


# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## *Introduction*

### Focus

Somalia has been without a government for over a decade. The country is run by warlords. The average person needs to find a way to survive in a climate of lawlessness. It is a country in name only. Despite this atmosphere of despair, three Canadians made their way back to their homelands and founded a radio, television, and Internet outlet called Horn Afrik. While political efforts stumble along, the rebuilding of the social consciousness of Somalia is taking place on the airwaves of Horn Afrik.

 Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

Imagine living in a country that has no government. Who would maintain and enforce the rule of law? Would there be law? Who would build the streets? Who would ensure that the water is safe to drink or that proper sanitation services are in place? What about electricity, telecommunications, health care, and education? Who would be responsible for all of these things?

### Descent into Chaos

It is difficult for us to envision a nation without a government, but that is exactly the reality that the people of Somalia have been facing since the removal of Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991. Barre ruled with an iron fist from 1969 to 1991. His brand of socialism eventually proved untenable, and the clans of Somalia united to oust him in a coup d'état. This brief alliance fell apart after the coup as clans led by warlords began laying claim to different parts of the country. What followed was a brutal civil war. The warlords' hunger for power was soon overshadowed by famine befalling the innocent population. While over 300 000 people died in the famine, the warlords disrupted humanitarian aid and thrust Somalia into misery. Finally, the United Nations, along with countries like Canada and the United States, stepped in to help the populace. Then-U.S. president Bill Clinton called the effort Operation Restore Hope. But the warlords ruled the day and effectively thwarted humanitarian efforts to help those in need.

One warlord in particular, Muhammad Farrah Aidid, ended all hope of international aid when his henchmen paraded the body of a dead

U.S. soldier through the streets of Mogadishu, in effect putting a public face to the chaos of Somalia. This was a tragic consequence of the Battle of Mogadishu, an operation that resulted in the deaths of 18 U.S. Delta Force Rangers and over 100 Somalis. Prior to the battle with U.S. forces, Aidid also led an attack that resulted in the deaths of 24 Pakistani peacekeepers. This once-peaceful nation fell into chaos as international forces withdrew, leaving the warlords to rule their fiefdoms amid the anarchy. Operation Restore Hope had failed.

### Canada in Somalia

Canada did not leave unscathed from Somalia. The Canadian Forces sent their elite commando unit, the Canadian Airborne Regiment, into the Somali theatre. However, two incidents shattered Canada's reputation as a noble peacekeeper. In one incident, Canadian soldiers shot two Somalis who were trying to steal supplies from their camp. One of the victims died from an "execution-style" wound to the head. In another incident, two soldiers tortured and murdered a 16-year-old boy after he was taken into custody. In a revolting twist, the men took pictures of the boy's torture. Eventually a royal commission ruled that the Airborne Regiment was unfit for duty in Somalia, and the government disbanded the unit.

The fall of Somalia shocked many observers of the African political scene. Many felt that Somalia represented the most homogeneous country on the continent. Ethnic Somalis constituted 97 per cent of the population in the early 1990s. The vast majority of

**Definition**

*Warlord* refers to a military commander who has independent control of an area and/or military group. In Somalia warlords are constantly fighting each other and making unity and order very difficult.

**Did you know . . .**

The story of the Battle of Mogadishu was made famous in the Mark Bowden book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War?* Ridley Scott later made a film called *Black Hawk Down* based on the book.

**CBC Archives**

To see video of the Canadian mission to Somalia visit the CBC Digital Archives at [www.cbc.ca/archives](http://www.cbc.ca/archives) and view the file entitled "The Somalia Affair."

people shared a common language. Well over 90 per cent of the population was Sunni Muslim. However, beneath the surface lurked a system of clans and sub-clans that valued retaliation if one clan infringed on another's territory. These clan rivalries fanned the flames of the civil war in the 1990s, a brush fire that destroyed the political fabric of the country and made Somalia a nation in name only. Eventually, two regions, Somaliland and Puntland, declared their independence. To this day, the international community refuses to recognize either as sovereign nations.

**Reconciliation, Politics and the Economy**

Despite the appearance of anguish and despair that has characterized Somalia's recent history, hope has risen from the ashes. Political efforts have been slow to unfold but now show signs of promise. In 2000, some of the warlords put aside their differences and formed a Transitional National Assembly (TNA). The formation of the TNA included the introduction of reconciliation talks to bring all of the clans into the new national framework. Talks have proceeded, but clan rivalries run deep, and reconciliation has yet to be fully realized.

Despite the struggles on the political front, Somalia is starting to build a respectable free-market economy. Unhindered by the red tape of government bureaucracies and the burden of taxation, Somali business people are capitalizing on the rebuilding of the economy. Business people have been developing sectors of the economy that include telecommunications, cattle farming, and water and electricity supplies. According to one commentator, Somalia has "one of the most dynamic economies in the East African

region and is effectively an economy without a state" (BBC News, "Life Amid Mogadishu's Ruins," April 16, 2004).

**Horn Afrik: Voice of the People**

One area of the economy that is really starting to take off is the media sector. A number of FM radio stations and several local newsletters have emerged in Mogadishu. Three Canadians—Ahmed Abdisalam Aden, Mohamed Elmi, and Ali Imam Sharmarke—gave up security and stability in Canada and have returned to Somalia to start a media outlet called Horn Afrik ([www.hornafrik.com](http://www.hornafrik.com)), a radio, television, and Internet media service that reaches out to the people of Somalia. In addition to locally developed programs, Horn Afrik also broadcasts Somali-language programming through partnerships with the BBC and Voice of America. The most effective tool of Horn Afrik to date has been call-in programs that allow locals to voice their concerns and announcers to produce and moderate dialogue concerning the future of Somalia. According to Aden, the call-in shows are helping Horn Afrik move toward its goal of becoming the best media outlet in the Horn of Africa. However, the anarchy of Somalia means that Horn Afrik has to maintain a balance between revealing the truth and keeping peace with the warlords. One way of doing this is to invite the warlords onto some of Horn Afrik's issues-based shows. To date, all of the warlords have made at least one appearance on Horn Afrik programs. Aden says, "Ours is a daily struggle to maintain independence in a very difficult situation" (BBC News, April 16, 2004).

It appears that Horn Afrik's efforts have been noticed. The radio division of the media outlet is one of the most

**Did you know . . .**  
CJFE declares May 3 World Press Freedom Day? CJFE reported that in 2003, 92 journalists and media staff were killed trying to report the news. This was an increase of 22 from 2002.

popular in Mogadishu. From a social standpoint, Horn Afrik is proving to be a unifying voice and a technological way to overcome the power of the warlords. Nonetheless, daily excursions into the streets of Mogadishu are dangerous business for Horn Afrik staff, who report under the watchful eye of armed security guards. Despite the security presence, one of the station's drivers was killed on a trip to North Mogadishu, and two reporters were detained and later released by warlords.

Clearly, the entrepreneurs who started Horn Afrik have given a voice to the people even at the expense of their own personal safety. On the international

stage, Horn Afrik was recognized for its desire to pioneer social change for Somalia when it was awarded the 2002 Press Freedom Award from the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE). The CJFE recognizes journalists who overcome the odds and produce programs that show a commitment to free expression. Despite the dangers involved in speaking the truth, Ahmed Abdisalam Aden, Mohamed Elmi, and Ali Imam Sharmarke continue to build their media service in the hopes of bringing the nation of Somalia back to life—a life of liberty and security for a people who have suffered for far too long.

## Questions

1. Make a point-form list of the events that saw Somalia descend into chaos.
2. What controversies emerged from Canada's presence in Somalia in the 1990s?
3. Why were some people surprised to see Somalia fall into deep divisions and civil war?
4. What signs of hope are surfacing on the political and economic front for Somalia?
5. What do you think of the decision of Ahmed Abdisalam Aden, Mohamed Elmi, and Ali Imam Sharmarke to return to Somalia to start Horn Afrik? Could you make that kind of sacrifice?
6. What is the fine line that Horn Afrik has to walk in order maintain safety and security as a media outlet?
7. Why is Horn Afrik proving to be a unifying voice for the people of Somalia?
8. Is there hope for Somalia? Support your answer with facts from the article.

# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## Video Review

Respond to the questions on this page as you view the video.

### Quote

“What is more important than the education we get from Canada and America is the culture, culture of tolerance.” — Ali Sharmarke, cofounder, Horn Afrik Radio- *News in Review*, May 2004

1. Why is Somalia referred to as “one of the most miserable and dangerous places in the world”?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do TV crews need private security when going out to produce a story in Mogadishu?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What role are Canadians playing in the emergence of radio and television in Somalia?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the Horn Afrik staff reflect defiance of Somalia’s strict moral code?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What one idea did Ahmed Abdisalam Aden import from Canadian radio to Horn Afrik?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How does Horn Afrik break the isolation felt by many people in Somalia?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who is Faraa Yusef, the host of *Today’s Events*, trying to get on his show? Does he eventually succeed? (The answer comes at the end of the documentary.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How does technology give Horn Afrik an advantage over the warlords of Somalia?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Who is Jeti Osman Jeti? What is his job at Horn Afrik?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## *Canadians in Africa*

### Further Research

To learn more about Canadian aid to Africa consider visiting [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/canadafundforafrica](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/canadafundforafrica) and [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/africa](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/africa).

It is part of Canada's identity to embrace other cultures and to help those in need in other countries. This is evident in Canadian national support for multiculturalism and the desire to intervene in international conflicts as peacekeepers rather than as aggressors. It is also evident in the continual efforts of Canadians to reach out and help others.

### Government Aid

Aid for developing countries has been a cornerstone of Canada's international efforts for many years. The government uses the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to deliver this aid. CIDA has established the Canada Fund for Africa, which seeks to reduce poverty as well as to promote environmental protection and gender equality. Canada demonstrated its commitment to Africa at the 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta. Discussions among nations assembled at the summit led to the G8 Action Plan for Africa, which pledged billions of dollars to African nations. The G8 plan was a response to the efforts of several progressive African leaders who were seeking international support for their New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Canada was a strong voice at the Kananaskis summit and backed up those words with action. It pledged \$500-million to start the Canada Fund for Africa, and then committed an additional \$6-billion over five years to support a variety of CIDA projects in Africa.

Besides CIDA's efforts, the Canadian government has also sought to reduce tariffs and quotas on imports from developing countries and has introduced legislation to make HIV/AIDS medications more accessible and af-

fordable for the many Africans struggling with the virus. The United Nations estimates that close to 30 million Africans are suffering from HIV/AIDS, with just 30 000 people having access to antiretroviral medications to deal with the virus ([www.unfpa.org/africa/hivaids](http://www.unfpa.org/africa/hivaids)). Canada hopes to bring about changes that will bridge the gap between those who suffer and those who receive the proper medication.

CIDA has identified the following areas as priorities and the percentage of funding\*:

- Social priorities and the environment – 48%
- Economic growth through trade and investment – 29%
- Governance, peace and security – 15%
- Bridging the digital divide – 8%

\*based on original funding put forward at the G8 Summit 2002 in Kananaskis, Alberta

Source: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca)

### Working Through NGOs

Some Canadians work through non-government organizations (NGO) like Farmers Helping Farmers and Right to Play to assist people in need. Here are two stories of Canadians working to make a difference in the world.

### Farmers Helping Farmers

A group of Prince Edward Island farmers has forged a 25-year partnership with the agricultural community in countries like Kenya. Drawn into the partnership by the ongoing malaise of poverty and malnutrition, Farmers Helping Farmers was formed to help

### Further Research

To view some exciting footage of the Crazy Canucks, visit the CBC Digital Archives at [www.cbc.ca/archives](http://www.cbc.ca/archives) and review the file "The Crazy Canucks: Canada's skiing heroes."

solve logistical problems that are contributing to overall problems in the region. One such problem is the availability of water. Women in Kenya have to walk several kilometres a day to collect water for their families. This is in addition to taking care of their children and performing other family duties. Working with CIDA, Farmers Helping Farmers helped provide 61 rain-water tanks so that people could start to collect water right outside their doors. According to Teresa Mellish, one of the co-ordinators for Farmers Helping Farmers, "They now have clean water at their homes. They have more time to do other things. Their children are cleaner, so they can go to school cleaner. So it makes me feel very happy."

Source: CBC News Online, February 17, 2004, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)

### Right to Play

Far away from the limelight of sports, Olympians Charmaine Crooks and Steve Podborski work with a group called Right to Play to bring the gift of sport to the children of Orochinga refugee camp in Uganda. Crooks, a track champion and Olympic silver medalist, and Podborski, a "Crazy Canuck" skier and Olympic bronze medalist, have volunteered their services to Right to Play in order to promote the power of sport in bringing joy to people's lives. One of the greatest

enemies of the 4 000 people of Orochinga Camp is boredom. They are a community without a home, without work, and with a dependence on the people who run the camp. Right to Play believes that sports initiatives can help to alleviate this boredom and bring a sense of meaning and purpose to the refugees in the camp. Right to Play also figures that Crooks and Podborski are two people who know first-hand the merits of participating in sports. Perhaps their activism will raise awareness of the organization at home and help the community of Orochinga as well.

Right to Play believes that sports can also be used as a medium through which relationships can be built in order to deliver social, educational, and health messages to the community. Primarily, however, sport helps the children of Orochinga feel a sense of joy that may be absent from their lives. According to Shannon Duff, a volunteer from Saskatoon who works at the camp, "It [sport] takes the children's mind off of any trauma that they've been through. They laugh. They play. They have fun with each other. They have fun with us. So really I think it's the smiles, it's the happiness. It keeps them busy, as well, which keeps them out of trouble." The efforts of Crooks, Podborski, and Duff will help to create a climate of joy that will live on long after the Canadians have left the camp.

Source: CBC News Online, February 16, 2004, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)

### To Consider

1. What does CIDA seek to reduce and to promote in the Canada Fund for Africa?
2. How does the division of CIDA funding reflect this commitment?
3. How are Farmers Helping Farmers affecting the agricultural efforts of people in Kenya?
4. What is the goal of Right to Play? What role are Charmaine Crooks, Steve Podborski, and Shannon Duff playing in the achievement of this goal?
5. Would you wish to work overseas for an NGO? Explain.

# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## A Comparison of Somalia and Canada

This table provides some facts about Somalia related to international development and compares them with similar facts about Canada.

Topic	Somalia	Canada
Official name:	Somali Democratic Republic	Canada
Capital:	Mogadishu	Ottawa
Area (Thousands of km <sup>2</sup> ):	638	9 971
Population (millions):	9.9 (2003)	31.6 (2003)
Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> ):	15 (2003)	3 (2003)
Urban population (%-2001):	28	79
Gross national income (GNI) (per capita):	US\$130 (2002)	US\$22 300 (2002)
Structure of GDP (%-2001):		
Agriculture	40	3
Industry	18	31
Services	42	66
Human development index (HDI) ranking:	Not Available (N/A) of 175 countries (2001)	8 <sup>th</sup> (2001)
Gender-related development index (GDI) ranking:	N/A of 144 countries (2001)	6 <sup>th</sup> (2001)
Life expectancy at birth:	35 (1960), 48 (2002)	71 (1960), 79 (2002)
Mortality rate under 5 years old (per 1 000):	294 (1960), 225 (2002)	33 (1960), 7 (2002)
Adult literacy rate (%-2001):		
Total	24	99
Men	36	99
Women	14	99
Population using improved drinking-water sources (%-2000):		
Total	N/A	100
Urban	N/A	100
Rural	N/A	99

### Sources

Statistics Canada, UNDP (Human Development Report 2003), UNFPA (The State of World Population 2003), UNICEF (The State of the World's Children 2004), World Bank (World Development Report 2004), WWF (Living Planet Report 2002)

**Did you know . . .**

One in two Africans lives on less than US\$1 a day or that one in five Africans is affected by conflict? (Source: *Canadian World View*, Winter-Spring 2004)

**Definitions**

GDP – Gross domestic product – the total value of all goods and services produced within a country during a given year

GNI – Gross national income (formerly gross national product or GNP) – made up of GDP plus the net income earned from investments abroad

HDI – The human development index measures human development by combining three dimensions of development—life expectancy at birth, knowledge (literacy and schooling), and income

GDI – The gender-related development index combines the same three dimensions of development as the HDI. It also takes into account the social inequalities between men and women, such as differences in income and education.

Population using improved drinking-water sources – the percentage of the population with reasonable access to an adequate amount of drinking water from improved sources

Source: Canadian International Development Agency, [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca)

**Analysis**

1. Why do so many items listed in the Somalia column indicate that the information is not available? What does this say about the international status of Somalia?

---

2. Use the definition of GNI to describe the difference between Somalia and Canada in this category.

---

3. Why is there such a dramatic difference between Canada and Somalia in the “life expectancy at birth” and “mortality rate under 5 years old” categories?

---

4. What steps do you think Canada has taken to build a 99 percent literacy rate? What will Somalia need to do to improve its literacy rate?

---

5. Why do you think the literacy rate is lower for women in Somalia in comparison to men?

---

**Extension**

Go to the Canadian International Development Agency Web site at [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca) to see what Canada is doing to help developing nations like Somalia. Are there any activities that you might be able to do in the future? Do you support these kinds of activities? Explain your views clearly.

# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## *The Somalia Scandal of the 1990s*

### Update

This same kind of callous treatment of prisoners has sadly been recently (April 2004) reported in Iraq. Observers have seen shocking photos of U.S. and British soldiers allegedly mistreating and humiliating Iraqi prisoners.

With the fall of Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991, Somalia drifted into chaos. Rival warlords fought for power while famine spread throughout the nation. Responding to the desperation felt by the Somali people, the United Nations assembled a humanitarian force to help relieve some of the suffering. Canadians responded to the UN call and sent a force of peacekeepers to Somalia in 1992. The Canadian Airborne Regiment, 900 soldiers strong, arrived in Somalia to safeguard and distribute humanitarian aid to people in and around Belet Huen. The Airborne was considered to be an elite commando unit, modeled on the U.S.'s Green Berets.

The people of Belet Huen welcomed the Canadian soldiers as they set up camp. However, as time passed, some locals began to sneak into the Canadian camp at night and steal supplies. On March 4, 1992, soldiers reacted to one such intrusion, shooting two Somalis. One man was wounded and the other died. Dr. Barry Armstrong, an army surgeon, revealed later that the man who died had been shot two or three times, with the fatal shot being delivered "execution-style" to the head. Then, on March 16, Shidane Arone was caught stealing on the Canadian compound. Once in custody, Arone, a 16-year-old Somali boy, was tortured and later murdered by Canadian soldiers. Two men were directly involved in the boy's death, Clayton Matchee and Kyle Brown. To make matters worse, the men took "trophy" pictures of Arone's torture, putting an image to one of the most disgraceful incidents in Canadian military history.

What followed was a lot of finger-pointing. Senior officers blamed junior officers. The brass in Ottawa blamed the brass in the Somali theatre. No one seemed ready to take the blame. Clayton Matchee attempted suicide in his jail cell and proved unfit to provide critical information. Kyle Brown claimed that Matchee was the perpetrator of the torture and murder, claiming he even had to draw his gun to persuade Matchee to ease up on Arone. None of this could be conclusively proven without corroborating testimony from Matchee. This proved to be dead end number one. Dead end number two came later when reports came to light that the March 4 "execution-style" killing was not investigated until five weeks after the incident. By this time, the Canadian people had had enough. A royal commission was called and the final report proved to be quite damning. The Canadian Airborne Regiment was deemed unfit for duty in Somalia and was eventually disbanded by the government. The minimal efforts to investigate the March 4 shooting (in fact the commission report claimed the military tried to cover up the incident) was seen as potentially creating a permissive atmosphere that unwittingly endorsed behaviour that led to the murder of Shidane Arone. Senior military officials were severely criticized for their handling of the Somalia mission and their conduct after the mission had ended.

The Somalia affair led to sweeping changes in the Canadian military. The conduct of officers and soldiers was put under the public microscope. Changes in training, the investigation of crimes committed by members of the military,

and the function and responsibilities of officers in the chain of command were introduced. The military would have to prove themselves worthy of public

respect before trust would be restored.

Source: Newsworld Flashback, <http://newsworld.cbc.ca/flashback/1996/somalia>

### **To Consider**

1. How did Canada respond to the United Nation's call for international aid in Somalia? Be specific.
2. Describe the two incidents that tarnished the Canadian army's reputation as a global peacekeeper.
3. Outline the conclusions of the Royal Commission report on Somalia.
4. What other changes could the military have made after the Somalia affair?
5. Has trust in the military been restored? Support your answer with specific examples.

# PEACE RADIO: CANADIAN VOICES IN SOMALIA

## *Final Activity*

The documentary on Horn Afrik shows how the media can be an agent for social change. While the Somalia of 2004 continues to function without a government or the rule of law, Horn Afrik has emerged as the voice of justice, culture, and renewal for many Somalis. Perhaps the three Canadians who returned to their homeland to start Horn Afrik will one day be seen as pioneers in the creation of a new Somalia. Overall, their efforts act as an inspiring story about the power of the media in people's lives.

In this activity you will be asked to produce a radio or television show that demonstrates the effects of the media on you. Your show will be delivered in the form of an oral class presentation unless your school has the technical ability to produce an actual television or radio program.

### Activity

1. Form a group of three or four.
2. Produce a radio or television show called: The Media and You

Your Focus: The media can change the way we see the world.

Sometimes people forget that, by viewing or listening to a program, their lives change because they have absorbed new information. You want to show how people's lives change when they are exposed to these stories.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Job Description	Work to be Submitted to Your Teacher
<b>Producer</b>	Your job is to monitor, plan, and arrange for the overall delivery of the show.	You will prepare an overall plan for the show. The plan is really a detailed outline of everything that occurs during the show, right down to the amount of time dedicated to each item.
<b>News Anchor</b>	Your job is to write and deliver the introduction and conclusion of your show.	You will write a script for the show's introduction and conclusion.
<b>Reporter</b>	You are the expert who will provide an example of how the media have a lasting effect on people's lives.	You will find an example (either video or audio) that shows the power of the media. You will also write a script that introduces your example and provides a summary after the example has been presented.
<b>Technical Producer</b>	Your job will be to handle all technical elements of the show.	You will write a technical plan for the show. Your plan needs to include a description of all technical elements needed to make the show a reality. Your goal is to be organized and avoid any technical glitches during the show.

