

# Troubled Waters

SOMALI PIRACY



**1** Pirate militiamen stand among fishing boats at a port in Hobyo, Somalia, October 2010.  
© Jehad Nga/The New York Times/Redux/laif

*They kept us in a state of terror. Even when I could not see the torturing, I could hear the screams.*

Dipendra Rathore, crewmember of a hijacked ship  
(Guardian, 2011)



In May 2010, 21-year-old Dipendra Rathore was training to become a naval officer onboard a Mumbai-owned chemical carrier when pirates hijacked the ship, 120 miles south of Oman. All 22 members of the crew were taken hostage. Eight months later, after mental and physical torture at the hands of their captors, they were released following the payment of a hefty ransom.

Experiences such as Dipendra Rathore's shed light on the harsh reality of hostage conditions. As discussed in the chapter on Somali

piracy in this volume, these conditions appear to be deteriorating despite a decrease in overall hostage-taking at sea. Interviewed Somali pirates acknowledge their growing frustration—and increasing tendency to take that frustration out on hostages—as deployments of naval forces and private security companies on ships intensify and ransom negotiations are prolonged. As state and private actors continue to seek effective responses to stem pirate activity, however, the fate of the 199 hostages being held as of March 2012 remains uncertain (ICC CCS, n.d.).

This photo essay begins by considering the root causes of Somali piracy: strong criminal networks, profitability, and a lack of alternative economic opportunities. It then turns to the measures undertaken to respond to pirate activities—including local resistance, deployments of NATO vessels and private security companies, and incarceration.

Somali pirates have a significant presence at sea and on land, with team members fulfilling various roles, whether as part of an attack team on the water or as armed guards onshore (**Photos 1, 3**). Ransom proceeds extend inland, benefitting not only pirate group members, but also local businesses and communities as well as armed groups that provide security (**Photo 5**). Pirates report that 30 per cent of their profits are regularly paid to government officials (**Photo 2**). Given the lack of economic and development prospects onshore, pirate groups can easily hire new recruits who are ready to risk their lives for a sum of money unobtainable elsewhere. Communities are left with few means with which to provide alternative livelihoods (**Photos 4, 6**).

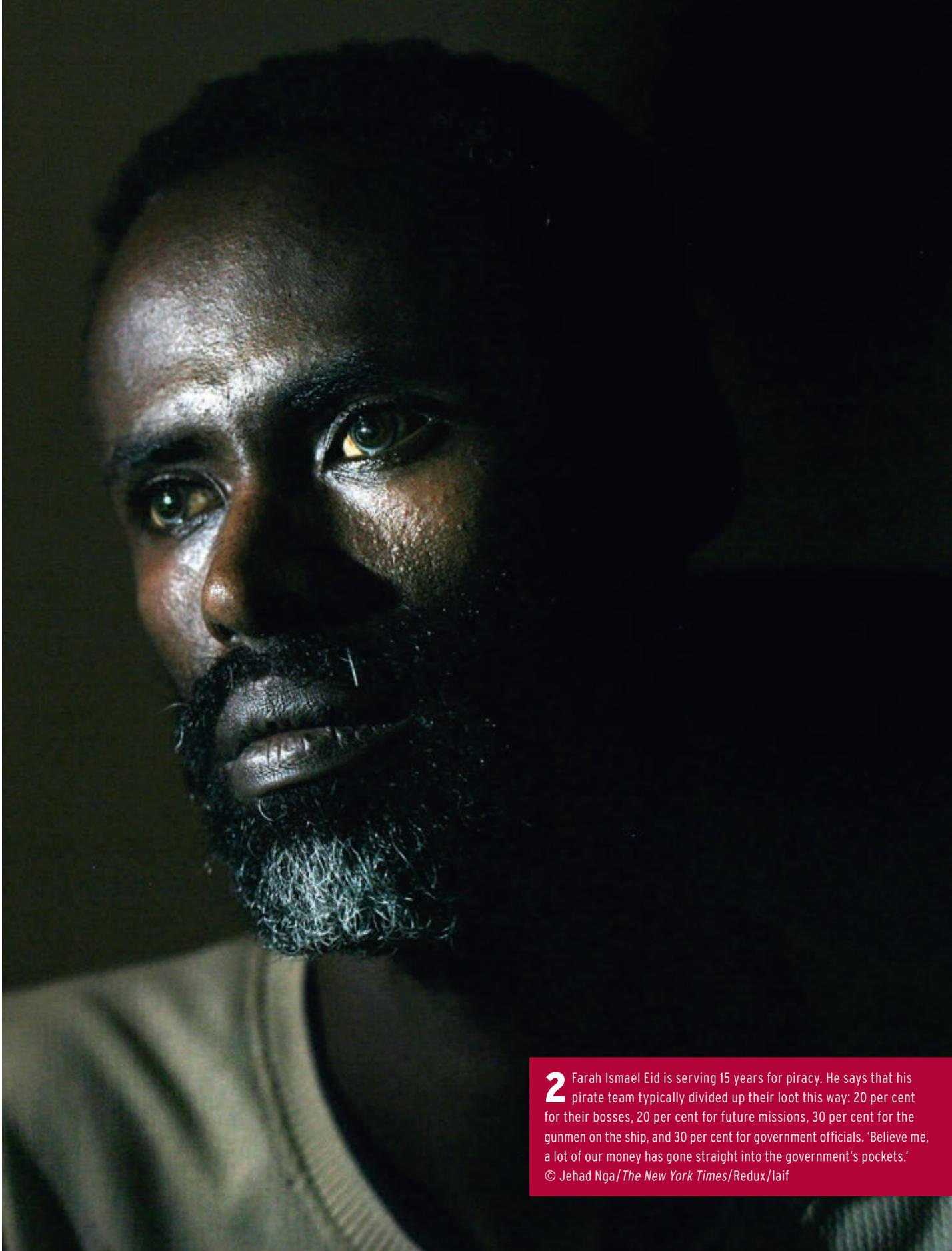
At sea, the area of pirate operations continues to expand, stretching from Somalia's coastline to the Gulf of Aden and large parts of the Indian Ocean. In 2008, a series of high-profile hijackings, including that of the Ukrainian cargo ship MV Faina, attracted international attention (**Photos 8, 9**; Leff, 2012; Lewis, 2009). Since then, many pirates have become increasingly violent during attacks and ransom negotiation periods. Although pirates have a financial interest in keeping their hostages alive, reports of torture and intimidation, and of the destruction of ships they are unable to capture, point to an escalation in the use of force at sea (**Photos 7, 12**).

The international community has stepped up efforts to patrol waters under pirate threat and has been deploying three naval coalitions to the 'high-risk area' since 2008 (**Photos 10, 11**). In Somaliland, an autonomous and stable region of Somalia, coast guards work to secure local waters (**Photo 13**). The high number of attempted pirate attacks has also prompted states and shipping companies to rely more and more on private armed guards to secure their vessels (**Photo 15**). Yet, while private security companies seem to have contributed to the recent reduction in successful hijackings, their use is also costly, poses complex legal challenges, and raises concerns over further escalations at sea.

The increasingly real possibility of capture and longer prison terms for pirates also contribute to this cycle of violence, with pirates claiming that higher risks prompt them to use greater force (**Photos 14, 16-17**). Meanwhile, Somali prisons struggle to find space for growing numbers of captured pirates (**Photo 18**). The economic incentives for piracy are clear, but the stakes for Somali pirates are high, and getting higher. Meanwhile, for those sailing within sight of the pirates, the risks have never been greater.

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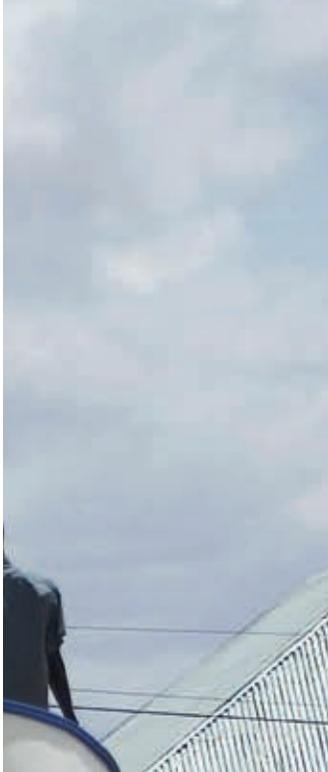


**2** Farah Ismael Eid is serving 15 years for piracy. He says that his pirate team typically divided up their loot this way: 20 per cent for their bosses, 20 per cent for future missions, 30 per cent for the gunmen on the ship, and 30 per cent for government officials. 'Believe me, a lot of our money has gone straight into the government's pockets.'

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**3** A truck passes through Galcayo on its way to Hobyto to supply pirates with boats, October 2009.  
© Veronique de Viguerie/Getty Images





**4** Somali elders meet to discuss some of the challenges faced by the town of Hobyo, including finding an alternative to piracy as a means of making a living. © Roberto Schmidt/AFP Photo



**5** Armed militiamen and a pirate walk on a rocky outcrop on the coast of Hobyo, as a hijacked Korean supertanker lies anchored on the horizon, August 2010. Both armed groups often work together and act as security forces for the region. © Roberto Schmidt/AFP Photo

COAST

PARIS

LACAG KU SHUBIDDA  
MOBILADA



Telecommunication  
**Golis**  
PERI PADE



MOBILADA





**6** A sign painted on a wall in Garowe, capital of Puntland and the home of several prominent and lesser-known pirates, reads 'No pirates allowed'. May 2009.  
© Michael Kamber/*The New York Times*/Redux/laif



**7** Suspected masked pirates guard the captain of a 24-member crew taken hostage when their Mozambican-flagged fishing vessel, Vega 5, was seized by Somali pirates, 25 April 2011. © Reuters





**8** Armed Somali pirates watch over the MV Faina crew following a request by the US Navy to monitor the crew's health and welfare. The ship was released in February 2009 following a ransom payment of USD 3.2 million. © AFP Photo/Getty Images

**9** Somali pirates hijack the Ukrainian MV Faina on 25 September 2008. The cargo ship carried more than 30 Soviet-era tanks and other weapons destined for Southern Sudan. © Reuters/US Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs

**10** A NATO armada, including ships from Germany, Turkey, and the UK, en route to the Indian Ocean to police the waters off the coast of Somalia. © Pio Luigi Cotrufo/AFP Photo/Getty





**11** A magnetic board on the German ship Mecklenburg-Vorpommern shows the positions of various nations stationed in the Gulf of Aden. © Joerg Gläscher/laif

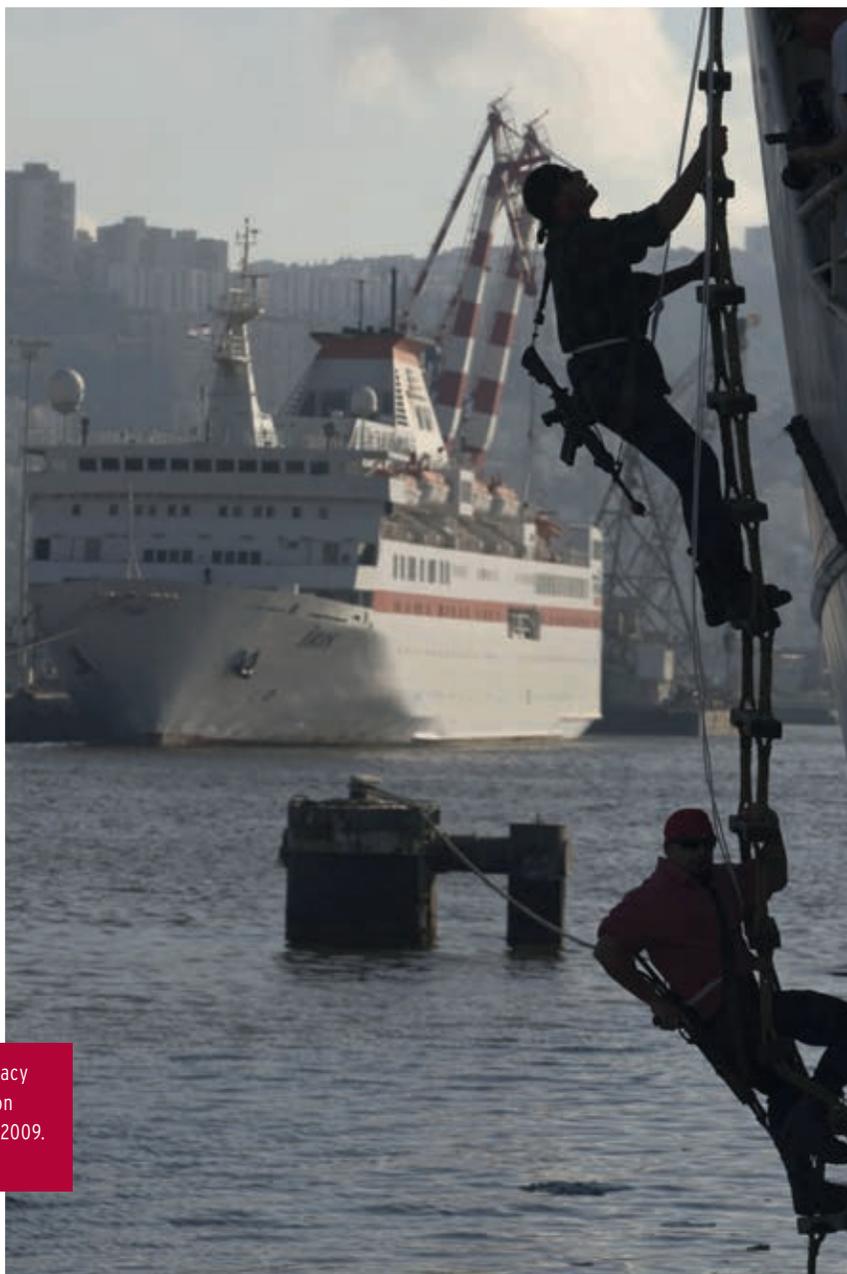


**12** The MV Pacific Express is towed to the port of Mombasa after having been torched by suspected Somali pirates on 21 September 2011. Members of the crew had refused to open the cabin doors when the ship was hijacked. © AP Photo



**13** Members of the Somaliland coast guard patrol the port of Berbera, September 2011. © Sarah Hunter

**14** Search and seizure team members from the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf close in to apprehend suspected pirates in the Gulf of Aden, 12 February 2009.  
© Jason Zalasky/AFP Photo/Getty Images



**15** Trainees take part in an anti-piracy drill during a maritime protection training programme, Haifa, Israel, June 2009.  
© Baz Ratner/Reuters



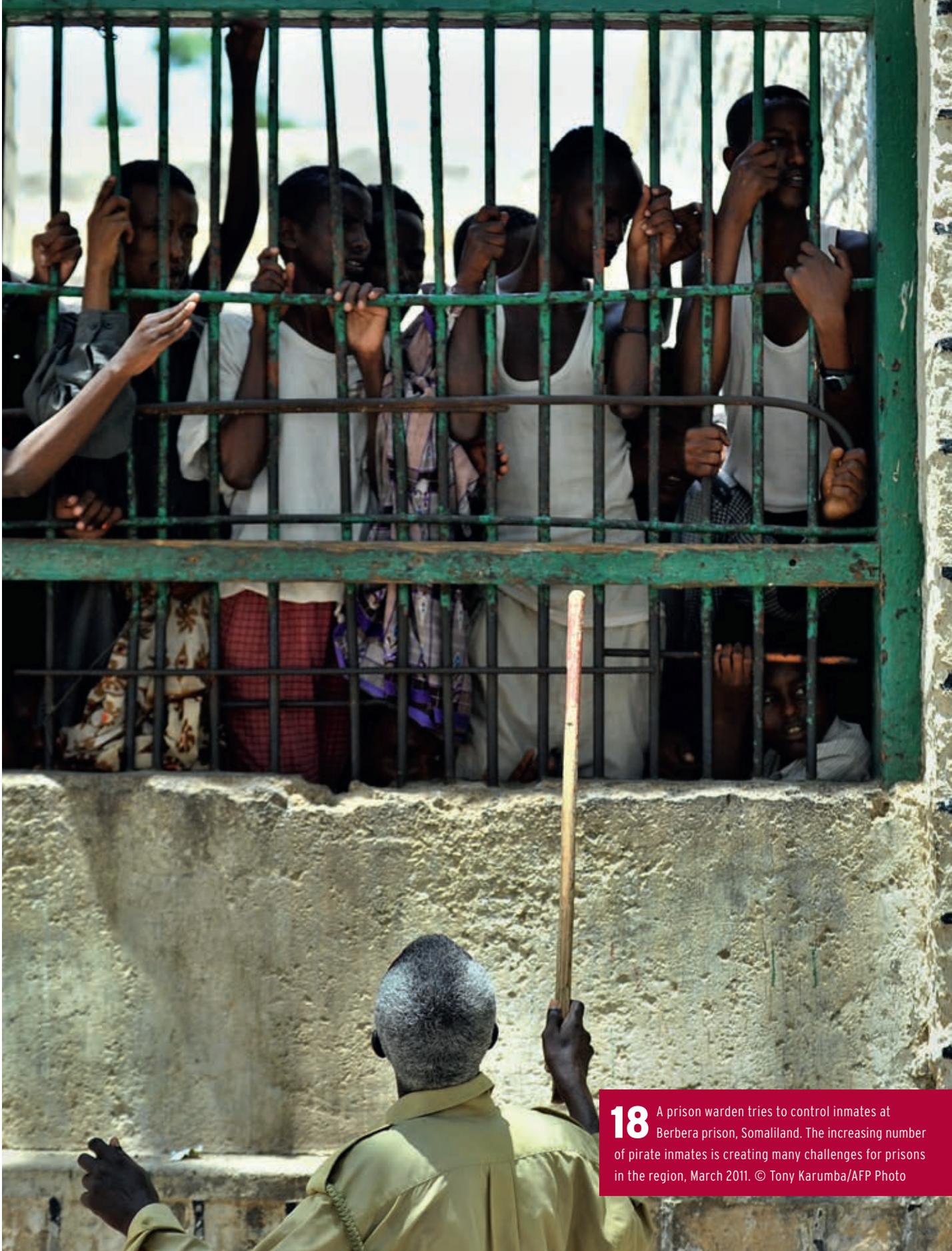
**16** One of 13 Iranian seamen whose fishing vessel was hijacked by suspected pirates prays on the ship's deck. The vessel was rescued by members of the US Navy, January 2012. © Tyler Hicks/*The New York Times*/Redux/laif



**17** Suspected pirates on board the Iranian fishing vessel on which they were captured, January 2012.

© Tyler Hicks/*The New York Times*/Redux/laif





**18** A prison warden tries to control inmates at Berbera prison, Somaliland. The increasing number of pirate inmates is creating many challenges for prisons in the region, March 2011. © Tony Karumba/AFP Photo