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# UN SOMALIA

## NEWSLETTER



## UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS DHUSAMAREB AND HARGEISA

**The top United Nations official for Somalia, Catriona Laing, visited Dhusamareb and Hargeisa in July, where she met with local leadership to discuss topics including security and development.**

Visiting Dhusamareb, the capital of the Federal Member State of Galmudug, the UN Special Representative met with its President Ahmed Abdi Karie 'Qorqor' and members of his cabinet. They discussed national issues, including the National Consultative Council process. Ms. Laing commended the president for his commitment to wide and inclusive consultations, including with civil society, elders, women and youth.

The security situation in Galmudug,

especially the stabilisation efforts in newly-recovered areas from Al-Shabaab, figured in their discussions.

"We discussed the importance of following up military operations with stabilisation efforts to ensure the area remains secure, including the provision of police. And I committed the United Nations to fully come in and support those stabilisation efforts," Ms. Laing said while in Dhusamareb.

The UN Special Representative and the president also discussed the establishment of a UN office in Galmudug.

"We now have land in Hero Dromo, here in the capital, and we agreed we should fast-track that work as soon as we possibly can. While we already have a very strong partnership with you, it will obviously be much easier to strengthen and deepen that partnership and for the various UN agencies, funds, and programmes to establish a presence here and strengthen the partnership going forward," Ms. Laing said.

On her visit to Hargeisa, also in July, Ms. Laing met with Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi and some of his ministers. They discussed the Somalia-Somaliland

**Serving the people of Somalia**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- UN Special Representative visits Dhusamareb and Hargeisa
- Young activists highlight impact of climate change on human rights
- International partners condemn escalation of conflict in Laascaanood
- Somali Youth: Voices of peace and hope
- Feature – Omar Nur Basharah: Preserving Somali history through his craft

dialogue, the conflict in Laascaanood, economic development and human rights.

On the Laascaanood conflict, where fresh clashes had erupted, Ms. Laing said, "I urge the importance of a ceasefire to enable dialogue and the eventual resumption of peaceful negotiations to find a way forward."

In her meetings with representatives from Somaliland's civil society, the senior UN official discussed topics such as political participation and inclusivity.

"I praised civil society organisations for the amazing work they're doing in support of marginalised groups, whether that's youth or women or persons with disabilities or disadvantaged clans, or working at the cutting edge of these really important issues. And I committed to lend the UN's full support to that work," said Ms. Laing.

Prior to her visit to Hargeisa, the UN Special Representative had met with the Federal Government of Somalia's Special Envoy for Somaliland, Abdikarim Hussein Guled. In that encounter, she emphasised the world body's support for an inclusive dialogue to address current challenges and ensure lasting solutions.

## Training on the nexus between Climate Change and Human Rights for members of Civil Society Organizations

29-31 August  
Airport Hotel, Mogadishu, Somalia



# YOUNG ACTIVISTS HIGHLIGHT IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

**At a United Nations-backed gathering in the Somali capital in August, young activists highlighted the severe impact of climate change on Somalia, and called for more effective action to combat the negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups across the country.**

“Floods which are a result of climate change destroy farms and damage crops, which leads to food insecurity, and that is the reason why most of the people in IDP (internally displaced people) camps are given nutritional food in order to treat malnutrition,” said Abdilatif Hussein Omar, a Director of Action for Environment, a civil society organisation.

The young activist spoke at a three-day training on the nexus between human rights and climate change, held in Mogadishu and organised by the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UN SOM).

“What we have focused on very much was the type of obligations that the government has with respect to human rights. So many of the international obligations that they have committed involve children, economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights. All these have climate change elements to them,” said the Chief of UN SOM’s Human Rights and Protection Group, Kirsten Young.

The 22 attendees were primarily made up of university students, academics and civil society representatives studying or working on climate change issues.

“Bringing these two worlds together is, I think, absolutely fundamental to understanding each other and how to leverage the expertise of each of the groups and be able to amplify their work,” said Ms. Young, who also serves as the Representative to Somalia of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

### Range of topics

Over the three days, the participants focused on a range of human rights topics interlinked with climate change, such as the right to a healthy environment. They examined how changing climate patterns

lead to drought, floods, and desertification, which, in turn, leads to food insecurity, conflict over resources and displacement – with these consequently affecting Somalis’ right to life, health and food, as well as the standards of living for individuals and communities. The training was also part of a wider effort to help create a vibrant cohort of young Somali environmental activists.

“The next step forward is actually to create a network of young climate activists that are coming from different sectors, from the academia, civil societies, media, and student clubs so that they can continue advocating for effective climate change response in relation to human rights issues,” said Abdifatah Hassan Ali, a Human Rights Officer with UN SOM.



The Federal Government of Somalia was represented at the event. Speaking on the sidelines of the gathering, Ahmed Abdi Osman 'Farole,' a Climate Change Officer from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, noted that Somalia is one of the countries most affected by climate change, but plans are underway to address the impacts.

"The ministry has plans to initiate climate and adaptation programmes on environmental conservation and creating awareness on how people can be prepared to live with the recurring climate change disasters," Mr. Osman said.

Some of the participants noted that the training session would complement some of the advocacy already being carried out by young Somalis.

Suweyda Mohamed Abdi, the Chairperson of the Green Light Association, another organisation that promotes environmental conservation and sustainable development in Somalia, said her organisation is actively involved in activities to reverse the effects of climate change through awareness campaigns in schools and tree-planting exercises.

"On our environmental campaigns, we have made great strides and initiated weekly

clean-ups at Lido Beach, and this has been very successful," she said.

Another participant, Abdinasir Abdulkadir Mohamed, who combines his environmentalism with his work, said, "I use my profession as an artist to do paintings that can be used to create environmental awareness and urge people to protect the environment."

Climate shocks Somalia has been experiencing a humanitarian crisis due to climate shocks, which have led to widespread drought and flooding. Some eight million people need urgent assistance, with 6.5 million expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity and 1.3 million displaced due to conflict or climatic shocks.

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## International partners condemn escalation of conflict in Laascaanood



In August, international partners strongly condemned the escalation of conflict in Laascaanood, including reports of fighting spreading outside the town.

The statement, issued on 27 August, urged all sides to agree to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

"We call for an end to the mobilisation of fighters and to the provision of supplies and armaments. We are deeply concerned about reports of large numbers of detainees and expect those involved to abide by human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure," the statement said.

International partners reiterated the importance of ensuring unhindered humanitarian access and delivery of assistance to those in need. "We urge all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric. All grievances and tensions should be resolved peacefully and through dialogue", they said.

Read the statement [here](#).

\*African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, European Union (EU) Delegation, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, League of Arab States (LAS), Netherlands, Norway, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Qatar, Russian Federation, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States and United Nations.



## SOMALI YOUTH: VOICES OF PEACE AND HOPE

**In the lead-up to International Youth Day, marked annually on 12 August, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UN SOM) highlighted on its social media platforms the efforts and aspirations of some of the country's youth.**

From Belet Weyne, in the Federal Member State of Hirshebelle, UNSOM featured local activist Shamso Mohamed Igaal, who works to provide education opportunities and empowerment for young people in her community.

She grew up in Belet Weyne, where she witnessed many young people struggling with poor education and health care. She decided to pursue a degree in lab technology from Plasma University, aiming to improve the health outcomes of her community. After graduating, she worked as a healthcare professional at the Belet Weyne General Hospital, where she noticed that many orphans who came for treatment were out of school. She was determined to change this.

As the leader of the local branch of the Somali Youth Civic Organisation (SYCO), she mobilised other young people and campaigned with community members

to urge them to support youth in need of education.

Thanks to her efforts, many disadvantaged students have been able to access quality education. Her enthusiastic advocacy and her strong sense of civic responsibility inspired many in her community to increase their efforts and help young people achieve their full potential.

From Galkayo, a city in the Federal Member State of Galmudug, UNSOM featured Abdiqani Osman Yusuf, a peace activist who has seen firsthand the horrors of conflict.

Born in a rural area of Puntland, in Somalia's north-east, he witnessed violence, displacement and killings as a child. He later moved to Galkayo for education, but found himself in the midst of more conflict due to that city's then-division.

But Mr. Yusuf did not give up on his dream of a peaceful future. He continued his studies and graduated with a degree in economics from the Galkayo campus of the Puntland State University.

Concurrently, he decided to dedicate his life to peacebuilding and youth engagement, believing that young people can make a difference for their future – he founded the Peacebuilding and Youth Engagement Center of Mudug, a youth-led organisation that promotes dialogue and reconciliation among youth. He also uses his writing skills to spread positive messages about peace and harmony on social media platforms.

From Afgoye, a town in South West State, UNSOM featured Osama Adan Osman, a peacebuilder who articulates his vision for Somalia through poetry, as shown here with one of his recent pieces of work:



Somalia envisions a harmonious land,  
Where peace dwells within, hand in hand,  
A mosaic of colours, a diverse array,  
Embracing the differences that come their way.

Education, the cornerstone of their quest,  
Empowering minds to face any test,  
From classrooms to libraries, knowledge shall flow,  
Illuminating paths where young minds shall grow.

In bustling cities and tranquil villages,  
The entrepreneurial spirit flourishes,  
Opportunities bloom, like the flowers in spring,  
Fostering the growth and prosperity they bring.

Oh, Somalia, land of hope and grace,  
Embracing progress at a steady pace,  
Through innovation and technology's might,  
A future of possibilities takes flight.

Let justice prevail with its unwavering gaze.  
Dispelling corruption and darkened haze.  
Where the rule of law reigns and fairness prevails,  
A society where every voice is heard.

Somalia envisions a land where all thrive.  
Where health and well-being are kept alive.  
With hospitals and clinics, compassionate care,  
Nurturing lives and mending hearts in despair.

Oh, Somalia, your vision is bright.  
Guided by stars in the darkest of nights.  
With determination, your people shall rise,  
Building a nation that soars to the skies.



**Shamso Maxamed Igaal**

Healthcare professional

I believe that education can help young people contribute to decision-making. Especially for the marginalised and vulnerable, education can help them have a voice and a choice in the direction of their lives.



**Osama Adan Osman**

Peacebuilder

Somalia envisions a harmonious land,  
Where peace dwells within, hand in hand.  
A mosaic of colors, a diverse array,  
Embracing the differences that come their way.



**Abdiqani Osman Yusuf**

Peace activist

Peace is not a dream, it is a reality that we can create with our actions and words. Young people have the power to shape the future of Somalia, and we must use it wisely and responsibly.



QALIN SHUBE GOLDSMITH

## OMAR NUR BASHARAH

“THIS IS MORE THAN A JOB. IT RUNS THROUGH OUR VEINS AND FORMS THE BASIS OF OUR HISTORY”

**Walking down a dilapidated alley in Mogadishu's Hamarweyne district, the first thing a passer-by notices is the faint sound of metal tapping and twisting emanating from the warren of workshops and storefronts.**

One of the people making that sound is 63-year-old Omar Nur Basharah. Surrounded by files, pliers, hammers and anvils, his back hunched, his eyes focused, he puts the finishing touches to a gold necklace ordered for a wedding ceremony.

It is something that Mr. Basharah has done for the past 50 years, having learned the craft at a young age from his father. But he worries about whether the craft – and the place it has in his community – will last another 50 years.

“I started doing this at the age of 13. I was ably mentored by my father,” says Mr. Basharah, one of the few remaining goldsmiths from the Qalin Shube community, renowned for their skills in gold and silversmithing.

“It holds a special place in our community. We are called Qalin Shube (translation: ‘the

one who smelts silver’) and we are known for this. People respect my community for this craft,” says Mr. Basharah.

“I really want the youth to know that these skills are valuable and worthy of preservation. They should be informed about their history and heritage,” he adds. “We make extremely beautiful products from gold and silver. This is more than a job. It runs through our veins and forms the basis of our history.”

### Historical roots

The Qalin Shube community are part of broader Banadiri community that lives along the southern coast of Somalia. In the country's capital, Mogadishu, they are predominantly found in its Hamarweyne district.

Within the Banadiri community, there are numerous other smaller groupings. They include the Shanshi, famed for their business acumen and confectionary skills; the Morshe and the Bandhabow, celebrated for their hand-woven fabrics; and the Reer Faqi, well-known for their piety and high number of respected ulamas (translation: Islamic scholars).

But when it comes to finely-crafted, made-to-order handmade jewellery for special events such as weddings, birthdays and anniversaries, it is the Qalin Shube that Somalis seek out.

“Crafting jewellery out of gold was first introduced to Somalia by Indians in the middle

of the 20th century. My father acquired these skills through the Indian traders and passed them to me,” says Mr. Basharah.

Over the ensuing decades, the gold and silversmithing industry thrived throughout Somalia and it became known for its craftsmanship throughout East Africa and beyond.

“Our products used to be displayed abroad such as in the Italian town of Milano,” notes Mr. Basharah. “Sadly though, that is no more.”

### Changing times

The start of Somalia's civil war in the early 1990s changed everything.

During the bloody conflict, most of the small Qalin Shube businesses that had survived generations were destroyed, and some of the best goldsmiths in Somalia were killed or fled.



"The buildings and our machines were looted, our livelihoods destroyed, and many of us were forced to flee," Mr. Basharah recalls.

Even for those who survived and remained, their ability to make a living was reduced dramatically as their customer base was decimated.

But some of the Qalin Shube continued their work, even in reduced circumstances. Their persistence was not solely based on income – there was a degree of communal pride centred on preserving the artisanal work so closely associated with them.

With slightly more than a dozen women and men still working as smiths, the path forward is not promising – most of the remaining artisans are ageing and few young Somalis want to follow in their steps. The Qalin Shube believe it takes at least two to three years to fully master the skills involved in heating and moulding precious metals by hand into fine jewellery using rudimentary tools.

Our products are loved because of the manual skills involved, the quality, the design and the beauty

A father of five, Mr. Basharah is trying hard to transfer these unique skills to his children, but interest from them and other youth in their community is low.

"There are experts in this field in Hamarweyne. There are about 20 men and six women. These people are ready and willing to pass this knowledge on to the young generation," says Mr. Basharah.

#### **Customer interest**

Ironically, while interest in learning how to become a smith has declined precipitously, there is still customer interest in their work.

According to Mr. Basharah, the high quality of the Qalin Shube's products, coupled with their ability to customise products to suit the personal tastes and budgets of their clients, has won them a loyal customer base, including some from abroad.

"Our products are loved because of the manual skills involved, the quality, the design and the beauty. Women wear our gold during special occasions, such as weddings and other social gatherings such as traditional Dabshidka (translation: 'the lighting of the fire') and they really appreciate what we make," Mr. Basharah says.

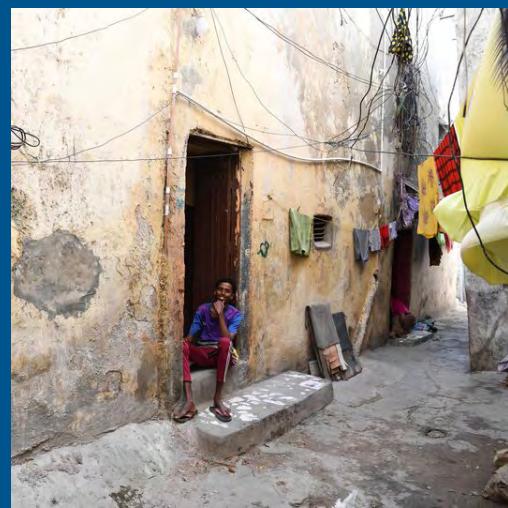
"Customers sometimes ask us to produce a particular design for them and that freedom to choose what

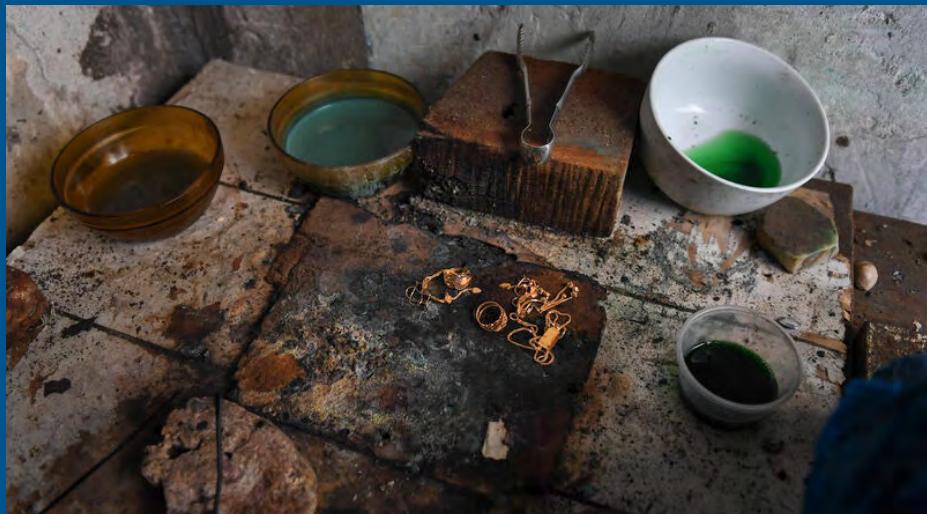
they want is particularly important," he continues. "It is what keeps our hopes alive."

#### **Way forward**

But aside from finding young Somalis willing to learn, the smiths of the Qalin Shube face other challenges: competition from imported jewellery, difficulty in finding tools on the local market and a dearth of quality raw materials, to name a few.

"We cannot display gold publicly because we can be killed [by robbers] or have our goods stolen due to the value and importance placed on gold. We are forced to mostly concentrate on silver which generates less income," says Mr. Basharah.





The artisan believes the establishment of a training centre to attract and retain future gold and silversmiths can help preserve this aspect of the Qalin Shube's heritage.

Mr. Basharah is not alone in this respect.

"These skills were passed from generation to generation but today, it is going through a critical stage, which makes conservation extremely necessary," says Abdurahman Khalid Macow, from the local non-governmental organisation WeLiterate, which promotes literacy and self-reliance among vulnerable communities in Mogadishu to address

injustice, discrimination and poverty and help preserve their heritage and traditional endangered occupations in Somalia.

"Depending on imported products all the time is tantamount to allowing the disappearance of your heritage, crafts, civilisation and we should never allow that to happen," Mr. Macow adds, noting that encouraging the consumption of locally-made products could help support the metal work.

The United Nations agrees.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the world body's operations in Somalia work with local partners and Somali communities to highlight the richness and diversity of Somali people and culture and promote meaningful participation in a peaceful and inclusive future for all Somalis.

"Mogadishu's Hamarweyne district has a rich history and fascinating cultural heritage, and the goldsmithing community and its craft is a testament to that. Goldsmithing is not only a craft but an essential part of the cultural identity of one

of the Banadiri communities in Mogadishu," says the Chief of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia's (UNSM) Human Rights and Protection Group, Kirsten Young, who also serves as the OHCHR Representative to Somalia.

"The community continues to preserve its craft despite challenges of insecurity, violence and displacement, and it is important to celebrate this achievement but also to raise awareness of these challenges," Ms. Young adds.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also works to protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage, from cherished historic monuments and museums, to living heritage practices and trades.

"Skills like Omar's are learnt at the feet of a master, in this case his father, and are irretrievably lost if the apprentice-master relationship falters for just one generation. Just as in the loss of an eco-system, or a language, the world is then a poorer place," says the Head of UNESCO's Somalia Desk, Mark Wall.

These skills were passed from generation to generation but today, it is going through a critical stage



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