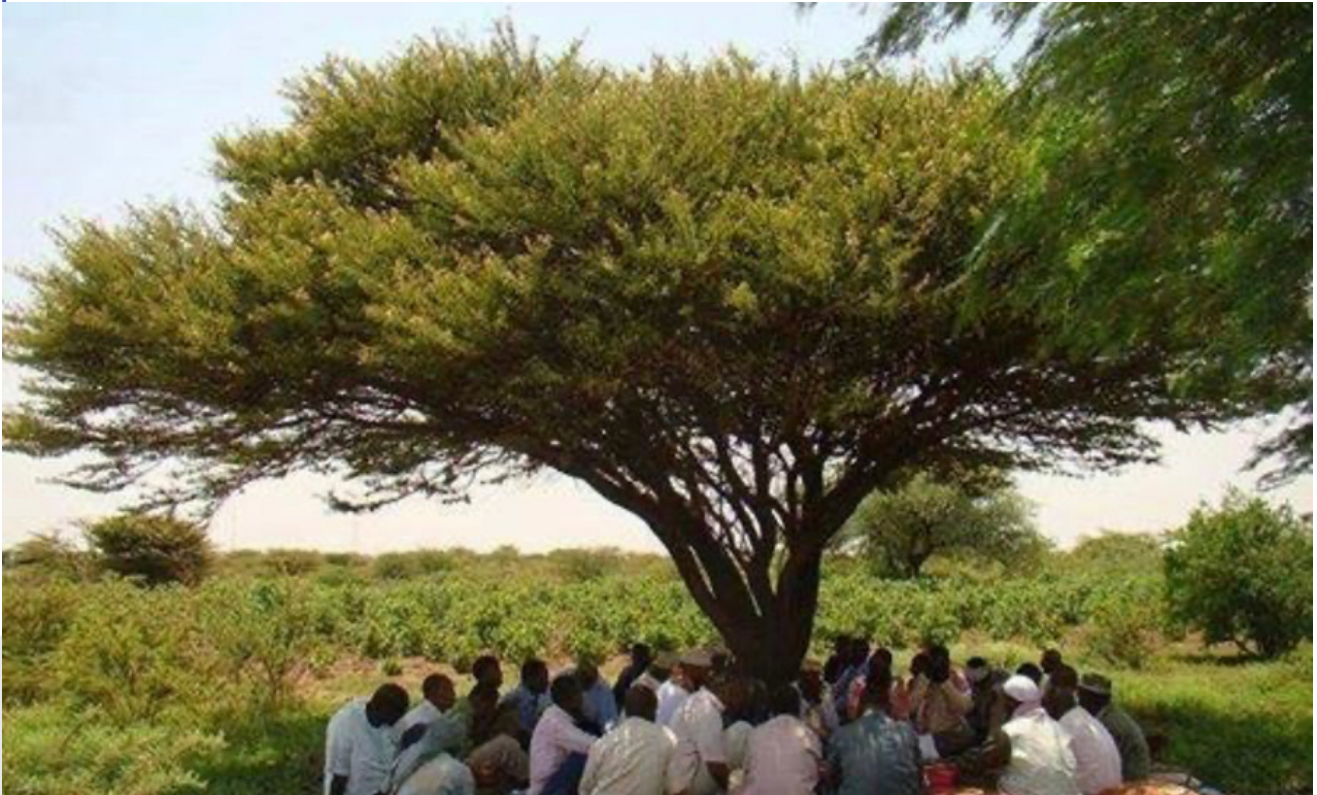


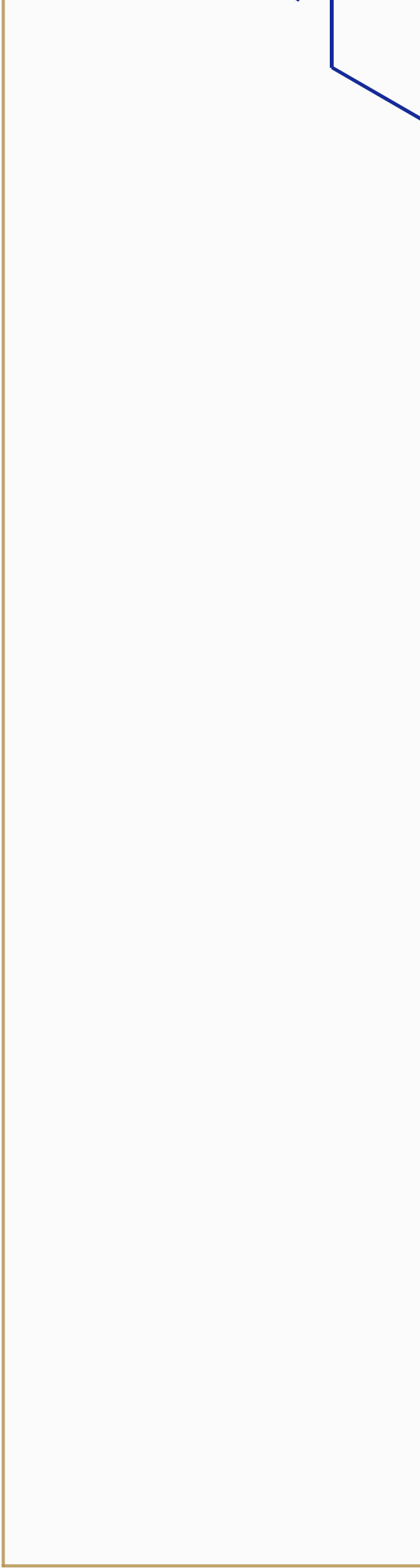
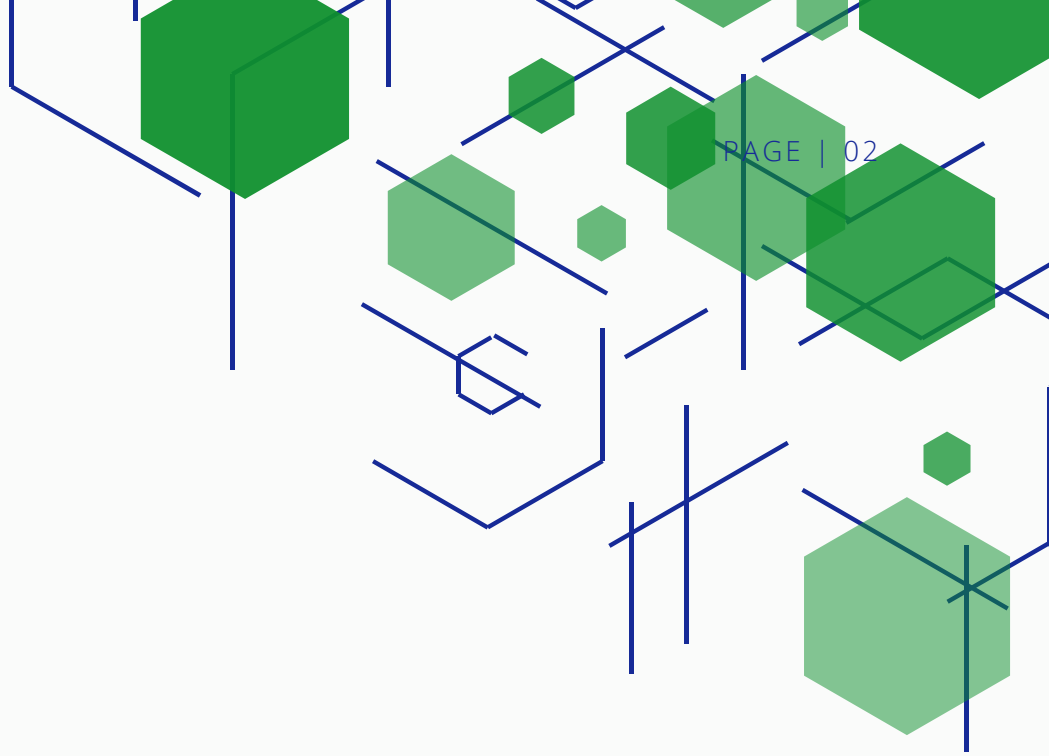


RESTORE SOMALIA
FOUNDATION



**RECONCILIATION
IN THE SOUTHWEST STATE OF SOMALIA**

MAY 2023





RECONCILIATION IN THE SOUTHWEST STATE OF SOMALIA

CONCERNS, CHALLENGES & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

-
- This research paper is part of a series of publications prepared by the Restore Somalia Foundation in the framework of "Peace and Sustainable Development". The project aims to propose possible solutions for reconciliation between Southwest State of Somalia's main political forces, key actors and citizens.



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Executive Summary

Somalia's history is complex, encompassing both pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. The Federal Government of Somalia was established in 2012 under the provisional Federal Constitution, following the end of the Transitional Federal Government. The country is divided into states, Puntland, Galmudug, Jubaland, Somaliland, Hirshabelle, Banadir Regional Administration (BRA) and the Southwest State. The South West state has seen its fair share of violent tribal battles, internal power struggles, and external political intrusion.

Because free and fair elections constitute the foundation of a functioning state, the ongoing political intervention of external parties has been the primary source of instability and political unrest in Somalia's South West State. Since the construction and re-establishment of Somalia's Southwest State, numerous actors have taken a keen interest in the region's politics and have gone to considerable lengths to influence the state's presidential elections. Electoral processes were tainted, and results were manipulated. People's mistrust and divisions grew as a result of a lack of transparency and suspicion in internal political processes. The federal government has tasked the Ministry of Interior, Local Government, and Reconciliation in Southwest State to work towards state-wide reconciliation, and political and social reconciliation as part of a nationwide reconciliation project.

As a result, motions, laws, and programmes were enacted with the purpose of achieving national and regional peace. However, not all regions are moving at the same rate, with some reconciliation initiatives moving more slowly than others. It is critical for both the community and the government to collaborate in order for this peacebuilding to succeed. In light of this, the purpose of this paper is to inform and urge others to join the efforts for reconciliation and peace in Somalia and more particularly in the Southwest State.



Introduction

The country was deeply divided for nearly thirty years. After the civil war ended, Somalia launched a nationwide reconciliation project, the National Reconciliation Framework (NRF), in 2017. The procedure is being driven at the federal level and is being coordinated by the MoIFAR Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs. The NRF prioritizes local-based processes and methods to foster national reconciliation, which was encouraged to be implemented by the government, community, and individuals.

Although the federal government of Somalia played an essential role in validating the NRF and establishing a solid foundation for national reconciliation, state-level implementation of the NRF which was left to the States Government wasn't very successful in some states. Some federal states have achieved quantifiable success and progress toward unity and peacebuilding. On the contrary, in other states, including the Southwest State, extreme nepotism and corruption, as well as a lack of comprehension of the National Reconciliation Framework, seriously hindered state-level progress.

Following the Validation Conference in Mogadishu in February 2019, the MoIFART charged each state with coordinating efforts toward national reconciliation and peacebuilding. A Department of Reconciliation was founded under the Ministry of Interior, Local Government, and Reconciliation in the Southwest State of Somalia to focus on Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation and Peace Building & Peace Committees. Unfortunately, the Southwest State's efforts have been futile, with no tangible results, to this date. The main criticism is that the Ministry of Interior, Local Government, and Reconciliation in the Southwest State of Somalia did not address political reconciliation and unity until four years later, in December 2022. After a violent conflict in Baidoa between the state government and a state presidential candidate, Mohamed Adan Ibrahim, that killed over ten people. Mohamed Adan Ibrahim (Fargeti), former Minister of Finance stated that the state government under the order of President Abdiasis Hassan Mohamed (Laftagren), attacked a house in Baidoa he had on lease.



Four months have now passed since this incident as the Southwest state finally commences its serious attempt at reconciliation. This paper aims to provide an overview of the Southwest State of Somalia's path and the challenges to reconciliation by looking into two interrelated questions:

1. What is the National Reconciliation Framework (NRF) and what mechanisms have been established to promote national reconciliation in Somalia?
2. What does reconciliation in the Southwest State of Somalia entail and why is it essential?

These concerns will be addressed by first investigating the historical framework influencing the need for reconciliation, as well as thoroughly investigating the conflict of the 2018 Southwest state presidency race. The second section delves into the National Reconciliation Framework. Finally, an emphasis will be placed on reconciliation in Somalia's Southwest State, with a detailed examination of its necessity and procedure.

Document analysis and interviews were employed as research methods for this work. The procedure included a thorough study of the applicable National Reconciliation Framework (NRF) as well as material reviews. Policy and legal documents, strategies, state-level institutions, country and state programs, and research were all relevant materials. Between January 2023 and March 2023, seven stakeholder interviews were held, including community elders (Malaqs), State Government officials, and civil organizations. Per their request, the Restore Somalia Foundation decided not to publish the names of the individuals interviewed for this paper.



Photo of the 2018 civil protest in Baidoa



1. Historical Context of the Conflict

The presidential election for Southwest state, which had been scheduled for November 17, 2018, was postponed due to allegations of interference by the Federal Government and controversy over the candidacy of former Al-Shabaab deputy leader, Mukhtar Robow, who was strongly opposed by the Federal Government. As a result, the entirety of the Southwest State Assembly Elections Committee resigned on November 5, 2018. On November 7, of that same year, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, president of the Southwest State, also resigned and decided not to run for reelection. Following that, the Elections Committee certified six candidates. Among them was Sheikh Mukhtar Robow (Abu Mansuur). Robow was soon arrested a month later, on December 13. This arrest provoked fights between his supporters, and Ethiopian and Baidoa police. Several people were killed in the ensuing brawl, including a state legislator. During this incident, the government expelled a United Nations special envoy who expressed concerns about Robow's illegal arrest and the use of excessive force. The massive protests in Baidoa will be recognized as the deadliest in its history.

On the day of Robow's arrest, the Southwest state electoral body officially announced the date of the presidential elections to be 19 December 2018. On this day, former MP and Minister, Abdiasis Mohammed Laftagareen, was elected president of the Southwest State of Somalia. Immediately after the election, opposition parties and competing candidates left the state out of fear for their lives.

The political dispute made its way to Mogadishu, where several prominent politicians, including the former speaker of the Somali Parliament, Mohamed Mursal Sheikh Abdurahman, voiced their objections publicly and called for Mukhtar Robow's immediate release. However, despite all efforts, Mukhtar Robow was kept in captivity, neither charged, nor convicted, until 2022.



Since the civil war of 1991, the people of the Southwest have dealt with tribal rivalries and conflicts. However, the contentious past election and the recent election of 2018, as well as the unlawful imprisonment of Mukhtar Robow have only aggravated the disunity. The people simply lost all trust. Tribal tensions increased particularly between the president-elect's tribe and Mukhtar Robow's tribe. Many claim that Mohamed Abdullahi (Farmaajo), the then-president of the Somalia Federal Republic, orchestrated Abdiasis Mohammed Laftagareen's presidential election. The already fragmented community was further divided.

A year after the election, to realign the presidential term with the regional administration, a motion to extend the presidential term by one year was introduced in parliament. It was granted unanimously by Somalia's Southwest State legislature, adding to the unease of the people.



2. The National Reconciliation Framework (NRF)

In June 2017, a new appeal was released for the creation of an inclusive framework that respects the Somali people's traditions, cultures, and faith. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs & Reconciliation (MoIFAR) organized the National Consultative Conference on Reconciliation held in Somalia to emphasize the need for community-based reconciliation and to draw lessons from previous reconciliation attempts. This conference was held to illustrate that the National Reconciliation Framework (NRF) will be a Somali-led and supported project - for and by the people. The NRF was validated in February 2019 during the Validation Conference in Mogadishu.

The National Reconciliation Framework (NRF) was created to provide regional and national leadership in the reconciliation process, as well as to provide a platform for ongoing and new reconciliation and peacebuilding activities across Somalia. The paradigm was then implemented across all of Somalia's regions in the second phase. The implementation phase was to take place over the next four years, guided by MoIFAR and supported by FCA, USAID, and other partners. The goal was to develop and exchange best practices for peace and reconciliation through a regional and national ownership-based philosophy.

The NRF consists of five interconnected pillars.

- A national social contract with a shared vision of a cooperative, fair, and safe society.
- Acknowledging and addressing the past.
- Restoring and rebuilding community relations.
- Building trust in government institutions and structures.
- Contributing to (economic, social, and political) reconstruction and recovery.



Photo of the 2023, reconciliation meeting in Baidoa



3. Reconciliation in the Southwest State of Somalia

Following the confrontation between opposition groups on December 23, 2022, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, president of the FGS, praised the initiative of political reconciliation in Somalia's Southwest State. Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur, the speaker of Somalia's Federal Parliament, spearheaded this move. To ensure a calm dialogue, the president travelled to Baidoa (temporarily) and inaugurated phase one of the Southwest State reconciliation meeting, which was attended by a large number of stakeholders, politicians, tribal leaders, and opposition groups. The opposition organizations struck an accord and issued a communiqué on February 5th, 2023 stating the following:

- Southwest State's traditional elders (Malaags and Sultaan) will be selecting the region's lawmakers in November 2023.
- The regional Parliament speaker and the regional president would be elected in January 2024.
- The Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs will be implementing the agreement.
- The agreement is valid up to the date of the election of the state's 2024 presidential election.

In the midst of it all, some tribes initiated their own community reconciliation without the involvement of the state government. One tribe held its first Malaag (tribal leader), a televised election attended by politicians, community elders, women, and youth. The tribe held the first ballot election for a tribal leader (Malaag) of the region and the country. This new procedure differed from previous tribal leader elections that showed transparency and unity. Another tribe, whose leader's title was revoked by the state government and not invited to the reconciliation meeting received united support from his community and was then re-admitted.



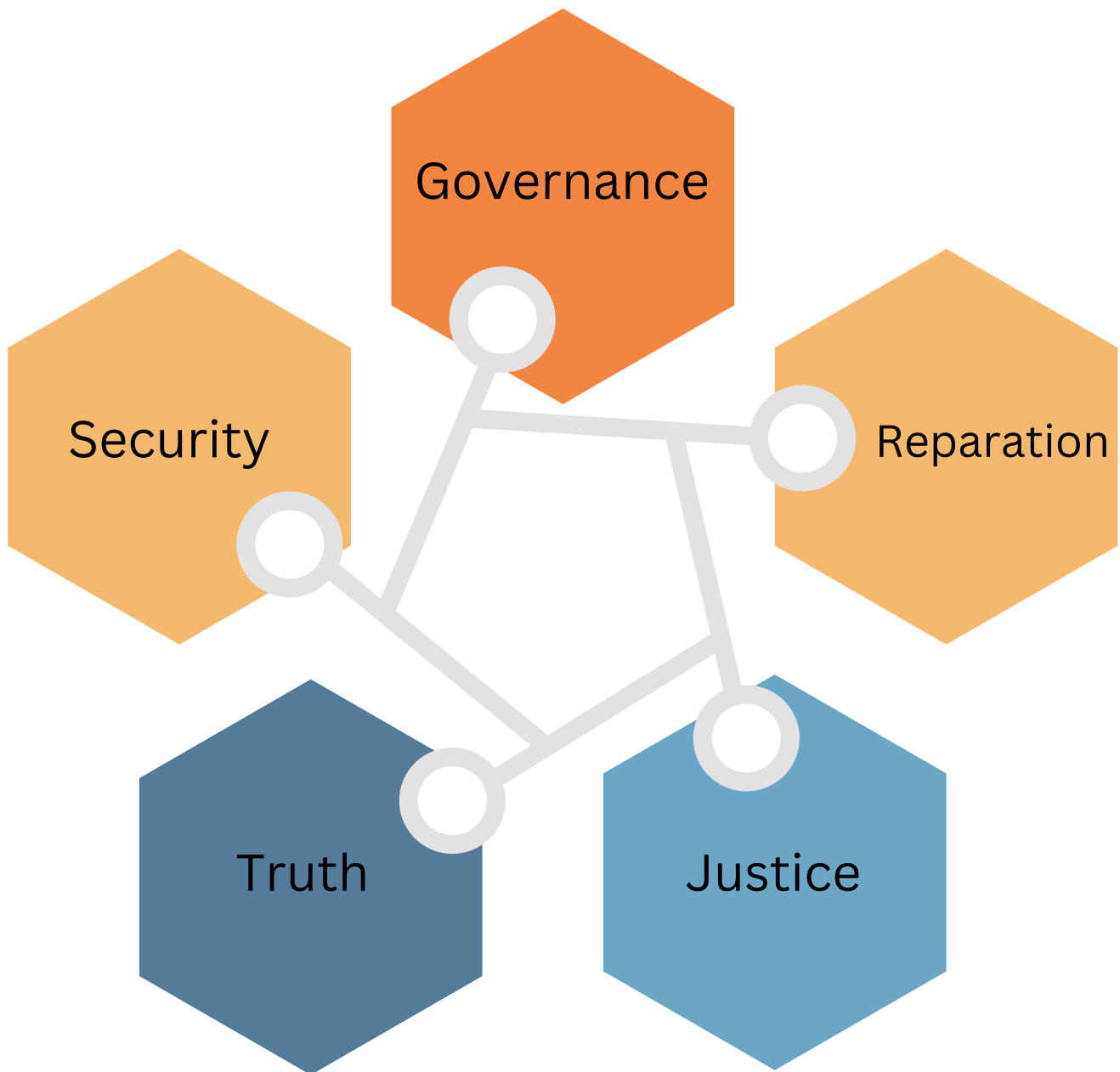
Photo of 2023 Reconciliation Meeting Baidoa



Photo of 2023 Reconciliation Meeting in Baidoa. The Malaqaqs.



Overview of universal reconciliation framework post-war.





Conclusion

In recent years, it has been acknowledged that reconciliation is a crucial aspect of post-violence reconstruction. This indicates that the war has ended, a settlement has been reached, and a new government is working to establish a new society from the ruins of the old one.

In the aftermath of prolonged violence, there is no quick fix or uncomplicated process for healing a society's wounds and divisions. It is difficult to foster trust and unity. The procedure involves the search for the truth, justice, forgiveness, and so on. Nonetheless, it is indispensable to the process of constructing a peaceful and stable society.

Reconciliation may appear unimportant when there is political pressure to form a new government, but it is counterproductive and can be more detrimental. The ability of politicians to negotiate and reach an agreement is crucial for transforming a conflict situation into one of harmony. All efforts, however, are undermined if they fail to mend fractured relationships between communities.

Each society must find its own means of reconciliation. However, only exemplifying reconciliation and establishing an independent reconciliation commission proved successful for post-conflict reconciliation in countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, and many others. Contrary to the structure of Southwest State at present. Long-term peace is the desired outcome, and achieving it is the responsibility of the government, the media, schools, civil society, and advocacy groups, as well as religious communities.



While Somalia has made significant progress towards reconciliation, the country, particularly the Southwest state, still has a long way to go before seeing meaningful results.

It is evident in order for genuine reconciliation to take place in the Southwest State, many crucial components must be in order. Primarily, a proper leadership structure is required, as well as trustworthy leaders. Furthermore, for the public to have faith in these leaders and the laws they enforce, there must be transparency surrounding discussions, elections, and decisions. In addition, putting an end to tribal divisions is necessary for the community to understand each other, come together as one, and foster peace.

Thus, despite years of conflict in Somalia and, more specifically, the Southwest State, a society can only confidently move from a divided past to a shared future by incorporating reconciliation at the levels of economy, politics, and justice.



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