

Beat: News

71 killed, hundreds injured in warlords; battle for Somali port

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USPA News - Fierce fighting between rival warlords in Somalia's key southern port city of Kismayo killed at least 71 people last month, although the total number of deaths is believed to be significantly higher, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report released on Friday. Several groups have been fighting for control of Kismayo in recent weeks, causing a large number of casualties and resulting in several groups claiming leadership over the Jubaland regional administration.

Among them is former Islamist warlord Ahmed Madobe, leader of the powerful Ras Kamboni militia, who was declared Jubaland's president by a constitutional assembly in May. "Recent fierce fighting between rival groups ... continues to have a profound impact on civilians and humanitarian aid work in the Lower Jubba region," the Somalia office of the WHO said in a report on Friday. It said at least 71 people were killed and 243 others were reported injured. Among the 314 casualties, which include five children under the age of 5, at least 187 were taken to Kismayo General Hospital while 60 were referred to hospitals in Mogadishu and 51 to Galkayo for further treatment. Most patients suffered fractures, head and chest injuries, and almost 40 patients had to undergo surgical operations. "Injuries and deaths outside the hospital are estimated to be much higher but cannot be confirmed," the office said in its report. "WHO is concerned about this high number of casualties reported in the month of June. From January to June 2013, 661 weapon-related injuries were treated in Kismayo General Hospital; 29 under the age of 5 years." Kismayo remains a volatile area, with observed increase in fighting among warring factions, and other incidences of violence such as landmines and hand grenade attacks. Due to the ongoing conflict, health officials have been forced to delay a vital polio vaccination campaign until the security situation improves.

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