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The Tragedy of Somalia

Somalia is going through the most difficult period in its history. War and drought have devastated the whole nation. The country has yielded to anarchy. The state has ceased to exist, the support system (government institutions) has collapsed, and the country has fallen apart.

And the war has destroyed the infrastructure and has ruined the production capacity of the nation. As a result, over half of its eight million people are starving to death. The people have become very dependent on international relief. According to the United Nations' estimate, one in four Somali children are dead by the age of five, and there is little hope of survival for others.

The root cause of the current food crisis in Somalia (the South) is the military regime's destruction of the economic infrastructure. At present the warlords of Muqdisho are preventing the people from returning to the land, where they were formerly self-sufficient in food production. Consequently, death has taken its toll. Even before the overthrow of Siad Barre in 1991, the military government devastated northern Somalia. In 1988 Siad Barre

declared war on the North, destroying the region's economic base.

The international community did not pay sufficient attention to the plight of the Somali people in the early stages of the calamity. Relief aid arrived after UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali accused the West of negligence in what he described as the worst human disaster in living memory, but the relief was too little and too late.

The warlords struggling for power in Muqdisho did not make the inter-

national relief workers' task easy. The food donated to alleviate the plight of the destitute people is looted daily and turned into a profitable business. In certain cases, food was used as a source of power by the warring factions.

Because of strategic interests during the Cold War, Somalia was at the top of the superpowers' political agenda in their effort to control the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to which Somalia has access. Aware of the international politics, Somalia's military government took

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