

## DJIBOUTI

### Afars

Activity: 1977-2020

### General notes

NA

### Movement start and end dates

- The Afars of Djibouti, along with the Afars of Eritrea and Ethiopia, formed the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) in 1975, which is coded as the start date of the movement. Since Djibouti did not become independent until 1977, we begin to code the movement from 1977. We found no separatist violence before 1977, and thus code prior non-violent activity. The movement remained active until violence broke out in 1991 (see below). The 2001 peace agreement included clauses that would decentralize the Afar-dominant regions and allow the Afars to rule themselves. Non-zero MAR protest scores suggest that the movement was ongoing. Protests and clashes took place due to frustrations over the slow pace at which the 2001 peace agreement was being implemented. Other grievances from 2005-2006 also include a destruction of homes and accusations of electoral fraud (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Hewitt et al. 2008; Keesing's Record of World Events; Lexis Nexis; Marshall & Gurr 2003, 2005; Minahan 2002; MAR).
- It seems that separatist claims continued to be made in subsequent years. For example, the U.S. Department of State reports that a former Afar minister for education was arrested in January 2017 "for posting on Facebook that he wanted to host a conference on Afar federalism" (U.S. Department of State 2017). Roth (2015: 259) also describes the movement as ongoing. [start date: 1975; end date: ongoing]

### Dominant claim

- According to Minority Rights Group International, "the ALF's goal would be to establish an independent Islamic state for Afars." The same information can also be found in Shehim and Searing (1980: 223), Minahan (2002: 44) and Schraeder (1993: 213). Over time, however, the calls for autonomy within Djibouti became more frequent. According to Schraeder (1993: 213), the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), founded in 1991 as a secessionist organization, has repeatedly stated that it wanted to maintain the territorial integrity of Djibouti. FRUD has been described as "the main Afar rebel group" (Minorities at Risk).
- The most significant event regarding the Afar claim was the 1994 split of FRUD into two factions; a split which also reflects the division in the entire Afar community. On the one side is the faction led by Ougoureh Kefle Ahmed, which began negotiations with the government and signed a peace agreement in 1995. This faction has transformed into a conventional political party allied with the government. On the other side was the faction led by Ahmed Dini (FRUD-Dini) which continued fighting for an independent Afar state until a peace agreement was negotiated in December 2000 (Minorities at Risk).
- Information on the strength of the two factions is mixed. Minahan (2002: 45) states that the Afar community, weary of years of war, did not overwhelmingly support renewed Afar militancy. Banks et al. (1998: 263) on the other hand, argues that FRUD-Dini continued to enjoy support from the Afar grassroots groups, which viewed the consociational faction of FRUD with "little esteem." A more objective indicator for the support of the two factions is the 1997 election, in which the coalition of which FRUD was part of won all 65 seats (FRUD won 11 seats). Hence, the moderate wing is considered dominant and autonomy coded as the dominant claim from 1995

onwards (first of January rule). Support for this coding is provided by Minorities at Risk, which states that the “main grievances of the Afars center on complete implementation of the 2001 peace accords, including decentralization in order to rule themselves.”

- Autonomy claims continue to have been made in subsequent years, as suggested by the above-reported push for a conference on federalism. [1977-1994: independence claim][1995-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

- Independence is the dominant demand until 1994; after that it is internal autonomy (see above). Yet, a faction called FRUD-Dini (also known as FRUD-C – “Front pour la restauration de l’unité et de la démocratie – Combattant”) continued to make demands for independence until (at least) 2000 (Minorities at Risk).
- FRUD-Dini/FRUD-C appears to have remained active, though it is a small group.
  - o FRUD-C signed an agreement with the government in May 2001.
  - o In April 2005, elements of FRUD-C refused another agreement negotiated under the leadership of Mohamed Kadamy and Hassan Mokbel (Arhotabba n.d.).
  - o The group appears to have received funds from the Eritrean government since 2008. Still, the group’s activities are “small-scale and ineffective” (Kessels et al. 2016: 10).
  - o In 2011, it was reported that the group (or a splinter group) was active “in the north of Djibouti, in the region of the Mambila mountains between Obock and Tadourah” and that it was engaged in military activities against the Djibouti government (U.N. Security Council 2011: 74). In 2011, the group’s name was also included in a list of state acts that “obstruct the implementation of Security Council resolution 1862 (2009)” – accusing Eritrea of supporting the group (ARDHD 2011). This activity however is disputed and some have described it as the outcome of Djibouti-Eritrea propaganda – with no evidence “even worth documenting” (TesfaNews 2011).
- On this basis, we code an ongoing independence movement. We should add, though, that we found no clear evidence on FRUD-Dini/FRUD-C’s political claims after 2000 and, in particular, not whether the group maintained its independence demand. [start date: 1975; end date: ongoing]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Afars is located in the northern and western regions of Djibouti, with Tadjoura as the main Afar center (Minahan 2002: 41). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

### **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

### **Separatist armed conflict**

- ALF violence in Djibouti in 1977 led to the death of 10 people, but since that death count does not meet our operational criteria for LVIOLSD, we code 1977 to 1990 as NVIOLSD. [1977-1990: NVIOLSD]

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1991-94 follows Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019) and it is marked as “ambiguous” following Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) classification of the conflict as being over “mixed motives”. [1991-1994: HVIOLSD]
- According to UCDP/PRIO, there were no casualties in 1995 and 1996. In 1997-1998, violence picked up again, and crossed the 25 deaths threshold in 1999 (UCDP/PRIO). As MAR explains, this was due to a radical faction of the rebel group in the 1991-1994 war: “[i]n early 1994, the main Afar rebel group, the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), split and the faction led by Ougoureh Kefle Ahmed began negotiations with the government. A formal peace agreement between the government and Ahmed’s faction was signed in December 1995. This faction of FRUD has become a conventional political party allied with the government and its main party, the Rassemblement Populaire Pour le Progres (People's Rally for Progress) (RPP). However, sporadic fighting continued by the faction led by Ahmed Dini (FRUD-Dini) until a peace agreement was negotiated in December 2000 and ratified in May 2001.” [1995-1998: NVIOLSD; 1999: LVIOLSD]
- Marshall & Gurr (2003, 2005) and Hewitt et al. (2008) code ongoing armed conflict until 2001. However, they code ongoing conflict if it recurs within 5 years and we found no evidence for substantial numbers of deaths in 2000-2001. We again mark the 1999 episode as ambiguous due to mixed motives.
- The MAR rebellion score is four in 2005: “[f]rustration with the slow pace of implementing the 2001 peace accord led to an outbreak of armed clashes in 2005 and rumors of the rebirth of an armed FRUD faction (REB05 = 4). The government quickly stamped out the incipient rebellion (REPVIOL05 = 5; REPVIOL06 = 3), and no violence was reported in 2006.” Other sources do not agree with MAR’s coding, however. First, UCDP/PRIO does not record a single death. Second, Hewitt et al (2008) suggest that there was no significant violence after 2001. We were not able to find evidence for significant violence in qualitative reports. We do not code LVIOLSD.
- While very sporadic fighting continued, we found no evidence for separatist violence above the threshold after 2005, either (also cf. Kessels et al. 2016: 10). UN Security Council confirms two casualties in February 2016 implicating FRUD-C (U.N. Security Council 2016: 21). UCDP/PRIO reports 3 fatalities in Djibouti city in 2021 involving Afar and Issa-Somali people (also cf. Crisis24 2021). [2000-2020: NVIOLSD]

## Historical context

- The Afar homeland – which comprises the Danakil Basin of the Great Rift Valley, straddling Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti – is thought to be the site of origin of the human species. The Afar tribes (also referred to as Danakil in earlier literature; see Shaw 2011: 2) were converted to Islam by seafaring Arabs in the seventh century. The group has a long history of religious wars against the Christian Ethiopian states (Minahan 2002: 43). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area was split between Italy, France, and Ethiopia. Roth reports that during French colonial rule, the Afars were the privileged group while the Issa-Somali were discriminated against (Roth 2015: 258). This changed after 1977 as the Issa-Somali Hassan Gouled Aptidon governed Djibouti between 1977 and 1999.
- While most Afars initially supported the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, ending that country’s feudal monarchy, Afar nationalism grew in opposition to the Ethiopian regime in the late 1970s. Separatist sentiments, as well as Afar rebels, crossed the border to French- and Italian-held territories, especially Djibouti (Minahan 2002: 44-45; Markakis 2021: 86). Five years before Djibouti’s independence, Afar students in the country founded an Afar Rassemblement Movement (Markakis 2021: 98). No clear cases of concessions or restrictions were found in the ten year period before 1977, although France often gave privileges to the other main ethnic group in Djibouti – the Issa-Somali – leaving the Afars disadvantaged both economically and politically (Abdallah 2008: 269).

## Concessions and restrictions

- In 1980 Afar opposition groups were repressed and expelled from safe havens in Ethiopia and persecuted by the Djiboutian regime. Many were denied the right to work (Abdallah 2008: 275), a clear restriction put on their right. However, these repressive measures were only taken against members of specific political parties, rather than Afari people per se. We therefore do not code a minority rights restriction.
- In 1981, following three years of political upheaval in the new Djiboutian state about ethnic representation in the legislative branches, the Issa-Somali-dominated government amended the constitution and made Djibouti a one-party state. The opposition, consisting mainly of Afar-led parties, were “denied any legal basis to contest for election or challenge the government” (Abdallah 2008: 274). In effect, due to the ethnic dividing lines in Djiboutian politics, the Afar people were deprived of political representation in the central government. While a clear instance of political repression, this does not count as a restriction as defined in the codebook.
- Starting in 1981, Afars were systematically discriminated against regarding employment. As Abdallah (2008: 275) describes, “the Issa-Somali hegemony was systematically strengthened and the significance of the Afars was reduced dramatically. The discrimination was clearly seen in all government institutions, where they were overwhelmingly replaced by the Issa.” Because the state was been the main source of employment in the country, this led to a *de facto* apartheid-like distribution of “work opportunities across ethnic lines” (Abdallah 2008: 275). Furthermore, “[a] similar biased policy was directed against the Afars in development fields” (Abdallah 2008: 275). While a clear instance of government repression, discrimination in terms of employment does not count as a restriction as defined in the codebook.
- In January 1991, shortly before the Djiboutian civil war broke out, the regime arrested and detained several opposition leaders without trial (Abdallah 2008: 276). While a clear instance of government repression, this does not count as a restriction as defined in the codebook.
- The new constitution, adopted in 1992 following the civil war of 1991, allowed for multiparty elections (Kessels et al 2016: 9). This is not a concession as defined here.
- In 1994, the main faction of FRUD – the Afar-led opposition fighting the government in the Djiboutian civil war – signed a power-sharing agreement with the government, ending their war. (A radical faction of FRUD continued fighting until 2000.) The agreement included provision of “decentralization”. Another peace agreement was signed with another Afar faction (FRUD-Dini) that had continued to fight the government in December 2000 and subsequently ratified in May 2001. The 2001 peace agreement included clauses that would decentralize the Afar-dominant regions and allow the Afars to rule themselves (MAR). However, autonomy was never implemented (Abdallah 2008: 277; Fishea 2015: 42). We do not code an autonomy concession since no decentralization has been implemented (Fishea 2015: 42).
- While not a restriction, it is important to note that although political power is theoretically shared between an Issa-Somali president and an Afar prime minister, “Issa-Somalis are still seen to be the predominant ethnic group in the civil service” (Kessels et al 2016: 9).

## Regional autonomy

- No – see above for why no autonomy after 1994. [no autonomy]

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

- When Djibouti gained independence in 1977, sovereignty of the Afar homeland was transferred from France to Djibouti. [1977: host state change (new)]

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Afars
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Afar
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	52202000

### Power access

- We use data on central power access from EPR. [1977: junior partner; 1978-1994: powerless; 1995-2020: junior partner]

### Group size

- We use data on relative group size from EPR. [0.36]
  - o Other sources suggest a similar relative group size of 35% (CIA 2022; Kessels et al. 2016)

### Regional concentration

- EPR codes regional concentration, but EPR uses a lower bar. MAR also codes regional concentration and suggests that the Afars make up more than 75% of the population living in their regional base and that >75% of group members live in the regional base. According to EPR, the Afar settlements are “predominantly located in the rural North and Western areas” of Djibouti [regional concentration].

### Kin

- There are numerically significant Afar communities in both Ethiopia and Eritrea (Minahan 2002: 41; EPR; MAR). [kin in adjacent country]

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