

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 19, 2023

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Power:

We write to express concern for the victims of the ongoing flood disaster in Somalia and urge USAID to focus its efforts on assisting the affected population. As you know, October to December is the traditional rainy season in East Africa, where it is known as *Deyr*. This year, the Deyr has been exacerbated by the El Nino and Indian Ocean Dipole weather phenomena, causing widespread flooding and devastation in the Horn of Africa.

Somalia has been hit particularly hard. As of November 29, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that at least 2 million people have been affected, including 746,000 who have been displaced.¹ Thousands of people have been cut off from markets and supplies or marooned in isolated villages. Roads, bridges and airstrips are in ruins.² In addition, a growing number of flood victims lack access to safe water and proper sanitation, which increases the risk of water-borne diseases.³

The catastrophic flooding in Somalia comes only six months after the country endured one of the worst droughts in recorded history, which spanned two years and pushed millions to the brink of starvation. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an estimated 1.5 million children under the age of 5 are expected to face acute malnutrition by July 2024.⁴ The crisis is exacerbated by the ongoing military conflict that continues to drive people from their homes.

Minnesota is home to one of the world's largest populations of Somali immigrants and refugees, and many in the community have family in Somalia who have been affected by the flooding. Our

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-floods-update-dg-echo-un-ocha-noaa-echo-daily-flash-29-november-2023#:~:text=As%20of%2029%20November%2C%20according,4%2C700%20houses%20have%20been%20destroyed.>

² <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-midst-disaster-devastating-rains-and-floods-spread>

³ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-2023-deyr-season-floods-situation-report-no-2-24-november-2023>

⁴ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-midst-disaster-devastating-rains-and-floods-spread>

Somali community is working hard to send aid back to Somalia and bring national and international attention to the country's plight, but federal assistance is needed.⁵

We urge the Department to keep aid to Somalia at the forefront of your operations as you work to provide disaster relief around the world. With that, we request that you provide answers to the following questions about your operations in Somalia:

- How has USAID provided assistance to Somalia in past years, and how has USAID bolstered its efforts after the recent flooding?
- How can the Somali community in the United States best support USAID to send relief back to Somalia?
- How can Congress best equip USAID with the resources and authorities it needs to respond to climate disasters in Somalia and the Horn of Africa?

We are eager to work with you on ensuring that Somalia receives the humanitarian aid it needs to rebuild after these devastating natural disasters. Thank you for all that you and your organization do to respond to disasters and conflicts around the world. Your aid saves lives.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

⁵ <https://www.startribune.com/minnesotas-somali-community-rallying-to-support-its-flood-devastated-homeland/600323227/?refresh=true>

Angie Craig

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

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Dean Phillips
Member of Congress