

Somalia: Behind the scenes Blueprint ahead of 2016 Election [Report]

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Special Report by Garowe Online's Investigative reporters/ *As Somalia's vision 2016 agenda has been threatened by deeply embedded political division, Garowe Online has investigated the dispute's bone of contention.*

Islamist President and former civil society activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has locked horns with second Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed in battle of wills that brought the day-to-day activities of government institutions to standstill for four weeks ,and as of yet, rival sides in Mogadishu are in quandary about the fate.

Though, Somalia is emerging from protracted warfare, the dispute further worsened humanitarian and political situation much less help UN-backed weak central government craft more robust strategies to meet 2016 benchmarks.

Insiders tell Garowe Online that the ‘moot point’ of the damaging political deadlock assumes far-fetching position, and emanates from more convoluted networks than it had been in the past.

On October 25, Prime Minister Mohamed sidelined key presidential aide and president Mohamud’s right hand man-Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir-in pre-planned cabinet reshuffle, adding fuel to the flames. However, Prime Minister unveiled on Monday evening during a televised speech on Somali National TV that he was aiming to speed up the work of the cabinet, and to resolve differences between Ministry of Justice and Judicial apparatuses.

“On October 25, 2014, I made brief cabinet reshuffle in line with article 100 of the Provisional Federal Constitution (PFC),” said Mohamed, referring to his constitutional powers.

Speaking to Garowe Online, well informed source in Mogadishu noted, the infighting dates back to mid-2014 when Somalia President appointed Ahmed Ali Dahir- as Attorney General.

MB offshoot fighting tooth and nail for wider influence

The moderate Muslim society in the war-ravaged horn of Africa nation bore the brunt of wave of slaughters in 1990s, followed by extremism and high seas crimes, largely in lawless south and central part of the country.

President Mohamud belongs to Dam-Jadid [New Blood] faction of Al Islah [Old Blood]-like Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood-that was driven underground last year when military toppled the country’s first democratically-elected President Mohamed Morsi-and-shortly after he swept to power on September 10, 2012, strong men including the then-minister for constitution Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir hit the fame.

United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea disclosed in confidential report in 2013 that the tiny gulf nation of Qatar threw its support behind Mohamud on the eve of tightly contested presidential elections. Besides, sources familiar with national politics add that Abdulkadir rules the roost and has the whole under the thumb.

A new-comer and former businessman, Abdi Farah Shirdon was cherry picked for the Prime Minister's position at first. Nevertheless, he had been in office for just over a year and was ousted in broad daylight parliamentary no confidence vote in December 2013.

“Heavy-weight politicians were kept at bay when Mohamud rose to power because, Farah himself was in fear for Dam Jadiid reign and he was looking for functionary and novice,” one source in Mogadishu said on condition of anonymity.

Following the appointment of current Prime Minister Mohamed, there has been a thaw in the cooperation as the cabinet lineup remained contentious initially, followed by voluntary resignation of National Security Minister as well as Dam Jadiid member Abdikarin Hussein Guled, the sacking of National intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) Chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali (Sanbaloshe) , political clashes between Chief Justice Aideed Abdullahi Ilka-Hanaf and Attorney General and more recently the controversial cabinet reshuffle.

“Unfortunately, a press statement from the office of President declared the cabinet reshuffle ‘null and void’,” Somalia Prime Minister told reporters in Mogadishu. “Illegal No confidence motion against the government was organized by the presidency. It has not stemmed from ineffectiveness in the job but moving president's friend from one ministry to another ministerial docket”.

Stressing the need for political stability, parliament speaker Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari announced that the no confidence vote in Prime Minister would be suspended until opposing national assembly members were reconciled.

Three parliamentary sessions ended in rowdy after MPs loyal to Somalia Prime Minister raised placards that read: “Nation or Person, Save the Nation and let's consult”.

“As long as possible, that means up to 2016 the prime minister will continue to hold the reins. He enjoys the backing of the international community who wants to see Somalia making progress in vision 2016 agenda and meeting the timetable,” said a political analyst.

Judiciary

As part of behind the scenes preparations ahead of 2016 election, Muslim Brotherhood Offshoot wants to consolidate its grip on power by focusing less on rampant corruption, chronic insecurity, and more on judiciary.

The new minister for Livestock and Animal Husbandry, Abdulkadir has been spearheading judicial reform process which constitutes central component in vision 2016 agenda but the recent cabinet reshuffle dealt blow to dream of the President Mohamud: “The chief aim of president Hassan’s allies was to at least set up the constitutional court that would have final say on matters surrounding national politics,” a source leaked.

Somalia President right away reacted to the removal of key aide, and allegedly wooed lawmakers in the often fickle 275-seat-chamber of parliament with cash to neutralize the threats ahead for Dam-Jadeed blueprint.

Two men-Fahad Yasin, former Al Jazeera journalist and Abdirahman Aynte, the head of Mogadishu-based public policy research institute [Heritage]- who could not be reached for comments, are said to have served as intermediaries to facilitate the withdrawal of undisclosed amounts of cash being paid by Qatar.

As of now, the political disputes between Dam-Jadiid and Prime Minister remain lingering, and neither side would make much ado about nothing.

Garowe Online Investigative reporters have contributed to this report