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Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia

Appeal to Warring Parties To Exercise Restraint

Nairobi, 21 December 2006 – After a brief interruption yesterday, fighting resumed today between forces allied to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) along two frontlines in Daynunay and Idale, only 25 kms southeast and 60 kms southwest from Baidoa, the seat of the government.

Displacement of civilians is increasingly being reported from the conflict areas, although numbers are not yet confirmed, while local hospitals report a high number of wounded.

The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Eric Laroche, is extremely disturbed by the sudden deterioration of the situation. ‘Engaging in conflict at a time when a significant segment of the population is already struggling for survival is unacceptable,’ Mr Laroche said. ‘More than ever, stability is now essential for the success of the ongoing humanitarian operation and all efforts should be entirely focused on alleviating the suffering of Somalis.’

The frail humanitarian situation in Somalia is presently aggravated by widespread flooding, which has already displaced an estimated 454,500 people in the Juba and Shabelle riverine areas. In August 2006, 1.4 million people (in addition to 400,000 internally displaced) were identified as being in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection. The consequences of any widespread conflict overlaid on the present situation would be disastrous.

‘The UN and its partners have just launched a humanitarian appeal to donors to enable the mobilization of a full humanitarian response. This, however, will not go far if we cannot then access populations in need and deliver assistance on the ground due to armed conflict,’ warns Laroche.

For more information please contact
Rita Maingi or Amanda Di Lorenzo - OCHA Somalia
Tel: (+254) 020 3754150-5
Fax: (+254) 020 3754156
<http://ochaonline.un.org/somalia>