13 April 2016

ARC and DCR Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information Reports:

Afghanistan Security Situation Update (January 2016)
and Somalia Security Situation (February 2016)

Asylum Research Consultancy (ARC) and the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) welcome the publication of the Country of Origin Information (COI) reports on Afghanistan Security Situation Update (January 2016) and Somalia Security Situation (February 2016).

As our previous responses to EASO consultations and comments on EASO Work Plans have indicated, we continue to be particularly interested in the EASO COI methodology and await the publication of the 2015 evaluation of the use of the EASO COI methodology and its potential revision.[1] With this in mind, we are pleased to note that the new EASO COI reports on Afghanistan and Somalia (from now on referred to as the EASO Afghanistan report and EASO Somalia report respectively) do not 'draw conclusions' (as provided for in the EASO COI Methodology report), or include distinct 'summary' or 'analysis' sections as for example the previous COI report on Afghanistan 'Insurgent strategies —intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans' (December 2012) did.

As active members of the Consultative Forum, we would have welcomed the opportunity to input into the Terms of Reference of the reports or to have been able to provide the following comments in advance of the reports' final publications. The following comments are based on an initial reading of the reports, first making some general observations and recommendations and further focusing on:

- Chapter 2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan, 2.1 Centre, 2.1.1 Kabul city of the EASO Afghanistan report, and
- Section 2. Security situation per region, 2.7. Benadir-Mogadishu of the EASO report on Somalia.

General observations and recommendations
Given EASO's stated aim of COI harmonisation[2] it is noteworthy that there are a number of differences in the approaches of the two reports.

Acknowledgements
It is a welcome development that as well as Member States, Roberta Belli, Security Information Analyst from the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), Somalia, reviewed the EASO Somalia report. It is a shame that the EASO Afghanistan report did not also have an external reviewer.

Methodology- Defining the terms of reference
- It is noted that UNHCR gave input on the terms of reference for the EASO Afghanistan report in addition to members of Specialist Network on Afghanistan, however it appears that only members of

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[1] As set out in the 2015 EASO work programme
[2] As set out inter alia in the 2016 EASO work programme

the Specialist Network on Somalia provided comments on the terms of reference for the EASO Somalia report. As stated in the introduction, as Consultative Forum members, we would have welcomed the opportunity to be invited to input into the Terms of Reference as well.

- There is a notable difference in approach between the methodology of the two reports despite them both addressing the security situation in the respective countries (emphasis added):

    EASO Afghanistan report
    […] Introduction
    […] Methodology
    Defining the terms of reference
    […] In 2014, through its work with Member States (MS), EASO identified the need among MS for detailed security updates supporting decision- and policy-makers in the assessment of the need for refugee protection and subsidiary protection, especially taking into account article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive (QD). This, together with article 2(f) QD, defines a number of key elements such as: a "real risk of serious harm"; an "internal or international armed conflict"; "indiscriminate violence"; the term "civilian"; and a "serious and individual threat to life or person".
    Based on various sources consulted by EASO, **these key elements can be broken down into topics and/or indicators. Examples include: parties to the conflict; intensity level of the violence; nature of the violence; regional spreading of the violence; targets of the violence; risk of collateral damage; use of arms and tactics; possibility to reach areas – security of transport (roads and airports); and indirect effects of the violence/conflict**. […]

    EASO Somalia report
    […] Introduction
    […] Methodology
    Defining the terms of reference
    […] In June 2015, members of the EASO COI Specialist Network on Somalia provided input for an update of the 2014 Country overview report. **Main issues that needed to be updated, according to the feedback received, related to the security situation, not only in South and Central Somalia, but also in the northern areas of Somalia**. Although information on human rights, migration and returns were found relevant, it was decided to concentrate this update on security issues only, taking into account the limited number of contributors and the time available for drafting. […]

- It is a little surprising that the EASO Somalia report does not follow the approach of the EASO Afghanistan report to examine the same indicators, given that claims from nationals from both countries will likely engage article 15 (c) of the Qualification Directive. The difference in approach is also borne out in the Terms of References. Note the difference in relation to reporting the regional description of the security situations (original emphasis):

    EASO Afghanistan report
    […] Annex 2: Terms of Reference
    […] Detailed regional description of the security situation
    Description that goes into regional details, e.g. per province, district, cities…
    Level of detail depending on province but some consistency needed.
    By region/province, possibly with separate focus on some contested areas:
    First distinction per region: (Cf. UNAMA)
    North
    North East
    West
    Central
    Central Highlands
    South
    South-East
    Then per province
    Try to define zones within province when describing levels of violence
    Some provinces are safer, so need less detail. Other provinces need more detail.

Short description of the province
  Terrain (short); main roads
  Urban areas
  Population (including numbers); ethnicity (indicative, no real figures, qualitative)
  Map (UNOCHA) with districts, roads and neighbouring provinces
Quantitative data
  Number of incidents
  Number of victims (death and injured)
    Civilians
    Military staff/fighters
  Humanitarian organisations
  Number of population displacements
Direct impacts of violence
  Overview of **major/significant** incidents in the province
  Frequency of the incidents
  Anti-government **elements active** in the region
  Weapons and tactics used
    Depending on occurrence of information, refer to chronology
    Insofar as possible: info on type of weapons / tactics: targeted vs indiscriminate
    Only effective use of violence, not potential, e.g. cache of weapons found
    Examples may relate to:
      Bombings
        • Artillery and mortars
        • Air raids
        • Massive bombings
      Explosives
        • Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)
        - roadside bombs (VOIED, RCIED)
        - car and suicide bombs (VBIED, BBIED)
        • Landmines
      Shootings
        • Direct confrontations/ground battles
        • Snipers
        • Death squads and executions
    Guerilla attacks/asymmetric warfare/multiple and complex attacks
    Surprise attacks/sweeps/raids
    Siege
    Terre brûlée
    Intimidation and threats
      Checkpoints/freedom of movement
      Kidnappings
      Limitations to participation in public life
      Forced recruitment
      Illegal taxation
      Sexual violence as a war strategy
      Lootings
    Criminal activities related to the conflict (e.g. in case of breakdown of law and order)
  Targets
  If info available differentiates between, e.g.:
      Civilian targets and population
      Military targets
      Government infrastructure
      Humanitarian organisations
  Affected areas
  If info available differentiates between, e.g.:
      Urban areas and dwellings
      Crowded/public places

Markets, shops
Schools
Places of worship and recreation
Hospitals
Cultural property
Roads and transport systems
Roads
Airfields
Stations
Secondary impact of the violence (directly linked to violence; excluding e.g. natural disasters, corruption, cultural issues, etc.) […]

EASO Somalia report
[…] Terms of Reference
[…] 2. Description of the security situation per region:
Lower Jubba, Gedo, Bay-Bakool, Middle Jubba, Lower Shabelle, Benadir-Mogadishu, Middle Shabelle, Hiiraan-Gagaduud, Ximan-Xeeb, Galmudug, Puntland, Somaliland, Sool/Sanaag.
2.1. Short description of the region (terrain, urban areas, population)
2.2. Violence
Number/kind of incidents
Number of victims (death and injured) Civilians/Military staff/fighters
Population displacements
2.3. Actors in the conflict
2.4. Areas of control/influence
2.5. Impact of the violence (residential areas, security of transport system, food security) […]

Whilst it is appreciated that the available COI may restrict the level of detail it is possible to document for the EASO Somalia report, it is considered that it would have been useful for that report to specifically address the targets of violence in Somalia by region, which would have aided a regional comparison for particular profiles of applicant claiming to be directly targeted.

Methodology- Collecting information
- It is considered that the cut-off points for research in the EASO Afghanistan report are unclear:

EASO Afghanistan report
[…] Introduction
[…] Methodology
[…] Collection information
The present report presents information collected between April and 9 October 2015. After this, some additional research was done in the review phase on selected topics only. A limited number of specialised paper-based and electronic sources were consulted within the timeframe and the scope of the research. Regarding media reports on security incidents mentioned for illustration under the regional description of the security situation, the reference period was from 1 November 2014 to 31 August 2015. Taking into account the importance and significance of the events in September and October 2015 in north Afghanistan (fall of Kunduz, assault on Maimana, airstrike on MSF hospital), EASO decided to also include these events in the report. […]

The report states that information was 'collected' between April and 9 October 2015, by which it is presumed that sources cited in the report were published within this time frame, rather than this being the drafting period of the research. However, media sources have a different cut off point of 1 November 2014 to 31 August 2015 with no explanation as to why this should be different to other sources. Moreover 'some' research was done on 'selected topics' outside of the April to 9 October 2015 time-frame, although again it is not clear exactly which sources were consulted or on what topics. This makes it difficult for users to look for updates to the report when conducting their own case-specific research. It is suggested that in future EASO COI reports set clear time frames for both accessing the sources and the publication dates for all types of publications.

The EASO Somalia report does set a clear timeframe although it is considered that it should have been made clearer whether this is the time frame that the sources were actually published, not consulted:

> EASO Somalia report
> […] Introduction
> […] Methodology
> […] Collection information
> The report presents information collected between August 2014 and 31 December 2015. […]

Methodology- Use of sources

- Both reports interviewed a number of contact persons who were referred to as 'anonymous sources' due to security considerations. In fact, further descriptions of these sources are actually provided in the Bibliographies of each report, but only the EASO Somalia report methodology makes clear that this is the case. Neither report provides a hyperlink within the document to this section which it is considered would aid user-friendliness given the size of the reports.

- The EASO Somalia report also cites Fact-finding reports:

> EASO Somalia report
> […] Introduction
> […] Sources
> […] Fact-finding reports
> The report uses information on the security situation from recent fact-finding missions (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian) to Somalia. These missions have interviewed a variety of local interlocutors, organisations and experts working in or with Somalia who cannot always be mentioned by name. In order to be as transparent as possible on the sources, reference is made to the interlocutors interviewed by these missions as primary sources, rather than to the mission reports themselves. Where possible, the information from these sources has been corroborated with public sources. […]

It is considered that it would have been useful if the report had cited both the primary sources and the mission the interlocutor was consulted for. This would more clearly distinguish the source from those anonymous sources who were specifically consulted for the EASO Somalia report, which is important given the missions would presumably have had distinct terms of reference to the EASO Somalia report and the information would have been collected at different times.

As well as not being clear what information was collected on which missions, no information on the methodology employed during any of the information-gathering missions is provided. It is considered that it would have been relevant to have included details on: the number of interviewees; location of interviews; whether they were conducted in person or over the phone; the dates or date range of interviews; how the interlocutors were selected; how the mission in country was facilitated (i.e. whether there was state involvement, which may affect interlocutors' independence). It would have also been interesting to note: the phrasing of the questions posed to the interlocutors; whether all interlocutors were asked the same set of questions; how structured the interviews were; whether the interviews were recorded and whether their responses are presented verbatim in the EASO report, or are summaries.

- It is a welcome development to note that references of larger reports provide the page number of the information cited.

- It is also a welcome development that a UK Home Office Country Information and Guidance report is not cited in the EASO Afghanistan report as a source of COI, but rather its approach is noted (emphasis added):

> EASO Afghanistan report
> […] 2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan
> […] 2.1 Centre
> 2.1.1 Kabul city
> […] Description of the violence
> […] According to an **assessment of several sources** by the UK's Home Office the surge of terrorist attacks in Kabul in mid May 2015 alone led to at least 26 deaths and more than 80 injuries. (246) […]
>
> (246) United Kingdom: Home Office, Country Information and Guidance - Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation, 15 August 2015, p. 23

By contrast, it is disappointing the EASO Somalia report directly cites the policy guidance section of a UK Home Office Country Information and Guidance report without making it clear that it is not a source of COI:

> EASO Somalia report
> […] 1. General description of the security situation in Somalia
> […] 1.4. Impact on State, Law and Order
> […] 1.4.3. Detention and death penalty
> […] Detention conditions are generally considered to be very poor. In February 2015 the UK Home Office reported: 'Conditions in most prisons in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland, including those administered by Al-Shabaab, are harsh with reports of poor levels of sanitation, overcrowding and disease; inadequate medical facilities; extensive use of lengthy pre-trial detention and the use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment' (185). […]
>
> (185) UK Home Office, Country Information and Guidance - Somalia: Prison Conditions, February 2015.

Note our previously published COI Methodology comments on this point: 'COI is not policy/ policy is not COI'.[3]

- Whilst some information is presented in the EASO reports as direct quotes, the reports tend to heavily rely on summaries. It is considered better practice to directly cite source material where possible. Furthermore, as the reports often summarise several reports in one sentence, whilst it is appreciated that this makes it more user friendly and the report more succinct, it should be made clearer what information is EASO analysis, and what is a summary of COI. For example:

> EASO Somalia report
> […] 2. Security situation per region
> […] 2.7. Benadir-Mogadishu
> […] 2.7.2. Violence
> The security situation is more volatile in Mogadishu than in other cities. There are more frequent attacks which take place every week in larger or smaller size. In addition, the capital experiences more heavy and complex attacks than other areas. This concerns, for example, major suicide attacks but also car bombs and assassinations [410]. […]
>
> (410) Lifos (Migrationsverket), Säkerhetssituationen i södra och centrala Somalia, 29 April 2015, p. 16

It is unclear whether reference 410 above relates to the whole paragraph or just the last sentence. If it is the latter, then in the above excerpt no reference is provided for the first sentence, rendering it unclear whether this is a summary of COI or EASO analysis.

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[3] ARC and DCR, Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology, November 2012

<u>Navigation</u>
It is considered that it would have improved user-friendliness if the EASO Afghanistan report had hyperlinked the contents to the relevant section of the document as the EASO Somalia report did, especially given the size of the report (248 pages).

<u>Quality control</u>
We would welcome the opportunity if Consultative Forum members were invited to provide comments in advance of the reports' final publications:

> <u>EASO Afghanistan report</u>
> […] Introduction
> […] Methodology
> […] Quality control
> In order to ensure that the co-authors respected the EASO COI Report Methodology, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the Acknowledgements section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report. […]

Our recommendation on this as was submitted with regards to EASO's 2016 work plan[4] remains:

> <u>Further developing common COI</u>
> To this end, we continue to recommend that relevant UNHCR country analysts and more NGO COI researchers and other relevant members of civil society be invited to any future specialised EASO COI network meetings and workshops to contribute their expertise and experience and welcome that such invitations have been issued during 2014. We also continue to propose that production or updating of existing EASO COI products should be undertaken in consultation with civil society, especially regarding the Terms of Reference. We draw attention to ARC and DCR's joint *Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information report: South and Central Somalia Country overview, August 2014 (published in October 2014)* which sets out our main observations, concerns and recommendations based on an initial reading of the report. We understand that the comments were seen as useful and constructive and we would have welcomed the opportunity to provide these in advance of the report's final publication.
>
> With regards to quality control mechanisms we recommend that in addition to State COI Unit experts and UNHCR, NGO COI researchers, country experts, academics, and other relevant civil society organisations be invited to review existing and future COI products. In this regard, the structure, working methods and outputs of the UK-based Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) continues to be recommended for consultation. (Please also see our comments on the 2014 Work Programme referring to ECRE's strategy paper[5]).

We would gladly give our time to such a review committee.

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[4] ARC and the Dutch Council for Refugees responded to an EASO invitation for input into their work plan for 2016. This was not made public.
[5] ECRE, Enhancing Intra-EU Solidarity Tools to improve quality and fundamental rights protection in the Common European Asylum System, January 2013

EASO Afghanistan report: Observations, particularly on content of Chapter 2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan, 2.1 Centre, 2.1.1 Kabul city

It is considered that the EASO maps presenting security incidents by type by province are an extremely useful tool. We would recommend to also include maps and/or tables indicating which districts are under full or partial control of the Taliban or IS. This is particularly of relevance for assessing if an area qualifies for subsidiary protection according to UNHCR Guidelines.[6] The following sources are useful to consult on this issue (non-exhaustive):

- Google Map of Taliban Control
- Institute for the Study of War Maps, Afghanistan Partial Threat Assessments
- Long War Journal, Taliban pages
- New York Times Maps, The Taliban Threat in Afghanistan and the Taliban Presence in Afghanistan

1.3.1 Armed clashes and assaults

1.3.4 Targeted killings

As highlighted in our previous commentary on the January 2015 EASO Afghanistan report, some parts of the updated report continue to be quite limited and/or dense. This seems to be especially the case in '1.3.1 Armed clashes and assaults', which appear to be relatively short in comparison with other chapters. In sub-section '1.3.4 Targeted killings', the reader is forced to look into the referenced sources for more information on the profiles of persons targeted, despite this information being of great importance for assessing certain asylum claims:

> **1.3.4. Targeted killings**
> The UN recorded an 11.4 % increase in targeted killings during the summer of 2015, compared to the same period in 2014. Between 1 May and 31 July 2015, 291 assassinations and attempted assassinations were recorded. This is a tactic used by insurgents to create fear and intimidate. (130)
> UNAMA reported 659 civilian casualties from targeted killings in the first six months of 2015. This was a significant increase compared to the first half of 2014 (424 civilian casualties) and a continuation of the steadily increasing trend in previous years (89 in the first half of 2009; 204 in the first half of 2010; 227 in the first half of 2011; 344 in the first half of 2012; 446 in the first half of 2013). (131)
>
> (130) UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.
> (131) UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 53.

Whilst in chapter '2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan' the previous report included some sub-sections on 'Victims' which provided a better understanding of the extent and geographical regions in which particular profiles are targeted, this updated EASO Afghanistan report does not contain any such sub-sections. Instead the profiles of persons targeted is included in the sub-section 'Description of violence' under each provincial section. For an assessment of the possibility of internal relocation a user of the report would need to consult each region addressed in the report, which is not only time-consuming but also goes against the intended use of the report (emphasis added):

> **Structure and use of this report**
> This report provides information on elements and indicators that may help in assessing the need for protection. **It is not meant to be read as a whole**. In the first part a general description is given on the security situation in Afghanistan and regional differences are highlighted. These are then explained in greater

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[6] See UNHCR, Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 6 August 2013, *III. Eligibility for International Protection, C. Refugee Status under UNHCR's broader mandate criteria or regional instruments, or eligibility for complementary forms of protection, 3. Eligibility for Subsidiary Protection under the EU Qualification Directive, p. 79*

detail in the second part, holding a regional description of geographic subdivisions (Kabul city and 34 provinces). Both parts, the general and regional description, provide information from various sources on the relevant elements and indicators. Information on an indicator as such should never be taken as conclusive but as indicative for protection assessment and is to be read together with all other indicators and information on the region (or province, district). […]

1.4 State ability to secure law and order

Similar to our previous commentary, section '1.4 State ability to secure law and order' of the updated EASO Afghanistan report only includes rather limited COI:

1.4 State ability to secure law and order
According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Afghan authorities are, in general, unable to provide protection against violence, with the only possible exception being the city of Kabul, but only to some extent. (132) For 2014, the US Department of State (USDOS) reported widespread disregard for the Rule of Law and impunity for human rights abusers. Abuses by officials were not effectively prosecuted. Furthermore, Taliban and other armed actors continue to kill, abduct and injure civilians and security personnel. (133) The capturing by the Taliban of territory, including district centres and the provincial capital of Kunduz in September and early October 2015 (see section 1.3.1 on armed clashes and assaults), was perceived by analysts as significant evidence of the weakness of the Afghan government and the ANSF. (134) In mid-2015, UNAMA observed 'a consistent failure of the Afghan authorities to protect civilian communities from human rights abuses and harm perpetrated by pro-Government armed groups, and an absence of accountability for such actions'. (135)

1.4.1 Security Forces
USDOS reported for 2014 that the 'civilian authorities generally maintained control over the security forces, although there were instances in which security forces acted independently.' Extrajudicial killings, widespread violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and abuse of detainees and other human rights abuses by security forces were reported. Efforts have been made to train security forces. Nevertheless, ANSF personnel appeared to be largely unaware of their responsibilities and defendants' rights. (136)

The Afghanistan Analysts Network reported on the increasing challenges to the ANSF: (137)

> The 332,000-strong ANSF, however, often only seem to be able to react to the multi-pronged Taliban minioffensives when the latter have already captured a district centre, as in the cases of Musa Qala, Nawzad or Yamgan. Even with the 28,400 Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces and other official and unofficial auxiliary forces, the ANSF seem to be overstretched on the large and topographically difficult Afghan territory and, as a result, often outnumbered at specific flashpoints. The latest assessment by the US government's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) speaks of a generally, although slowly, decreasing capability of the ANSF compared to 2013, attributed to "the stresses imposed on ANDSF units at the beginning of the 2015 fighting season, in particular with command and control and the coordination of joint-force operations' and despite slightly declining attrition rates.

1.4.2 Justice
Seven authorities are involved in the criminal justice sector: the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, the Supreme Court, the MoI, the NDS, the MoD and the High Office of Oversight. (138) The formal court system, as established in the Constitution, consists of a Supreme Court, High Court of Appeal, Provincial Courts, lower Primary Courts and some specialised courts such as the Juvenile and Family Courts and Counter-Narcotics Courts. However, these courts are not operational in all provinces and all courts lack capacity. (139) The judiciary is relatively strong in the larger urban centres, where the government is in control, but very weak or non-existent in rural areas, where local elders and shuras (140) settle both criminal and civil cases. In some areas the Taliban has enforced a parallel judicial system based on strict interpretation of sharia. Both unofficial systems provide no guarantees for Rule of Law and basic rights of defence. Often, women are victims of these traditional judicial systems and harsh punishments are executed, such as mutilation. The Taliban increasingly targets official courts and kills judges, court officials and prosecutors. (141) USDOS reported for 2014 that 'the judiciary continued to be underfunded, understaffed, inadequately trained, ineffective, and subject to threats, bias, political influence, and pervasive corruption.' Impartiality of the judiciary is undermined by bribery and pressure from different parties. Courts use a mixture of law systems (codified; sharia; local custom) without uniformity and even in Supreme Court, judges appeared to have limited knowledge of civilian jurisprudence. (142) UNDP states: (143)

Afghanistan has witnessed over thirty years of conflict, which have severely constrained the justice system and the government's ability to serve its people. Legislation is often not compliant with international best practices, human rights conventions signed by Afghanistan, and even other national laws. The vast size and rural nature of the country's provinces as well as widespread poverty and low levels of education prevent people from accessing justice through State channels. Illiteracy compounds these issues, resulting in a lack of awareness among people about their rights. As a result, approximately 80% of disputes in the country are settled by traditional justice bodies, at times, in contradiction with human rights standards. Women are particularly limited in accessing fair and equitable justice through both formal and informal channels.

1.4.3 Detention

US Department of State reported 'harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions and abuse in official detention centers' and private prisons run by ANSF members used for torture of arrestees. Furthermore, inadequate food and water, and poor sanitation facilities were common. A lack of facilities with as a result overcrowding was a serious problem. However, according to USDOS: 'inmate deaths were infrequent and largely due to natural causes'. (144) Arbitrary arrest and detention were a widespread problem. Prosecutors and police reportedly 'detained individuals without charge for actions that were not crimes under the law' (moral crimes, breach of contract, family disputes).(145) UNAMA reported in February 2015 arbitrary arrests, practices of torture and 'a general spirit of impunity for human rights violations' within the NDS. (146)

(132) Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, p. 26.
(133) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 2.
(134) Reuters, Insight - Taliban audacity trumps Afghan forces' weak defences in Kunduz, 30 September 2015; Wall Street Journal (The), Afghan Forces Recapture Central Kunduz From Taliban, updated: 1 October 2015; Dam, Bette, 'Kunduz was always vulnerable', 8 October 2015; International NY Times, Taliban Fighters Capture Kunduz City as Afghan Forces Retreat, 28 September 2015; Al Jazeera, Taliban fighters raid Kunduz in Afghanistan, 28 september 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, The liberation of Kunduz showed military capability and moral magnitude of Mujahideen, 7 October 2015.
(135) UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 73.
(136) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 1-10; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, pp. 49-52; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 69-72.
(137) Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.
(138) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 8; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, p. 49-52.
(139) Tahmindjis, P., The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities, January 2014.
(140) A shura is a community council.
(141) Tahmindjis, P., The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities, January 2014; USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 13-18; RFE/RL, Militants Storm Afghan Court, Killing Prosecutors, Officials, 28 October 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, pp. 46-48; AI, Afghanistan: Abhorrent punishment of 100 lashes for 'adultery' must be investigated, 2 September 2015; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 54-55, 58-59, 94.
(142) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 13-18.
(143) UNDP, Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan (JHRA), n.d.; Guardian (The), First female nominee fails to win seat on Afghan supreme court, 8 July 2015.
(144) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 6-8.
(145) USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 12.
(146) UNAMA, Update on the Treatment of Conflict Related Detainees in Afghan Custody: Accountability and Implementation of Presidential Decree 129, February 2015, pp. 14-30.

It is assumed that the intention of the above sections is to address the state's ability to protect civilians against security incidents in the context of an internal armed conflict as well as the state's ability to provide effective protection to persons that are specifically targeted due to their individual profile.

However, it is considered that the COI above only addresses a limited number of the range of issues required to assess both the state's *ability* (which should include inter alia: capacity; resources and equipment; training; oversight and accountability; functioning of the judicial system; evidence of security forces themselves being directly targeted; impunity for human rights abuses committed by state actors including the scale and location of particular abuses; numbers of civilian casualties; whether particular profiles are more vulnerable etc.) *and willingness to protect* (which should include inter alia: insurgent

infiltration of the security forces; extortion and corruption e.g. evidence of bribes required to open cases, or police accepting bribes from perpetrators resulting them dropping cases, judicial corruption; denial of protection to particular groups e.g. women, ethnic minorities etc).

Moreover, the introductory paragraph of section 1.4 above reads more like a judicial assessment in relation to whether protection is available. Whilst the EASO report may accurately cite the Dutch Ministry of Affairs report, it is recommended that EASO COI reports should not include language that can be perceived as policy positions.[7] As mentioned above, should policy positions from member states and/or UNHCR be included in EASO COI products (e.g. UK Home Office Country Information and Guidance reports; UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines) then they should be clearly cited as such.

Once again, a section on detention conditions is included; its relevance is not made clear to the ability of the state to secure law and order.

1.5 Impact of the violence
1.5.2 Civilian population
It is again surprising to note that the updated EASO Afghanistan report section on '1.5. Impact of the violence > 1.5.2. Civilian population > Refugees, returnees and IDPs' has no information on the humanitarian conditions internally displaced persons (IDPs) face. Similarly, in the 'Displacement' subsections of the areas addressed in chapter '2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan', the COI focuses on whether the particular area generates or hosts IDPs and for some areas, the number of IDPs. Given the relevance of the humanitarian situation for returnees or for IDPs in assessing the reasonableness of relocation and eligibility for international protection for this profile of applicant, it is suggested that the report also address by region:

> Erosion of traditional support mechanisms
> Access to basic infrastructure and essential services for returnees and IDPs
> Livelihood opportunities
> Criminality rate
> Mental health treatment and psychological support.

2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan
- It is considered that the sub-sections 'General description of the city', 'Description of the violence', 'Displacement', and 'Actors of conflict' found under each provincial section should have been listed on the contents page, which would make it clearer for users to locate COI pertinent to a specific region.

- The following general observations, recommendations and comments are based on an initial reading of section '2.1.1. Kabul city'. The security situation in Kabul city was chosen for a snapshot review as it is often the city COI researchers need to focus their research on, given its designation as a location of return or proposed site of internal relocation.

2.1 Centre
2.1.1 Kabul city
General description of the city
Whilst it is acknowledged that this sub-section provides general background information about Kabul, it is still surprising that most COI included in this section is referenced from reports published between 2011 and 2014 – outside of the set reference period for this report.

Description of the violence

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[7] N.B. It is not the Dutch Ministry of Affairs that formulate policy positions but the Ministry of Justice.

- Information presented in this section is extremely dense and not very user-friendly. It is therefore recommended that for any update sub-headings be inserted, for example on the specific groups of persons being targeted, together with illustrative examples: Afghan military and intelligence personnel; Afghan police forces; Afghan government officials (incl. (female) MPs, Judges, Prosecutors); International officials (incl. embassy officials, foreign personnel, NATO and ISAF forces; Intl. NGO workers); and civilians (both as targets and as bystanders) [Note that COI has been included in this sub-section identifying these profiles as targeted persons. This list should not be seen as exhaustive].

- It is surprising that despite being cited elsewhere in the report, the UNAMA 'Midyear report 2015' does not feature in this particular subsection despite documenting numerous targeted attacks of groups of persons in Kabul.

- COI presented is not representative of that in the original source as it does not mention the "density of ministries, embassies and other foreign presence" (emphasis added):

  EASO Afghanistan report
  […] Other central districts – district 2, district 4 and district 10 – are also prone to insurgent attacks **because of the density of ministries, embassies and other foreign presence**. (242) […]

  (242) Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015

  Edinburgh International
  […] While the security services continue to improve and develop their capability to counter such tactics (a recent attack on a foreign guesthouse in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighbourhood was put down without military or civilian casualties by the country's Quick Reaction Force on 26 May 2015), **the sheer scale and ingenuity of militant aggression within Kabul's central districts** has meant that an underlying threat is unlikely to be entirely removed at any point in the near future. It is within this context that any security forecast for Kabul should be made. […]

- A viewpoint included in this report about civilian casualties is dated January 2013 – clearly outside of the agreed reference period for this report:

  […] Although many insurgent attacks happen without consideration for collateral damage to civilians, according to analyst Fabrizio Foschini the choice of these targets appears to indicate that AGEs are somehow looking for legitimacy for their actions. (244)

  (244) Foschini, F., Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ, 21 January 2013.

  Should it be deemed necessary to include historical information, then this approach should be set out in the Methodology of the report and the reporting period of the publication clearly cited in the body text of the report.

- The following information included in the report could not be located in the original source:

  EASO Afghanistan report
  […] Additionally, highprofile locations were targeted with suicide bombs and IEDs. (228) […]

  (228) UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

- Some contextual information from the following source has not been included. Whilst the excerpt included in the EASO Afghanistan report references a statement made by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) in its March 2015 publication, the original source refers to events that occurred between July 2014 up to March 2015 (emphasis added):

  EASO Afghanistan report

In March 2015 ISW stated: 'In these attacks, militants focused on targeting Afghan government and Western interests, including foreign military and diplomatic personnel, Afghan security forces, and western NGOs'. (243)

(243) ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015, pp. 17-18

Institute for the Study of War
Insurgent violence in Kabul increased in July 2014 and maintained a consistent level of intensity through March 2015. In these attacks, militants focused on targeting Afghan government and Western interests, including foreign military and diplomatic personnel, Afghan security forces, and western NGOs.

Additional information found in this source would have been useful to include as background information on tactics used and capability of insurgent attacks as set out in the ToR in Annex 2:

Institute for the Study of War
As the timeline below indicates, the pattern of violence in Kabul occurred in bursts, indicating reset periods for planning and coordinating attacks. This indicates design behind the campaign of attacks. The bombing campaign during the latter half of 2014 occurred at a much higher frequency than previous time frames. This indicates increased capability [...]
It would be incorrect to dismiss the escalation in violence as an act of "desperation" or a marker of Taliban weakness. Instead, the uptick in violence in the capital is indicative of the insurgency's strength in outlying areas and potentially a shift in their overall campaign. [...]
The higher frequency and intensity of this violence suggests that the insurgency has established a more sophisticated support network for planning, resourcing, coordinating and executing attacks, though the Taliban is likely not the only group participating in attacks in the capital region. National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief Rahmatullah Nabil told lawmakers in December 2013 that over 107 terrorist cells were operating in and around Kabul. This network likely remains active today. [...]
The Taliban have also ramped up IED attacks in the capital, the vast majority of which have targeted military and government convoys. In particular, the insurgency has increased its use of "sticky bombs" or Adhesive Explosive Devices (AEDs) in targeting military vehicles. Most of the successful IED and AED attacks have targeted ANSF vehicles, particularly ANA buses, rather than ISAF or RSM units. This is probably due to the ANSF's lower operational security. [...]
Several high-profile attacks have already occurred against foreign targets in 2015. On January 29, 2015, three U.S. contractors were killed in a "green on blue" attack in the Kabul International Airport. Insurgents also carried out at least two major SVBIED attacks, the first on January 5, 2015 against a European Union convoy on the eastern outskirts of the capital and the second on February 26, 2015 against a Turkish diplomatic convoy in the heart of Kabul city. These incidents demonstrate that the Taliban maintains the capability to launch highly destructive attacks in the capital targeting foreign interests. [...]

- As in our previous commentary, it is surprising that the timing of the updated EASO Afghanistan report was not co-ordinated with the publication of the annual report from UNAMA, given the relevance of the COI included in this report and that the publication date is known to be in February of each year. At the least it is suggested that the EASO make reference to the expected date and URL of the 2015 UNAMA report[8] becoming available, to enable users to more readily access more up to date COI.

Displacement
- Information included in this section is misleading. The summarised text states that Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan, many of whom arrive in Kabul, "try to survive doing daily labour". However, the original source documents instead the high level of under- and unemployment, as well as the lack of work and government support (emphasis added).

EASO Afghanistan report
Apart from internal displacement due to the conflict in Afghanistan, Kabul city saw large flows of Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan after fleeing Pakistani military operations in FATA, and unregistered Afghans being expelled by Pakistan since December 2014, when a military school in Peshawar was attacked

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[8] See UNAMA, 2015 Annual Report, February 2016

by the Taliban. The Washington Post reported in August 2015 that more than 82,000 unregistered Afghans had been 'pushed out' of Pakistan since January 2015, along with about 150,000 Afghans deported from Iran over the same period. Many of them arrive in Kabul and try to survive doing daily labour. (252)

(252) Washington Post, As the US pulls back, more Afghans descend into joblessness, 17 August 2015; RFE/RL, Afghan Refugees Again on the Run – This Time From Pakistan, 30 August 2015.

The Washington Post
[…] They are among 82,000 unregistered Afghan refugees who have been pushed out of neighboring Pakistan since January — along with about 150,000 workers deported from Iran over the same period — and many **have come home to nothing**.
"Life was hard in Pakistan, but it was a life. **Here we don't know anyone, and there is no work**," said Shomaila Malik, 45, who arrived in March. Her husband, a laborer, is disabled by kidney disease, and their two young sons scavenge all day for scrap metal to buy food. "**They should be in school, but we must depend on them finding Pepsi cans**," Malik said. […]
Both sides of this human tide — **the influx of needy returnees with nowhere to turn** and the surge of passport applicants hoping for a way out — **are symptoms of Afghanistan's economic stagnation and overwhelmed government, which have left millions of people to fend for themselves at a time of deepening uncertainty**. […]
The official unemployment rate is about 35 percent — four times as high as it was in 2013 — and economists here say it is closer to 50 percent when the large numbers of underemployed are added.
The phenomenon is visible across the capital, where tens of thousands of men gather each morning at intersections, bus stops and bridges, hoping for a day's work. As the formal economy shrinks, men who had steady sales or office jobs have been reduced to waiting on the corners with bundles of tools, competing with the chronically unemployed for a stint building walls or digging ditches. […]
Even for families who have made only a 100-mile journey from Pakistan, readjustment can be a shock. Many longtime refugees raised their families there, found steady employment and had no plans to come home to a country still ravaged by poverty and war. **Now, with Pakistani authorities pushing them out and no official Afghan programs to resettle them, life has become a daily struggle in an alien land. […]**

In addition, the second source referenced in footnote 252, the August 2015 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) article, also reports about the lack of resources and employment options (emphasis added):

RFE/RL
Only a month ago, Naimatullah was running a school for Afghan migrants in the Pakistani town of Sialkot -- a place he had called home for over two decades. […]
Now, Naimatullah finds himself living in squalor in a makeshift refugee camp on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, Kabul. **He has no job and lives off the meager handouts he receives from the government and foreign aid groups**. […]
The UNHCR and the Afghan government have pleaded with Islamabad to extend the year-end deadline it set for the return of all Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan. **Kabul says its resources are overstretched and that it cannot accommodate such a large number of returnees so quickly.** While politicians in Afghanistan and Pakistan haggle over the issue, the Afghan returnees find themselves as refugees once again -- this time in their own country. […]

- Additional information on the socio-economic situation of returnees and those IDPs living in Kabul city would have been useful. Despite this report focusing mainly on the security situation in Afghanistan's provinces, a section on the living conditions and situation of returnees and IDPs living in these provinces are also important indicators of the humanitarian situation on return or the reasonableness of relocation, which is necessary for decision-makers to assess eligibility for international protection for this profile of applicant. Apart from UNHCR's[9] and OCHA's[10] respective monthly displacement and humanitarian reports, the following are illustrative examples of additional useful sources on these issues:

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[9] See here for a list of UNHCR's 'Conflict-induced internal displacement' monthly updates
[10] See here for a list of OCHA's 'Afghanistan Humanitarian Bulletin'

- o Norwegian Refugee Council, *Listening to Women and Girls displaced to urban Afghanistan*, 23 March 2015
- o US Agency for International Development, Afghanistan - Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet; published regularly here
- o ReliefWeb – Afghanistan country page

<u>Actors in the conflict</u>

- In footnote 254, the reference to the source 'CMFC, The Kabul Attack Network, July 2011' should be removed as it is outside the reference period for this report and the source is not listed in 'Annex 1: Bibliography'.

- No information has been included on criminality being a source of insecurity in Kabul. A brief search on this issue revealed the following illustrative and non-exhaustive types of publications of interest for the indicated reference period:
  - o Foschini, Fabrizio; Esar, Naheed, *The Killing of Farkhunda (1): The physical environment and the social types party to her murder*, 29 April 2015
  - o IRIN, *Aid at risk as Afghanistan's war splinters*, 19 January 2015

EASO Somalia report: Observations, particularly on content of Chapter 2. Security situation per region, 2.7. Benadir-Mogadishu

1.2. Actors in the conflict
1.2.1. State's armed forces
Whilst recognising that the stated aim of the EASO Somalia report was to provide an update particularly in relation to the security situation, it is considered that the above section should have addressed human rights abuses committed in the context of security operations by each actor involved in the conflict. No mention is explicitly made of this topic in the Terms of Reference. It is considered that such COI is required to assess the security situation in a given location as well as the ability of security forces to provide effective protection. Only limited information is included on abuses perpetrated by the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA); it is not clear if this information was sought on the other state forces, or was not available.

Whilst some information on this issue is provided elsewhere in the report at '1.4.2. Security forces and State protection', no reference to this section is provided in section 1.2, and as detailed below, it is considered that section 1.4.2 only addresses a limited number of the of issues required to assess both the state's *ability* and *willingness* to protect.

1.2.2. International forces
Again, this section inconsistently reports on abuses committed by these actors during security operations; some information is included on the random killings of civilians and the sexual exploitation of women by ANISOM. No such information is included on the UN Guard Unit or Ethiopian National Defence Forces but again it is not clear if this information was not available, or not researched.

1.3. Armed confrontations
1.3.4. Impact on the population
This section only provides limited COI:

> EASO Somalia report
> [...] 1. General description of the security situation in Somalia
> [...] 1.3. Armed confrontations
> [...] 1.3.4. Impact on the population
> Several sources interviewed by DIS in May 2015 stated that AlShabaab performed violent attacks in towns it does not control, mainly on persons or institutions representing the international community including AMISOM and the UN, the Somalia Federal Government (SFG) and those supporting, or perceived to be supporting, them (157).
> UNHCR Somalia and a humanitarian international NGO, interviewed by DIS in May 2015, stated that there was a lack of reports from areas under Al‑Shabaab's control due to limited access. As such, it should be noted that the information from these areas is to some extent uncertain. There are reports of infighting, arbitrary arrests, abductions, forced recruitment, forced marriages to Al‑Shabaab and accusations of espionage leading to severe punishment (158).
> The COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency, Lifos, reported in April 2015 that in the areas controlled by Al‑Shabaab there were generally fewer armed clashes but that 'conflict in these areas primarily evinces human rights violations, like forced recruitments, forced marriages to Al‑Shabaab members and the risk of being accused of espionage' (159).
> The UN Security Council reported that the security situation remained extremely volatile, particularly in South and Central Somalia (160). In October 2015 the UN Monitoring Group reported that the conflict with Al‑Shabaab showed an increase of violations against civilians and a large number of civilian and military casualties (161). Also the conflict between Puntland and Somaliland over the disputed regions in Sool and Sanaag resulted in civilian casualties (162). According to UNHCR, in November 2015 the number of IDPs in Somalia was estimated at 1,100,000, including an estimated 369,000 in Mogadishu (163). [...]

(157) DIS, South Central Somalia – Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process [sources: International organisation working in S/C Somalia (A), International organisation working in S/C Somalia (B), International organisation working in S/C Somalia (C), Humanitarian international NGO working in S/C Somalia], September 2015, p. 11.

(158) DIS, South Central Somalia: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process [sources: UNHCR Somalia, Humanitarian international NGO working in S/C Somalia], September 2015, pp. 16-19.

(159) Lifos (Migrationsverket), Säkerhetssituationen i södra och centrala Somalia, 29 April 2015, p. 6.

(160) UN Security Council, Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary‑General (A/69/926–S/2015/409), 5 June 2015, p. 25.

(161) UN Security Council, Letter dated 9 October 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009)
concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 19 October 2015, p. 37.

(162) UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, 28 October 2015, p. 4.

(163) UNHCR, Somalia: Total IDPs by Region - November 2015, 7 December 2015.

Given the section headings of the report, it would imply that the above subsection on 'Impact of the population' should relate specifically to the two major military operations against Al‑Shabaab addressed in section 1.3. However, the content of this section appears to relate more generally to the impact on the population of the security situation during the reporting period of the report; August 2014 to December 2015. It is considered that the placing of this more general information in section 1.3 means it is likely to be overlooked. Moreover, if this is to be a general overview of the impact of the security situation then it is considered that it should have provided greater detail, in particular a gendered assessment of the violence and additional information on the particular profiles targeted for attack.

1.4.2. Security forces and State protection

Given the relevance of this section to claims for asylum, it is considered that more detailed COI should have been provided. For example, it would have been useful to know if information on the profiles of persons targeted for arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces was available (emphasis added):

> EASO Somalia report
> [...] 1. General description of the security situation in Somalia
> [...] 1.4. Impact on State, Law and Order
> [...] 1.4.2. Security forces and State protection
> The US Department of State reported in its Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2014 on Somalia: 'Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control over the security forces' (180). Furthermore, several sources reported that Somali government security forces were responsible for indiscriminate attacks, sexual violence and **arbitrary arrests and detention** (181).
> The US Department of State also mentioned in its report that SFG largely failed to provide security and protect rights in areas under its control: 'Civilians continue to suffer from conflicted‑related abuses, including killings, displacement, and the diversion of confiscation of humanitarian assistance by armed groups, principally al‑Shabaab' (182). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported on the events of 2014 that SFG 'largely failed to provide security and protect rights in areas under its control' (183).
> The Independent Expert to the UN Human Rights Council concluded in his October 2015 report:
>> 'Overall, the situation of human rights in Somalia remains dire. Violations of freedom of expression, widespread reports of sexual violence and the continued use of the death penalty remain major concerns. Activities of the militant group Al‑Shabaab disproportionally affect the civilian population and pose a threat to sustainable peace in Somalia. Reports of civilian casualties and displacements in the context of military operations conducted against Al‑Shabaab persist. Similarly, the humanitarian situation is alarming and yet funding to meet humanitarian needs in Somalia appears to be declining' (184).

The COI above only addresses a limited number of the range of issues required to assess both the state's *ability* (which should include inter alia: capacity; resources and equipment; training; oversight and

accountability; functioning of the judicial system; evidence of security forces themselves being directly targeted; impunity for human rights abuses committed by state actors) *and willingness to protect* (which should include inter alia: insurgent infiltration of the security forces; extortion and corruption e.g. evidence of bribes required to open cases, or police accepting bribes from perpetrators resulting them dropping cases, judicial corruption; denial of protection to particular groups e.g. women, ethnic minorities etc).

Moreover, no information is provided to indicate that the authorities may be less able or willing to protect in some regions than others or provide protection to one group over another. For example, the Danish Immigration Service notes with regards to the situation in Mogadishu as is reported in section 2.7.5 of the EASO Somalia report:

> EASO Somalia report
> 2. Security situation per region
> [...] 2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu
> [...] 2.7.5. Impact of the violence
> UNHCR in Somalia, interviewed by DIS in May 2015, noted on the impact of the violence on the population:
>> 'In Mogadishu the SFG continues to face significant challenges in providing basic security to its populations. Thus the reality on the ground, as reported by observers, remains that civilians are injured and killed every week in targeted attacks by gunmen, or attacks involving IEDs and grenades. The continued high number of security incidents, including targeted killings of journalists, judiciary, government officials and others, and fighting between government forces and affiliated militias still dominant in parts of the city illustrate these challenges. For Somalis in Mogadishu, it is very difficult to survive without a support network, and newcomers to the city, particularly when they do not belong to the clans or nuclear families established in the district in question, or when they originate from an area formerly or presently controlled by an insurgent group, face a precarious existence in the capital. Often, they are forced to settle in IDP settlements where living conditions are deplorable and human rights violations commonly reported – with no durable solutions in sight' (443).

2. Security situation per region
2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu

- The report addresses the same five issues per region:

  - Short description of the region
  - Violence
  - Actors in the conflict
  - Areas of control/influence
  - Impact of the violence

Reading sections '2.7.2. Violence' against '2.7.5 Impact of the violence' it is considered that the intended distinction between these sections is not obvious. As detailed in the Terms of Reference of the EASO Somalia report, these two subsections should address:

> Violence
>> Number/kind of incidents
>> Number of victims (death and injured) Civilians/Military staff/fighters
>> Population displacements
>
> Impact of the violence (residential areas, security of transport system, food security)

- In section 2.7 on Benadir-Mogadishu, it is disappointing to note that no information on population displacement as a result of the security situation is provided in section '2.7.2 Violence'. However, a subsection on IDPs is provided in the Mogadishu '2.7.5 Impact of the violence' although such a subsection is not provided for any of the other regions addressed in the report. It is not clear whether information was sought on IDPs for other regions. However, in the subsections 'Impact of the violence'

for three other regions of Somalia; 2.13 Sanaag, 2.14 Sool and 2.15 Somaliland, with regards to 'Transport and food security' the EASO Somalia report states that "There are no specific reports regarding security for travelling on roads". It is considered that this approach of clearly indicating when information was sought but not found should have been taken when addressing all issues listed in the terms of reference.

2.7.2. Violence

- This section provides two pages of dense text. It is considered that the user-friendliness of this section could have been improved by presenting the COI under the subheadings addressed in the terms of reference as listed above.

- As highlighted in our previous commentary on the October 2014 EASO Somalai report, the EASO Somalia report tends to summarise the COI rather than present it as direct quotes. This means that it is not clear in the following paragraph whether reference [410] relates to the whole paragraph, or just the last sentence. This is particularly important in the following paragraph in which the first sentence appears to provide an assessment of the source material, rather than an original source of COI, but it is not clear if it is Lifos' or EASO's position (emphasis added):

> EASO Somalia report
> 2. Security situation per region
> [...] 2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu
> [...] 2.7.2. Violence
> **The security situation is more volatile in Mogadishu than in other cities**. There are more frequent attacks which take place every week in larger or smaller size. In addition, the capital experiences more heavy and complex attacks than other areas. This concerns, for example, major suicide attacks but also car bombs and assassinations 410. [...]
>
> (410) Lifos (Migrationsverket), Säkerhetssituationen i södra och centrala Somalia, 29 April 2015, p. 16

This is similarly the case in the following paragraph of this section (emphasis added):

> EASO Somalia report
> 2. Security situation per region
> [...] 2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu
> [...] 2.7.2. Violence
> [...] **Overall, the number of incidents in Mogadishu – especially bomb attacks – is decreasing, but is still high.** According to a security analysis expert, interviewed by BFA Staatendokumentation (November 2015), Al‑Shabaab seems to avoid collateral damage in order to improve its own reputation (413). UNHCR in Somalia, interviewed by DIS (May 2015), explained that 'AlShabaab wants headlines and therefore carries out spectacular attacks against high profile targets' (414). Al‑Shabaab frequently targets hotels as prominent places where officials meet, e.g. a suicide attack outside the SYL Hotel in Mogadishu, hosting a meeting of Turkish officials on 22 January 2015 just before the visit of the Turkish President (415). A double attack on 22 February 2015 hit the Central Hotel in Mogadishu and the hotel mosque, killing 20 people including senior officials, an MP and Mogadishu's deputy mayor (416).
>
> (413) Security analysis expert, Austria, Interview, BFA Staatendokumentation, 12 November 2015.
> (414) DIS, South Central Somalia: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process [source: International organization working in S/C Somalia (A)], September 2015, p. 42.
> (415) BBC, Somali car bomb explodes outside Mogadishu hotel, 22 January 2015.
> (416) BBC, Somali capital Mogadishu hit by double explosions at hotel, 20 February 2015

It is quite difficult to get a sense from the text presented in this section that the incidents in Mogadishu are indeed 'decreasing' but 'still high'. The COI on violent incidents is presented in dense paragraphs of text and are not listed in chronological order. It is considered that presenting a list of key incidents in chronological order along with the resulting number of deaths and injuries would have assisted readers'

ability to better assess the security situation. Furthermore, several incidents are reported without listing the number of injured, for example:

EASO Somalia report
[...] 2. Security situation per region
[...] 2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu
[...] 2.7.2. Violence
[...] Al‑Shabaab frequently targets hotels as prominent places where officials meet, e.g. a suicide attack outside the SYL Hotel in Mogadishu, hosting a meeting of Turkish officials on 22 January 2015 just before the visit of the Turkish President (415). A double attack on 22 February 2015 hit the Central Hotel in Mogadishu and the hotel mosque, killing 20 people including senior officials, an MP and Mogadishu's deputy mayor (416).

(415) BBC, Somali car bomb explodes outside Mogadishu hotel, 22 January 2015.
(416) BBC, Somali capital Mogadishu hit by double explosions at hotel, 20 February 2015.

However, as noted by Al Jazeera reporting on the same incident (emphasis added):

Al Jazeera, Al-Shabab stages deadly attack on Somalia luxury hotel, 21 February 2015
[...] At least 25 people were killed, including two members of parliament, and **40 injured** in an attack by al-Shabab fighters on a luxury hotel in the Somali capital Mogadishu, police sources say. [...]

- It is considered that the EASO Somalia report should have included the descriptions of the interlocutors of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) fact finding mission as provided for in its report. In the following paragraph they are referred to simply as 'sources':

EASO Somalia report
[...] 2. Security situation per region
[...] 2.7 Benadir-Mogadishu
[...] 2.7.2. Violence
[...] According to UNHCR in Somalia, interviewed by DIS in May 2015, 'a high number of security incidents continue to take place in Mogadishu, including targeted killings of journalists, judiciary, government officials and others. (…) civilians are injured and killed every week in targeted attacks by gunmen, or attacks involving IEDs and grenades' (411). **Some other sources interviewed** by DIS in May 2015 stated that 'Al Shabaab currently seems to aim for spectacular attacks against high value targets, such as AMISOM, the government and the UN' (412). [...]

(411) DIS, South Central Somalia: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process [source: UNHCR Somalia] September 2015, pp. 11-12.
(412) DIS, South Central Somalia: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process [sources: International organisation working in S/C Somalia (A), International organisation working in S/C Somalia (B), International organisation working in S/C Somalia (C)], September 2015, p. 11.

Having consulted the relevant section of the DIS report the 'sources' referred to are given further descriptions as set out in reference [34] of that report (emphasis added):

EASO Somalia report
[...] 2. Al-Shabaab activities in cities with AMISOM/SNAF presence
2.1 Targets of Al-shabaab
[...] Some sources stated that Al-Shabaab currently seems to aim for spectacular attacks against high value targets, such as AMISOM, the government and the UN. Reference was made to recent attacks in 2014 and 2015 on Villa Somalia, hotels in Mogadishu where high ranking politicians and government officials congregate, on the UN in Garowe in April 2015, as well as the attack on the UN and AMISOM areas of Mogadishu International airport in December 2014.[34]
34 **International organization working in S/C Somalia (A), International organization working in S/C Somalia (B),), International organization working in S/C Somalia (C)**

By providing these descriptions the EASO Somalia report would have enabled users to more readily undertake source assessments.