

African Union troops 'shell Somali civilians'

By [Global Research](#)

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African Union troops in Somalia have been accused of indiscriminately shelling a Mogadishu neighbourhood after an attempted suicide bomb attack on their base.

At least 22 people were killed in the car bomb blast and an ensuing firefight on Saturday, witnesses and medics said.

Several homes were hit by artillery fire just minutes after the vehicle blew up, residents of the Hodan neighbourhood said.

"We are civilians - we don't have weapons - yet we are caught in the middle of the fighting from the African troops who allegedly came here for peacekeeping," Adam Abdi said.

"This area was bombed more than six times but there are no military bases here."

Mosques hit

Locals were also angered after two people were reportedly killed and two mosques hit during the violence.

"First, they hit the minaret, 10 minutes later they shelled the mosque, this shows how much they hate Islam," the imam of the Nawawi mosque told Al Jazeera.

"I appeal to the Muslims and brothers to support their brothers here against their enemies, whether the Ethiopians or from Burundi."

About 3,000 peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi are in Somalia as part of the African Union mission (Amisom) to stabilise the country.

Nine AMISOM troops have been killed in Somalia since the first Ugandan contingent was deployed in March 2007.

The incident came just days before additional troops were expected to arrive in the Somali capital to bolster the force.

AU denial

Ramtane Lamamra, an AU peace security commissioner, condemned the attempted suicide attack, which he called "a cowardly terrorist act that goes against achieving peace and stability in Somalia".

A spokesman for the Ugandan military said that the AU forces had not opened fired after the blast.

Somalia is wracked by violence with near-daily attacks on troops loyal to the largely powerless UN-backed transitional government.

Much of the country is controlled by armed opposition groups who have captured many of the towns and villages seized by government and Ethiopian troops from the Islamic Courts Union in late 2006.

The interim government has failed to bring stability to the Horn of Africa nation, where more than 16,000 people have been killed in the past two years and one million others driven from their homes.

Some analysts have said the the recent withdrawal of Ethiopian troops could create a power vacuum as opposition forces scramble for control.

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