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The El Ali Meteorite Heist: A Tale of Betrayal, Corruption and Tragedy in Somalia.



El-Ali Meteorite – 16 metric ton (Image taken in 2015)

Introduction

In early 2020, the El Ali meteorite, one of Somalia's most significant and valuable meteorological discoveries, was stolen in a violent robbery that left the El Ali community devastated. The attack, which resulted in the death of 25 community members, including Hassan Cabdi Ibraahim, has been linked to a disturbing collaboration between the militant group Al-Shabaab and elements within the Somali government led by president Farmaajo & his PM Hassan Ali Kheyre. This report, based on interviews with eyewitnesses, community leaders, and corroborated by online sources & local media outlets in Somalia, details the tragic event and its broader implications.

El Ali Community

El Ali District is situated in Hiiraan region, Somalia and it is inhabited by indigenous clan known as Derissame who are camel herders. The local indigenous community dresses in a special way where they dress (two simple pieces of clothes, which cover the shoulders and the lower party of the body as skirt and their preferred colour is white) and they let their hair grow until it becomes more and grows to form afro hairstyle.

See image below:



Images @courtesy of SONNA

The Robbery Incident

The El Ali meteorite, discovered outskirts of the town of El Ali in the Hiiraan region, quickly attracted attention due to its rarity and value. However, this attention also drew the interest of Al-Shabaab militants and, reportedly, corrupt elements within the Somali government. On the day of the robbery, heavily armed men, identified as Al-Shabaab militants, stormed the site where the meteorite was held. The attackers faced little resistance from the indigenous community that preserved the meteorite as part of its cultural heritage and swiftly seized the meteorite, killing 25 community members and injuring several others, including Hassan Cabdi Ibrahim, a respected young figure in old El Ali district.

Aadan Cali Seedow, El Ali DC and community militia leader, Maxamed Miinlaawe, spoke to the media in Mogadishu in March 5, 2024 and confirmed the armed robbery of the El Ali Meteorite and the killing of its community members during the attack according to this report

<https://youtu.be/Viy4tYIDsLs?feature=shared>

Dahir Amin Jesow Somalia Federal Government Parliament MP, condemned the robbery of the El Ali meteorite and the killing of the community members in several interviews with local media outlets in Somalia.

According to multiple sources, the robbery was not merely an act of banditry by Al-Shabaab but was facilitated by government officials, including the head of NISA, Fahad Yasin, Prime Minister Ali Kheyre, and President Abdullahi Farmaajo. These officials allegedly provided false legal documentation to support the export and sale of the meteorite, effectively collaborating with the terrorists to rob the El Ali community of a culturally and traditionally significant object.

Eyewitness Accounts

****Ahmed Mohamed Nuh, Journalist****

Ahmed Mohamed Nuh, a journalist who has extensively covered the region, described the scene of the robbery. "It was a coordinated attack," he said. "The militants arrived well-prepared and knew exactly what they were after. When Hassan tried to resist, they shot him without hesitation. What's worse is the betrayal by those in power who were supposed to protect us."

****Nabadoon Ibraahim Xaaji Yarow, El Ali community Traditional Leader, nominated after the severe illness of Ogaas Hassan Yusuf Idris.****

Nabadoon Ibraahim Xaaji Yarow, a traditional leader and elder in El Ali, expressed his grief and outrage. "The meteorite was more than just a stone; it was part of our heritage. Twenty community members including the young vibrant, Hassan died defending what belonged to our people. The involvement of government officials in this robbery is a disgrace to our nation."

****Ibraahim Cabdi Ibraahim, Brother of the Deceased****

Ibraahim Cabdi Ibraahim, the brother of the slain Hassan, spoke through tears as he recounted the tragic events. "Hassan knew the value of that meteorite, not just in money but in what it meant to our community. He died trying to protect it from those who wanted to take it from us, including our own national leaders who betrayed us."

****Hassan Hilowle Abukar, Indigenous Community Rights Activist****

Hassan Hilowle Abukar, an advocate for indigenous rights, emphasized the broader implications of the robbery. "This incident is a stark example of how both state and non-state actors collude to exploit our people. The meteorite was a symbol of our cultural identity, and its theft represents a deep violation of our rights."

****Hussein Husni, Former Regional Minister from Hirshabelle****

Former Regional Minister Hussein Husni condemned the government's role in the robbery. "The involvement of high-ranking officials in this crime is appalling. It shows the lengths to which they will go to exploit our nation's resources, even if it means working with terrorists."

Online Reports and Confirmation

Various online reports corroborate the accounts provided by the El Ali community members, confirming Al-Shabaab's involvement in the armed robbery. Additionally, these reports highlight the disturbing role of Somali government officials in facilitating the theft. According to these sources, government documents were falsified to legitimize (Kureym Company) to export and sell the meteorite, with profits likely shared between Al-Shabaab and corrupt government officials. The newly established Kureym Mining and Rocks Company in 2020 was run by: Abdikarim Farasle, Abdi Shigshigow, Noor Hassan, Abukar Murasade and Faqi Qubeys. The last two names (e.g., Abukar Murasade & Faqi Qubeys) invite suspicion, as they are not practical names used by Somalis but rather are extracted from clan names like; Mursade and Qubesy, demonstrating that misleading names were used to mislead the truth and the public view.

This link contains a lot of facts, both contradictory and correct facts;

<https://people.duke.edu/~ng46/El-Ali/>

Miraculously, the El Ali meteorite was intercepted at a check point outside Mogadishu (18 km west of Mogadishu) in the area known as (Siinka Dheer) by the police, as announced by the police spokesman; Colonel Sadiiq Aadan Doodishe in February 20, 2020, was stored in the most notorious prison in Mogadishu, known as (Godka Jilicow). What the government of Somalia did next, confirmed its collusion and involvement in the crime, as the government released the El Ali meteorite to the alleged Kureym company which sold many parts of the meteorite to Universities in Canada & USA and then shipped it to China for sale.

Taken all together – The robbery of the El Ali meteorite is a tragic event that not only highlights the vulnerability of local communities to armed groups like Al-Shabaab but also exposes the deep corruption within the Somali government. The collaboration between state and non-state actors in this robbery has left the El Ali community in mourning and has raised serious questions about the integrity of the Somali government.

This report serves as both a documentation of the courage of the El Ali community in the face of betrayal and a call to action for the protection of Somalia's cultural heritage and the rights of its people. It underscores the urgent need for accountability and reform to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

AAD Research Team