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2.1.2. Mobility and accessibility

(a) Mogadishu airport and flight connections

Mogadishu International Airport/Aden Adde International Airport serves as the primary entry point to Somalia.911 Airlines flying to Mogadishu include Daallo Airlines, Fly Dubai, Egypt Air, Qatar Airways, Uganda Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and Turkish Airlines.912 A recent source (March 2025) mentioned that Fly Dubai and Kenyan Airways have been suspended (for the time being) in June 2024.913 Inside Somalia, some smaller companies operate such as Jubba Airways, Freedom Airline Express, African Express, Daallo Airlines, Salaam Air Express, and Halla Airlines. Daallo Airlines is the oldest airline; it was established in 1991 already.914 The Aden Adde International Airport of Mogadishu (MGQ) is located some 5 km from the city centre. It offers direct or transit flights to various airports in the region including Ambouli Airport (JIB) in Djibouti, Berbera Airport (BBO), Bosasso Airport (BSA), Dubai (DXB), Entebbe (EBB), Galkacyo Airport (GLK), Hargeisa Airport (HGA), Istanbul (IST), Jeddah (JED), Nairobi (NBO), RiyanMukalli Airport (RIY), Sharjah (SHJ), and Wajir Airport (WJR).915 For more details see EUAA COI Report: Somalia - Key Socio-Economic Indicators, 2021, chapter 1.2.1. According to the Finnish Immigration Service, for most ordinary Somalis air travel is prohibitively expensive.916

In February 2023, the IATA Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) was relaunched in Mogadishu, after a 33-year hiatus. IATA-accredited passenger sales agents use the BSP to facilitate selling, reporting, and remitting transactions.917 Also in 2023, the safety and operational efficiency of the Somali airspace was enhanced. Modern radio navigation and other technological infrastructure were deployed, enhancing 'situational awareness along busy air corridors, especially at intersections with routes that connect diverse global regions. The region's airspace now adheres to Class A regulations.'918 This resulted in an increase in the number of international airlines using Somalia's airspace. Before these upgrades, there were approximately 220 daily flights through the country's airspace; this number has, as of June 2024, increased to 500.919 In 2024, the National Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2023 the number of arrivals was 253 008 and the number of departures was 233 808 at Mogadishu International Airport.920

○ (b) Internal mobility, including checkpoints

Challenges to mobility in Mogadishu include insecurity (caused by Al-Shabaab bombings), poor transportation infrastructure, lack of traffic regulation and a massive increase of traffic including old vehicles and drivers without license.921 On most roads, there are no traffic signs, no traffic lights and no traffic police.922 Some roads are damaged by decades of fighting. Others have more recently been rehabilitated by local communities and business people. The Turkish government also constructed some 23 kilometres of smooth tarmac roads in Mogadishu.923 Moreover, some of the newly built and/or rehabilitated roads have been partially closed or are restricted due to security concerns.924 This again hinders public transportation and produces traffic jams.925 As of March 2025, floods have again damaged or destroyed some roads.926

Schouten (2023) identified 22 checkpoints in the Benadir region, which encompasses the capital Mogadishu.927 Those checkpoints in the city are major targets for Al-Shabaab attacks.928 Former Deputy Police Commissioner General Zakia Hussen, who recently left the active police service, explained that there are 54 junctions with checkpoints in the Somali capital. At each of these checkpoints, police forces work in tandem with NISA officers (in civilian clothes). Every vehicle passing through is searched.929 Additionally, mobile checkpoints are occasionally set up by the police to conduct random checks.930 Around Villa Somalia (in Wardigley) and along the roads leading there (through Hamar Weyne, Hamar Jajab, Waberi and Hawl Wadaag), checkpoints are set up which are run by the presidential guard/Red Barrets (Somali: kofiyad cas). These are very strict and only let vehicles through which have a special authorisation.931 Cars have to be parked before the checkpoints and drivers' ID cards have to be shown to soldiers who then may allow the pass through.932 This is particularly the case in areas where government buildings are located. Thus, citizens seeking to access government services will face particular challenges with accessing these areas.933 Hagmann et al. (2022) found that 'insecurity renders Mogadishu Somalia's most immobile city'. They indicate that '[e]ntire neighbourhoods have limited accessibility as the government seeks to quell the al-Shabaab insurgency and protect itself from attacks […] the "green zone" around Halane and Aden Adde International Airport are blocked to Bajaj and minibuses.'934 There are four major checkpoints on the way to the Mogadishu international airport. These are run by NISA. After the checkpoints, AU troops are guarding the actual gates to the airport.935

The number of vehicles in Mogadishu is constantly increasing. Particularly three-wheeled motor rickshaws (*bajaaj* in Somali, also known as tuk-tuk elsewhere) flood the streets.936 Some of the mostly young drivers do not have driving licenses. They create frequent traffic jams, which can cost people many hours while moving across the city. 937 Public minibuses are also gradually disappearing from the streets, and the widely used *bajaaj* has become the dominant public transport mode in the city.938 To manage the flood of *bajaajs*, the government divided them into 'A' and 'B' *bajaajs* and allows them to operate only on alternating days.939 The overcrowding causes jams and security challenges, as crowded places are vulnerable to attacks with vehicle-borne explosive devices (VBIED).940 IDPs, who often are very poor and live at the margins of Mogadishu, are less mobile. Many cannot afford motorised transport and/or have to walk significant distances to the nearest bus stop.941

○ (c) Accessing and settling in the city

There are four major checkpoints when one enters Mogadishu from the surrounding areas. One is called 'Jazeera', coming from the south. The other is 'Ex-Kontrol Afgooye' from the west. The third is 'Sinka Dheer' from the north-west; and the fourth is called 'Ex-control Bal'ad' from the north. These checkpoints are manned by *Haramcad*, special police units also known as *Cheetah*, and by NISA. Occasionally, AU soldiers also operate at those checkpoints.942 Incoming vehicles are digitally screened. The checkpoints are connected with the database of the Ministry of Transportation for that. Not registered vehicles are not allowed to pass.943 Hagmann et al. (2022) found that '[a]t the southern checkpoint towards Afgoi everybody must offload their vehicles for a thorough screening'.944 Some of the checkpoints leading into the capital are manned by Somali Police supported by either Kenyan or Ugandan forces with dogs specially trained to sniff explosives.945 Anyone coming in by plane goes through normal screening at the international airport.946

Any Somali can just enter Mogadishu. But to settle in, one needs connections. Typically, relatives would accommodate a newcomer, at least temporarily. To rent or buy a place, one needs to go through local government registration. NISA is working closely with local governments to check on newcomers. One normally needs local relatives or acquaintances as guarantors.947 Also to find employment, one needs a network.948

Regarding IDPs coming to the city, Hagmann et al. (2022) mentioned that '[a] web of local powerbrokers, usually drawn from the dominant clans in a particular district and comprised of landowners, district officials, businessmen and gatekeepers, have effectively monopolised the business of urban informal settlements and inward migration to Mogadishu'.949

○ (d) Documents and procedures for accessing and settling in the city

Newcomers (Somalis) coming from abroad by plane go through the normal entry procedures at the Mogadishu international airport. They need to have valid passports. Others coming by land (from the regions) to Mogadishu go through the checkpoints (mentioned above) leading into the city. For settling down, newcomers typically need to be registered with the local government, which includes some background checking by NISA.950 Those travelling by land do not necessarily need ID documents. Yet, for renting or buying property, they need to go through a registration process with local authorities.951

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