

Refugees Originating from Somalia

Primary Languages: Somali, Mai Mai (dialect of Somali language)

Primary Religion: Sunni Muslim

Major Holidays: Ramadan (one lunar month of fasting from sun up to sun down; this month changes year to year), Eid Al-Fitr (celebrating end of Ramadan) Eid Al-Adha (Haj/pilgrimage, festival of sacrifice in honor of Abraham). Friday is the holy day of the week; 'weekends' were Thursday/Friday instead of Saturday/Sunday.



Somali-Somali



Somali-Bantu

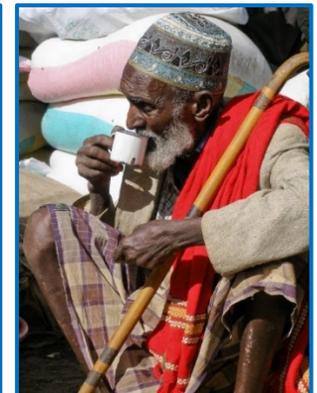


Historical Background

- The Republic of Somalia was formed in 1960 by the federation of a former Italian colony and a British protectorate. There were two democratically elected Somali presidents that followed Independence: Adan Abdulle Osman, then Abdirashid Ali Shermalke who was eventually assassinated days in a coup d'etat.
- Mohamed Siad Barre held dictatorial rule over the country from October 1969 until January 1991, when he was overthrown in a civil war waged by clan-based guerrillas.
- Somalia was without a functioning centralized government from 1991-2012.
- As of 2017, over 870,000 Somalis were registered as refugees in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, while an estimated 2.1 million men, women and children are displaced within the country itself.
- Refugees born and raised in camps outside of Somalia do not have birthright citizenship in those camp countries. For example, a refugee student may have been born in Kenya, but that does not make them Kenyan.
- Some Bantu people were brought to Somalia as slaves around two centuries ago, and may feel they are still treated as foreigners in some ways. This history, coupled with their cultural, linguistic, and physical differences, distinguishes them from Somali-Somali. While most Somali-Bantu speak and understand the Somali language, they may prefer the Mai-Mai dialect or another indigenous language if available.

Traditional Dress

The traditional woman's head covering is called a *hijab*, the full body dress is an *abaya*. Women are expected to dress modestly, which includes covering their hair in public. Pants are not generally accepted attire for women, but may be worn under a skirt. The traditional wrap for men is called *macawiis*. The snug-fitting hat men wear is a *qofe*.





Prayer Accommodation

Devout Muslim students *may* wish to pray during the school day. There are five calls to prayer per day. Times change based upon the calendar. Typically, only one prayer occurs during the school day (around midday). For local prayer times go to:

http://icomaha.org/Prayer_Schedule.php. Ablutions are required before prayer; this involves washing the hands first, then water into nose and out, wash the face, then arms, then wet the head and ears, last wash the feet. This process takes about 5 minutes. Prayers require a clean, private space and take about 5 minutes to complete.

Classroom Considerations

Particularly devout families may choose to exclude their child from music and certain art assignments. Some interpretations of the religion do not allow 'idol worship', which includes drawing living creatures such as people or animals. Landscapes, buildings, etc. are fine. These exceptions are only made if the family requests them; they are not proactively offered by schools. Also, please be aware that most Somali parents will not want their child photographed aside from the yearly school identification photo.



Nutritional Considerations

Muslim students will not be able to eat any pork products at school, or anything that has come into contact with pork (food cooked in the same oil, food touched by gloves that have touched pork, etc.). Since American food looks very different than food students are accustomed to eating, they may require assistance in identifying which foods are safe for them to eat. Somali people traditionally eat with their right hand rather than silverware. Sharing food is common.

Naming Standards

Muslim names are based on a genealogical system. People do not have first, middle, and last names, but rather a chain of names:

- 1 - First name (personal name)
- 2 - Father's name
- 3 - Grandfather's name
- 4 – Great-grandfather's name, and so on...

A three-part name is legally determined upon immigrating to the U.S.: personal name, father's name, grandfather's name. Thus siblings, both male and female, will share the same second and third names. Parents will not have the same "last" name as their children or their spouse. Women do not change their names when married.

Names commonly mispronounced by Americans:

- 'Kh' is not a hard 'K' sound, but rather more of a guttural 'Huh' sound, almost like you're clearing your throat..
Examples: Khalif = Huh-leef Sulekha = Soo-lay-huh
- Ayan = Eye-yon

Vowels are most commonly pronounced:

- A = Ah** (as in 'awesome')
- E = Eh** (as in 'egg')
- I = Ee** (as in 'ski')
- O = Oh** (as in 'only')
- U = Oo** (as in 'tulip')

Family Engagement

Men and women typically do not shake hands with each other. If greeting someone from the opposite sex, place your hand over your heart. Be aware that children are not supposed to make direct eye contact with adults; it is considered disrespectful. Parents may not be literate in their primary language, so verbal interpretation is best.



Flag of Somalia



Somali Dish



Dadaab Refugee Camp