

INTERNATIONAL

Somalis cling to shards of hope

JOWHAR, Somalia (AP) — All but one of the eight pink concrete school buildings in the complex where Halima Mohamed was standing had been picked clean by looters: No doors, windows or roofs.

Same with the municipal building across the street. And the sugar factory around the corner. And the house where Halima used to live with her husband and nine children before Somalia's government collapsed in 1991 and she went from being a well-off nurse to a starving beggar, selling little bags of candy in the market.

Yet there she stood with the other parents as their children played games, cheering and clapping as though they were in a real schoolyard and not a dirt lot surrounded by concrete skeletons.

"At least our children haven't lost the spirit to play," Halima, 40, said with a smile.

After nearly a decade of civil war and no central

"At least our children haven't lost the spirit to play."

— Halima Mohamed

government, some Somalis say the only way to cope is by clinging to the few shreds of good among so much bad.

Being optimistic has gotten harder in recent months in much of central and southern Somalia, where fighting among warlords has escalated to what locals say is its worst level since 1992.

Some international humanitarian groups have pulled out their foreign employees as kidnapping has become more commonplace. Guns have poured into the region, driving down the cost of an AK-47 assault rifle from \$150 to \$20.

Rival clans have been battling all along for control of the fertile central valley, where much of Somalia's food is grown, and for Ballidogle airfield and Indian

Ocean ports. Many Somalis say renewed fighting linked to the Ethiopia-Eritrea border war has left them despondent that clan leaders will ever feel forced to come to the bargaining table.

"We are hopeless about getting a government," said Fatima Haji, a 40-year-old mother of six who was a government interpreter before the government fell. Now she is out of work.

With no jobs considered suitable for men available, she said, the women do the housework as well as any service tasks they can find to make some money. All the men of the town do is sit around and chew narcotic leaves of khat.

"Our men — this is their job," she said sadly.

The fall has been far in

Jowhar, one of central Somalia's largest towns, 56 miles north of Mogadishu on the Shabelle River. Before the government collapse it was a boomtown, a place where thousands of people came to work in factories making sugar, sandals, soap, and rum.

Now people pick building material off what's left of the huge rusted hulk of the Snai Biasa sugar factory and hope to sell it for scrap. And Jowhar's main street is monument to Somalia's broken dreams: remnants of the boarding school on one side, a square of concrete blocks that used to be a hospital on the other, and on and on.

Sixteen percent of Somali children go to makeshift schools, life expectancy is 48, and with an annual income of \$110, it's hard to imagine where Somalis find optimism. But for some, that's the only way.

These days people are
(See Somalia, Page 14)

Ghana knocks report on U.S. targets

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Ghana has criticized U.S. intelligence reports that American facilities here may be terrorist targets, saying they undermine the West African nation's image as a safe haven for foreign investors.

In a statement issued late Friday, the Foreign Ministry expressed surprise and dismay at recent reports suggesting African nations such as Ghana or Mozambique — where security tends to be more lax than in the West — could be the next targets of suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden.

The exiled Saudi millionaire, who the United States accuses of ordering last year's bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, is said by U.S.

intelligence to be in the advanced stages of planning another attack.

Ghana has been committed to working closely with the United States on matters of national security, "sharing information and adopting measures aimed at combating threats posed by terrorism," the Foreign Ministry said.

It expressed regret that the announcement undermined Ghana's image of peace, stability and goodwill.

"At a time when Ghana is making serious efforts to boost investor confidence in its economy and political arrangements, such wrong impressions as the U.S. State Department statement has sought to create is grossly unfair and goes against the grain of the cooperative ties

between the two countries," it said.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to reassure the general public and all governments abroad that Ghana will continue at all times to cooperate fully and promptly with all her partners in dealing decisively with alleged or perceived threat," it said.

The U.S. Embassy in Accra did not immediately react to the statement.

There were signs of increased security in the capital with more police than usual stationed outside the embassy and companies.

A State Department official told The Associated Press that there's been a pattern of activities by the bin Laden network indicating planning for an attack.

Uganda capital elects new mayor

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — The campaign manager of the Ugandan capital's last mayor — now jailed in the United States — has won a landslide victory to replace him, according to results released Monday.

John Sebaana Kizito pulled in more than 55 percent of the vote in Sunday's balloting, the electoral commission said, beating out three other candidates.

Thousands of Kizito's supporters accompanied the mayor-elect through the streets of Kampala on Monday, waving huge photos of the 64-year-old winner.

His predecessor, Nasser Sebaggala, was

convicted in Boston in December on eight fraud counts involving phony checks. He was sentenced in February to 15 months in prison.

Kizito, like Sebaggala, is a member of the former opposition Democratic Party, which has been banned since 1986 under President Yoweri Museveni's so-called "no-party" system. Ugandans are expected to vote next June in a referendum on whether to return to multiparty politics.

More than 43 percent of Kampala's 250,000 registered voters cast ballots in the election, the electoral commission said. The city has an estimated population of 1.5 million.

WORLD BRIEFS

FIRST BRICKS LAID FOR NATION OF ISLAM FACILITY IN GHANA

The first bricks for the Nation of Islam's mosque/school and training center were laid May 18 by Mother Khadijah Farrakhan, Nation of Islam Chief of Staff Leonard F. Muhammad, a delegation of NOI officials, and chiefs and imams from nearby Muslim communities. The facility will be located in a community called Galilea on the edge of Weija Lake on the outskirts of Accra, an area of development where the population of Muslims is increasing. "The timing of this ground-breaking ceremony could not have been better," said Dr. Mohammed Chambas, Ghana's deputy minister of education, citing the opening of the fifth African-African American Summit. "Our ability to take advantage of expanded trade and business relations will depend on the education and training we give to our people, particularly our youth. That's why this project is important."

INTERNET SITE ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LAUNCHED

WASHINGTON (IPS) — The U.S.-based Harvard School of Public Health recently announced the formal launch of a new Internet site designed to provide continuously updated information and a global debate about major reproductive health issues. The Global Reproductive Health Forum site, <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu>, offers an archive of on-line information about gender issues and reproductive rights, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, contraception, family planning, abortion and maternal health. Unlike most on-line resources, however, GRHF is soliciting the participation of women, particularly from the developing world. It is organizing new networks in South Asia, Latin America and West Africa. The GRHF was partly inspired by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. "Internet technologies have great potential to help people participate in the economy, get educated, and access information and services that are vital to their well-being," said Michael Reich, who oversees the project at Harvard.

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