SAFETY AND SECURITY IN MOGADISHU

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

2 INSECURITY IN MOGADISHU: CONTEXT, ISSUES, ACTORS 4

2.1 HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND STATE-CONTESTATION IN THE CAPITAL 4

2.2 CONTEMPORARY URBAN SECURITY ACTORS 5

2.3 MOGADISHU'S SECURITY DYNAMICS: DIFFERENT EVOLUTIONS IN HODAN AND KAHDA 10

3 URBAN RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOURCES OF EVERYDAY INSECURITY 15

3.1 VIOLENT MUGGING AND ARMED ROBBERY 15

3.2 SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE 18

3.3 POLITICAL VIOLENCE 20

4 SOCIAL AND SPATIAL LOGICS OF INSECURITY: URBAN INEQUALITIES IN EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION/ JUSTICE MECHANISMS 23

4.1 INEQUALITIES AND EXPOSURE TO CRIME/INSECURITY . . . 23

4.2 POLICE-COMMUNITY PROXIMITY, RELATIONS AND RESPONSES TO CRIME 25

5 EMERGING FINDINGS 30

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY 32

1 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mogadishu remains Somalia's most contested urban space, and this has serious implications for the physical safety of its residents.[1] Since the total state collapse in 1991, insecurity in Mogadishu has ebbed and flowed, taking on different forms and levels of intensity over time. The city's violent past has produced complicated patterns of inclusion and exclusion, grievances and aspirations, as well as different coping mechanisms by urban residents for various physical threats. Today, insecurity in Mogadishu takes on different forms, ranging from Al Shabaab attacks targeting government officials to inter-communal conflict, robbery and physical assaults. While some of these insecurities overlap, their spatial and social logics reflect historical settlement patterns, class dynamics, gender divisions and different degrees of social capital among the population.[2]

As the seat of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), Mogadishu – and the Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) that it is part of – remains a prime locus of political tensions, resource competition and conflicts between political elites. The capital city has seen rapid demographic growth, return migration and urban (re-)development after mass displacement created by the 2006 Ethiopian military intervention. Yet fundamental questions about the 'ownership' of Mogadishu – i.e. which clans are politically dominant in the city – that date back to the civil war remain unresolved. These questions create social stratification between those groups that consider themselves autochthonous to the city (and certain districts/neighbourhoods) and displaced populations of urban in-migrants, who often hail from historically marginalised clans.

Somalia's chronically unstable national 'political marketplace' with its commodified use of violence (DeWaal, 2015), deeply seated grievances over urban property rights and the federal government's inability to forge a social contract with its citizens on the basis of effective service delivery are among the main structural causes of instability in Mogadishu. They explain why a multitude of armed actors govern the city, straddling the border between 'state' and 'non-state' and constituting sources of both security and insecurity. As a result, city dwellers navigate a fragmented, uncertain and ever-evolving security landscape in the pursuit of their daily livelihoods.

This African Cities Research Consortium's (ACRC) safety and security study on Mogadishu examines the everyday issues of insecurity that different residents experience and react to in two districts of Mogadishu – Hodan and Kahda. Hodan is a relatively central district of Mogadishu, home to a booming real-estate market, a growing middle class of professionals working in business, the humanitarian sector and state offices, as well as

1 ACLED reported 565 conflict events in Benadir region including battles, violence against civilians and explosions/ remote violence between mid-May 2021 and mid-May 2022 (https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard)

2 Membership in a specific clan lineage (organized through patrilineal descent groups) is a key determinant of social capital in Somali society. Social capital in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu is 'a capital one has as a result of being a member of a particular group or network' (Hagmann et al, 2021)

high-profile targets for Al Shabaab violence. In this district, exposure to unpredictable Al Shabaab attacks and fears of increasing street crime (violent armed robbery by youth gangs and/or members of security forces) were primary concerns reported by residents. Kahda is a more peripheral district that has only emerged as a recognized entity over the last 15 years. The settlement and development of the area are a result of significant displacement-linked in-migration from southern regions, as well as displacements of former inner-city residents as a result of earlier phases of urban violence and evictions. There is a much higher density of camps in Kahda (in comparison to Hodan) but also an increasing proportion of permanent structures and more 'upscale' development. Robbery was also reported as a major concern for many residents in this district, irrespective of whether they lived in camps or permanent dwellings. However, sexual and gender-based violence was a particular concern for the district's most vulnerable residents: widowed or divorced women living in ill-secured IDP camps.

Neither Hodan nor Kahda are homogenous districts. Although they exhibit certain different spatial and social features, both are characterized by multiple forms of inequality that relate to gender, social class, and clan/racialized identities. Hodan, for example, is also home to internally displaced people in camps and informal settlements, whereas in Kahda there are significant socio-economic differences between those who live in camps and those who have permanent accommodation. These inequalities are experienced in exposures to different forms of violence and insecurity and access to the connections, social practices, and institutions that may reduce or mitigate risks and offer recourse for harm.

The research illustrates how different communities – and particularly displaced populations – face unequal exposure to different security threats. These findings are not new and have been reported in various studies over the last 10-15 years. However, more recent trends and dynamics can be identified in the data from this small-scale study:

- Arguably, public concern around prevailing security issues in Mogadishu is shifting towards youth related gang crimes (that may be overlapping with longer standing dynamics of security force involvement in robbery).
- More research is needed into the ways in which urban inequalities, a burgeoning youth population, and youth unemployment are driving this trend, as well as the extent to which social media is merely raising the profile/visibility of this type of insecurity, or exacerbating its frequency and severity.
- In relation to political violence, police appear caught between counter-terrorism and community engagement, which are difficult to undertake simultaneously (in that the need for confidentiality for effective counter-intelligence can run counter to logics of community engagement and trust building).
- The success of formal community-police initiatives (e.g. organized community watch collaborations) would be likely dependent on the wider prevalence of Al Shabaab activity in the city and state efforts against the group. Continued Al Shabaab presence

in the city (or certain districts in particular) may continue to make people less likely to engage with state security actors given fears of reprisals. Such initiatives may not be suitable to undertake in all locations and further targeted research is necessary on possible avenues for police-citizen engagement (beyond the scope of the current research).

- Similarly, community relations with (and proximity to) police forces is viewed in different ways by different people. Police can be seen as both a source of security (closeness of facilities, prevention of crime through visibility) or insecurity (attracting political violence, killing innocent people such as bajaaj/tuk-tuk drivers, or accusations that police themselves are involved in criminal activities).
- Displaced populations' security vulnerabilities intersect closely with wider issues faced by residents living in informal settlements, around social belonging, discrimination, widespread patriarchal social norms and 'minority' rights.
- Urban residents' perceptions of 'safety and security' are undoubtedly informed by past experiences of different (and changing) forms of violence. Interviewee testimonies hint at the wider cumulative impacts of pervasive (but variable) insecurity in the Somali capital, and the need for further mental-health focused research on how this contributes to evolving security threats (e.g. the apparent rise in armed robbery).

Synthesising a range of academic and policy/grey literature on conflict and urbanisation dynamics in Mogadishu – as well as earlier studies by the authors on policing – the report first provides background to Mogadishu's complex security picture, an overview of key security actors in the city, and the evolution of security issues in the two urban districts. Drawing from 30 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted by Somali Public Agenda researchers in July 2022 with a diverse group of residents in Hodan and Kahda, the report then presents and analyses interviewees' lived experiences and perceptions of different forms of everyday insecurity. This section focuses on violent street crime, sexual and gender-based violence, and political violence. The final main section explores how spatial and social urban inequalities influence different levels of exposure to these types of insecurity and access to community and state-based protection and justice mechanisms (i.e. neighbourhood watch initiatives and formal policing).

2 INSECURITY IN MOGADISHU: CONTEXT, ISSUES, ACTORS

2.1 HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND STATE-CONTESTATION IN THE CAPITAL

Since the toppling of Siyaad Barre's military government in January 1991, Mogadishu has faced different phases and forms of insecurity. Up until the early 2000s, the capital city experienced the rise of warlords with armed militias who divided the city into two (AllBanaadir, 2021). Residents in divided Mogadishu relied on clan elders and armed militia to secure themselves and their properties. A Transitional National Government (TNG) was established in Arta, Djibouti in 2000, but only managed to assert itself in some northern parts of Mogadishu and failed to take over Villa Somalia (the centre of government) from General Mohamed Farah Aideed's militias. IGAD, led by Ethiopia and Kenya, subsequently organised reconciliation conferences that engaged key warlords. After over two years of conferences in Eldoret and Embgathi in Kenya, in 2004, Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected there as the President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In the same period, an alternative form of governance was also emerging to challenge the warlords – the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). This was a loose organization of Sharia courts that formed in Mogadishu and spread across key parts of south-central Somalia by 2006. Remembered with some fondness by many inhabitants of the capital, this seemingly organic governance arrangement succeeded in providing local security, sidelining powerful warlords and ending much of the robbery and killing that was commonplace at roadblocks in the city (Organization for World Peace, 2017).

The ICU's attempt to take over Baidoa in late 2006, the interim seat of the foreign-backed TFG, prompted Abdullahi Yusuf's request for Ethiopian troops to intervene. Concerned about the rise of an Islamist government across its border, Ethiopia (backed by the US in the midst of the Global War on Terror) needed little invitation. Its forces invaded Somalia in late 2006 and defeated the ICU in Mogadishu and the south and central regions of Somalia, from Beledweyne to Kismayo. The Ethiopian forces carried out massive security operations, often involving the indiscriminate use of mortar fire that terrorised the civilian population, particularly in areas such as Bakara market, the biggest in Somalia, where the ICU forces sought refuge (Human Rights Watch 2008). In this period around 2007, the residents of Mogadishu faced death, injury, loss of property, and displacement to outskirts neighbourhoods of the city, or abroad.

While the ICU was broken up, this period witnessed the rise of Al Shabaab from its ashes, a hardline offshoot militia that waged an effective and (initially) popular counterinsurgency against the Ethiopian invaders and came to retake much of the south-central territory that had earlier been held by the ICU. In 2009, the successor president of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, was elected in Djibouti. The forces of his coalition government, backed by African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces, engaged in a bloody war with Al Shabaab, culminating in their expulsion from the capital in late 2011.

By 2012, an internationally-recognised (albeit still weak) Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) had been established in Mogadishu with a clearer mandate to secure and govern Somalia. Initially led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, the FGS adopted the New Deal Compact in September 2013, and with its international partners developed and implemented an architecture for coordination, cooperation, and dialogue for peacebuilding and state-building, particularly in regard to the security and justice sectors (UNSOM & World Bank, 2017). It was not until 2015, however, that the Benadir's regional administration (encompassing Mogadishu and its environs) developed a plan that acknowledged the FGS's inability to gather the intelligence needed to manage the security threat from Al Shabaab's increasing urban suicide bombings, complex attacks and assassinations. In May 2017, three months after the election of Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo as Somalia's new president, political agreement around the National Security Architecture and an international security pact were endorsed in London. Although representing a step forward, the agreement was not implemented, primarily due to the difficult relationship between the FGS in the capital and the emerging regional Federal Member States (Keating & Abshir, 2018). These centre periphery tensions in Somalia's contested political settlement intensified under the subsequent term of President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmaajo' (2017-2022). This hampered national political reconciliation or the stabilization needed for the holding of one-person-one-vote elections – which themselves became an issue that threatened to unravel the fragile political settlement established with the Somali Federal Government in 2012.

2.2 CONTEMPORARY URBAN SECURITY ACTORS

Mogadishu has often been a primary arena for national contestation between different groups of powerholders who jockey over access to the political and economic resources that are available in the capital. Overall, Mogadishu's security environment remains marked by fluidity and uncertainty and this reflects the wider contested and fragile nature of the national political settlement, as introduced above and further detailed below in relation to specific state and non-state security actors. As in other parts of central and southern Somalia, non-state security actors play key roles in the urban political landscape. Given the inability of state actors to keep urban dwellers safe, non-state security actors enjoy some local backing because of their ability to provide basic security to certain businesses and neighborhoods (Finnish Immigration Service, 2020).

State security actors in Mogadishu consist of a broad range of groups and institutions funded by a variety of domestic and external sources. National security forces present in the capital are comprised of the Somali National Army (SNA), the Somalia Police Force (SPF), the Custodial Corps and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) (Wasuge, 2018). State security forces have often been politicized and predatory in their interactions with urban residents (Ingiriis, 2020). Ugandan troops who are part of the new Africa Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) – formerly AMISOM – and who support the federal government's counter-insurgency against Al Shabaab are also stationed in Mogadishu and its environs. State and international community sponsored militias like the police paramilitary *Darwish* wing and *Danab* special forces engage in counter terrorism

activities alongside the Somali National Army (SNA) and the national Somali Police Force (SPF). The Attorney General's office and state military and civilian courts are also part of the state-led security architecture.

Overall, the city's official security sector resembles a patchwork of local, regional and foreign trained units, which often compete rather than complement each other (Reno, 2018) . This came into stark relief in the early part of 2021 when different clan/partisan-aligned units within the security forces engaged in violent confrontation over Somalia's delayed elections and President Farmaajo's (ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to secure a term extension (Somali Dialogue Platform/Rift Valley Institute, 2022). This violence (which temporarily displaced significant populations from districts such as Hodan and Howlwadaag) represented the greatest threat to Somalia's post-2012 elite political settlement and the greatest prospect of the full-scale outbreak of armed conflict across the capital (Somali Dialogue Platform/RVI 2022).

The **Benadir Regional Administration (BRA)** is the main political authority in Mogadishu and is under the authority and mandate of the Federal Government. Although Mogadishu is geographically located within the BRA, its status in a federal Somalia is still contested and undefined. This is partly because political hegemony in the capital remains one of the most contested issues in the current (fragile) political settlement and the formula for clan-based power sharing could be significantly altered with the formalisation of Benadir's status (either as a capital city, federal region, or new type of designation in the federal system). This ambiguity, along with the fact that the Somali Federal Government has struggled to exert any tangible governance authority beyond Mogadishu, has created a complex and often overlapping governance relationship between the SFG and the BRA – in that both authorities are essentially confined to one geographical area, the capital. This has led to a lack of clarity and disputes over Federal/BRA control over revenue streams and institutions in Mogadishu. For example, while the police that operate in Mogadishu are the 'national' Somali Police Force (answerable to the Federal government) in practice they are confined to working in the capital (Hills, 2016). While the head of the (municipal) Benadir Region Police is appointed by the national Somali Police Force chief, the BRA has a significant influence over policing in the capital. At the same time, this municipal police force works with federal institutions such as the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Internal Security (with oversight over the national Somali Police Force (SPF), the National Inteligence and Security Agency (NISA) and the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate of Somalia), as well as other Benadir Regional Administration offices. The most notable task of the BRA is revenue collection from local sources such as tuktuk drivers, houses, issuing licenses as well as provision of some services such as sanitation, primary healthcare and administering some schools in Mogadishu.

BRA – which has authority over municipal police at district levels in Mogadishu - initiated a community policing program called '*deriseen*' (neighbourhood watch) in 2014. This was

first piloted in Waaberi (Hills, 2016) and partially rolled out in other districts: the 4 Waliyow Adde districts (Hamar Jajab, Waaberi, Howlwadaag and Hodan) and the 5 central districts (Hamar Weyne, Shangaani, Warta Nabadda, Abdi Aziz, and Boondheere). The program established street committees per every 10 houses (known in Somali as *Toban tiriyayaal*), while groups of 50 houses were defined as neighbours. Five representatives from these 50 households were selected to monitor and report daily activities within the neighborhood to a police officer attached to them. The system was designed to work as a bridge between the police and the community. The head of each ten-house grouping was required to live in this area and be able to collect accurate information. They were required to fill in a form every day with information including: numberplates of new vehicles parked in the area, data on new people joining a household, reports of armed persons entering a house (even government soldiers), details of special events and associated movements (such as weddings, funerals etc.), whether residents were arrested or a court case was opened against them. The plan was that this community policing project would have an office in each police station and that each division would have police staff and a vehicle. The program apparently trained 200 police officers, 200 field workers, 200 community policing officers, 100 NISA officers, and 9,000 street committee members. According to a former head of the program (interviewed by one of the current researchers for an earlier study in November 2018) the project was funded by The BRA (with support from AMISOM and donors such as UK) and the neighborhood watch staff were paid $150 per month. Deriseen demonstrated some encouraging results in Waaberi (Hills, 2016) and in other initial districts including Hodan, where it was linked to certain successful counter-terrorism operations. However, the program allegedly became politicized (with allegations that trained youth were mobilized for political purposes) and registration fees began to be charged to neighbourhoods.

It is unlikely that this initiative is still functioning through the structures that were initially established as it required a political will from the Benadir Regional Administration leadership, close coordinaton with ATMIS (previously ATMIS police), funding and community mobilization. Although the current research sample of interviewees was small, none mentioned that Deriseen was still in operation, while some noted that its return would be welcomed. However, because of its limited outreach and apparent politicization during the 2017-2021 tenure of President Farmajo (and increased contestation between different parts of the state security apparatus), cooperation between the public with security institutions has continued to remained limited, and does not appear to be currently formalized in the same way as the previous scheme. The threat of Al Shabaab reprisals for direct civilian collaboration with state authorities has continued to be a limiting factor for development of citizen-police interactions.

Another limiting factor for such schemes has been the relatively low numbers of police officers in the city. Although there is a police station in each district (including Hodan and Kahda) as well as extra facilities that are supposed to coordinate security provision, the total number of police officers in Mogadishu is estimated at between 5,000–6,000. This

is low in proportion to the estimated size of the wider population, with approximately1 police officer for every 417 persons (UNHCR, 2020).

Although police salaries have been supported by donors such as the EU (Hills, 2017), rates of pay are low and this likely contributes to perceived corruption and officers' diminished ability to protect city residents. The ability of the authorities to investigate crimes, such as the robbery of mobile phones, is so limited that victims find it futile to report minor offences, unless people have personal/clan contacts within the local police force. Instead, people often turn to their own extended families for help, or even reach out to their own clan's representative in the Somali Federal Parliament.

Clan militia have long been a source of insecurity in Mogadishu. In the early years of state collapse, they provided protection to communities and businesses, extorting rents both from their relatives and weaker clan groups. Initially, the Somali National Army (SNA) was little more than a loose coalition of clan militias whose allegiance to parochial clan interests often thwarted successive federal government's attempts to establish a professional army transcending clan divisions (Williams, 2020). In spite of over a decade of internationally funded security sector reform in Somalia, the SNA and other state security actors have been unable to reach ambitious national security goals. Clan militia – including uniformed and out of uniform state security forces – have been responsible for robbery targeting civilians and the sexual assault of female internally displaced people (IDPs) and other vulnerable groups in the past (Wasuge, 2018, 33).

In reality, the distinction between 'clan militia' and 'state security forces' is often blurred as the same soldiers may either fulfil state security tasks, pursue military objectives in the interest of their clan family or engage in freelance mercenary and criminal activities (OCVP, 2014). Clan militia – whether in uniform or not – operate with little accountability. They are a constant threat to minority and numerically weaker groups in the capital. They play a key role in upholding stratified power relations in Mogadishu between – to simplify – locally dominant Hawiye clan lineages at the top of the hierarchy, other majority Somali clans from other parts of Somalia in a middle tier, and IDPs and 'guests' who are often from minority and/or weaker clan families at the bottom (Cassanelli, 2015). A large proportion of those who live in camps for displaced people in Mogadishu come from racially-discriminated Somali Bantu-Jareer clans, as well as pre-dominantly Af Maay dialect-speaking Digil and Mirifle clans. Neither of these groups (themselves divided into multiple lineages) have historical claims to residence and representation in the capital and are usually in subordinate positions to various gatekeepers or intermediaries who belong to (or have connections with) dominant clans (Bakonyi and Chonka, 2023).

Informal settlement/camp managers provide protection and basic services to the estimated 500,000 IDPs in Mogadishu. These individuals are often referred to in the context as 'gatekeepers', notwithstanding the fact that there are other types of individual who influence how external organisations relate to these camps/settlement. Camp managers control access to IDP settlements and are de facto intermediaries between IDPs, local officials, power brokers and aid agencies (Bryld et. al, 2017). A 2019 estimate

suggested the existence of roughly 140 gatekeepers in Mogadishu, with each gatekeeper potentially managing one or more settlements (Yarnell, 2019). Gatekeepers – who may be male or female – often work in conjunction with informal camp committees (mixed gender) and clan elders (male) and liaise with land owners and local militias to provide shelter and basic services such as water and sanitation to IDPs in exchange for rents in either cash or in kind (this petty humanitarian entrepreneurship is explained in further detail on page 26). Gatekeepers play key roles in providing and deciding on precarious land tenure security for IDPs and other locally marginalized populations in Mogadishu (Kamau et al 2020). They also influence the provision of humanitarian aid to IDPs as well as the mobility of the latter within the city. In spite of their diversion of aid (HRW, 2013), IDPs still recognize gatekeepers as service providers, particularly in the absence of state actors (Bryld et. Al, 2020). Gatekeepers are not part of the official governance structure in Somalia, but are another example of the widespread privatization of the provision of public goods in Mogadishu and Somali cities (Hagmann et. Al, 2019).

While Mogadishu has seen an overall reduction of clan conflicts over the past twenty years, clan dynamics continue to shape safety and security in the city. These competitive inter-group dynamics afford clan elders and customary authorities an influential role in power brokerage. The recruitment and appointment of officials and representatives to positions of local public authority – whether local government, market committees or other positions – are predominantly based on clan representation (Mursal, 2018). Individuals from bigger and more powerful clans escape accountability as they enjoy clan protection. Clan and religious elders play a pivotal role in resolving communal and family conflicts on the basis of customary Somali law (*xeer*), which compensates victims and re-establishes social relations. Male clan elders often mediate violent conflicts – including land disputes or homicides – and in so doing complement and substitute state courts and administrations (Hagmann et. al, 2019).

Al Shabaab remains a powerful actor in the political economy of security in Somalia. Despite significant international efforts to strengthen Somali security agencies to counter their operations and influence, the group has remained resilient and active in the capital. The Al-Qaeda affiliate is the single deadliest source of insecurity in Mogadishu, frequently carrying out complex attacks (involving suicide bombings and multiple gunmen) on government buildings and civilian hotels and restaurants associated with state personnel (Chonka, 2018). It also carries out frequent targeted assassinations of state or state-linked individuals. Explosions in public places – either targeting government/international convoys or positions – often cause significant civilian casualties. The Zoobe junction bombing of October 2017 was likely the world's deadliest single truck bombing, although the precise location where the device detonated was unlikely to have been the primary target (The Guardian, 2017).

The group also provides some judicial services to the public through its *Shari'a* courts. These are reported to operate in the city outskirts and in the Lower Shabelle region, and in parallel to the (weak) state judiciary. Parties to disputes either voluntarily bring cases

to Al Shabaab courts (which have certain reputation for efficiency and impartiality) or are summoned to them. Al Shabaab is also able to govern individuals in the city remotely through threats and extortion (Finnish Immigration Service, 2020). Al Shabaab collects significant domestic revenue in the form of tax from businesses in Mogadishu (Mubarak, 2020). Although Al Shabaab has developed some relatively sophisticated and state-like provisions of infrastructure, education and basic healthcare in towns that it directly controls (particularly in its Middle Jubba stronghold), in the capital the group's courts are the only 'service' that it provides to the population, who may travel to outskirts areas to engage with their dispute resolution mechanisms.

In recent years, an armed insurgent group affiliated with the Islamic State, which had a prior presence in northeastern Somalia (Puntland) extended its (modest) presence and operational capacity to Mogadishu. This competitor to Al Shabaab has been linked to a series of targeted killings of government officials and security personnel including employees of companies who refused to pay extortion money.

Local and international **Private Security Companies (PSCs)** supplement security agencies in the capital. They are mostly hired to secure high value targets including foreign aid and diplomatic missions, wealthy individuals and businesses in important commercial areas such as Bakaara market. The number of PSCs has grown considerably since the (re-) establishment of the FGS in 2012. Most concentrate their presence and activities in the heavily fortified 'green zone' surrounding Mogadishu International Airport (MIA) as the UN, the EU and other missions relocated staff and offices from Nairobi to the capital. The MIA-zone thus emerged as a militarized enclave serving as key node of internationalized state-building in Somalia (Bakonyi, 2021). Local PSCs play key roles in gathering intelligence, registering weaponry and assisting international counterparts in navigating security challenges (Norman, 2020). As they substitute ineffective state security forces, these private security companies 'play direct roles in the reconfiguration of political authority' (Reno, 2017). While interviewees in this study did not mention large PSC's as a direct threat to their personal security, they may be indistinguishable from other uniformed arms carriers who did pose threats, as discussed in section 3.

2.3 MOGADISHU'S SECURITY DYNAMICS: DIFFERENT EVOLUTIONS IN HODAN AND KAHDA

In many respects, Mogadishu is a safer city for its civilian population than it was a decade ago. Overall, the security threats of collateral damage caused by armed confrontations between state security forces alongside African Union troops with Al Shabaab (or fighting between different units of the state security apparatus) had decreased. In both Hodan and Kahda, respondents indicated that overall urban well-being had increased along with security. In general, people in these two districts reported that the number of bombings, indiscriminate attacks, targeted killings, and robberies by soldiers had fallen over the last decade. Nonetheless, different groups of people in these two neighborhoods continued to report a range of directly experienced and perceived security issues that were serious and debilitating. Prominently, these included violent armed robbery on the street (sometimes

committed by uniformed personnel), harassment and robbery undertaken by increasingly high-profile youth gangs, sexual and gender based violence (including home invasions and rape of women), and lingering fears of being caught up in Al Shabaab-linked explosions or complex attacks in certain locations. Different forms of urban insecurity are experienced and perceived in a variety of ways by residents of both neighbourhoods. The remainder of this section explains how the different characteristics of Hodan and Kahda (and their residents) have emerged over time, and how these varying contexts relate to evolving forms of insecurity and violence.

Hodan district can be considered part of Mogadishu's semi-periphery in terms of security dynamics – in that it is located outside the internationally-secured airport-zone (Somali Public Agenda, 2022a). Hodan borders on this zone (around the important KM4 junction) and encompasses part of the Makka Al-Mukarama thoroughfare than runs east from the airport towards Villa Somalia. This road is home to many prominent hotels and restaurants that have been targets of Al Shabaab attacks. Hodan's eastern edge borders on Bakaara market, the capital's commercial heart. Given its relative proximity to these locations, Hodan has emerged as a popular location of residence for a segment of Mogadishu's middle class and is increasingly home to politicians, civil servants and the national staff of humanitarian organisations. This is particularly true for the Taleh neighbourhod of Hodan, which is also home to a growing business community, major banks and other commercial buildings. Land and real estate prices (as in many other semi-peripheral districts in Mogadishu) have risen rapidly in recent years. Nonetheless, Hodan is also a relatively heterogenous district in terms of clan lineages and socio-economic class. The district has long-standing residents whose roots in the area go back to the Siyad Barre era, along with incoming state/INGO-affiliated professionals who cannot live in more peripheral districts due to fears of Al Shabaab targeting (Somali Public Agenda, 2022). There are also informal settlements in the district inhabited by displaced people.

Figure 1: Map of Mogadishu showing the location of districts, including Hodan and Kahda (RVI 2017).

Fears of being caught up in Al Shabaab attacks were certainly expressed by interviewees from Hodan, but a more prevalent concern related to the apparent increase in armed

robbery, either by uniformed and un-uniformed security forces, unidentified individuals or youth gangs. Many people perceived Hodan's growing economy as increasing its population's exposure to robberies, and there was speculation that criminals were being attracted into the district from outside.

Given the presence of large numbers of state officials and strategic military/security facilities and positions in Hodan, this district was significantly affected by the escalation in tensions and armed conflict between different factions of the military around the disputed electoral process. In particular, clashes in February-April 2021 led to displacement from the area. The failure of the then President's attempt to secure a term extension (and the subsequent political settlement that allowed indirect elections to proceed into 2022) allayed fears of further destabilization in Mogadishu. Nonetheless, this was a recent period of violence and uncertainty that loomed large in the security perceptions of many interviewees in Hodan. It also underlined the wider fragility of the national political settlement, including under the new tenure of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud who again returned to power in May 2022. Some interviewees felt that the (armed) political instability of the prolonged election period between 2021-2022 distracted attention away from criminal activities and provided space for gangs to exploit (see also Somali Public Agenda 2022b).

Kahda district, located to the northwest of Hodan and forming the outskirts of the capital, is a peripheral district in relation to evolving urban security dynamics. From the 1970s[3] until the late 2000s, Kahda was largely un-urbanised and inhabited only by pastoralists and semi-pastoralists hailing from a single clan family.[4] It has undergone significant urbanization since the late 2000s. Fighting between the ICU and the Ethiopian-backed TFG around 2007 displaced significant numbers of Mogadishu residents towards the city's outskirts. The devastating famine of 2011 – exacerbated by conflict across south-central Somalia – accelerated rural-urban forced migration, with many people moving along the 'Afgoye corridor' into Mogadishu and settling around Kahda. Since 2012, wider urban reconstruction/redevelopment, economic growth and widespread land disputes in Mogadishu (RVI & HIPS, 2019) have also led to the evictions of displaced people from properties they were squatting on in more central city areas, with many moving towards the patchwork of camps that spreads across peripheral districts (see Figure 2). As such, Kahda hosts a significantly higher proportion of displaced people living in informal settlements and flimsy camp accommodation, in comparison to Hodan.

3 The date was provided by one of the pioneers of Kahda district establishment interviewed on July 11, 2022.

4 This was reflected in the area's previous name Kahsheikhaal.

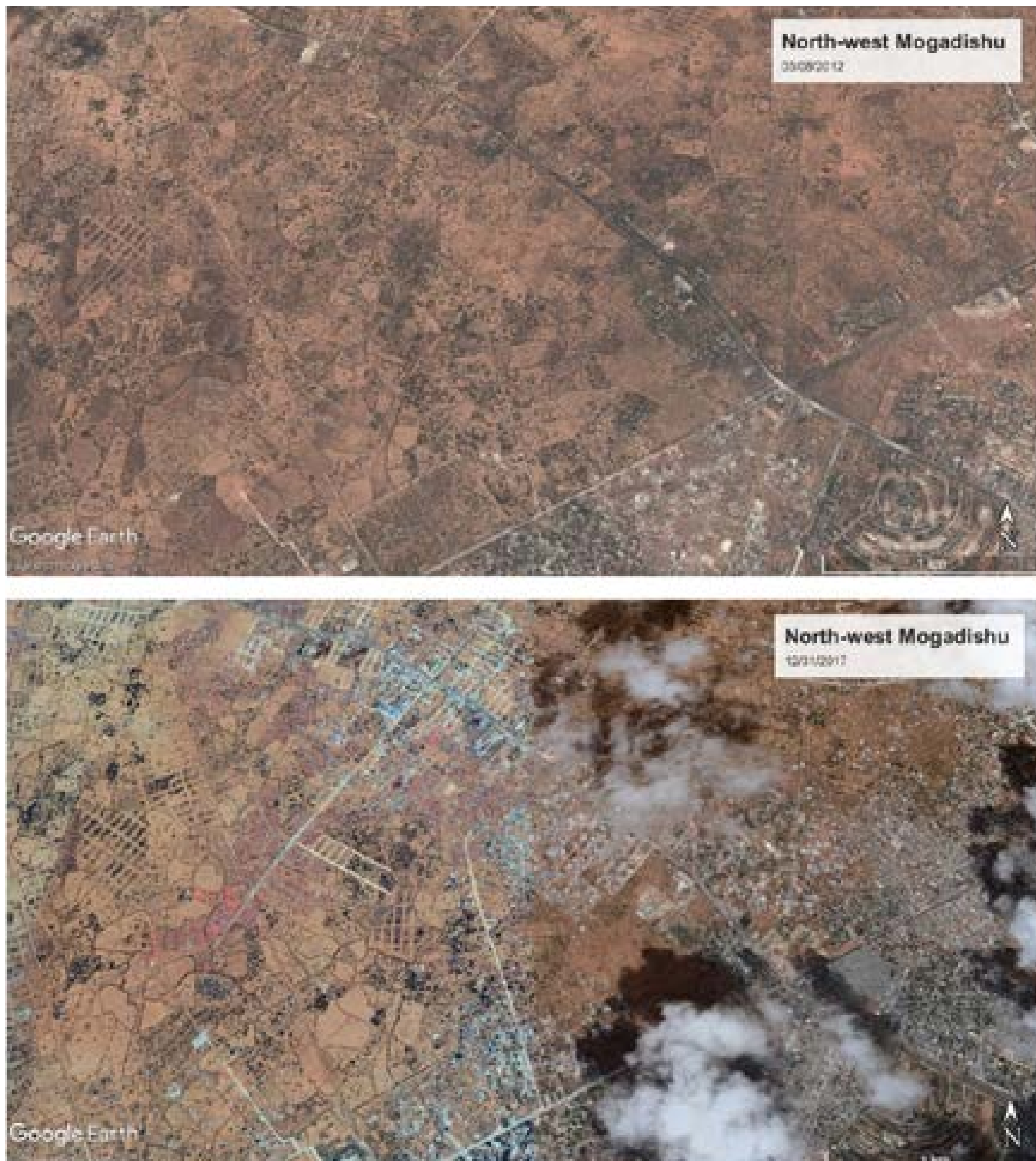

Figure 2: Google Earth satellite images from 2012 and 2017, showing rapid urbanization of Kahda district (largely driven by displacement and rural-urban in migration. (Taken from Chonka, Edle & Stuvoy, 2022)

District state authorities have a much lower profile and presence in Kahda, with many officials choosing not to reside in the district for fear of Al Shabaab.5 With fewer district/ federal government institutions and personnel in Kahda, residents' experiences and fear of large scale Al Shabaab attacks were lesser than those reported in Hodan. Some people in Kahda even reported a less antagonistic relationship between Al Shabaab operatives and their fellow youth in the district, even those who may be government officials.6 While Al

5 As per an interview, Kahda's district commissioner doesn't sleep in his residence in Kahda. Mogadishu 14 July 2022.

6 Interview with a resident of Kahda

Shabaab apparently exercises some authority in the district through its court system, the group has not dominated society, as they have been reportedly challenged by other Islamic authorities in the district around certain disputed religious issues.7

While Kahda residents did speak of experiences and fears of violent robbery on streets and in their homes, there was also a perception among some residents that many robbers (including youth gangs) target other neighbourhoods where there is more apparent wealth. The most vulnerable populations in Kahda to most forms of insecurity (and particularly robbery and SGBV in homes) appear to be displaced populations and divorced or widowed women in these camps. These people – who often come from marginalized clan/ethnic groups – make up a significant proportion of the district's population.

7 Including Mowliid (celebrations for the Prophet's birthday) and Duug (slaughtering animals after someone's death for prayer)

3 URBAN RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOURCES OF EVERYDAY INSECURITY

This section examines in-depth interview respondents' reports of experiences and perceptions of insecurity across both Hodan and Kahda districts, as well as reviewing specific measures that urban citizens take to protect themselves or respond to threats. The most common, pervasive, and debilitating threat to urban residents' safety that was discussed by interviewees was that of violent robbery. This tended to be experienced on the streets and was perpetrated either by uniformed arms carriers and/or youth gangs (ciyaal weero) that appear to have grown in prominence and notoriety in the city. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) targeting vulnerable women remains a serious concern, and issues of social stigma may be severely limiting the reporting of these incidents in different neighbourhoods. Political violence – linked to Al Shabaab attacks and confrontations between different factions of the state security apparatus – continues to pose dangers to urban residents and particularly in specific strategic locations that certain people need to spend time in or transit through.

3.1 VIOLENT MUGGING AND ARMED ROBBERY

Although many interviewees in Hodan and Kahda districts felt that the general urban security situation had improved in comparison to a decade ago, most people reported fears of unpredictable and indiscriminate violent robbery on city streets, particularly at night. Perpetrators tend to be armed with knives or firearms, sometimes wearing government security uniforms or sometimes appearing to be members of youth gangs. In some cases, interviewees reported acquaintances being robbed by 'well-dressed' young people who did not necessarily appear threatening prior to an attack:

> "You never know who is who [in order] to protect yourself. I know a girl who was robbed by a decent [looking] man. It was early morning, and she was going to the vegetable market. He approached her just as a normal person walking towards [her]. As she expected him to pass her by, he pulled out a knife, took her phone, and ran to the road where he caught a Bajaj [motorcycle rickshaw] that was waiting for him. I am now suspicious of everyone." (Hodan, 25 year old female resident)

Robberies often involve violence and the killing of victims is not uncommon (Radio Dalsan, 2022). Interviewees noted that perpetrators are concerned about being identified and that this may lead to a victim being killed. Robbers often instruct victims not to look back (after they have had their belongings taken), and they may use violence to scare them away:

> "I was once robbed in 2017. A Bajaj came closer to me and suddenly one man came out of it and told me to hand over my mobile phone. He hit me in the face with the handle of his gun. I groaned, "Why did they hit me since

> I gave them what they wanted?" He firmly threatened me to go away and never look back at them. Everything was happening so fast, and I couldn't understand what exactly was happening, and I can't identify them now." (Hodan, 30 year old man).

According to other interviewees, in April 2022, a young man was stabbed to death in Kahda district after he apparently recognized his assailants. Reluctance to hand over belongings can also lead to physical attacks. Also in 2022, a young woman was murdered in broad daylight in the Kahda district after she seemed hesitant to relinquish her possessions.

Motorcycle rickshaws (Bajaaj) are a common means of transport in Mogadishu and, as apparent in the above quotes, are often used by robbers given their speed and maneuverability. Also clear from the interviews is that the target of robbers is almost always mobile phones. The vast majority of urban residents carry mobiles and the use of mobile money is prevalent. Devices (especially smartphones) have value to thieves, and although users' mobile money accounts are protected by PIN numbers, robbers may use physical force or threats of extreme violence to get victims to hand over their details.

The involvement of state security forces in these types of robberies was widely reported by interviewees. Some spoke about armed uniformed soldiers confronting civilians to steal their belongings. One interviewee linked such criminality to soldiers' addiction to Khat (a narcotic leaf widely consumed in the city) and the difficulties of their position in relation to ongoing counter-terrorism:

> "They chew khat [but] they hardly get money to finance it. Above all, if they get hungry, they will do anything they can. Moreover, when someone is a soldier and takes a gun, he is directly at war with Al Shabaab because, even unlike the civil servants, they don't have any means of hiding themselves, and this doesn't allow them to work and do a decent job. The only option they have is to rob. I'd like to emphasize the khat once more. Khat is problematic and addictive. The salary they gain would at least suffice them if they weren't buying this drug." (Hodan, middle-aged housewife).

Other interviewees claimed that government soldiers "leased guns to gangs who use them to attack the public" (Hodan, 35 year old man), indicating another revenue source for security forces in the capital. Nonetheless, other interviewees noted a reduction in the involvement of government troops in robbery and checkpoint extortions under former President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo (2017-2022), arguably as a result of improvements made by his administration to the payment of soldiers.

Regardless of the actual level of continued security force involvement in robberies of civilians, much public attention has shifted towards the rapid growth of armed youth gangs in Mogadishu, known locally as ciyaal weero (which can be roughly translated as 'attacking/aggressive children'). Apparently, proliferating from peripheral districts of the capital (such as Dharkeynley and Kaaraan) from 2021, groups of young men have been responsible for a range of different crimes, including armed robbery on streets and of

businesses and homes, as well as sexual assaults of women. Some interviewees linked the emergence of these youth gangs to the political and security vacuum that occurred in 2021/22 in relation to splits between different segments of the state security apparatus over the disputed electoral process. More targeted research is needed to verify this claim, and investigate how tensions between security forces contributed to this phenomenon, or undermined other informal security arrangements at neighborhood level. This is outlined in the conclusion in one of the PCPs that the report puts forward for potential action research with specific stakeholders. Although ciyaal weero is often understood as a very recent crime wave, underlying trends of a burgeoning youth population, high levels of unemployment, increasing drug use/addiction and the availability of weapons have all likely contributed. Increasing (or perceived) socio-economic inequality in the city, along with nascent gentrification and urban segregation may also play a role, although this cannot be confirmed by the current research.

Ciyaal weero attacks have become particularly visible in Mogadishu through the circulation of videos on social media platforms such as TikTok. Although the specific impact of social media-generated publicity needs further research, the fact that Ciyaal Weero content (e.g. showing confrontations between different gangs) is gaining large numbers of views may be a motivating or exacerbating factor for this type of violence.

The 'ciyaal weero' label appears to cover a wide range of anti-social youth behaviour, ranging from low-level nighttime disturbances, random acts of violence, to violent organized crime. Some groups appear to have powerful gang leaders, organized hierarchies and links with off-duty soldiers who provide weapons and take a proportion of proceeds from robberies (Somali Public Agenda, 2022b).

The rise of these male youth gangs and their criminal activities has severely disrupted the socioeconomic movement of city dwellers, particularly at night. Shops and service providers close their business doors early and people in some areas talk about avoiding any movements on the street after sunset. Horrific stories of violence are widely narrated and circulated. A housewife in Hodan explained why she is afraid of those gangs and doesn't go out at night:

> "Those crazy children do crazy things, including tearing down girls' clothes in the middle of the roads and streets and sending them home walking naked."

Interviewees in Hodan and Kahda had different views about the extent to which *ciyaal weero* activity was prevalent in their districts and whether specific gangs had established a presence there. In Kahda, some residents noted that gangs and robbers were more active in wealthier neighbourhoods where there were higher value target individuals and businesses. In both districts, interviewees spoke about gangs in relation to other neighbourhoods where they were perceived to be more active (Daynille, Dharkeynley) or where they were coming from to disturb their area (Hodan). More broadly, it is thought that a lack of education and economic opportunities in low-income neighbourhoods is a

primary driver of youth gang activity, as are apparent rises in drug use and addiction in the city (Somali Public Agenda, 2022b). More research is needed into the organization of youth gangs, the processes of their emergence from specific locations and their intersections with clan and political power dynamics across the city.

In response to the threat of armed robbers (whether in security force uniforms or members of youth gangs), many Mogadishu residents adapt their behaviours when moving around the city. According to one male Hodan resident, his sisters will not go out for shopping or entertainment unless one of their brothers accompanies them. Many Mogadishu residents avoid carrying smartphones and instead take a basic handset called Niicle that costs about $10–$12:

> "I leave my iPhone behind, and take Niicle. There are times I can't leave it and, in that case, I put it in my chest right under my bra. And I take all my gold jewelry and fake gold jewelry off before I go out. Because they can't differentiate the original and fake gold and won't believe you if you say this isn't worthy. They will take it and harm you along the way." (25 year old female resident of Hodan)

Nonetheless, as noted above, the use of basic mobile phones does not necessarily preclude the theft of mobile money as robbers may use violence/threats of violence to access user PINs and transfer money to themselves or a third party.

3.2 SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In relation to the types of robberies and youth-gang related street violence discussed above, young women face heightened levels of risk, either in terms of being targeted, or in experiencing particular kinds of violence. A 29-year-old laundry-man who lives in the Taleh neighborhood of Hodan, urged girls and women to take steps to conceal their properties while passing through the area. He describes how women might be targeted more often than men in these types of crime:

> "Women and girls face insecurity in Taleh neighborhood. It is different when a perpetrator wants to rob a person. It depends on the gender. They rob men mostly at night and with guns, but when it comes to girls, they rob them in broad daylight with a knife and, in most cases, slap the girl unexpectedly while taking her phone or purse."

Although interviewees in both districts spoke about cases of sexual assault and rape of women, it was in Kahda that some respondents emphasized the particular vulnerability of single women living (often with children) in informal settlements/displaced people's camps. A young woman who lives in the district and works there for an international NGO described her understanding of this problem in detail:

> "I do assessments on girls' education and barriers, including access to school safely. Girls were young and couldn't fathom most of our assessment questions, but those who were 15-16 years of age reported their cases of rape.

> It is not only young girls. Women, especially those who live in corrugated iron houses, face a significant threat of rape and physical assault. The worst place is somewhere called Baydhabo Yarey. Vulnerable houses are broken into so easily. And there are no men with them. They are widows or single mothers. Perpetrators are men, and they are only afraid of other men. Those poor women are constantly harmed because they live alone with their children in a loosely locked house." [...]

Interviewer: How do these women find justice?

> "Justice!? First of all, they don't talk about it. It is what women have felt over the years. When they are raped, they are not a victim but a criminal in the eyes of society. They are condemned for causing what happened to them and are deprived of living like a normal person within society. She will not be wedded if she was a virgin. No women are risking their lives by saying such things."

It appears that rape is common in IDP camps, but is likely to be significantly underreported. Cases of severe injury from sexual assaults are referred to hospitals while other victims may stay in their homes and try to carry on their daily lives as if nothing happened.

Some women in Kahda encourage others to '*cover themselves*' and avoid presenting themselves as *'attractive'* to men:

> "I know of two women who were raped in the camp. They were light-skinned and showed off their beauty. They are naïve and irrational [doing that] because the gunmen [soldiers] know that there are only vulnerable women in vulnerable shelters here [...] They were bleaching [their skin, a common beauty treatment]. They shouldn't look that attractive and should cover themselves because those soldiers are observing the camp shelters all day. They know all about our situation. They know which house has a male inside and which is not. They break in at night based on the information gathered all day."

Although this amounts to victim blaming, it likely reflects steps that some women may take to reduce their vulnerability. However, the same interviewee also stated that "they [the armed men] are unpredictable and just rape women no matter their age and appearance" indicating the futility of this approach. There were also reports of men breaking into houses and raping women in front of male family members.

Interviewee discussions of sexual violence either focused on home invasions in ill-protected and unsecured camps/informal settlements, or risks that women faced in the streets after dark (sometimes linking this to the broader phenomenon of *ciyaal weero* outlined above). It is unclear the extent to which sexual violence also affects women in more wealthy parts of the city, i.e. those that live in more secure accommodation and with male family members/husbands. Social stigma may produce more widespread underreporting, but

this is likely compounded for displaced populations given their wider social and political marginalisation in the city, as we return to in section 4 of the report on inequalities of risk, and in relation to an identified PCP in the conclusion.

3.3 POLITICAL VIOLENCE

As the capital city of Somalia and home of the Somali Federal Government, Mogadishu has since the late 2000s been a primary theatre for Al Shabaab's violent campaign against state authorities and their backers. This has involved numerous targeted assassinations (small arms and car bombs), attacks on convoys, as well as complex attacks involving suicide bombings and multiple gunmen on government buildings and civilian locations like hotels and restaurants (often only indirectly or tenuously) linked to state actors. These attacks have often caused civilian casualties. This was something that several interviewees had experienced and continued to fear. For instance, an internally displaced woman from Hodan recalled an experience of this:

> "Some incidents cannot be forgotten. There was a time when a car exploded near the madrasa where my kids learn. I ran away from the camp when I heard about the explosion. I was scared for my firstborn, who was there [...] When I reached the place, the teacher told me that he left minutes before the explosion. Two casualties have been taken to a hospital. [My son] became mentally shocked when he witnessed the explosion, and he ran away from the scene, but then he got lost. That was one of the incidents I can't forget."

Residents of the more peripheral Kahda district – where municipal and federal government targets are much fewer – reported a much lower frequency of bomb attacks in the area. Interviewees noted that many government officials who undertake duties in Kahda do not actually live in the district. The extent to which this means that Al Shabaab exerts influence in or controls Kahda is difficult to ascertain. Some interviewees spoke of Al Shabaab targeted violence against unpopular power-holders in the district that they implied could be looked on favourably by some residents:

> "They [Al Shabaab] mostly go after those who mimic them by controlling, judging in cases of dispute, and oppressing the people, [and this makes Al Shabaab] look powerful in the eyes of the people. They killed a [dominant clan] landlord who used to be here. He became too much trouble for public transportation drivers. He had a scar on his lips and his voice was stuttering. He even never allowed someone to look at him [...] He argued with a boy from the Jareer Weyne. He didn't have his gun at that moment and threatened the boy to stay in the exact spot if he had the bravery to. The people pushed the boy and urged him to leave. When he came back with his gun, wondering and asking where the boy went, he was attacked by men who came straight out of a shop and shot him at the heart multiple times in front of his mother and siblings". (25-year old female representative of a camp in Kahda).

Some interviewees maintained that Al Shabaab operatives in Kahda had personal acquaintances and relationships with police and soldiers in the district which limited violence. This same interviewee noted that certain individuals also pay (what amounts to) protection money to Al Shabaab8 and that the group had intermediaries in the district that enabled them to operate its courts system in the periphery of the city:

> "Those insiders [who work with Al Shabaab] give instructions on court procedures; they tell people where and when to go. Delivering this message is very critical. It demonstrates their power and resilience as it shows that Al Shabaab stays with you in the same district. People are more likely to do as instructed." (33 year old male university lecturer, Kahda resident).

Others, however, noted that the group's social/religious influence in Kahda had been, and continued to be relatively limited:

> "We haven't seen a major security challenge since the creation of the district and that is something we are grateful for Allah for. Another aspect is that Al Shabaab militants could not even stay in Kahda peacefully when they fully ruled the city. A Sufi sect Imam stood out in the mosque in front of Al Shabaab (who were praying at the front line and carrying their guns) and declared that whoever opposes the Mowlid [celebrations for the Prophet's birthday] should first kill him. They were criticized in the religious controversy. For instance, when Al Shabaab forbid slaughtering animals after someone's death, the religious scholars went to Al Shabaab and asked for convincing evidence from the Holy Book and the Sunnah. [...] Al Shabaab used to appoint new Imams for the mosques. I witnessed when AS began to do the Khudbah (Friday sermon). They are also beaten in that aspect; the Imam swore and assured them that as long as he was alive, they would never step up to the mosque minbar and read the Khudbah. Al Shabaab told him to step back and allow for the procedures that the whole city accepted, and he again told them that they could only kill him. The Sheikh is still alive and present in Kahda." (35 year old male resident of Kahda, university lecturer).

As such, respondents' fears of direct Al Shabaab attacks in Kahda itself were relatively limited. However, many of the district's low-income residents (including displaced people) reported fears of attacks in other parts of the city that they needed to travel to or through regularly for work. For instance, Tabeellaha market is located at the edge of Kahda district and interviewees spoke about multiple bombings along this road that had claimed the lives of many civilians.

Fears of Al Shabaab violence were more pronounced in Hodan – a district known to be home to many government employees as well as certain areas that have been targeted

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8 This was also reported by a female resident of Hodan.

in large-scale bombings and complex attacks. Residents reported employing different risk-reduction strategies, including avoiding the crowded restaurants along Makka Al Mukarama street, and avoiding government-owned vehicles and hotels where politicians stay (as well as saying that they put their trust in Allah). This was also true for lower-income residents of Hodan, such as a displaced mother (who fled from the droughts in Lower Shabelle region in 2017). She described declining a well-paying cleaning/housekeeping job in one of those hotels on Makka Al Mukarama's most targeted streets:

> "Even though the salary would have been a lot, I could not do it. I didn't want to die and leave my kids behind. And after a month, the hotel was attacked, and there was an explosion and many people lost their lives. That's when I told myself that I had made a good decision."

Of course, many other low income residents – particularly displaced people who often live in conditions of extreme economic precarity (Chonka and Bakonyi, 2021) – may not feel able to refuse such work that could put them in harms way.

Another common tactic that people use to mitigate threats from Al Shabaab is to conceal what they do for a living. A female aid worker in Hodan district was asked whether she felt that people in professions such as hers were exposed to particular risks:

> "I don't know because everyone keeps their career and personal lives hidden. Even me if someone asks where I work, I lie and tell them that I sell clothes at the Bakara market. Because if I tell them where I work, I will be a target because you never know what your neighbors are up to. I can't trust them since they may be Al Shabaab, and they also do the same and don't tell others about their business."

Political violence in Mogadishu that accompanied disputes over the last indirect election process was still fresh in the minds of interviewees. This was particularly true in Hodan, where different factions of the armed forces were mobilized to support different sides in the struggle over the elections and which caused temporary displacement. Although this situation was resolved and widespread fears about broader destabilization were averted, this period highlighted the fragility of Somalia's political settlement and the continued fragmentation of armed/security forces along clan-political lines in the capital. The genuine integration and coordination of government armed forces remains a challenge for the recently elected President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, just as it was under his previous tenure in office (2012-2017) where limited progress was made in relation to security sector reform and anti-corruption efforts.

4 SOCIAL AND SPATIAL LOGICS OF INSECURITY: URBAN INEQUALITIES IN EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION/JUSTICE MECHANISMS

Despite some shared concerns around the prevalence of street robbery, the previous section has highlighted important variations in the predominant security issues that face different groups of residents in the (semi-peripheral) Hodan and (peripheral) Kahda districts of Mogadishu. This section of the report analyses these variations in greater detail, exploring how particular inequalities affect the social and spatial dynamics of urban insecurity and access to means of reducing or mitigating prevailing risks. This section first provides an overview of which groups across these districts are most acutely affected by which types of insecurity and analyses how their social and spatial position in the urban environment affects their physical and socio-cultural safety and access to different forms of protection vis-à-vis other actors. The analysis then turns to police and community-organised responses to crime and insecurity, assessing what is effective and accessible to different communities in a context of (seemingly) widening socio-economic inequalities.

4.1 INEQUALITIES AND EXPOSURE TO CRIME/INSECURITY

Interviewees in Hodan and Kahda indicated that virtually anyone walking through city streets (particularly after dark) could be a victim of the armed robbery that many people thought was increasing in frequency and violence across the city. Particular locations with poor street lighting and rough roads also increased the risk of attacks. Men and women could be targeted, although interviewees noted above that women could face increased intimidatory violence and risked sexual assault in the course of robberies. Some interviewees felt that Hodan – given its higher concentration of wealth, businesses and entertainment venues – was a more common location for robbers, in comparison to Kahda. Nightlife (and opportunities for robbery) are more limited in Kahda and many residents spoke about avoiding all outside movements after dark.

This was particularly prevalent for displaced people living in different types of camp or informal settlement (which exist in Hodan and in greater concentrations in Kahda). Previous research has indicated that IDP camp dwellers tend to spend as much time within camp spaces as possible, with exceptions made for commuting for work (e.g. domestic labour, construction, or petty trade/portering in markets) (Chonka and Bakonyi, 2021; Bakonyi and Chonka, 2023). This relates to displaced people's subordinate, marginalized and vulnerable status as urban residents. A significant proportion of people classed as 'internally displaced' to Mogadishu (i.e. those who live in informal settlements that are identified with this label) hail from clan groups that are not dominant in the capital and do not make historical claims to urban land rights. Large numbers of 'IDPs' are from Digil & Mirifle clans predominant in Bay and Bakool regions and – as Af Maay speakers – constitute an ethno-linguistic minority in the city. Many other 'IDPs' hail from Somali Bantu Jareer groups and often face racialized discrimination and – at times – direct

violence (BBC Somali Service 2018).

As outlined in the Informal Settlements Domain report (and noted above) displaced people rely on various intermediaries and patron client relations in order to find space to settle, basic resources to construct shelter, and obtain protection through camp managers (often known as gatekeepers). The political economy of displacement and camp urbanization in Mogadishu relies on humanitarian aid. Various petty humanitarian entrepreneurs who either hail from land-owning clans or have connections with these groups establish camps and facilitate in-migrant settlement in order to attract food, non-food or cash aid for IDPs (Bakonyi and Chonka, 2023). At which point, these gatekeepers take a proportion of aid, as do land owners and other members of local communities who have enabled this settlement or stake their own claims to access to humanitarian resources. Although this clearly amounts to a diversion of aid, camp residents feelings towards this type of gate-keeping are often ambivalent or tolerant of these practices, in that they see little other option to receive shelter or basic sustenance (Bryld et al, 207; Bakonyi and Chonka, 2023). These patron-client relations and lopsided power relations mean that displaced people tend to have very limited political agency within their 'host communities', and little direct access to non-state judicial mechanisms, e.g. through important local elders from dominant clan groups. They are reliant on intermediaries, particularly camp leaders/managers/gatekeepers and camp organizing committees (if these exist). Camps vary in terms of these structures, and in terms of the connections that gatekeepers have with local landowners, clan elders and institutions such as the police, the municipal government, or other non-state/armed security providers. Often, camp managers are required to also pay off these local actors from the humanitarian resources that they have been able to access via their camp's residents, in order to ensure the camp's continued existence and relative security. Nonetheless, almost all camps are in a vulnerable position in relation to tenure security and (often violent) evictions are common as landowners seek to reclaim spaces on which camps have formed.

The marginality of camp dwellers likely means that they have little direct interaction with Al Shabaab or threat of targeted political violence from that group. While many displaced people from rural areas have cited predatory agricultural taxation by Al Shabaab as a driver of their forced migration to cities (Bakonyi and Chonka 2023), there is little indication that Al Shabaab extorts money from urban camp dwellers, focusing instead on medium businesses and more wealthy individuals/enterprises. Nonetheless, displaced people's need to find casual employment in other parts of the city (often on streets) means that they can be exposed to collateral harm from Al Shabaab bombings/complex attacks either on major arteries in the city or in the vicinity of hotels and marketplaces. If displaced people spend nighttime hours within camps, then they limit their exposure to street crime, such as robbery. Nonetheless, not all camps provide secure accommodation and the weakness of cloth or corrugated metal shelters puts residents at risk of home invasions by armed intruders and sexual violence. As indicated in the previous section, rapes of single women in camps/informal settlement may be prevalent but significantly underreported. Camps are often home to large numbers of single mothers who may be widowed or divorced. This

30 year old working-class male interviewee from Hodan described different relationships and violence between armed men and single women in camps/informal settlements:

> "They are the most insecure and vulnerable people in our camp because they have no one to protect them from these monsters. If the soldiers notice women living alone without a husband, they come and try to rape them. Although not all soldiers are the same, some of them are good; they propose a secret marriage to them. They don't hurt them. Compared to the other soldiers who rape them without mercy, I hear so many single moms complaining about these issues and camp managers doing nothing about them. Yet they blame the victims instead of the predator."

The end of the above quote indicates how patriarchal social norms can make it difficult for women to report sexual violence and the previous section has highlighted how shame and fear of social stigma lead many victims to keep quiet about the abuse they have suffered.

Given the limits of police action to prevent or prosecute such violent crimes (discussed below), various neighborhood communities have created and self-funded nightly patrols of informal security guards/watchmen. Discussing the vulnerability of single female camp dwellers, this interviewee (a young female INGO worker who lives in Kahda) describes a mechanism that exists in the neighbourhood but which is not accessible/applicable to displaced people:

> "Every house in Kahda pays $4 per month for a community [group] that ensures security. They are from the neighborhood and operate on their own. They chew khat and stay up all night. [They] consist of two groups; group 1 starts surveillance at 11 pm to 2 am and from 2 am to dawn by the second group. Those IDP families are less advantaged and can't afford to pay that amount. For the neighborhoods who pay the money, there are torches hovering all around and there is whistling while the poor's [settlements] are dark and invite attackers.

The extremely limited resources of most camp dwellers prevents them from contributing to and benefiting from these kinds of informal security arrangements. Displaced people and representatives from camp committees who were interviewed did mention these initiatives or their camps integration into wider community schemes, indicating social stratification and inequality between those who dwell in permanent (brick) houses and those who live in (often short term) camp settlements.

4.2 POLICE-COMMUNITY PROXIMITY, RELATIONS AND RESPONSES TO CRIME

Interviewee responses about the role, activities and effectiveness of the police varied considerably, both within and between the different districts and their constituent neighborhoods. In general, police forces in Mogadishu are understaffed and have limited capacity for engaging proactively in communities to tackle crime and insecurity. As agents

of municipal and federal state authorities, police officers are targets of Al Shabaab violence (VOA, 2022). Citizens may also be wary of directly engaging with police officers for fear of retaliation by that group. As such, police presence in neighbourhoods (stations, officers patrolling) can be seen as both reassuring and threatening by different residents. In some neighborhoods, people experience the close proximity of a police station as a source of comfort and stability. This was echoed by some Kahda residents, especially in the Afartanka neighborhood, who stated that they don't pay for community police since the district commissioner lived there. Others in Kahda emphasized that it was the hitherto relatively limited state/police presence in their areas that had reduced the risk of violence from Al Shabaab. Some respondents in Kahda talked about trade-offs between police stations attracting Al Shabaab violence and the possible benefits of police for community security/dispute resolution. When asked about a new police station now in closer proximity to her neighbourhood, this woman noted:

> "It could mean that AS forces could hunt the police and that might have a negative impact on us, but on the other hand, it is more beneficial for us to be near to it in terms of dispute resolution." (40 year old woman, middle class, member of community organization, Kahda).

In Hodan, some interviewees in other neighborhoods where there are army facilities nearby (like the Tarabunka junction, Warshadda Caanaha, and Cir Toogte in Hodan district) reportedly faced significant security challenges, due to these locations being targeted by Al Shabaab. Others in Hodan pointed out other spatial characteristics that they felt increased exposure to crime, e.g. their proximity to slums in the African Village neighborhood, which were believed to be used by robbers to hide or hunt for victims in the vicinity.

In emergency situations (and especially at night), very few interviewees spoke about their experience (or possibility) of directly contacting the police to respond. Most interviewees stated that they did not know a direct emergency number to call to reach the police. In Hodan, one interviewee spoke about how the police would no longer take details from callers in relation to intelligence tip-offs:

> "Previously, the police used to ask the caller's name and where he was. That pushed many away from communicating with the police officers. However, now you are only asked about what you saw and where." (35 year old male engineer, Hodan).

This was seen as encouraging people to report suspected Al Shabaab activity without fear of reprisal. However, it illustrates impediments to community engagement when police are expected to respond directly to other forms of crime and insecurity.

In relation to crime, several interviewees said that they would only make contact with individual police officers that they had personal or family connections with, and most of this contact would occur the day after a crime had taken place:

> "I did not come to the station to report what happened; instead, I will look for someone I know who is related to the station or the military. If, for example, an incident occurs and the army has to take action, I do not go straight to the police station; I have to find someone who is related, has a connection, or works at the station. But going to the station is not always option number one. This is due to the fact that I have a very low level of trust in the station. The first is that I do not believe that they will respond to me quickly. The second is that I do not believe that they will do something about it [...]." (31 year old male accountant, Hodan).

This same interviewee also acknowledged that other more marginalized communities – particularly displaced people – had even less access to police contacts. Victims of crime in IDP camps often would have to first make contact with the camp leader before they assisted them in calling the police. As a camp resident described it:

> "We are not able to do anything, to be honest, we just sit in our homes and stay silent, we experienced a lot of insecurities before, and we did nothing about it, because if you go to the police station, the ones you are complaining about are there, so you might get threats to move from the whole camp if you do that. Because it's a long chain, the camp administrators, the police, and the police administrators are friends and are working together to hurt us. We, the IDPs, have no rights compared to the other people residing this neighborhood, they always see us as people who do not belong to this district, even if something happens, we are the first suspects, and also they detain us, if an incident happens [...]." (30 year old male porter, resident of IDP camp in Hodan).

Again, displaced communities' sense and experience of marginalization stemmed from their lack of social inclusion and their feeling of not 'belonging' in the city, likely due to their minority clan status. In terms of clan representation within the police, some interviewees indicated that appointments did cross-cut different groups:

> "[The police hierarchy] is not based on clan. The current district police commissioner is Duduble, and the previous was Murusade, and his predecessor was Shiiqaal. I guess they stopped looking for clan in [recruitment of] police officers. Other Shiiqaal officers stay in other districts. The criteria do not now dictate clan proportion in security matters." (35 year old male university lecturer, Kahda).

However, it is important to note that each of the clan groups mentioned above would be considered a powerful constituency in the city, and in (in the case of the Shiiqaal/Sheikhal) the group that had historical claims to the land of the district. These groups do not include the 'minority' clans with which most displaced people in the capital's periphery are affiliated.

Often people choose not to contact the police due to a lack of connections impeding access or the anticipation that they will be required to provide "enough" proof of a crime/ perpetrator, which they felt that they did not have. Only a small number of interviewees spoke of specific occasions where police had caught suspects after a crime had been committed, rescuing a kidnapping victim (in one case), or returning some stolen property. Many other interviewees spoke about the need to pay the police to act, or the necessity of having personal connections with officers (this was not limited to poorer citizens, but also middle class interviewees).

Some proactive police operations have targeted ciyaal weero youth gangs in the city, which have risen in profile in the city since 2021. The police and district authorities undertook an operation dubbed Samakaab to round up suspected youth gang members, confiscate weapons and seize alcohol.9 These occurred in districts such as Hodan in July 2022. However, attempts to prosecute suspects were thwarted by the intervention of federal MPs and respected elders who pressured the police to release the youth from their clans on bail. President Hassan Sheikh himself subsequently addressed this issue in a speech at a mosque in the presidential palace later, stating that Mogadishu residents should not complain about the city's security problems while also pressuring police (through clan representatives) to release those who are likely involved in such criminal activity.10

In general, interviewees had little to say about police involvement with court proceedings. Worryingly, in one case where a rape victim did come forward to police to report the crime, the evidence she provided (identification of one of her rapists) was apparently deemed insufficient by the court:

> "She was brave enough to say it, but she got no justice. The police came and gathered a lot of suspected men since the men who raped her were more than one. She recognized only one and filed against him, yet the court released him after she couldn't provide more proof." (Male university lecturer, Kahda).

Despite limited recourse to police or judicial action, victims of crime did not report that they actively engaged with Al Shabaab's alternative courts mechanism, although some people did report cases where others had been summoned before them (see previous section).

Beyond addressing crime, some interviewees also spoke of the police themselves as agents of insecurity, particularly in the chaotic context of traffic management and controlling people's road movements through the city:

> "The existence of these checkpoints brings another challenge to us. You need to be familiar with the security officials on the site and that they should know you personally to guarantee access. If they don't, you should

9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oxp7xXpeZM
10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwhBbYjDMrY

> call someone trusted, preferably a government agent, to verify it for you. [...] The traffic police do not work for the people; they earn money from them [civilians] by doing their job. [...] I haven't been involved in an accident yet – most of the accidents in the city are caused by big trucks and Bajaj – but I mean that they show up as they please and ask for money." (30 year old female entrepreneur, Hodan).

Other interviewees alleged that police officers (along with soldiers) were part of gangs of robbers and took part in violent criminal activity in their neighbourhoods. As noted above, this phenomenon may be related to low or irregular payments of security forces salaries and the availability of weapons that can be used (or leased to others) for criminal purposes.

5 EMERGING FINDINGS

It is important to first highlight a broader point on perceptions of safety that is indirectly captured in the interview data, and undoubtedly influences how people talk (or do not talk) about particular security threats. The Mogadishu residents interviewed in this study – express that they live in fear on a daily basis. Although the wide range of threats to people's physical security have evolved and shifted over time, widespread experiences of violence have undoubtedly taken a heavy toll on urban residents' mental health. Anecdotal evidence suggests that symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) appear to be widespread among the urban population. This is rarely formally diagnosed, largely because local mental health services are extremely limited and unavailable to most people. As urban residents navigate the city they encounter sites and situations that bring to mind past incidents and lead to the re-living of trauma. For example, a 48-year-old mother from Hodan described how a robbery had left her schoolgirl daughter emotionally traumatized:

> "My daughter and my two other sons were robbed at different times each. My daughter was going to school. She was attacked [by someone on] a Fekon motorcycle. He pointed a knife towards her and she ran! As she ran away, he hit the knife against the wall. He caught her suddenly and took the phone. She stood there like a statue and couldn't move at all. A woman who was weeping outside her home saw my daughter wearing the school uniform. The woman used to see her almost every day, going and coming back from school. She took her hand and walked her to the main road going to the school. My daughter told us that she started remembering things at that moment. She started crying heavily, walking the street like a mad person. She attended the school in that state. Her teacher called me, saying that nobody knows what happened to her but she is just crying and crying. She was brought home [...] the wall reminds her the incident every day. She says that the she could have been wounded in the same way the wall was. And it makes me sad that she isn't forgetting it."

Others who spoke of their memories of bomb attacks (quoted above) similarly described the reliving of past violence and a pervasive sense of fear in public spaces in the city.

Although security threats faced by Mogadishu residents have evolved (for instance, reflected in increasingly common fears about criminal as opposed to political violence), more research is needed into how these dynamics may overlap and influence each other. For example, attention should be paid to people's emotional responses to violence, or the alleged role of (state affiliated) arms carriers (themselves undoubtedly affected by past periods of conflict and experiences of attacks) in rising violent criminality, for instance with regard to increasingly high-profile youth gangs.

Mogadishu's dramatic real estate boom also draws attention to acute forms of socio-economic inequality. These may be experienced by young people from lower-income

backgrounds whose education has been disrupted by prior periods of urban instability and state incapacity, or the large IDP population which (arguably) has developed into an underclass providing cheap and expendable labour, and enjoying few tangible rights of urban citizenship. Without wider steps taken to address the tenure precarity and social status of people living in informal/IDP settlements, it is difficult to envisage specific potentially effective security interventions, particularly for the most marginalized individuals, such as widowed or divorced women at risk of SGBV in ill-protected shelters and camps.

Similarly, without a change in the overall presence and threat of Al Shabaab in the city, it is difficult to see how police-citizen relations can be tangibly enhanced. Fears around retaliation for state collaboration will likely persist, as will the types of interpersonal suspicion and uncertainty that lead people not to disclose their professional identity. All of these dynamics may undermine social cohesion, and the logics of counter-terrorism. For instance, the need for anonymity of informants and secure reporting channels may not align with practices of open community engagement and trust building activities. Nonetheless, the presence and visibility of policing is clearly viewed in different ways by different people. Police may be seen as both a source of security (through proximity to facilities, prevention of crime through patrols) or vectors of insecurity (in attracting political violence, or alleged police involvement in criminal activities). When considering the most vulnerable members of urban society (again, for example, single women in IDP camps), it is difficult to assess their perceptions around community policing because they are often completely detached from these institutions through their reliance on multiple intermediaries, including camp gatekeepers, who themselves may need 'local' interlocuters to access services. A change to these networks of relationships would require a wider shift in the political economy of small-scale camp management and humanitarian entrepreneurship that sustains (but also extracts resources from) rural-urban migrants. For other neighborhoods with some prior experience of the Deriseen community policing scheme, more targeted research could explore the legacy of this short-lived initiative, any remaining impacts and reasons for its apparent stagnation.

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