

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN SOMALIA

Name: The Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia

Year of Origin: 1978

Founder(s):¹

- Sheikh Mohamed Garyare
- Dr. Ali Sheikh
- Dr. Ibrahim Dusuqi

Place(s) of Operation: Primarily Mogadishu

Key Leaders:

- Ali Bashi Omar Rooraa: Chairman²
- Abdurahman M. Abdullahi: Executive Board member, presidential bid for 2016 elections³
- Hassan Sheikh Mohamud: Former President of Somalia and Chairman of the Peace and Development Party (PDP)⁴

Associated Organization(s):

- Al-Islah⁵
- Harakat Al-Islah⁶
- Damul Jadiid⁷

Al-Islah—short for Harakat al-Islah (meaning “reform”)—is the Somali branch of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) (i.e., the Brotherhood). Unlike other extremist groups in Somalia such as [al-Qaeda](#) affiliate [al-Shabab](#) or Islamist militant group al-Ittihad al-Islamiya, Al-Islah claims to eschew

¹ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pg. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>.

² “Somalia’s Al-Islah Movement Condemn President Hassan’s Attendance of the Egyptian President’s Inauguration,” *AllAfrica*, June 9, 2014, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406100161.html>.

³ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pg. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; “Somalia: UAE Cabinet approves Al-Islah as a terrorist organisation,” *Geeksa Afrika* (Hargeisa), November 17, 2014, <http://www.geeskaafrika.com/6419/somalia-uae-cabinet-approves-al-islah-as-a-terrorist-organisation/>.

⁴ Mary Harper, “Will President Mohamud be able to tame Somalia,” BBC News, September 11, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19556377>.

⁵ “Somalia: UAE Cabinet approves Al-Islah as a terrorist organisation,” *Geeksa Afrika* (Hargeisa), November 17, 2014, <http://www.geeskaafrika.com/6419/somalia-uae-cabinet-approves-al-islah-as-a-terrorist-organisation/>.

⁶ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pg. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>.

⁷ Matt Bryden, “Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government,” Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

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violence in its efforts to establish an Islamic state.⁸ Nonetheless, a subset of the party, Damul Jadiid, openly embraced violence during the 2006–2008 Ethiopian occupation.⁹ Damul Jadiid has been the Somali parliament’s ruling party since the December 2016 elections.¹⁰

Al-Islah was formed in 1978 by Brotherhood member Sheikh Mohamed Garyare. In 1981, Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre began arresting political dissidents and cracking down on civil liberties in response to mounting opposition. After years of operating underground, Al-Islah reemerged following Barre’s ouster in 1991, capitalizing on the power vacuum resulting from the Somali civil war.¹¹ The group distinguished itself from other emerging Islamic groups by publicly repudiating violence. Al-Islah also provided aid and social services to Somalis in the hopes of building a network of support and created “peace caravans” that traveled throughout Somalia in an effort to resolve local disputes using Islamic teachings.¹²

Throughout the 1990s, Al-Islah continued to eschew violence and instead focused on improving education in Somalia. The group established the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS), a network that continues to provide education to youths throughout the country.¹³

⁸ “Islamism and Politics in Somalia: Dr. Abdurahman M. Abdullahi (Baadiyow),” Chatham House, June 12, 2012, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/120612summary.pdf>; “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; Stig Jarle Hansen, “Country Profile: Somalia,” Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>.

⁹ Matt Bryden, “Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government,” Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

¹⁰ “Somali speaker implicated in parliamentary seats fraud,” All East Africa, February 3, 2017, <https://www.alleafrica.com/2017/02/03/somali-speaker-implicated-in-parliamentary-seats-fraud/>; “Somalia: Regional think tank favors “clan” to the Somali presidency, stirs outrage,” Garowe Online, January 23, 2017, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-regional-think-tank-favors-clan-to-the-somali-presidency-stirs-outrage>; “Somalia swears in 283 members of parliament,” AMISOM, December 27, 2016, <http://amisom-au.org/2016/12/somalia-swears-in-283-members-of-parliament/>.

¹¹ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pg. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; “Siada Barre’s Fall Blamed for Somalia’s Collapse into Civil War,” *Voice of America*, January 31, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/siad-barre-fall-led-into-civil-war-020111-115008454/134345.html>; “WDN Interview with Dr. Abdurahman M. Baadiyow,” WardheerNews.com, April 16, 2013, <http://www.wardheernews.com/wdn-interveiw-with-dr-abdurahman-m-baadiyow/>.

¹² Stig Jarle Hansen, “Country Profile: Somalia,” Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>; “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; Stig Jarle Hansen, “Country Profile: Somalia,” Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>.

¹³ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; Stig Jarle Hansen, “Country Profile: Somalia,” Tony

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Despite Al-Islah's efforts, however, Somali clans and Islamist groups continued to clash with the Somali government into the early 2000s. Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2006 to subdue the violence, prompting some Al-Islah members to take up arms.¹⁴

In 2006, Al-Islah members formed the Damul Jadiid ("New Blood"), a subdivision within the group that openly embraced violence as a means to establish an Islamic caliphate. Damul Jadiid members fought alongside the Council of Islamic Courts, a coalition of various Somali Islamist groups opposed to the Ethiopian occupation. Since Ethiopia's withdrawal from Somalia in 2008, Damul Jadiid has refrained from the use of violence and has instead taken an active role in Somali politics, eventually becoming the ruling party of parliament during the December 2016 elections.¹⁵

Damul Jadiid members have also held leadership positions in the higher echelons of the Somali government.¹⁶ Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, founder and chairman of the Al-Islah-affiliated Peace and Development Party (PDP), held Somalia's presidency from 2012 to 2017. After assuming the office of the presidency, Mohamud appointed several Damul Jadiid figures to senior positions within his administration, including in the ministries of state, interior, justice, and social affairs.¹⁷

Under the influence of Damul Jadiid, the Somali Federal Government (SFG) has shifted its approach on the country's foreign policy, reportedly straying from the African Union and

Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>

¹⁴ Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

¹⁵ Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf; "Somali speaker implicated in parliamentary seats fraud," All East Africa, February 3, 2017. <https://www.alleestafrica.com/2017/02/03/somali-speaker-implicated-in-parliamentary-seats-fraud/>; "Somalia: Regional think tank favors 'clan' to the Somali presidency, stirs outrage," Garrowe Online, January 23, 2017, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-regional-think-tank-favors-clan-to-the-somali-presidency-stirs-outrage>.

¹⁶ Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf; Marcin Buzanski, "Turning Somalia Round," Fall 2015, <https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/turning-somalia-around/>.

¹⁷ Mary Harper, Will President Mohamud be able to tame Somalia?" BBC News, September 11, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19556377>; Jason Mosley, "Somalia's Federal Future: Layered Agendas, Risks and Opportunities," Chatham House, September 2015, pg. 11, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150902SomaliaFederalFutureMosley.pdf; Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

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focusing more on issues pertaining to the Middle East. Although the governments of Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey have helped Somalia along in its reconstruction process, these partnerships and others have complicated relations with Somalia's neighbors Kenya and Ethiopia, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.¹⁸

Damul Jadiid became the Somali parliament's ruling party during the December 2016 elections, after winning a plurality of the seats.¹⁹ Despite this victory in parliament, however, former Somali President Mohamud suffered an unexpected loss in the February 2017 presidential election, and was replaced by nationalist candidate Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed.²⁰

History:

- **1969 – 1991:** The Barre regime outlaws clannism and competing Islamist groups.²¹
- **1978:** The Brotherhood launches Al-Islah in Somalia.²²
- **1991:** Following the ouster of Barre, Al-Islah begins to operate overtly.²³
- **1990s:** Al-Islah attempts to unify Somali clans by proselytizing Islamic teachings, providing humanitarian aid, and re-establishing social services to Somalis during the civil war.²⁴
- **1999:** Al-Islah publicly supports the Djibouti-Arta peace process.²⁵
- **2006:** A faction of Al-Islah breaks away and creates Damul Jadiid to take up arms against the Ethiopian occupation.²⁶

¹⁸ Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

¹⁹ "Somali speaker implicated in parliamentary seats fraud," All East Africa, February 3, 2017.

<https://www.alleafrica.com/2017/02/03/somali-speaker-implicated-in-parliamentary-seats-fraud/>.

²⁰ Jason Burke, "Somalis greet 'new dawn' as US dual national wins presidency," *Guardian* (London), February 8, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/08/somali-presidential-election-won-mohamed-abdullahi-mohamed>; Tom Wheeler, "New Somali president brings many strengths," *The New Age*, February 14, 2017, <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-new-age-free-state/20170214/282325384723870>.

²¹ "Somalia's Islamists," International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>.

²² "Somalia's Islamists," International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pg. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>.

²³ "Somalia's Islamists," International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>.

²⁴ "Somalia's Islamists," International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; Stig Jarle Hansen, "Country Profile: Somalia," Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>.

²⁵ Stig Jarle Hansen, "Country Profile: Somalia," Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>.

²⁶ Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government," Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

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- **2012:** Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is elected president of Somalia.²⁷ Mohamud has “links” to the Brotherhood’s Al-Islah party, according to a report by the BBC.²⁸
- **December 27, 2016:** Damul Jadiid becomes the ruling party of the Somali parliament following national elections.²⁹
- **February 8, 2017:** Mohamud loses the presidential election to former Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed.³⁰

Violent Activities:

Al-Islah has publicly renounced violence. In 2006, however, members of Al-Islah created the faction Damul Jadiid, which actively fought against the Ethiopian occupation between 2006 and 2008 before taking a political role in the Somali government.³¹

Ties to Extremist Groups: Not determined

Designations by Governments and Organizations: Not determined.

In Their Own Words:

Abdurahman M. Abdullahi, senior leader of Al-Islah and Islamic scholar, July 29, 2011
Describing Al-Islah’s relationship with the Brotherhood:

“Islah describes itself as an Islamic movement representing the Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia. It takes inspiration and understanding of Islam from the ideological guidelines laid down by Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928.”³²

²⁷ “Somalia profile – Timeline,” BBC News, March 1, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094632>.

²⁸ “Somali Election of Hassan Sheikh a ‘Great Step,” BBC News, September 11, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19557884>.

²⁹ “Somali speaker implicated in parliamentary seats fraud,” All East Africa, February 3, 2017, <https://www.allearafrica.com/2017/02/03/somali-speaker-implicated-in-parliamentary-seats-fraud/>; “Somalia: Regional think tank favors ‘clan’ to the Somali presidency, stirs outrage,” Garowe Online, January 23, 2017, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-regional-think-tank-favors-clan-to-the-somali-presidency-stirs-outrage>; “Somalia swears in 283 members of parliament,” AMISOM, December 27, 2016, <http://amisom-au.org/2016/12/somalia-swears-in-283-members-of-parliament/>.

³⁰ Jason Burke, “Somalis greet ‘new dawn’ as US dual national wins presidency,” *Guardian* (London), February 8, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/08/somali-presidential-election-won-mohamed-abdullahi-mohamed>.

³¹ “Somalia’s Islamists,” International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005, pgs. 13-15, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/somalia-s-islamists.pdf>; Stig Jarle Hansen, “Country Profile: Somalia,” Tony Blair Faith Foundation, September 22, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/country-profiles/somalia/situation-report>; Matt Bryden, “Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government,” Center for Strategy and International Studies, August 2013, pg. 8, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf.

³² Andrew McGregor, “The Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia: An Interview with the Islah Movement’s Abdurahman M. Abdullahi (Baadiyow), Jamestown Foundation, July 29, 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38256#.VzyvGY-cGM9.

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