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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, May 2, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Michael Levitt**



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1300)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)):** I'm going to call this meeting of the subcommittee on international human rights to order.

This is a special session on a topic brought to us by MP David Anderson and MP Marwan Tabbara, the Dadaab refugee camp and its imminent closure in Kenya.

We have three guests joining us to provide testimony. Before I open the floor to them, I'm going to do a quick introduction.

Jean-Nicolas Beuze is from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UNHCR. He's the representative in Canada. He's testified before this committee at least a couple of other times. He's going to provide testimony today on the humanitarian situation within the camp.

Abdirahman Haiye—welcome—is a first-year student at Dalhousie University. He arrived in Canada from the Dadaab refugee complex, where his family still resides. He came here in 2016. Mr. Haiye is a recipient of a World University Service of Canada scholarship. Congratulations on that.

Ahmed Mohamed is a third-year student at the University of Toronto. Welcome, Mr. Mohamed. He arrived in Canada in 2015 from the Dadaab refugee complex, where members of his immediate family reside. Mr. Mohamed is also a recipient of a World University Service of Canada scholarship. So congratulations to you as well.

I think we'll begin with Mr. Beuze, and then we will open the floor to each of you gentlemen to give us some insight into your experiences.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze (Representative in Canada, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I'm very happy to be back before this committee.

I'll try to be brief, because I think it's more important that you hear directly from our colleagues, Somali refugees who have first-hand experience of what it means to live in Dadaab.

Let me just set the scene with a few numbers. I remind everyone that Kenya hosts the third-largest refugee population in Africa, with

something close to half a million refugees, of whom 90% are in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps. The overwhelming majority, 300,000, are from Somalia.

Somalia has the world's fourth-largest refugee population, with approximately 900,000 Somali refugees in all parts of the world. Also, let's not forget the one million IDPs. It's a very protracted crisis. We are well into the third decade of this crisis; we need to find a solution to the plight of these almost one million refugees.

Dadaab, with the Government of Kenya and UNHCR, went through a verification process in the summer of 2016, and so we can give you quite precise numbers. Currently there are 280,000 refugees in Dadaab. The overwhelming majority are from Somalia. Out of this number, we were able to verify that 40,000 people were what we call “double registration”, people who either were in our database twice or actually were Kenyans with ID and therefore were living near or in the camps but were not actual refugees. Out of the 280,000 assessed in December 2016, 69,000 have expressed an interest in returning to Somalia.

As I always mention before this committee—because money is part of the equation, unfortunately—UNHCR Kenya has asked for \$250 million for 2017, of which \$173 million is specifically to respond to the Somali refugees. Out of the \$250 million, 2%—I repeat, 2%—has been received, and when we try to go into the earmarking for the Somali refugees, 0% of the money has been received as we speak.

It's the same for HCR in Somalia, which is dealing with the protection of one million IDPs and support for returnees. We have asked for \$85 million and have received only 6% of this funding. If you compare with other numbers floating around, vis-à-vis other crises that are monopolizing the attention, the money requested is not that high. The main donors are Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Australia, and Switzerland. Canada has given us, for the east and the Horn of Africa, \$19 million in 2016 and \$14 million in 2017. That is not only for Kenya and Somalia but for the whole east and Horn of Africa, which is plagued by the famine. In addition, as you know, recently Minister Hussen released information that \$21 million Canadian had been given to all partners to respond to the crises in Somalia, the drought, and the famine.

We are very grateful to the Government of Kenya for the cooperation we are getting from them and for the fact that they have kept the border open and are respecting the principle of non-refoulement. All the returns to Somalia are thus very much based on voluntary and informed decisions by the refugees who are in Dadaab currently.

As you mentioned, Mr. Chairperson, in November there was an announcement that the camp would be closed. The High Court of Kenya came in, intervening in February with a decision that is being appealed by the government. We are working very closely with the refugee affairs secretariat, which has been set up by the Government of Kenya to try to find a solution.

• (1305)

In this respect, I would just like to draw your attention to President Kenyatta's statement at the IGAD—the Intergovernmental Authority on Development—which in March of this year was looking at the situation of the closure of the camp and the support to Somalia. The statement from His Excellency the President of Kenya reiterates that the return to Somalia will be done in an orderly, safe, and dignified manner, respecting very much the principle of non-refoulement and the choice of the people.

We are pushing for three solutions vis-à-vis Dadaab, and that's where I think your committee may wish to make a recommendation to the Government of Canada in supporting those three solutions. First is supporting the voluntary and spontaneous return of those Somali refugees in Dadaab who have expressed the desire to return to Somalia. According to a tripartite agreement signed in 2013 between UNHCR, Somalia, and Kenya, we are supporting this. We are not encouraging in any way; it's a free choice for people to decide whether they want to go back to Somalia. I have just a few numbers. In 2014, 500 people opted for this option. In 2015, 5,000 people, and in 2016, 30,000 people decided to return to Somalia. We have an estimate that around 63,000 Somali refugees have returned to Somalia since December 2014 of their own free will, supported by UNHCR. The gender ratio, as I know this is an important question for this committee, is 50-50 men and women

Upon arrival in the 12 areas, which have been assessed as potential areas for return, we provide UNHCR education and health, but also very importantly, livelihood, shelter, and protection activities. Everybody—including those choosing not to return to those 12 areas—is still supported, including through cash support, anywhere they go in the country. We are organizing go-and-see visits for the refugees to go and see the situation on the ground, come back, and inform the community about what is possible for them to do upon return, what kind of services they will receive, and so on. We expect probably 50,000 to return this year, and potentially 65,000 in 2018.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Mr. Beuze, if I can say.... I know you have two more points to make, but I just want to make sure we leave enough time—

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** I will be very quick.

**The Chair:** —for our other witnesses.

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** Sure. *Merci.*

Very quickly, concerning resettlement, that is where Canada can play a role. We have very small numbers, quotas by resettlement countries, for Somali refugees from Dadaab or from Kenya in general. To give you one number, in 2016, 902 Somali were resettled to Canada, 902 out of the population of approximately 300,000 refugees currently in Kenya. Much more needs to be done, because we don't have any space for resettling Somali refugees.

The third option is that we are working with the government of Kenya to support the local population, with a view to integrate the refugees into the local economy. The World Bank has recently given a loan of \$100 million, which is closing the gap between humanitarian and development, which is to support the local host communities, but which will benefit in creating livelihood opportunities for the refugees as well. We are working on the rehabilitation of Dadaab to turn it into a sustainable settlement.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Beuze.

We'll move right along. Mr. Haiye, if I can have you maybe speak for around five or six minutes, that would be great. Then of course we'll go to Mr. Mohamed. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Abdirahman Haiye (Student, Dalhousie University, As an Individual):** Thank you very much. I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to the committee. I will just be very brief.

The UNHCR, together with its implementing partners, calls its operation an emergency operation, which means they provide for the most important basic human needs. Number one on the list is food, but there are many questions concerning it, whether food is actually provided in Dadaab and whether it is consumable by a normal human being, even if that person is a refugee. The UNHCR provides food through its top implementing partner, the World Food Programme, WFP, but the food that's given in the real sense is something that I would say cannot even be given to livestock. It's what refugees give to donkeys—things like maize, or corn as you would say—and it's very poor quality.

I am very grateful to the UNHCR, the Government of Kenya, and the international community at large for having been very helpful to the Somalis in particular, because as the numbers indicate, the Somalis are the largest group there.

There are many questions regarding the humanitarian issues in Dadaab, especially [*Inaudible—Editor*]. Everyone now knows that Dadaab is the largest refugee camp in the world, but it was only recently, when the Kenyan government decided to say they were closing the camp, that everyone came to realize that there is a place called Dadaab. Before that, not many people knew about Dadaab, I believe.

Something else I also wish to mention is that everything concerning Dadaab, like meetings or talks or discussions, is always done outside Dadaab. If we had had today's discussion in Dadaab, no one would require any explanation regarding the humanitarian and human rights issues there.

As I said, food is one of the first things that the UNHCR and its implementing partners are targeting. It's not enough. The reason I say this is that every child under the age of five goes to the hospital five to 10 times a month, just because of malnutrition. Even in the hospital, there is no help from medicine.

Basically, no big issue is being made of the food thing. Another thing about the issue of food is that the staple, or most common foods eaten in Dadaab or in Kenya or in the east of Africa, is things like rice. The Somalis are a pastoral community, and normally what we eat daily is animal products, livestock products, milk, and all that. But those foods are not there, so a child who was born and grew up on a farm—with milk, meat, and all that—is now told to eat things like sorghum and corn, and it's out of the question; those foods are not suitable for consumption. That's why most of us seem to be younger than we are. When I came here, for example, they were asking me whether I was 15 or 16, but I'm not. There is too much malnutrition, and there are too many issues to do with food.

• (1315)

The little food that is given, which I said cannot be consumed by a normal human being, is not something that you could get easily. You have to be in a long line for hours and hours, and everyone who has gone there knows that it's between 45 degrees and 50 degrees. It's terrible.

It's been 25 years, which is why I talked about the issue of the emergency operation. It's not an emergency operation. Twenty-five years is not a short period, so all this time, if the UNHCR and the international community at large had let the Somalis or other refugees living in Dadaab find food for themselves, at least they would have done that, but you are in this concentration camp, as I call it. It's a concentration camp. You cannot go to Kenya. You cannot go to Somalia. You can't carry out anything [*Inaudible—Editor*], even if you wanted to earn food from your own ways. It's kind of a concentration camp. Back home, we call it an “open prison”. That's what we call it. There's nothing you can do, especially for the youth. We were born and grew up in the camp. We went to some form of a school and then, after the end of high school, there's nothing else ahead, except for the few of us who had the opportunity to get some scholarships.

The situation in Dadaab is terrible and I would recommend that something has to be done, especially to the Kenyan government. We cannot be thankful for Kenya when the Kenyan government is benefiting from the refugee camp, to be very honest. Everyone working there is a Kenyan national and Kenyan nationals working for the UNHCR and other implementing agencies are earning seven times more than Kenyan nationals working for the Kenyan government. At the same time, the Kenyan government wants the refugees to be thankful for that. What are we grateful for? There's nothing to be grateful for. It's the Kenyan government that makes the refugee camp.

As for statement that they want to close the camp, I don't think they need to close the camp. If they wanted to close the camp, they would have done it a very long time ago. They don't want that.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Could we move on now? I want to leave plenty of time for the members to be able to speak to you both and ask questions of all three witnesses.

Mr. Mohamed, can we have a short statement from you as well? Then we'll move on to questions.

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed (Student, University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus, As an Individual):** Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ahmed Mohamed, as I've been introduced.

It's my pleasure to appear in front of a parliamentary committee and, more importantly, the subcommittee on international human rights to talk about the issues that have bothered me many times.

Today I would like to present to you some of the challenges and human right abuses that a typical person living in Dadaab faces in his or her daily life. The problems that exist in those camps are numerous but, because of time, I will talk about a few that I believe amount to direct or indirect human rights abuses.

First of all, there is widespread corruption that affects all spheres of life in the camp. It involves almost every step that one has to take. For example, individuals travelling outside the camps are required to have a movement permit, along with their alien cards, issued by the Department of Refugee Affairs. But it's hard to get those documents without paying at least \$100 U.S., which only very, very few people can afford. Sometimes, I was unlucky and couldn't pay that amount. I had to walk for about 90 kilometres on foot to visit my uncle whom I had not seen for a long time. Such incidents restrict most people from moving outside the camp.

In the hospitals, some of the patients are asked to pay for referral to UNHCR for major medical complications. I remember one of my neighbours was once asked to pay \$1,000 U.S. to refer her daughter who had chronic epilepsy. Admission to the schools is also taxed. It's no longer free. It costs \$50 for new students for an administration fee, and parents just believe that one. They just take it as normal. I remember one time when I told a parent that she never had to pay the administration fee and it was illegal to do. She was surprised to hear me say that.

The rampant corruption in the camps amounts to denial of basic human rights, including to the very necessities of life such as the right to education, shelter, and food. That's why I feel it is human rights abuse and violations. It also impedes the right for equal opportunities in the employment system, where it is less likely to get hired without bribery.

There's an incident that I would like to share with you because it haunts me whenever I remember it. It happened to my cousin who lived in a different camp, and he was a person living with a disability. One day we were told that he had been in jail for five days. Some elders went to see him, but they realized he was transferred to another police cell outside the camp. He was brought back after two weeks for court in Dadaab. He was falsely accused of raping a woman he legally married. His marriage certificate was rejected, and the witnesses feared for their lives. The prosecutor told me privately that, if I had come earlier to the court, the case could have been settled with 50,000 Kenyan shillings, which is equivalent to about \$500 U.S. We could not pay that amount, so we were unable to help him. He was taken to a provincial court where he was later proven to be innocent after spending several weeks behind bars; yet, he still had to pay \$200 U.S. for a reason that I don't understand up to today.

We later came to know that the family of the lady was uncomfortable with the fact that their daughter was marrying a man with a disability. They made up the entire case and bribed the police prosecutor. Even before the court freed him, it was obvious, at least to me, that the case was unrealistic because my cousin was in a wheelchair and could not move without his wheelchair, as both his legs had been paralyzed at a young age. The police saw that they had to move him. They had to move him to and from the vehicle by themselves. It just shows how inhuman that one was.

• (1325)

On the other hand, a very reliable friend of mine who is a social worker currently in the camps recently told me that last December there was an 11-year-old girl who was raped by a man who was working as humanitarian staff. But he bribed both the police and his seniors, and was able to walk freely without being punished.

These disheartening facts indicate the failure of the justice system to protect even the most deserving and most vulnerable individuals in society. I believe there are many other cases, and many others who have experienced similar incidents to these ones that I have just narrated, whose voices are unheard.

In addition to this, the police sometimes carry out an impromptu operation and indiscriminately arrest anyone who doesn't have their refugee identification card with them. It's sometimes hard when you go into the police cell to get out of it without purchasing your freedom. This creates constant fear in the camps, especially among the youth, who are mostly the target of the police. It is a saddening reality that makes life unbearable in the camps. It is perhaps this reason, or it's one of the reasons, that forces some families to return to Somalia—although it's sometimes called “voluntary”, but it's not voluntary to me—where they will face dire poverty and insecurity.

If I am allowed, I would recommend that the committee further their human rights case study on Dadaab and see the current situation for themselves. Investigating and documenting human rights violations by working with the other partners on the ground, where possible, could bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Canadian government could also consider resettlement for the individuals whose rights have been violated. And above all, the Canadian government can take part in stabilizing Somalia, where most of the refugees come from. This could be the greatest

achievement, because it would give the refugees the opportunity to return and live in their homeland as dignified as any other citizens in this world.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Mohamed. Thank you for that.

We're going to move right into questions, beginning with MP Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank our witnesses for all testifying before us this morning.

To the UNHCR, I have some questions about the repatriation program you've been participating in. The Kenyan government obviously wants to shut the camp down, and they've done everything they can to do that. The Supreme Court has intervened in that decision. But on repatriation, there's been some suggestion.... I'm just going to lay out three points that have been made about the UNHCR.

The first point is that the participation in the tripartite agreement was basically a violation of the UN mandate requiring an adequate level of protection for returning refugees, which you did not provide. The second is that you did not provide adequate resources, either protection or resources, to returning refugees, which is another part of your mandate. The third point is that this was hardly voluntary, that coercion by both the Kenyan government and the UNHCR has basically forced people to go back to Somalia. The question is, how can there be voluntary repatriation when there is continuing war and conflict, when there are ration cuts in the camps and quotas and deadlines set, and cash payments to get people to leave the camp and go back in the midst of a situation where there was not only war but also a developing drought?

I'm just wondering if you can give a response to that question, please.

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** Yes, our mandate is indeed to protect refugees against forced return to a country where their lives will be in danger. That's why we have been stressing to the Government of Somalia and the Government of Kenya—as acknowledged in the tripartite agreement and the recent IGAD meeting in March—that the voluntary nature of the return has to be assessed on an individual basis. This is very much what we are doing and therefore we are upholding, with the Government of Kenya, the principle of non-refoulement and upholding international refugee law in this respect.

This is why we organized, for example, the go-and-see visit by some refugees, who go back to their communities and discuss—assessing individually, at the level of the family—whether it's a time and place to return safely to, in a way that's conducive to a dignified and orderly return. In terms of the support, we support them both from Kenya and in Somalia. But I repeat that when you receive 6% of the funding required for the operation in Somalia, 2% for the operation in Kenya, and 0% of the funding required specifically in Kenya for the Somali population, you do understand that we are limited in what we can do in supporting their reintegration back in Somalia, for sure.

That's why I would completely concur with our two colleagues on this panel today that the stabilization of Somalia is absolutely key. Canada, as other countries, must play a role in providing stability from a security point of view, but very much also on the side of livelihood opportunities.

• (1330)

**Mr. David Anderson:** I guess we're unsure about how going back to burned out, destroyed villages without health care and nutrition or a functioning economy is good for people, or how you can expect them to thrive in that situation.

The Kenyan Supreme Court made its decision to intervene. What has been the Kenyan government's response to that? Has it actually been supporting the refugees? Has it re-established the refugee affairs department? I think it was instructed to by the Supreme Court. Has that been done, and has that been an effective re-establishment?

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** It has not re-established the old body that was in place, but there's still a Refugee Affairs Secretariat, the RAS, with which we are working. We also are working with the national multi-agency refugee repatriation team of the Government of Kenya. The Government of Kenya, as you know, has filed a notice of appeal with the high court to challenge the decision, based on the security condition.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Are you aware of the charges that Mr. Mohamed has made about the cost to refugees of purchasing ID cards and documents, the extraordinary fees, and the allegations of corruption that are taking place in the camp? I believe the camp's part of your responsibility. He talked about the denial of basic human rights. What is the UNHCR's response to those situations?

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** We have a wide system in place to ask people who may be subjected to fraud or worse, on the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers, as was mentioned before, to make sure that victims and survivors are able to lodge complaints. We work with the authorities on the ground. We are only the United Nations—

**Mr. David Anderson:** Can I just interrupt you for a second on that, then? UN staff members and UN representatives have been connected on a number of occasions in the past with sexual violence. It seems to be a recurring theme. We've just heard an allegation this morning of another situation taking place where someone was able to escape responsibility for an attack on a young person. What's being done to address those issues?

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** Investigations are being done within each of the organizations concerned. When it's staff of the United Nations or our NGO partners, everybody is actually bound by the same mechanisms to investigate and punish the culprit. When it comes to criminal sanctions, they cannot be imposed by the United Nations because we have no legal jurisdiction in this respect. That can be done only by the judicial authorities of the host country. We work with the judicial authorities of all countries in the world to make sure that they, in accordance with the criminal law in that country, punish the culprit.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Mohamed, do you have a response to that?

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed:** I understand the point that the UN representative made: when it comes to some of the criminal issues,

it's done by the police and the justice department of the host government. However, the refugees still experience the same problems. Although they report them to the UN, there's nothing that has been done, to my knowledge.

For instance, refugees can't get an alien card, the main identification card for refugees to stay in the country, from the UNHCR. It's the department of refugee affairs that issues it, and it issues it on the basis of money. Whoever doesn't pay money can't get it. The department just tells them frankly, "Go to the UNHCR", if it doesn't give it to them. If they go to the UNHCR, it'll refer them back to the department of refugees, the RAS. Some people just give up. Like the other day, they're just caught on the streets on the allegation that they don't have the documents they're supposed to have as refugees. They're put in jail by the police, where they still have to pay money to be released.

Yes, I understand, but I still wonder what further steps the UNHCR can take to make sure that people.... The people still suffer. The UNHCR tries to do something, but people still suffer.

• (1335)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mohamed.

We're actually going to move to MP Tabbara.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses who are here before us today to help shed some light on this dire situation. It's very timely.

My question will be for Mr. Beuze. I'm going to talk about three topics in the little time that I have: security, vulnerability, and Uganda as a model.

I'll begin with security. In the briefing that I have, I read that there have been many attacks by al Shabaab and that security is a very big concern for the Kenyan government. There was the abduction of foreign aid workers in 2011-12, and the 2013 mall attack that claimed several lives. So, security's a very big issue. Is there some sort of measure that's been looked at to secure the camp with regard to who's coming in and going out? I understand that they've closed off the camp to more refugees, but what is the challenge of the security within the camp? I think this is the real root cause. Security is the main issue. If you can, could you just elaborate on security.

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** Thank you very much.

The camp is located very near the border. Access to the territory of Kenya is the sole responsibility of the Kenyan authorities.

The United Nations does not decide who enters and who does not enter the territory of Kenya. We have neither the jurisdiction, the means, nor the legal possibility of assessing who may be a combatant, who may be linked to some armed groups, and who is a civilian.

The camps have to be civilian. Refugee status is solely for civilians and cannot include people who have been involved in armed activities, including criminal activities. As was pointed out before, the registration of refugees is not something that is under our mandate. It's under the mandate of the government of Kenya. As in any other country in the world, it's the host government that decides who is registered as a refugee or not.

In a normal situation, the host government requests the support of UNHCR. In some instances, they actually give that power, that jurisdiction, to UNHCR in its entirety.

This is not the case in Kenya, as was well explained. It is the Refugee Affairs Secretariat that has the responsibility to register refugees.

We do work with them. We do work to ensure that there is no fraud being committed, or corruption. We play an oversight role, we train the staff, and we have complaint procedures in place when fraud or corruption happens. But eventually, it's the sole responsibility of the government of Kenya.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thank you.

One of my other topics is Uganda as a model. Uganda has been very welcoming and accepting a lot of refugees. What can we learn from their model? Is there an idea of giving refugees, maybe, a plot of land, as Uganda has done, or is there some kind of recommendation that you would have?

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** Thank you very much, Mr. Tabbara.

This is exactly what we are trying to do with the third solution we are proposing, which is transforming the Dadaab camp into a sustainable development where we will integrate locally the refugees who decide not to return to Somalia for all the reasons you have mentioned, and because they have the choice not to return. Unfortunately, for those who can't be resettled, the only current solution is to have them where they are.

As was mentioned in the first testimony, there is very little prospect of people having opportunities to earn a livelihood after secondary school, or even without completing school, because there is very little investment being made currently in the region where the Dadaab camp is located. It is way in the middle, between Nairobi airport and the main seaport of Somalia in the southern part of the coast. Therefore, as in northern Uganda, which has been doing it for the South Sudanese, there is a possibility to develop the region. This is why the World Bank has given \$100 million in loans to Kenya to try to develop the economy around Dadaab, which will eventually help—arguing exactly what you are arguing—the local integration of the refugees.

We strongly believe that Canada can play a role in supporting these efforts.

• (1340)

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** My question would be to Mr. Mohamed and Mr. Haiye. I want to touch upon the vulnerability of some groups, such as women and children, in the camps. If they're forced to flee back to Somalia, what are some of the vulnerabilities or challenges they might face in Somalia?

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed:** Thank you so much.

The vulnerabilities they might face in Somalia include being victims of the insecurity there. One of the possible places people can go back to Mogadishu, but we know that every day there are car bombings, and the other day we saw the civilian victims in the media. We have seen these types of images from there.

People can be victims of Al Shabaab or other gangs. There is still no functional government in the regions they are going back to, and there's no strong government that can protect them. Even the money given to these people by the UNHCR can be taken away from them, and there's no one who can protect them, because there's not enough security.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Just to clarify for the committee, the money they're given to return to Somalia is given by the UNHCR, and the vulnerability you're talking about is that they may be robbed or these funds may be taken from them as they're in transition back to Somalia. Is that correct?

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed:** Yes, that's one case. The other case is of people who are going back to Somalia. I can't prove it, but I have had cases in which people who went back to Somalia lost some members of their family to al Shabaab, who accused them of being some kind of spies for the Kenyan government or free people who were outside the camps and who changed their culture and that sort of thing. When they came back to the border, they could not get their refugee registration back—they could not be registered again—and had to live in the camps and depend on other families, because they couldn't get the rights that other refugees could get from the UNHCR since they didn't have full registration. There are some people who went back to Somalia. Once they see the situation there, they come back to the camps and can't be registered again.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thank you.

Also, Mr. Beuze, if you would, please submit those three recommendations that you have to the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're now going to move to MP Hardcastle.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have several questions, so I'm going to get right to it, first with Mr. Haiye from Dalhousie University. In your presentation, sir, you were speaking about the way Kenya is perhaps benefiting from the camps. You said that if they wanted to close the camps, they would have done so by now.

I'd like to give you an opportunity to expand on that thought, because you were cut off. What makes you believe that this is a beneficial arrangement? Help us understand what your thoughts are, with your first-hand experience.

• (1345)

**Mr. Abdirahman Haiye:** The Kenyan government is benefiting from the camp in many ways. One of them is that most of the people working for the United Nations and the other implementing agencies are Kenyan nationals. In that case, they are employed and are paying taxes to their government. In that way the Kenyan government is benefiting a lot. As I said, a Kenyan person who works for the UN in the camp is earning seven times more than a Kenyan who is working for their own government. In that way the Kenyan government is benefiting from the camp.

In another way, most of the funding.... As Mr. Beuze has just said, the World Bank has given \$100 million U.S. to the Kenyan government to develop the surrounding area. The funny thing is that no systems are put in place to ensure whether these funds are being used for the right purposes or not.

One other thing I want to add is that I don't think the Kenyan government is closing the camp for security reasons. I remember once when we were told that al Shabaab was in control of a town that was 10 kilometres from the border base of the Kenyan military. All that time, nothing was happening. I don't understand the reason the Kenyan government all of a sudden said there were al Shabaab hiding in the camp. No, there are no al Shabaab hiding in the camp. Al Shabaab are screened in the same way the Kenyan government and the refugee camps do of refugees. They don't even think the refugees are Muslims any more, or something like that.

I don't think, then, that there are security reasons, and as I said, those are some of the many reasons that the Kenyan government is getting a lot more than the refugees are getting from relief and aid.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle:** Mr. Mohamed, do you want to expand on that as well?

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed:** Thank you so much.

I just want to expand on that too. There is another way in which the Government of Kenya can benefit from the refugees who are staying in those camps. Some of the refugees, especially those who came a long time ago, have established businesses in the camps. I don't know whether the UN aid services are aware of that or whether that is allowed. But the Kenyan revenue authorities go to the refugee business centres at the end of the year and collect tax revenues from them. They charge for the land. They charge for the business.

I know some people who don't even have enough money to pay for it, but they're still charged, otherwise their shops will be closed. That's one of the ways. It's a way of getting revenue as well.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle:** Okay.

Mr. Haiye, maybe you can go first and then Mr. Mohamed. You mentioned a bit about al Shabaab. What is your opinion about them? Are they successful in recruiting the Somalis living in the Dadaab camp in particular?

**Mr. Abdirahman Haiye:** I won't be able to talk a lot about that. But to my knowledge and to the knowledge of the people in the camp, no refugee has ever been recruited. It has never been mentioned. If anything, the al Shabaab terror attacks that happened both in the camp and in other parts of Kenya have been carried out

by Kenyans, mostly from the coast of Kenya where there are a couple of Muslim groups. All these terror attacks have been carried out by Kenyans, because after the investigations have been done, they are saying that they are Kenyans, and then nothing is done after that.

The blame is always that there are al Shabaab hiding in the camp. It's just by word of mouth. But when numbers come out, it is Kenyans mostly. There has never been, to my knowledge, mention of a refugee from Dadaab going back to al Shabaab, because that's why we came from there. Nobody would ever want to go back to the same problem. Thank you.

• (1350)

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle:** Go ahead, Mr. Mohamed. You wanted to add to that.

**Mr. Ahmed Mohamed:** Sure. One reason I will say that most people in the camps are not recruits of al Shabaab is, first, that they are people who have at least enough knowledge about the world and are well informed about the issues with al Shabaab and those kinds of things. Another reason is that if someone is employed, there's little incentive or money to join, although it's not enough. The UN is there and other non-governmental organizations have tried to provide students who finish high school with some kind of employment that gives them something around \$80 a month. That's an incentive for them to sustain their lives.

We know one of the main reasons that people join al Shabaab is unemployment or lack of information about al Shabaab is doing. Because of these two main reasons, they may not be.... Although most of the young people are accused by the Kenyan government of joining al Shabaab, they have never produced a case of a refugee carrying out an attack against the Kenyan government.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're going to try to get two short questions in. We're going to start with MP Khalid.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony today.

Mr. Beuze, when do you anticipate the complete closure of the camp?

**Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze:** We don't anticipate the complete closure of the camp. We are working on turning the camp into a sustainable settlement where livelihoods, opportunities, will be provided to the refugees, but also to the local communities around the camp. This is very much what we are working on with the Government of Kenya and with the support of development and humanitarian partners.

**The Chair:** We're going to adjourn.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** I want to thank the three witnesses, especially our two student witnesses today. You provided an invaluable perspective first-hand from your knowledge and your experiences. We all appreciate your bringing that knowledge to us on this committee here today.

And to Mr. Beuze, thank you for testifying before us again.

The committee is adjourned.

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