



**Center for Policy Analysis**  
Peace, Democracy, Human rights

## Somaliland: A Male Democracy



*Photo: Women queuing to cast their votes in November 2017 presidential election*

Photo credit: Barkhad M Kaariye

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# **Somaliland: A Male Democracy**

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## Introduction

Eighteen years ago, the people of Somaliland on overwhelming majority approved a progressive constitution emphasizing equality and prohibiting all forms of discrimination.<sup>1</sup> As the first public voting since 1969, the referendum opened a new and promising era for the Somalilanders. It officialized the ending of the dictatorship that had a tight grip on power for over twenty years.

The military of the Somali Republic has taken over power in a coup d'etat in 1969, ousting a democratically elected government and ending nine years of civilian rule (1960 to 1969).<sup>2</sup> After a bloody civil war, the central government led by Dictator Mohamed Siad Barre collapsed in 1991. Somaliland declared restoration of independence in 18<sup>th</sup> May 1991.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not recognized as a sovereign state.

The Constitution of Somaliland created a presidential system of a government comprising of three branches, namely executive, judiciary and legislature.<sup>4</sup> The executive is headed by a president elected by the public every five years along with his/her vice-president. A bicameral legislature consisting of the House of Representatives and the Guurti make up the legislative branch.

The approval of the constitution was followed by elections held in 2002 (for local councillors), 2003 (presidential), 2005 (House of Representatives), 2010 (presidential), 2012 (for local councillors), and 2017 (presidential). From these dates, it is clear that elections were not periodically conducted. However, our intention in this brief is not to deliberate on the continual postponement of elections and the extension of tenures.

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<sup>1</sup> Articles 8 and 36 of the Somaliland Constitution

<sup>2</sup> Adam, Hussein. *From Tyranny to Anarchy: The Somali Experience*. 1st ed. Eritrea: The Red Sea Press, Inc, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Jhazbhay, Iqbal. *Somaliland an African Struggle for Nationhood and International Recognition*. 1st ed. Midran South Africa: Institute for Global Dialogue and the South African Institute of International Affairs, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Article 37 of the Somaliland Constitution

This paper aims to scrutinize how patriarchy influences and shapes Somaliland governance and marginalizes women, creating a democracy that benefits only men. The Constitution and electoral laws provide universal franchise, allowing women to vote. Furthermore, laws permit women to run for offices. The labour laws prohibit all forms of discrimination. Women are big voters in all elections. However, they are not represented in decision making tables and are a minority in government jobs as well as private sector workforces.

## **Women Representation in the Executive Branch**

The incumbent president, Muse Behi Abdi, was inaugurated on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017. He appointed a cabinet of 32 ministers and deputy ministers.<sup>5</sup> Women got two ministers and one deputy minister. The director generals of the ministries (an equivalent of permanent secretaries in some jurisdictions) are all men, except one<sup>6</sup>. All of the heads of all government agencies are men.

## **Civil Servants**

According to the Civil Service Commission, women are 25% in the civil servants.<sup>7</sup> Majority of them work in lower ranking offices. There is no available record of the number of women and men in the military, police, custodial guards, immigration, intelligence agency and coastal guards.

## **Local Governments and Regional Administrations**

In the last local government councillors' election held in 2012, 2088 candidates competed for 305 seats. Women candidates were 135 whereas and the remaining 1945

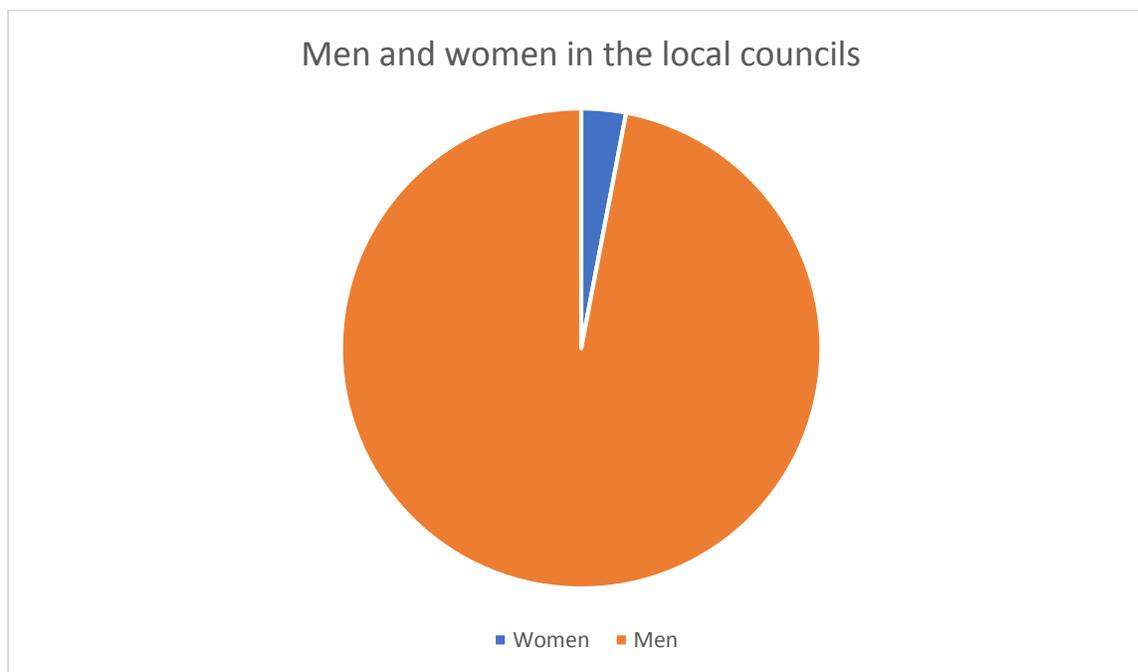
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<sup>5</sup> <https://goobjooge.net/akhriso-magacyada-golaha-wasiirada-xukuumadda-somaliland-ee-la-magacaabay/>

<sup>6</sup> Deeqa Abdi Yousuf has been appointed on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018 as the new director general of the Ministry of Investment.

<sup>7</sup> Somaliland Civil Service Commission report 2018 <https://csisomaliland.com/>

were men. only 9 women candidates were elected.<sup>8</sup> . All the mayors of the 23 districts of the country are men. All of the governors of the thirteen regions and their deputies are men.<sup>9</sup>



*Chart 1: men and women representations in the elected local councillors*

## Parliament

The bicameral parliament of Somaliland has two chambers according to article 38 of the Constitution. The lower house with most of the legislative powers is called the House of Representatives. The members of the house are 82.<sup>10</sup> The first, and so far, the last direct election was conducted in 2005.<sup>11</sup> Two women were elected: Ikraan Haji

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<sup>8</sup> Somaliland National Electoral Commission data, 2012

<sup>9</sup> Geographically Somaliland is divided into regions and districts.

<sup>10</sup> <http://somalilandparliament.net/members/members/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://somalilandparliament.net/about/history/>

Daud from Awdal region and Baar Saed from Sanaag region. Ikraan resigned from the House. Therefore, Baar is the only women in the House.

The Guurti, which also has 82 members and more 5 honorary members, is the upper house of the Parliament. There is no single woman in the Guurti and the only woman who ever joined the Guurti resigned.

## Political Parties

The lack of representation of women in leadership positions is also reflected in all the three political parties of Somaliland. There is no single woman in the top leadership of political parties.

Party	Position	Occupant
<b>Kulmiye</b>	Chairperson	Man
<b>Kulmiye</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Deputy chairperson	Man
<b>Kulmiye</b>	Secretary General	Man
<b>Kulmiye</b>	Central Committee Chairperson	Man
<b>Waddani</b>	Chairperson	Man
<b>Waddani</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Deputy Chairperson	Man
<b>Waddani</b>	Party Leader	Man
<b>Waddani</b>	Secretary-General	Man
<b>Waddani</b>	Central Committee Chairperson	Man
<b>UCID</b>	Chairperson	Man
<b>UCID</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Deputy chairperson	Man
<b>UCID</b>	Secretary-General	Man
<b>UCID</b>	Central Committee Chairperson	Man

*Table 1: leadership positions in political parties*

## Conclusion

The above analysis shows the lack of representation of women at the top leadership positions of the key political actors of the country. However, the same marginalization is common at workforces, civil society leadership positions and businesses. In contrast to the region, Somaliland lags behind. The reformist Prime Minister of Ethiopia has appointed 50/50 cabinet. Both the president of Ethiopia and the Chief Justice are women. Somalia has even more women in its cabinet and Parliament than in Somaliland.

Institution	Percentage of women
Local councils	3%
Parliament	0.6%
Cabinet	9%
Top parties' leadership	0%

*Table 2: percentage of women in key institutions*

## Recommendations

### **To the President of Somaliland:**

The President of Somaliland makes many appoints in the executive and the judiciary. He is required to fulfil his campaign promise and appoint more women in his government. The president promised to give 30% to women during the presidential election campaign. The president proposed a quota for women in the House of Representatives. The majority of the members of the Parliament belong to the ruling party, Kulmiye. Therefore, it is vital the president ensure his party members to vote for and approve the quota and extend this quota to the local councillors.

## **To the Parliament**

The Parliament has to approve the proposed quota for women and extend this quota to the local councillors.

## **To the Political Parties**

The political parties' rhetoric made during campaigns pledging women political participation needs to be true by giving women fair share in the leadership of the parties.

## **To the Civil Society**

The civil society of Somaliland have to act what it preaches and include more women in the leadership. Furthermore, it is the obligation of the civil society to effective and honest campaign for women rights.

## **About Center for Policy Analysis (CPA)**

CPA was established to help the countries of Horn of Africa region to build, peace, democracy, human rights and effective governance systems where all citizens are equal. CPA is based in Hargeisa, the Capital of the Republic of Somaliland.

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