan was revealed on Sept. 20, when British Member of Parliament Michael Meacher declared that the United Nations should place So-

malia, a former colony of Britain and Italy, under trusteeship. Speaking to the press from Mogadishu, Meacher declared that "the international community does have to consider a wider U.N. mandate and a temporary trusteeship." The boldness of this neo-colonialist plan is matched only by the paucity of food aid coming to Somalia from Britain.

Under this plan, the United Nations bureaucracy would take the full reins of administration in Somalia—despite the fact that the United Nations Development Program stalled for months the distribution of \$68 million of aid to Somalia, and that the U.N. agencies have not even entered the picture to deliver aid until August.

This call is being echoed by such agencies as the Commission for Refugee Women and Children, a subsidiary of the International Rescue Committee, which enjoys close links to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. In her testimony to Congress on Sept. 16, commission chairman Catherine O'Neill offered her opinion, "The U.N. must heal Somalia by working to broker a peace and *administer* the country until some civil government is in place." Repeating the demands of U.N. Secretary General and British agent-of-influence Boutros Boutros-Ghali, O'Neill added that force might be required to do so: "The world community and the U.N. need to have standby, on-loan, military capacity to ensure humanitarian access, and if necessary, to reestablish order when it collapses inside a [i.e., any] country."

What must be done

The same agencies that are calling for the military and/or U.N. takeover of Somalia are either the same that aided and abetted the disintegration of the country, or that have stood by doing nothing while thousands have died over the last year. Nevertheless, the world community must take action to save Somalia.

This includes:

- 1) An immediate arms embargo on Somalia, to be enforced by the Organization of African Unity, led by Nigeria and Kenya.
- 2) The calling into action of classical military logistics, initiated by the U.S. and other governments, not under the auspices of the United Nations; to deliver 2 million metric tons of food to Somalia, which will "flood" the area with food, removing food as a commodity of political power and violence. This logistical help should aid in taking Somalia's millions of displaced back to their original homes, and aid in reestablishing or supporting the local village structures. The logistical support should include building the required infrastructure to get the food aid to the citizenry, with the building of roads and bridges.
- 3) The delivery of seeds, fertilizer, and farm implements, along with the building of transport, energy, and water infrastructure, to breathe life into the Somali economy.
- 4) The immediate suspension of all payments on foreign debt to the International Monetary Fund or any other agency.