

Somali children die in mine blast

Five children who were playing with a landmine in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, were killed when the device exploded, witnesses say.

The children between the ages of six and 12 were playing football before they found it. One of them picked it up and threw it against a wall.

One of the children's mothers said they were on their way to mosque for Friday prayers when they had stopped to play.

Somalia is awash with guns and other weapons after 16 years of civil war.

An extensive operation to confiscate weapons in the city in house-to-house searches has been under way since late April, when Ethiopian-backed government forces drove insurgents from the northern suburbs.

Ethiopian soldiers have been in Somalia since December, when they helped oust an Islamist group that had taken control of the capital and surrounding areas.

Leg lost

The BBC's Mohammed Olad Hassan in Mogadishu says the explosion occurred around the livestock market in the north-east, where supporters of the ousted Union of Islamic Courts and other insurgents live.

"The mine went off and caused a huge explosion killing five children and three other people passing near by," local resident Ashkiro Mo'alin told the BBC by phone.

"We sent the children to the mosque to attend Friday prayers but they stopped on the way and started playing football before they died in the explosion," said Shamsa Abdi Mahdi, the mother of a six-year-old boy who died.

An imam at a nearby mosque said a 16-year-old girl had lost her right leg and had been rushed to hospital. Two others had less serious injuries, he said.

Our correspondent says the insurgent groups are known to plant roadside bombs and mines to target government officials, soldiers and Ethiopians when they pass by.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/6277310.stm>

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