ORGANIZATION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS

Annual Assessment Report on Human Rights Violations in Mogadishu Prisons and Detention Facilities

An assessment of conditions of detention, access to justice, and the treatment of prisoners and detainees in the Benadir Region

By Organization for Prisoners' Rights

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Location Mogadishu, Benadir Region, Somalia

Reporting Period January to December 2023

Scope Mogadishu Central Prison, Mogadishu Prison and Court Complex, Godka Jilacow, district police stations, and the Criminal Investigation Directorate

Executive Summary

As of 2016, Somalia has been a federal state made up of five Federal Member States — Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Puntland, and Southwest State — alongside the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, which does not recognize federal authority. When this report discusses prisons in Somalia, it means the prison facilities within these federal states together with the prisons of the Benadir Region (Mogadishu).

This report gives an account of human rights conditions in Mogadishu's prisons and detention facilities for 2023: the state of the facilities, the availability of community-based alternatives to imprisonment, and the treatment of both sentenced and remand prisoners.

Somalia remains committed, at least on paper, to preventing and combating torture, and reaffirms its commitments under the Convention against Torture (CAT), Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In practice, serious problems persist: unchecked prison violence resulting in deaths; disease as the leading cause of death in custody; inadequate supervision enabling easy access to weapons; a lack of separation between categories of prisoners; and competition for basic necessities that drives abuse between inmates. Corruption and physical abuse by guards remain persistent, with women prisoners particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. Overcrowding affects almost every prison in the country, and facilities are old, outdated, and physically deteriorating.

Acronyms

AS	Al-Shabaab
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
CAT	Convention against Torture
CID	Criminal Investigation Directorate
CRC	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
MCP	Mogadishu Central Prison
MPCC	Mogadishu Prison and Court Complex
NISA	Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency
OPR	Organization for Prisoners' Rights
SC	Solitary Confinement
SOB	Sexual Offences Bill
SONSA	Somalia Non-State Actors
SOYDEN	Somali Youth Development Network
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TB	Tuberculosis
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
WOCSO	Women and Child Support Organization

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I. Introduction

This report outlines the impact of OPR's work and findings for 2023. The Federal Government of Somalia has recognized five Federal Member States, alongside the Benadir Region, since 2016. Responsibility for prison management rests with the Commander of the Custodial Corps. Prisoner numbers have risen notably since the FGS launched its campaign against Al-Shabaab (AS); despite targeted international aid, Somalia's prisons and justice institutions continue to struggle with administering justice, upholding order, and providing accessible services to prisoners and detainees. Reform of the court and prosecution system remains urgently needed.

Since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud returned to office in May 2022, the anti-AS campaign — pursued jointly with local militia (Ma'awisleey), African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) forces, and Turkish and US support — has led to the arrest of many alleged extremists, some under 18, from the Bay and Bakool regions. They are now held in prisons in Mogadishu, Baladwene, Bulo Burte, and Jowhar, often in dire conditions, with injured detainees particularly poorly served.

A survey by OPR at Mogadishu Central Prison (MCP), Godka Jilacow, and the Mogadishu Prison and Court Complex (MPCC) found approximately 1,792 male, 28 female, and 109 male juvenile convicted prisoners, with no female juveniles recorded. Remand prisoners totalled 953: 877 male, 17 female, and 59 male juveniles. A separate OPR survey found 47 inmates at MCP who had served their mandated term but remained in prison — a figure OPR could not independently verify. At Godka Jilacow, OPR recorded 98 political prisoners and detainees and 198 individuals associated with Al-Shabaab, again without independent verification. A further 234 detainees were held across 18 district police stations in Mogadishu, and 74 (21 of them female) at the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) headquarters.

Category	MCP	Godka Jilacow	MPCC
Convicted male	1,792	—	309
Convicted female	28	—	0
Convicted male juveniles	109	—	0
Total	**1,929**	**—**	**309**

Table 1. Convicted prisoners in Mogadishu, 2023 (Godka Jilacow figures reported separately in text; OPR was not able to independently verify the Godka Jilacow figures).

Category	MCP	Godka Jilacow	MPCC
Remand male	877	—	0
Remand female	17	—	0
Remand male juveniles	59	—	0
Total	**953**	**—**	**0**

Table 2. Remand prisoners in Mogadishu, 2023.

These figures are compiled from records provided by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Somali Custodial Corps. OPR treats them as a floor, not a ceiling — they reflect what the government's own records show, not necessarily the full number of people held.

II. Prisons and Detention Facilities Conditions

Administration and Recordkeeping

Prisons and detention facilities in Somalia have no ombudsmen, and recordkeeping remains inadequate, hampered by the absence of any policy framework for digital records. A registrar officer at MCP explained that Mogadishu's prisons have no legislation governing electronic records, and that recordkeeping relies on outdated manual methods, inadequately trained staff, and weak policy. Records staff are typically selected through clan-based practice rather than qualification, and OPR's research found that none of the registry staff interviewed had received any specialised training in records management.

Prisons and Detention Facilities Infrastructure

Somalia's prison buildings are largely antiquated — Mogadishu Central Prison, built during the colonial era, now holds more than triple its intended capacity, and many prisons built in the 19th century remain in operation with no effective plumbing. Most facilities require renovation or reconstruction. All of Kismayo's jail facilities except the Police Headquarters are in disrepair; Mogadishu's central jail needs urgent maintenance; Baidoa's main jail is old, hot, and poorly ventilated. None of these facilities has dedicated space for female detainees.

Family and Information Availability

Access to family and information remains a major obstacle to justice for many prisoners. Young men from Bay, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle are often held far from where family can visit, and prisoners arrested in southwest Somalia and held in Mogadishu frequently receive no visitors at all. Family visits, once permitted every Sunday and Wednesday, have been banned for over a year; where a visit is allowed, visitors may not bring food and are charged $20.

A prison staff member confirmed to OPR, without reluctance, that he operates a restaurant inside the prison and that families are not permitted to bring food — prisoners may only receive visitors if they arrive without food. Visitors typically wait from 7am to 3pm, are separated from inmates by a barrier, and are charged an additional $20 for the privilege; inmates must pay $5 for ten minutes outside their cells in fresh air.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding remains severe: Mogadishu Central Prison was designed for 400 to 500 prisoners, but the average population over the past three years has reached 1,993 — more than triple capacity — worsened by the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to cities nationwide and the government's anti-AS campaign. Nearly every prison in Somalia is affected, particularly smaller facilities holding pre-trial detainees, and prisons under Al-Shabaab control are similarly overcrowded.

Health, Hygiene and Nutrition

Healthcare for detainees is inadequate across Kismayo, Baidoa, and Mogadishu, with limited qualified staff, no medical supplies for on-site nurses, and exposure to extreme heat and insects. There is no isolation for tuberculosis (TB) patients despite high case numbers, and no TB medication is provided. Seasonal outbreaks of cholera and diarrhoea have caused deaths and hospitalisations. Laboratory equipment and trained technicians are scarce, as are first-aid supplies and emergency equipment; medical departments offer no ultrasound, CT, or MRI diagnostics, and deteriorating cases are transferred to outside hospitals. Medical staff are not paid or trained on a reliable schedule, and no facility has an ambulance. Common conditions include scabies, tinea versicolor, ringworm, hepatitis A and B, H. pylori, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pneumonia, and anaemia.

> *Mogadishu prisons lack medical ombudsmen and proper medical recordkeeping. High seasonal temperatures have driven an increase in diarrhoea and cholera, resulting in multiple deaths and 38 hospitalisations. Inmates face serious health risks from poor sanitation and a shortage of medical personnel, and tuberculosis is resurging, with inmates dying from it. — a doctor at De Martino General Hospital*

In prisons and detention facilities generally, 80 percent were judged to have unacceptable hygiene, mainly due to a lack of or poorly maintained toilets, and over 60 percent lacked adequate sleeping amenities. Shared sanitary facilities and poor ventilation create conditions favourable to disease transmission.

> *I participated in a hygiene seminar related to the coronavirus outbreak. We were taught how to wash our hands. But most of the time me and all inmates do not receive soap and other anti-bacterial products from the government and prison authorities. — an inmate at MCP*

Nutrition remains a persistent problem, compounded by climate-related extreme temperatures, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing conflict, giving Somalia's prisons some of the highest rates of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency OPR has observed. Interviews with nurses in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Kismayo found inmates receiving insufficient food in both quantity and variety, with many suffering anaemia and vitamin A deficiency.

Water and Food

OPR supports places of detention in improving access to clean water, on the principle that detainees must receive water and food sufficient in quantity and quality for good health. The government funds food only for prisoners held at CID sites, not for detainees in police stations; where food is provided it is often unpalatable, pushing inmates to buy food from prison-run restaurants instead.

> *Prisoners are forced to buy food expensively from restaurants within the prison that are owned by some high-ranking prison officers. A small portion of rice without soup usually costs US$1. — an inmate*

OPR also learned that prisoners who refuse to buy food from these restaurants are punished with solitary confinement (SC): held undressed for up to five days without food or water, in a room filled with oil drained from vehicles, permitted only a few minutes of sun, and beaten before being returned to their cells, often unable to walk.

> *Initially we were forced to buy food but now we even buy drinking water because we were told that the generator pumping water is broken. — an inmate*
>
> *The other day we were told to pay monthly water charges. We responded by telling the authorities we don't have money; we are a responsibility of the government. — another inmate*
>
> *My plea to the FGS is to address the situation at this facility, which is managed by Mohamed Qaliif, a prisoner serving a 25-year sentence, and Dahir Abdulle Rage (Baasuuke), a Prison Commander. We are experiencing severe shortages of food and water. Despite receiving donations, the prison officers confiscated the items as soon as the donors departed. While the ICRC recently delivered boxes of dates and powdered milk intended for every prisoner, we never actually received these donations — we were told we needed to pay if we wanted them. — an inmate*

Minorities in Somalia's Prisons and Detention Facilities

Minority prisoners face particular difficulty. OPR research found members of minority groups in Somali prisons subject to sexual assault, extrajudicial killing, and other rights violations both inside and outside detention. Somalia's justice system remains fragile and lacks national laws protecting minorities in prison, and the judiciary itself is susceptible to clan-based interference — including the unlawful detention of individuals from minority communities. Numerous minorities at MCP and MPCC are held or convicted without proper legal process, representation, or information, compounded by the absence of the political and clan support that protects others.

> *He was the individual responsible for constructing the Yakshid District Administration building. Upon completing the project, he did not receive his payment and was later arrested when he insisted on being compensated. When he requested to be taken to court to pursue justice, he was informed that he did not have the right to access the legal system. — OPR, relaying an account from a minority-group detainee at MCP*

Deaths in Prisons and Detention Facilities

Somalia's prisons are among the most overcrowded in the world and chronically underfunded. National mortality data for prisons and pre-trial facilities is largely inaccessible. Interviews with ex-offenders point to tuberculosis, cholera, insufficient food, and shootouts between inmates and guards as the leading causes of death at MCP. OPR has verified 104 deaths in Mogadishu's prisons and detention facilities since the start of 2019.

Non-separation of Adult and Juvenile Prisoners

Juveniles are commonly held alongside adults, with little separation between pre-trial detainees and convicted prisoners. Families sometimes request a juvenile's incarceration as discipline, while others send children from Al-Shabaab-controlled areas to Mogadishu specifically to prevent forced recruitment. Terrorism suspects are frequently housed with juveniles convicted of minor offences.

> *There has been a lack of separation between individuals associated with AS and those with less severe offences, particularly after the government's intensified security sweep. Individuals who have committed severe crimes, including parricide, are being housed together with juvenile prisoners — a high-risk environment where inmates are vulnerable to harm from dangerous criminals and extremists. — an inmate at MCP*

Gender Sensitivity and Segregation

Rule 11(a) of the Nelson Mandela Rules requires separate institutional facilities for men and women. In most facilities observed, cells are separated by sex, but female prisoners — a small minority of the population — often lack separate restrooms and private space. Overcrowding sometimes forces women into temporary quarters such as staff rest rooms, and men and women occasionally share restroom facilities.

III. Human Rights in Somalia's Prisons and Detention Facilities

In its 2022 report on human rights practices in Somalia, OPR highlighted unlawful and arbitrary killings by security forces, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, alongside concerns about political prisoners, politically motivated disappearances, and serious restrictions on press freedom — including criminal libel laws and unjustified prosecutions of media workers. The report also flagged the lack of investigation into violence against women, including conflict-related sexual violence.

Religious Freedom in Somalia's Prisons and Detention Centers

OPR continues to monitor religious freedom in Somalia's prisons. Enforcement of religious-practice laws remains inconsistent across the country's autonomous administrations, a legacy of the civil war. OPR's information gathering this year found that prisoners in Somalia's prisons are seldom allowed to pray, read the Qur'an, or take part in other religious practice permitted under Islam.

> *We are not allowed to learn the Holy Qur'an; if one insists on praying, they are punished. If two prisoners want to pray together (jama'ah) they receive a punishment. — an inmate*

AS-Controlled Prisons and Courts

Al-Shabaab operates its own courts nationwide, hearing a range of disputes, unlawfully imprisoning individuals, and frequently issuing death sentences — sometimes by phone, without the accused present or represented. These courts also try government officials, security personnel, and ordinary citizens, and AS-controlled detention facilities offer no functioning judicial safeguards: no dedicated space, heating, lighting, adequate bedding, food, recreation, or outside contact.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Government and regional authorities frequently detain journalists and government critics, including prominent opposition figures; the FGS does not disclose the number of political prisoners, and human rights organizations are typically denied access to sites such as Godka Jilacow and the CID headquarters. Radio Kulmiye journalist Abdullahi Kulmiye Addow was held by NISA from 16 to 21 October 2022 after interviewing a businessman who had criticized the government; his release was secured only after Radio Kulmiye agreed to suppress parts of the interview. Several journalists, including Radio Higsi's Mohamed Abdiwahab Nur (“Abuja”), have been arbitrarily detained with little or no access to family or legal counsel.

Somaliland authorities, for their part, continue to detain Somaliland citizens working for the FGS in Mogadishu, sometimes for extended periods, and prohibit Somaliland officials in the federal government from representing Somaliland — treating such representation as treason under Somaliland law.

IV. Justice and the Rule of Law

Long periods are spent behind bars without charge or due process; NISA in particular frequently holds detainees for extended periods without judicial process. While the law allows persons to challenge the lawfulness of their detention in court, only politicians, major clans, and some business figures can exercise this right effectively.

OPR was not able to document confessions obtained through torture or coercion being used as court evidence, but received credible reports of defendants mistreated during pre-trial detention, particularly in NISA and CID facilities.

> *The NISA officers who detained him after being accused of assaulting an officer had beaten him and he still has a scar on his face; after they took him to a room, he was beaten with sticks and wires while they demanded a confession. — OPR, relaying an account from a detainee released from Godka Jilacow*

Government security forces, allied militias, and regional authorities arbitrarily arrest and detain people despite constitutional prohibitions, frequently citing alleged AS affiliation — a justification also used against journalists and government critics.

The Provisional Constitution requires arrested persons to be brought before judicial authorities within 48 hours, with warrants based on sufficient evidence and prompt notification of charges, legal access, and family contact. Adherence to these safeguards remains rare: the government makes warrantless arrests, sometimes holds high-profile AS-linked detainees in unofficial houses before charging them, and bail — though provided for by law — is rarely understood or respected in practice. Security officials, judicial officers, politicians, and clan elders sometimes use influence to secure the release of favoured detainees.

Court proceedings are ordinarily public, though courts may close hearings in sensitive cases (national security, juveniles, rape, witness protection). The judiciary is nominally independent but the government does not always respect that independence; the civilian judicial system remains dysfunctional outside urban areas, reliant on a mix of customary law, sharia, and formal law, and vulnerable to clan-based influence and corruption. Judges lack adequate security and accountability mechanisms are weak; international NGOs have reported local officials invoking public order laws to detain and incarcerate without trial.

> *Many inmates have been incarcerated for years without trial, others were bailed and are not supposed to be in prison, some have served their sentences and are still incarcerated, and some prisoners have been in prison for three years and more for charges as little as $10. There is a racket involved in all this injustice, and those responsible should be called to answer. — the Human Rights Committee of the Federal Parliament of Somalia*

> *If you visit the prison facility, you will find a prisoner who has been detained for 10 years and yet has not been sentenced. So, where is the justice? There is no justice. My suggestion is that we, the*

> *stakeholders, should give the prisoners priority and visit the facility to witness the reality firsthand. — General Mahad Abdirahman, Chief of the Somali Custodial Corps*

Functional civilian courts exist nationwide, but face a serious shortage of trained judges and legal documentation for precedent. Defendants in military courts rarely have legal representation or a right of appeal, and authorities sometimes carry out death sentences within days of a verdict; some officials continue to claim jurisdiction under a 2011 state-of-emergency decree, though it was issued for three months, never formally extended, and its current status is unclear. Military courts do not always inform defendants of the charges against them or provide access to government-held evidence, dedicated defence facilities, or the ability to call witnesses or appeal; there is no functioning formal judiciary in AS-controlled areas, and no clear protocol for transferring cases between civilian and military courts.

The right to a fair and public trial is undermined by the absence of an independent, functioning judiciary. Detainees are formally entitled to a presumption of innocence, prompt notice of charges in a language they understand, appearance before a court within 48 hours, and legal representation — but clan politics and corruption routinely impede these rights in practice, and the law is silent on confronting witnesses, appeal rights, and adequate time to prepare a defence.

Pre-trial detention is commonly lengthy, though no reliable estimate exists of its average duration or share of the prison population, with delays driven by high detainee numbers, too few judges and court staff, and general inefficiency.

V. The Somali Police Force and Other Somali Authorities

Beyond Somalia's prisons, people arrested by police and NISA are also held in police stations, Godka Jilacow, CID facilities, and unofficial houses.

Somali Police Force

During 2023 security sweeps, the Somali Police Force apprehended 89 individuals. In 2022, it arrested 51 people, including 14 AS suspects, 17 journalists, and 20 alleged Ciyaal Weero (youth gang) members. In 2021, 66 individuals were detained in Mogadishu, including 19 AS suspects and 47 alleged gang affiliates. In 2020, 101 individuals were detained, 39 of them AS suspects. In 2019, 89 individuals — mostly suspected AS members — were apprehended, with 49 later released without charge; over the same period, the SPF detained more than 139 boys suspected of gang involvement.

Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency

In 2023, NISA carried out frequent, extensive security operations against AS and criminal groups, detaining 37 young men across 21 incidents through the year. In the previous reporting year, OPR connected NISA to the unwarranted apprehension of 17 people, including 8 journalists and 9 AS suspects.

Children in SPF, NISA and AS Custody

All parties to Somalia's 32-year conflict have used children — as fighters, carriers, informants, or for checkpoint duty; AS has enlisted children as young as 9 over the past decade. Mistreatment continues once children reach government custody, whether through surrender, capture, or mass arrest: FGS officials often treat children accused of AS association as adult criminals rather than as victims of conflict, citing an outdated legal system and genuine security concerns.

Since 2015, most detained boys have been captured during urban security operations rather than on the battlefield, then transferred to NISA custody in Mogadishu, where they are held — sometimes incommunicado, without family access or legal representation — alongside adult detainees. The justice system continues to rely heavily on coerced confessions even from children, who have been forced into written or recorded confessions under threat and, at times, physical abuse amounting to torture.

Government officials have acknowledged detaining boys considered high risk; outcomes often depend on a boy's economic status, clan affiliation, and public attention to the case as much as on the facts. Many are eventually released, often after relatives bribe officials; others are transferred to NGO-run rehabilitation centres, and some face military-court trial for AS membership, murder, or conflict-related offences.

Military Court Prosecutions of Children

International standards call for children recruited into armed conflict to be treated as victims requiring support and reintegration, not simply prosecuted — a principle the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

(CRC) has applied specifically against prosecuting children in military justice systems that Somalia, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 2015, is expected to follow. In practice, children continue to face military-court trial for AS-related crimes and are often treated as adults, with basic due process — the right to present a defence, protection against coerced evidence — regularly disregarded. Nearly every instance of a child sentenced by Mogadishu's military court since 2012 has involved alleged AS membership or support.

Children held on security charges have no independent oversight, and child-protection and prisoners'-rights advocates have minimal access to intelligence facilities, prisons, and military courts. The total number of children held nationwide for AS-related conduct is unknown, with no organized record-keeping system in place. A draft anti-terrorism law risks simplifying, rather than improving, the prosecution of children for AS-related crimes, without adding the juvenile-justice safeguards or guaranteed access to rehabilitation that would be needed.

> *You can either get caught up in a bomb attack or a mass sweep by NISA. We always get stopped and questioned. Either way, we face problems. It's like we're constantly in a prison. — a 16-year-old boy held by NISA for two and a half months during a mass sweep in Mogadishu*

VI. Achieved Outcomes against the Strategic Objectives of OPR

Working in Collaboration with Corrections Authorities and Stakeholders

OPR has built relationships with Somalia Non-State Actors (SONSA), the Somali Youth Development Network (SOYDEN), the Women and Child Support Organization (WOCSO), and the Human Rights Committee, supporting the FGS and prison authorities with strategic advice aligned to the UN Global Focal Point Arrangement on Rule of Law (GFP) and the Comprehensive Approach to Security (CAS). This has enabled coordination with UN entities — UNDP, UNOPS, and UNODC — on joint justice and corrections programming.

Human Rights Awareness Seminars, Education and Counselling

Following 2022, 393 custodial corps employees (262 men, 131 women) received training covering the Bangkok Rules on the treatment of female prisoners, the Nelson Mandela Rules, incident management, rehabilitation and human rights, prison duties, and basic and advanced medical training. Even so, inadequately trained guards continue to struggle to ensure inmate safety; comprehensive data on the custodial corps' overall training capacity was not available within the timeframe of this report.

OPR is developing an action plan to extend its rehabilitation-focused interventions — religious, educational, psychological, social work, vocational, sport, and arts-based — starting at Mogadishu Central Prison, alongside continued advocacy for legal reform: the 1962 Somali Penal Code still lacks any definition of torture, a promised 2020 revision has not materialised, and the Sexual Offences Bill (SOB), introduced to Parliament in June 2018, is still awaiting its first reading. New prison facilities have opened in Somaliland and Puntland with UN Office on Drugs and Crime funding, particularly for piracy-related cases, with staff trained to meet international standards.

Support for Legal, Emotional, and Social Well-being

People held for extended periods with mental health conditions receive no counselling or psychotherapy, no discharge prescriptions, and no outpatient follow-up — leaving many chained at home after release, since families, the main available support system, are themselves under-resourced, often ill-informed about mental health, and subject to significant social stigma.

An Open, Fair Process and Aftercare for All Convicts

OPR's prison work extends beyond assessing conditions to ensuring detainees' rights are upheld regardless of background, that they are treated with dignity, and that families can reach, visit, and stay informed about them. OPR publishes its findings via its website and other channels, and has visited people in detention —

prisons, police stations, NISA facilities, and CID headquarters — in partnership with other stakeholders since 2019, in support of humane and dignified treatment for those held.

VII. Recommendations

Overcrowding

- → Develop and implement sustainable measures to reduce the prison population, including non-custodial alternatives under the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules) — mandatory rehabilitation for certain drug-related offences, fines rather than imprisonment for first-time offenders, fines or community service for minor infractions, avoiding pre-trial detention for specified offence categories, electronic monitoring as an alternative to remand, and early-release mechanisms such as parole.
- → Minimise pre-trial and remand detention, set bail at a level proportionate to the offence, and give elderly inmates priority for available alternatives to incarceration.

Accommodation and Space

- → Provide proper ventilation, heating, and cooling for cells, and ensure ample space and climate-appropriate bedding for all prisoners.

Punishment, Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment

- → Ensure all inmates are treated with dignity and without discrimination, and that no disciplinary measure amounts to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- → Limit solitary confinement to a genuine last resort, for the shortest possible time, following independent evaluation.
- → Investigate all allegations of torture and mistreatment thoroughly and independently, discipline offenders under existing law, and provide victims appropriate remedy and compensation.

Food, Water and Sanitation

- → Guarantee constant access to clean drinking water and a reliable water supply for hygiene, showers, and toilets around the clock, with unlimited, private restroom access.
- → Expand shower availability and time per prisoner, and ensure cleaning supplies given to prisoners on cleaning duty are adequate.
- → Improve the nutritional quality of food, meeting prisoners' dietary, spiritual, and cultural requirements, with facility sanitation brought up to international standards and hygienic eating utensils comparable to those used outside prison.
- → Provide female inmates with the supplies their hygiene needs require, including sanitary pads free of charge.

Healthcare and Other Health-related Services

- → Conduct routine inspections with qualified medical or public health input to identify and address risks to inmate health.
- → Ensure prisoners needing specialist care are transferred promptly to outside facilities, with particular attention to women, older prisoners, juveniles, and people with disabilities, and that all prisoners receive adequate psychological and mental health care.

Outside World, Recreation, and Complaints

- → Enable regular, unimpeded contact with family, friends, and legal counsel through visits, letters, and calls, with privacy protected against unreasonable intrusion for both family and legal visits.
- → Provide consistent, unrestricted access to newspapers, books, and other educational and cultural material, and adequate opportunity for recreation.
- → Allow anonymous complaints, ensure every complaint is investigated and addressed, guard against retaliation, and publish regular statistics on complaints received, investigations completed, and disciplinary action taken.

Recommendations to the International Community

- → Press the FGS to develop and implement sustainable measures to reduce the prison population and address overcrowding.
- → Press the FGS to bring prison conditions into line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders — particularly on space per prisoner, sanitation, and healthcare access.
- → Call on the FGS to honour existing agreements, including full Ombudsman access to all prisons, and provide the technical assistance needed to bring Somalia's prison conditions into line with its international human rights commitments.

Summary

Conditions in many of Somalia's prisons and detention facilities remain severe in 2023. Overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, unreliable access to food and water, and weak legal safeguards continue to define daily life for the great majority of those held — conditions compounded, for specific groups, by minority status, age, or political association.

> *The conditions documented in this report are neither inevitable nor irreversible. They are the product of decisions about who is detained, on what basis, and with what protection, and they can be changed by decisions of the same kind.*