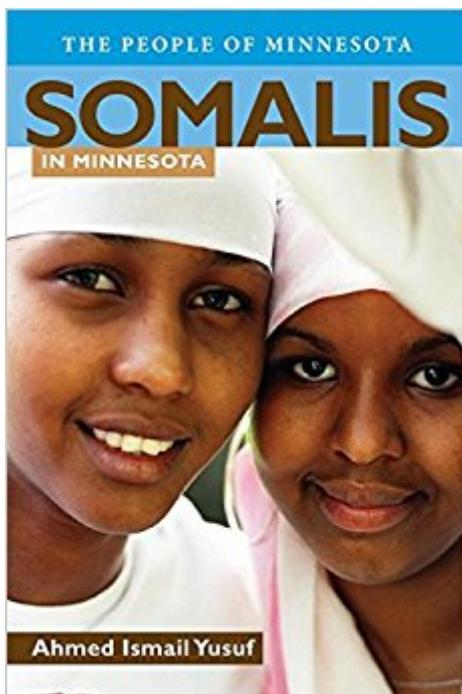


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# Somalis In Minnesota (The People Of Minnesota)



## Synopsis

The story of Somalis in Minnesota begins with three words: sahan, war, and martisoor. Driven from their homeland by civil war and famine, one group of Somali sahan, pioneers, discovered well-paying jobs in the city of Marshall, Minnesota. Soon the war, news, traveled that not only was employment available but the people in this northern state, so different in climate from their African homeland, were generous in martisoor, hospitality, just like the Somali people themselves. The diaspora began in 1992, and today more than fifty thousand Somalis live in Minnesota, the most of any state. Many have made their lives in small towns and rural areas, and many more have settled in Minneapolis, earning this city the nickname "Little Somalia" or "Little Mogadishu." Amiable guide Ahmed Yusuf introduces readers to these varied communities, exploring economic and political life, religious and cultural practices, and successes in education and health care. He also tackles the controversial topics that command newspaper headlines: alleged links to terrorist organizations and the recruitment of young Somali men to fight in the civil war back home. This newest addition to the people of Minnesota series captures the story of the state's most recent immigrant group at a pivotal time in its history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a great primer/starting point to learn more about Somali culture. It is very easy to read and structured well.

In the 1980s the young country of Somalia found itself stuck between two superpowers and wracked by violence and misery. A few years earlier, Somali General Siad Barre, backed by the Soviet Union, had invaded and claimed lands in neighboring Ethiopia. The Soviet Union then surprisingly switched alliances and supported Ethiopia. Barre called on the United States and Britain for help, but in the end he had to pull out of Ethiopia. Subsequent coup attempts and executions destabilized and divided Somalia into war zones. Famine followed. International food aid couldn't penetrate the region's carnage and corruption and the U.N. sanctioned humanitarian military intervention. An attempt to capture warlord Farrah Aidid, who had attacked Pakistani troops, led to the infamous "Black Hawk Down" incident. American troops were killed and President Clinton ordered the U.S. to leave. All other countries followed suit, leaving a smoldering Somalia behind. With few options remaining, people fled. A particular group of refugees went to Kenya and, following more indescribable hardship, some eventually found their way to San Diego. Lacking opportunities in California, a 1992 help wanted ad for a food processing plant inspired some to move to the considerably more frigid climate of Marshall, Minnesota. They found work almost immediately, encouraging others northward. More and more followed. They established communities in Minnesota's welcoming and relatively tolerant atmosphere. Even more followed. Soon, some relocated to Minneapolis and continued building Somali communities. This continued until Minnesota, particularly the city of Minneapolis, could claim the largest population of Somalis in the United States. The small book "Somalis In Minnesota" tells this inspiring and often heartbreakingly story of perseverance in the words of Somalis themselves. Three Somali words appear prominently in this tiny book: "Sahan" (or, roughly, "pioneer"), "war" (meaning "news," not combat) and "Martisoor" (or "hospitality"). Basically, the "Sahans" that made their way to Minnesota spread "war" (news) to others of the "Martisoor" awaiting them in the North Star State. Hospitality in particular remains a central tenet of Somali culture. As the book explains, the word "Somali" means "go milk for yourself," referring to the hospitable practice of allowing guests to help themselves to milkable livestock. Though many Somalis did find hospitality in Minnesota, the book also points out that things were by no means perfect. Many faced discrimination in housing, jobs and education. Language barriers in particular left many vulnerable to fraud or intimidation. Most Somalis also practice Islam, so religious tensions rose, especially following 9/11. Some Somali money-wiring companies were closed by the FBI. Not only that, the 2008 suicide bombing incident in northern Somalia exposed a group of young Minneapolis Somalis training with al-Shabaab. Voluminous FBI investigations followed. Further arrests and convictions in 2011, coupled with media coverage of "Somali Gangs," led to much unwanted attention for the Somali community. Nonetheless, the

community and Minnesota seem to have weathered this storm relatively unscathed so far. Tensions didn't rise as far as Somalis feared and outright hate incidents remained isolated and few in number. The book even highlights stories where Minnesotans went out of their way to protect Somalis from backlash, such as a Marshall Police officer personally asking a Somali family if they had faced any harassment and Project 504, which helped Somalis deal with unscrupulous landlords. Despite past and present challenges, Somalis have overcome and built a solid community in Minnesota complete with Somali doctors, police officers, businesses, malls and community services. A Somali culture and artifact museum is also planned. Through all this and more, Somalis have become a genuine part of Minnesota itself. "Somalis In Minnesota" provides a great high-level introduction to Somali culture in Minnesota, but its brevity can leave an aftertaste of "not enough." A breezy reading through its 70 some pages of content feels more like a mere starting point for this voluminous topic. Though some may want more after finishing it, the book was likely intended as an easily accessible general introduction, not as an exhaustive study. At this it excels. As Somalis have now become an intrinsic part of Minnesota, even outside of Minneapolis, everyone should learn something about their story and their culture. "Somalis In Minnesota" is a great place to start.

As I am in the mid of information collection for a book show for Alberta Somali Media, an eight year old radio show on CJSR radio and our just established website [...] therefore, Somalis in Minnesota is a great tool and rich source for my homework. As many Somalis would be, I am very thankful for his work while he is on the to of my list for the prospect guests of the new show. Thanks Mr. Yusuf for the work and for the service of excellent delivery.

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