Please cite as: EUAA, '1.4.3. Minority clans ' in *COI Report - Somalia: Country Focus*, May 2025.

1.4.3. Minority clans

☐ (a) Benadiri/group in the local context

The term Benadiri derives from the Persian word for ‘port, harbour’ (bandar). In the Somali setting it refers to a conglomerate of different groups that usually reside along the so called Benadir-coast between Mogadishu, Merka, Barawa, and up to Kismayo.[461] According to MEDA’s 2025 report, groups belonging to the Benadiri spectrum are Gameedle, Shanshi, Moorshe, and Bravanese.[462] This, however, seems to be a rather limited description. According to Anita Adam, who has conducted the so far most comprehensive research on Benadiri (in Mogadishu), the following groups belong to this conglomerate: Bandhawow aka Bandhabow (consisting of various sub-lineages including Amin Khalfo, Bahar Sufi, Quruwaay, Oontiro, Sheebo, Ahmed Nuur, Gudmane and Ali Mohamed), Morshe (with the various sub-lineages including Reer Waamiin and Shukuureer), Iskashato (including the sub-lineages of Reer Sheikh Muumin, Indhaweyne. Askare, Shamsidiin, Aydaruusi, and Reer Manyo), Dhabarweyne (including the sub-lineages Abdi Yusuf, Oor Male, Habr Cayne, Qalin Shube, Shanshiye), Yakuub (with the sub-lineages Reer Ali Imaan, Faqi Ali, Abakarow, and Baa Fadal), Asharaf (with the lineages Hassan and Hussein each divided into various sub-lineages), Amudi (with the sub-lineages Omer Ma’alin Amuudi, Ahmed Amudi and others), Saddeh Geedi (with the sub-lineages Adan Dhere, Awareera, Reer Abdulle, Reer Sheek Salah, Indhaweyne, Reer Shiikh) and Reer Maanyo (comprising the sub-lineages Reer Ma’ow, Reer Shawish, Reer Umar, and Reer Aafi).[463]

The origin of many Benadiri groups goes back to travellers and traders who have come from the Arab Peninsula and Persia and have mixed with local Somalis.[464] Many (but not all) Benadiri are considered ‘light-skinned’ (Somali: gibil cad) and are, indeed, often visibly so, looking sometimes like people from Yemen or Iraq.[465] Some Benadiri, such as Asharaf/Hassan/Sarmaan, Bandhabow or Dhabarweyne are considered dark-skinned (gibil madow). Some, such as Asharaf/Hassan/Sarman, do not reside along the coast but mainly in the hinterland of southern Somalia, up to the Bakool region.[466]

Many members of Benadiri groups speak their own dialect of Af-Mahaa - considered as the standard Somali - called Af-Reer-Hamar or Af-Hamari (Xamaari).[467] It is perceived

to sound ‘softer’ than the Somali spoken in central and northern Somalia.468 Notably, Arabic, as second language, seems to be wider spread among Benaadiri-speakers than among other Af-Maha speakers. For many Benadiri, Arabic carries ‘not only the weight of religious authority, but also implications of education, sophistication, and urbanity.’ 469 Due to geographical proximity, Benadiri residing in Merka and surroundings, which is close to the Af-Maay dialect region, would often also speak Af-Maay.470

According to the Minority Empowerment and Development Agency (MEDA) Report 2025, Benadiri number approximately 500 000.471 The Benadiri people are typically either urbanites or farmers (e.g., around Afgoye in Lower Shabelle region, some 30 kilometres west of Mogadishu).472 Along the coast they are known for their trade and commerce.473 During the civil war they suffered exploitation at the hands of clan militias.474 Their situation has improved in recent years. In urban settings, especially in Mogadishu, Benadiri people can get access to education.475 They also have gained some access to government institutions. For instance, Dr. Maryam Qaasim, a Benadiri woman born in Barawa, served in senior positions (including as minister, yet for a subordinate portfolio) in the Somali government (2012-2017).476 There are other Benadiri in government today. Intermarriage between Benadiri and other Somali clans is not restricted.477 Still, in everyday life, members of the Benadiri groups are considerably less powerful than members of dominant clans and face socio-political exclusion.478 For more details, see section 4.2. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles, published in September 2021.

☐ (b) Tunni, Eyle, Geledi and Begedi

Tunni, Eyle, Begedi, and Geledi are part of the Rahanweyn clan-family. Rahanweyn is divided into the clans Merifle and Digil, each being divided into various sub-clans and lineages. Rahanweyn have been marginalised until the early 1990s. From the mid-1990s onward, they gained power in south-western Somalia and today (early 2025) are not considered a minority group anymore.479 Still, some particular groups within Rahanweyn have a position akin to minority groups in some regards.480 Tunni are part of Rahanweyn/Digil. Some Tunni live as agriculturalists and pastoralists in the hinterland of the southern Benadir coast. Others are city dwellers and live in Barawa. They are traders and/or fishermen. A third group called Tunni Torre is composed of people of Bantu origin, possibly ex-slaves and/or former clients of other Tunni groups. 481 Those Tunni residing along the coast have cultural and linguistic ties to the Benadiri. Some Tunni would also speak Af-Maay. They face discrimination based on clan politics.482

The Eyle are part of Rahanweyn/Merifle. They are a small group of between 50 000 to 100 000 people who live primarily in the coastal areas of southern Somalia. They engage in fishing and animal husbandry.483 Eyle are known for their distinct language. They are generally considered to be part of the broader Benadiri group. They face socio-political marginalisation.484

Begedi and Geledi are part of Rahanweyn/Digil. Still, they are often considered to be part of the Benadiri minority groups. Historically, particularly the Geledi were once powerful and had their own sultanate (until the mid-19th century). But during the civil war Geledi and Begedi were overrun and exploited especially by Hawiye clan militias who took control of their homeland.485 Geledi and Begedi typically reside in Lower Shabelle region, especially in and around Afgoye. They are usually farmers and/or traders.486 For more details, see section 4.2. of the EUAA COI report Somalia: Targeted Profiles, published in September 2021.487

☐ (c) Shiidle

The Shiidle people are a small group in South Central Somalia. They are considered to be part of the broader Benadiri group. They have face social exclusion and discrimination within Somali society.488

- 461

  Interview with Markus Hoehne, Somalia researcher, 9 March 2025

- 462

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 8

- 463

  Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, pp. 132-134.

- 464

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, pp. 8 and 14

- 465

Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, pp. 51 and 116-123; Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

- 466

Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, pp. 154-157; Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

- 467

Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 111; Lamberti, M., Die Somali-Dialekte, 1986, p. 61-66

- 468

Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

- 469

Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 110

- 470

Hassan Deqa, Somali Dialects in the United States: How Intelligible is Af-Maay to Speakers of Af-Maxaa? 2011, url, p. 5

- 471

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 13

- 472

Sheekhnor Kaassim, Telephone interview, 2 April 2025. Sheekhnor Kaassim is a Benadiri elder based in the USA.

- 473

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, pp. 8, 12 and 15

- 474

Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 248

- 475

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 19

- 476

Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

- 477

  Shamso Sheegow, Telephone interview, 1 April 2025. Shamso Sheegow is a Somali writer based in Sweden with extended contacts in Barawa. She runs an NGO supporting environmental projects in and around Barawa.

- 478

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 8

- 479

  Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025

- 480

  Shamso Sheegow, Telephone interview, 1 April 2025

- 481

  Adam, A., Benadiri People of Somalia with Particular Reference to the Reer Hamar of Mogadishu, 2011, url, p. 243; Shamso Sheegow, Telephone interview, 1 April 2025

- 482

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 8; Shamso Sheegow, Telephone interview, 1 April 2025

- 483

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 13

- 484

  MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 8

- 485

  Luling, V., Farmers from Arabia: The role of gibil cad groups in the interior of Southern Somalia, 2010, p. 314.

- 486

  Sheekhnor Kaassim, Telephone interview, 2 April 2025

- 487

  EUAA COI report Somalia: Targeted Profiles, September 2021, url

- 488

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, url, p. 8

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu