

“Money Is Your Government”: Refugees, Mobility, and Unstable Documents in Kenya’s Operation Usalama Watch

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Abstract: During a 2014 security operation in Kenya known as Operation Usalama Watch, Somali refugees spoke of money as their only valid ID, knowing that only cash, in contrast to identity documents, would be accepted by police and military. The article argues that such extortion should not be interpreted uncategorically as an example of refugees’ exclusion from state-derived citizenship rights. Rather, by paying bribes to resist forced removal from Nairobi, Somali refugees constructed a global diasporan identity tied to free flows of capital. By using money as a substitute for identity documents, refugees appealed to a notion of rights untethered to the state. At the same time, by speaking of money as their government, they articulated a critique against a political system that excluded them.

Résumé: En 2014, au cours d’une opération de sécurité au Kenya nommée Opération Usalama Watch, les réfugiés somaliens ont parlé de l’argent comme de leur seule valide identité, sachant que seule l’argent liquide, contrairement aux documents d’identité, serait acceptée par la police et les militaires. L’article soutient que cette extorsion de fonds ne doit pas être interprétée d’une façon catégorique comme un exemple de l’exclusion des réfugiés aux droits de citoyenneté provenant

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de l'État. Au contraire, en payant des pots de vin pour résister au retrait forcé de Nairobi, les réfugiés somaliens ont construit une identité diasporique mondiale liée à la libre circulation des capitaux. En utilisant l'argent comme un substitut pour les documents d'identité, les réfugiés ont fait appel à une notion de droits autonome à l'état.

Keywords: Refugees; identity documents; security

Introduction

On April 3, 2014, Moha, one of the fifty thousand-plus refugees registered by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Kenya's capital, described the operation that had taken place in his building in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighborhood the previous night.¹

When they came to the house it was around midnight. They talked to the watchman, and they said, "We want to get in." Otherwise they will break the door. . . . Some remained on the ground floor. [Others] went up to the roof. Now that they captured the whole house, that's when they started operating. . . . They say, "Open, open! Who is the elder of the house? . . . If anybody is above eighteen, is eligible to have identity [card], get out and show us." The mom was there but then she didn't know any language to communicate with them. So I was the first one [who] opened. [The officer said], "Where is the elder?" I told him, "Here she is, but she cannot communicate with you." Then he said, "Talk. Start from yourself. Do you have anything?" I showed my student card. . . . We spoke in Kiswahili. They said, "Wewe ni Mkenya, simama pande hii." You're a Kenyan, stand on this side.

In his account, Moha passed as Kenyan because of his student card and good Swahili, although he was born on Somalia's southern coast. Everyone in Moha's four-bedroom apartment, which housed a different family in each room, similarly had some document to show. In the next house, Moha told me, the officer

found a family of a mom, her young sister who had no document, plus the kids. He said, "Where is this one's?" She said "No [ID]." "Ooh," he said. "These are the people we are looking for." Then, they started negotiating from there. . . . Then *all* the building was the same situation. If you have [no document] . . . negotiation is what matters. They never took anyone from the building. . . . Then they went away while their pockets are full. I saw one guy who told me, "I paid 2,000 Kenya shillings for myself." You see. Very bad. So I think even Somalia is better now. . . . When something like this happens, you feel you are living in a country [where] there is no government. . . . Your money is your government. (Interview, April 3, 2014)

In this article I examine the resources that Somali refugees in Nairobi employed in their everyday encounters with state surveillance and security. During the 2014 security operation known as Operation Usalama (Security) Watch, the Kenyan government, in its official capacity, attributed a self-evident accuracy to Kenyan- and U.N.-issued identity documents. Checking IDs became the central mode by which the operation was conducted, but in this case the possession of government-issued or UNHCR refugee identity cards incriminated refugees as security suspects, rather than conferring protection as they had in the past. In practice these IDs also made the individuals vulnerable to extortion, and Somali refugees, the operation's primary suspects, spoke with bitter irony of money as their only "valid" form of ID, knowing that in most encounters cash was the only sort of paper that would be accepted by police and military. In this space of exclusion from "the rights of man" (Arendt 1973) conferred by the nation-state (Agamben 1998; Aleinikoff 1995; Malkki 1995a), what resources are available to those who are unprotected by a legal body? I argue that by paying bribes to continue living in the city, Somali refugees constructed a global "stateless nation" and a diasporan identity tied to transnational families and free flows of capital. At the same time, by speaking of money as their government, they articulated a critique against a political system that excluded them.

I carried out the research for this article in Nairobi between August 2013 and March 2015. The article draws on government, nongovernmental, and Kenyan media reports, and more centrally on interviews and conversations with friends and interlocutors who were living as refugees in Eastleigh at the time of the operation. Because of the difficulty of spending time in Eastleigh in April 2014, when the operation was at its height, and because of the fear that pervaded the community, my research from that period focused on a few people with whom I already had trusted friendships. In later months I talked to a wider range of people, many of whom were glad to share their experiences, perhaps as a way to express their frustration, and often with an optimistic view of communicating the nature of the operation to a wider audience.

During my fieldwork I lived in Pangani, a diverse neighborhood where middle- and working-class Kenyans of various backgrounds reside, as well as refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. On one side, Pangani looks across a new eight-lane superhighway to leafy Muthaiga with its gated homes of politicians and ambassadors. On another side it juts up against the Mathare Valley and its slums and bleeds into Eastleigh, a dense, largely Somali neighborhood. Thus I lived amidst and traversed police checkpoints as I moved within and beyond the neighborhood over the weeks of the operation.² I conducted my research primarily in Swahili and English. I used basic Somali to facilitate everyday interactions, and relied on an interpreter for in-depth conversations and interviews in Somali.

The article begins by explaining the background to the Somali refugee presence in Kenya and to Operation Usalama Watch. The next section goes further back in the historical record to examine colonial and postcolonial

precedents for the policing of Somali mobility in Kenya. Finally the article examines the uncertainty and instability of both government- and U.N.-issued identity documents in the context of the operation, and the alternative modes by which refugees protected themselves—especially through the exchange of money. By substituting Kenyan shillings for such documents, refugees made use of capital's predictably welcome reception and its ability, despite their own immobility (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012; Coopan 2005; Behdad 2005; Hyndman 1997) to cross borders.

Identifying Refugees, Identifying Terrorists: The State's Surveillance Dreams and Refugees' Surveillance Nightmares

Operation Usalama Watch was one episode in ongoing struggles between Somali refugees and the Kenyan state. These fraught relations had already been heightened by Operation Linda Nchi (Protect the Nation), which began in October 2011, initiated to combat the militant group al-Shabaab in Somalia. Kenya's military incursion into Somalia precipitated violent attacks in Nairobi and elsewhere in Kenya, which were attributed to the Somali militant group.

In December 2012, in the twilight of President Mwai Kibaki's administration, the Kenyan government issued a directive to remove refugees from urban areas and to close refugee registration centers in Nairobi and other cities, citing grenade attacks attributed to al-Shabaab as the primary motivation. The government targeted the fifty thousand refugees registered in Nairobi and tens of thousands of others who were unregistered, or registered in camps but living in the capital.³ It planned to initially move eighteen thousand refugees to Thika Municipal Stadium on January 21, and to the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps shortly thereafter.

In response, seven refugees joined with the nongovernmental legal aid organization Kituo cha Sheria to file a suit against the government, which they eventually won.⁴ But on March 25, 2014, a year into Uhuru Kenyatta's presidency and six months after al-Shabaab's attack on Nairobi's upscale Westgate Shopping Mall—a three-day siege in which sixty-seven people were killed—the government issued a second relocation directive. The directive followed another series of violent incidents, including a gun attack on a church in Mombasa on March 23 which led to the closing, yet again, of urban refugee registration centers.⁵ About a week later grenades in Eastleigh killed six people at a restaurant, and in the following hours and days roadblocks were erected and a search and arrest operation commenced that would continue into the following months. On Saturday, April 5, the government officially launched Operation Usalama Watch, known internally as Operation Sanitization Eastleigh (IPOA 2014).⁶

In the first year of Uhuru Kenyatta's presidency, and increasingly following al-Shabaab's attack on the Westgate shopping mall, talk of internal security pervaded political discourse, from promises of high-tech surveillance technology to a new biometric national registration process.

Nyumba Kumi (Ten Houses), a citizen-led, neighborhood surveillance program, was formed, and President Kenyatta, in his State of the Union Address (Kenyatta 2014a) guaranteed citizens “the most extensive new investment in security since independence.” A public service announcement that aired in June (Kenyatta 2014b) made such promises visible, showing men in hard-hats attaching security cameras to street lights and glass skyscrapers—an aspirational vision of development and security. While the announcement cut from images of the bombed-out Westgate shopping mall, to a soldier and police officer in a park, to a Muslim family on a leisurely stroll, Kenyatta told his viewers, “Everyone feels the anger, and our impulse is to strike out, to fight back. Yet we must not do so indiscriminately.” Kenyatta vowed to put “cameras in every major city” and to set up command-and-control centers that would use facial recognition technology to locate terrorists with precision. “If we can see it, we can stop it, . . .” he said. “Terrorists, criminals, thugs, run and hide. For there will be thousands of cameras, and millions of pairs of eyes, watching you.” But the rhetoric of high-tech security to pinpoint individual criminals contrasted sharply with the indiscriminate crackdown that refugees had experienced in the preceding months.

In late March Secretary for Interior Joseph Ole Lenku stated that the directive requiring refugees to leave urban areas for refugee camps aimed “to address the increasing threat of terrorism in the country,” because “refugees could be behind the terror attacks” (quoted in Ombati 2014). President Kenyatta announced that “Kenya will not continue hosting refugees at the expense of peace and suffering of its citizens” (*Somali Current* 2014). News articles and the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) quoted a confidential report stating that the aim of Operation Usalama Watch was “to flush out Al Shabaab/aliens. . . .” (*The Star* 2014b; IPOA 2014:2). The two-headed specter of the “Al Shabaab/alien” captured the way that legally registered refugees were cast as criminals. Accordingly, the primary target of the operation became any person in Nairobi who could not produce a national ID, and Somalis in particular.⁷

Nairobi's Eastleigh neighborhood is a dense residential and commercial area of about 1.5 square kilometers, flanked on its eastern perimeter by the Moi Air Base. Despite being an important commercial hub where some Nairobians come for inexpensive imported goods, Eastleigh exists in the imaginations of many Kenyans as a place of “otherness.” The smells, sights, and sounds of Eastleigh mark it as a cultural zone that is separate from the rest of the city. The stench of sewage—a sign of infrastructural neglect—is punctuated by the scent of spices, incense, and perfumes that evoke coastal East Africa, the Horn, and the Middle East, a place apart from the boiling beans and roasting maize of central Kenya. One hears Somali more than Swahili or Kikuyu, and the slow uncurling of the call to prayer from mosque megaphones rather than the ecstatic shouts of church choirs. Women wear long and thick hijabs rather than skirt suits or skinny jeans.

But more centrally, Eastleigh is infrastructurally and socially positioned outside of Nairobi (see Jacobsen 2011), mirroring the way that the Somali

majority region of northeastern Kenya has also historically been produced as a periphery. In an interview about Usalama Watch, Ole Lenku (2014a) reflected a common perception, stating that “Eastleigh has operated as if it’s not part of Kenya”—flipping the blame for its marginality away from the state and onto its residents. This common view holds Eastleigh as a Muslim space in a Christian majority country, a place of foreigners, overtaken by refugees, and feared as a haven for terrorists. According to rumor, its economic vibrancy is built on money from piracy, even though many Nairobians know that in fact it is supported by networks of remittances sent from the widespread Somali diaspora throughout two and a half decades of civil war, as well as the enterprising ingenuity of Somalis in Nairobi.⁸ But regardless of the real or imagined sources of Eastleigh’s prosperity, the intersection of Somali refugees’ legal vulnerability, their social marginalization, and their reputation as a wealthy community was important in creating conditions for extortion by security agents.⁹

By April 5th a reported 6,100 police and military had been deployed to Eastleigh’s already crowded streets (*The Star* 2014b). State surveillance appeared much less focused and high-tech than in President Kenyatta’s rhetoric, operating through checkpoints on main roads, and with police and the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) officers stationed throughout the neighborhood where they could identify and arrest any refugees, both documented and undocumented. Officers entered homes at any moment of the day or night—flipping the neighborhood inside out to make the invisible visible. In May the government issued a ban on vehicles with tinted windows—an extremely popular car accessory (Maina 2014). The order was short lived but showed the desire to make private spaces open to state vision.

Most centrally, the operation worked to identify refugees who either *lacked* legitimate identification papers (i.e., a national ID) or *possessed* UNHCR documents and government-issued refugee “alien” cards. Police harassment and extortion of refugees through ID checking had been a consistent feature of life in Eastleigh for at least a decade or more (HRW 2002). But overnight, it seemed, legal documents had been turned into incriminating evidence in a more sweeping and systematic way than before. According to people I interviewed who had been detained at Kasarani Stadium, a major sports complex, refugees were arrested, detained, and screened at the stadium by a vetting panel that verified suspects’ documents and took their photos, fingerprints, and iris scans (Ismail, May 18, 2014; Mohamed, June 1, 2014; Pacifique, Aug. 16, 2014). The IPOA reported, however, that “there was very poor and unsatisfactory record-keeping,” which they suspected “was deliberately aimed at extorting money and seeking bribes from persons arrested” (2014:10). According to the operation’s stated procedures, people found with no documentation were to be deported to their country of origin, refugees with camp-issued documents were to be sent back to the camp where they were registered, and refugees with documents issued in Nairobi were to be relocated to the refugee camp

of their choice. By late May, the IPOA reported that 2,724 people had been screened at the Kasarani Stadium and 481 had been deported, primarily to Somalia (IPOA 2014).

Thus Kenya, which has played an important role in the region as host to refugees over the past two and a half decades, increasingly viewed refugees as threats to sovereignty, security, and the integrity of its borders. But if, as Torpey argues, states have a “monopolization of the legitimate means of movement” (1998:240), individuals also make use of corruption within Kenya's security apparatus to push against the state's attempts to control their mobility and access to urban spaces. Moreover, Somali communities in Kenya were attempting to subvert state curtailment of their mobility long before the recent era of al-Shabaab and Operation Usalama Watch.

From *Shifita* to Al-Shabaab: A History of Somalis as Suspects

The marginalization of Somali regions, movement restrictions, and collective punishment of ethnic Somalis in Kenya (Somali-Kenyans) have a long precedent, predating the 2014 operation and the arrival of Somali refugees who began crossing Kenya's borders to flee the Somali Civil War in 1991. The British colonial administration of the Kenya Colony conceived of the Somali majority Northern Frontier District (NFD) as a vast buffer zone between the so-called White Highlands dotted with European farms and the nomadic populations on the other side of the colony's north and eastern borders. Accordingly, the 1902 Outlying District Ordinance prevented Somalis and other NFD residents from moving into other parts of the colony (Thompson 1995; Hyndman 1997; Mburu 2005). In 1922 the NFD was named a “closed district,” curtailing movement across and inside its borders. Travel required movement passes, with exemptions only for domestic servants accompanying European employers. The Special Districts Ordinance of 1934 established a “*cordon sanitaire* among the NFD ethnic groups” (Mburu 2005:53) which sought to prevent the mixing of different ethnic communities and restricted herding and trade—the region's primary economic activities.

Within colonial administrative discourses, Somalis were described variously as either inferior or superior to their “racially distinct,” “Bantu” neighbors—but always as racially “other” (Thompson 1995:17). Somalis vied for and gained “non-native” status through the Somali Exemption Ordinance of 1919, though later they lost many non-native privileges (Turton 1972). The Somali Youth League (SYL), founded in Mogadishu in 1943, offered an institutional framework for Somalis of Kenya to express their solidarity with the growing nationalism of their coethnics across the border. When the first SYL office opened in the NFD in 1947, its activities were perceived as a threat to the colony, as they encouraged “disregard of tribal boundaries” and assisted “the immigration of ‘alien’ Somali into the Colony” (Turton 1972:137)—subverting the administration's grip on its borders.

At independence NFD residents campaigned for unity with the Somali Republic, but an alliance of the Kenyan “aspiring ruling elites” and the British government ultimately quashed this aim (Whittaker 2012:346). The Northern Frontier District Liberation Army, whom the government dubbed *shifita*—“bandit rebels at odds with state authority” (Whittaker 2008)—waged a guerrilla war from 1963 to 1968. According to Whittaker (2008), “The official response was all encompassing. The NFD was declared a prohibited zone, security personnel were empowered to shoot and confiscate livestock or property on suspicion of subversion, whilst detention camps were erected to accommodate those persons considered politically dangerous.” Like the British, independent Kenya conceived of Somali mobility as a threat to its borders and systems of governance. President Jomo Kenyatta’s regime continued to attempt to seal the porous border in order to end guerilla activities and their support from the Somali Republic. Administrators recommended bolstering the border with a large trench filled with thorns and a fifteen-mile demilitarized zone, although this never materialized.

Drawing on a longer policy of controlling pastoralist movement through curfews, movement restrictions, and registration and identification/movement passes, the Kenyan government implemented a forced villagization program aiming to halt nomadic mobility and thus distinguish nomads from insurgents on the move (Mburu 2005; Whittaker 2012). Government officials drew on lessons from the colonial period, and, in imitation of the British response to the Mau Mau insurgency, saw prohibiting movement as the only way to “distinguish between so-called ‘loyal’ civilians and *shifita* and their sympathizers” (Whittaker 2012:347). Whittaker quotes the Kenyan MP G. G. Kariuki speaking to Parliament in 1965: “We do not want to be told that there are loyal Somalis, let loyal Somalis come out and show us their loyalty. Let them be put in a camp where we can scrutinize them and know who [amongst them] are good” (2012:347). Writing about a screening exercise intended to sort Somali Kenyans from Somali nationals that took place in northeastern Kenya in 1989, Lochery notes that “reactions of the Kenyan state to perceived threats from Somalis in Kenya follow decades-old patterns” (2012:638). Indeed, Kariuki’s statement, made forty-nine years before the 2014 operation, echoes the way Somalis in Kenya are conceptualized today in the context of Kenya’s military operations in Somalia and the cross-border threat of al-Shabaab.

The use of internal movement passes persists—though today only for refugees. A policy of encampment, like villagization in the 1960s, is now central to efforts to contain suspects and sort out criminals. In this historical context, UNHCR-run refugee camps appear, in some sense, to aid the Kenyan government in continuing its policy of policing Somali mobility.¹⁰ During Operation Usalama Watch, and as Kenya has increasingly attempted to remove refugees from cities and restrict them to overcrowded border-area camps, the state has taken advantage of the international bodies that finance and run camps in accordance with humanitarian objectives and

international law. Unintentionally, the humanitarian actors provide the infrastructure that the state utilizes in its efforts to control border-crossing Somali subjects.

Identity Documents and Sorting Suspects, 2014

Kasarani Stadium—dubbed “#KasaraniConcentrationCamp” on Twitter—became the Nairobi locale where the state put containment and sorting into action. Beginning on April 2, 2014, the major sports arena in Nairobi's outskirts was designated a police station (*Kenya Gazette* 2014), becoming a detention and screening center for suspects. On Sunday, April 6, with my passport in my pocket, I crossed the street from my apartment and wandered to the corner where I bought a newspaper and exchanged greetings with Gladys, the vendor, noticing after some time two police behind me, rifles at their side. Looking in the direction of a building nicknamed “China House”—the tallest apartment building in the Pangani neighborhood and known for housing many Somali residents—Gladys informed me that an “operation” had taken place the previous evening, evident from the eight large military vehicles outside. I walked down the main road, past fruit and vegetable vendors, open-front barbershops, and liquor stores. At China House I waved to the building's *askaris*—young guards dressed in navy uniforms—and asked them about the events of the previous night. First advising me not to leave home without my passport, they explained that a few young men without IDs had been arrested in their homes and taken to the stadium.

I had never been to Kasarani Stadium; I had only seen the large lime-green block letters spelling “The Home of Heroes” from the highway, above the red and green Safaricom logo. Unable to call on friends who had refugee IDs and would be at risk if they accompanied me, I boarded a matatu (minibus) heading down Thika Superhighway, then crossed the eight lanes by a footbridge toward the massive circular arena. The road inside the complex is pristine, with shiny streetlights and bright green signs that honor Kenya's athletes, reading, “You are meters away from the home of heroes.” I stopped to buy a bottle of water and asked the vendor where people were being detained. He pointed in the direction of one of the stadium's main entrances. On the pavement in front of the gate stood fifteen police officers in navy blue, and five or so officers in camouflage uniforms and maroon berets—members of the paramilitary GSU, which had been deployed to conduct nightly raids in Eastleigh. People gathered on the small grassy area in front of the gate or waited inside parked cars, all seemingly seeking information about a person detained inside.

As I neared the officers a policeman approached. I introduced myself as a student interested in seeing the stadium, to which he replied that that would not be possible. After some attempts to persuade him, he replied, “You know, today we have a church function”—which appeared true, but seemed like an excuse—“and, as you've probably heard, we have

imprisoned people here. We are sorting those who are terrorists, and those who are okay.”

“How do you know who is a terrorist and who isn’t?” I asked.

“From the ID,” he answered. “If they’re here legally, and have an ID, they’re okay.”

In official government rhetoric, the national ID became the marker of legitimacy—authentic proof of both citizenship and non-suspect status. The refugee identity document, by contrast, and the absence of a national ID, was the primary evidence to support arrest, detention, and forced relocation during Usalama Watch. Under state surveillance on streets and in houses, checking identity cards became the primary mode of finding “Al Shabaab/aliens”—the refugee-cum-terrorist. Even taxi drivers in my neighborhood who ordinarily drove Somali residents to and from Eastleigh turned down customers without a national identity card or passport, as they could be held responsible for carrying an “illegal” passenger.

But despite the official rhetoric, police and military personnel also knew that documents could be illicitly obtained (see Das 2006; Kelly 2006; Longman 2001). The doubt cast on documents enabled other modes of determining identity, as I explore below. As Aretxaga wrote, “the power of the state is harnessed not so much from the rationality of ordering practices as from the passions of transgression in which the line between the legal and the illegal is constantly blurred” (2003:402). In Kenya, the line between legal and illegal was blurred as the state deemed government-issued refugee or “alien” documents illegal, and again as police took to the streets using the performance of law and security to conduct an operation of extortion on a massive scale.

Suspect IDs and Suspect Bodies

As Tobias Kelly writes in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, “the implications of holding identity documents are always partial and unstable, as the laws and regulations that give them meaning are often incoherent and the possibility of forgery is always immanent” (2006:90). Veena Das writes that “once the state institutes forms of governance through technologies of writing, it simultaneously institutes the possibility of forgery, imitation, and the mimetic performances of its power” (2004:227). Although the identity card was officially deemed a crucial tool in Nairobi’s security operations, state agents did not fully trust it. The uncertainty surrounding these documents, particularly in the context of an ethnic population comprising both Somalis of Kenyan nationality and Somali refugees, was evident in the everyday experiences of the Somali population.

Until March 2016, to be recognized as a refugee in Kenya a person needed to possess a U.N. refugee identity document issued by UNHCR as well as a document colloquially called an “alien card” issued by Kenya’s Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA).¹¹ Yet because of the closing of the Nairobi DRA office in 2012 during the first relocation directive, many

refugees were unable to apply for or renew their alien card, which put them in a precarious position, even before the relocation directive. In addition to possessing these basic identity documents, a person registered as a refugee in a camp and wanting to travel outside was required to apply for and carry a DRA movement pass granted for specified reasons. People registered in a camp but attending university in Nairobi, for example, had to return every four months to renew their document, traveling a day or more by bus, depending on the camp. Some people registered in the camps live in Nairobi, or stay there long-term without movement passes, due to the difficulty and cost of obtaining and renewing them.¹²

Even Somali-Kenyan citizens struggle with IDs that are scrutinized and mistrusted by agents of the state. Many Somali-Kenyans do carry a national identity card, but it can be notoriously difficult for them to obtain one.¹³ In addition, some noncitizens (whether registered as refugees or not) have also obtained national ID cards through various illicit processes for various purposes: so that they can apply for Kenyan passports for international travel, for education, business, or professional needs, or to travel within Kenya and ease the insecurities of living as a refugee. Discussing Operation Usalama Watch in a television interview, Secretary for Interior Ole Lenku (2014a) stated, "We are aware that too many people got Kenyan identification documents and travel documents unprocedurally. Through corruption. That is no secret." In late April 2014 police arrested several people at a hotel where identity cards were being produced. Two months later a newspaper reported the discovery of an "ID card syndicate" involving "brokers who transport non-Kenyans from the refugee camps and other parts of Northern Kenya to Nairobi" (*The Star* 2014a).

Thus for Somalis in Kenya, an ID exists in a complex historical web of marginalization and discrimination, border crossings and forged identities, and relations between the Kenyan state and the U.N., which documents refugees for different purposes. And in part because of illicit national registration, and in part due to histories of Somali exclusion, people identified by their physical appearance, name, and clothing as Somali are regarded with suspicion when they present a national ID card. It was in this space of uncertainty about the authenticity of both national identity and U.N. identity documents that refugees used and talked about money as the only certain and reliable "papers." That police and soldiers would often (in many accounts *always*) take money in lieu of identification tells us not only something about how refugees must "navigate the gaps between laws and their implementation" (Das 2005:241), but also about how, in this context, the instability of state power and its technologies contrasted with the more stable quality of capital.

Over the course of Operation Usalama Watch, similar accounts about daily transactions between Somalis and police and military officers were provided by friends, posted on social media, and published in the newspapers. In a café in Eastleigh in early May, Moha described an encounter between a police officer and his friend, a Somali-Kenyan. The officer had

ordered his friend, “Toa ID yako” (Remove your ID). The young man presented his national identity card, which the officer regarded suspiciously, looking back and forth between the ID and the young man’s face. “Huyu ni nani? Ni wewe? Si wewe—ulinunua hii” (Who is this? It’s you? This isn’t you—you bought this). The officer walked away with the ID in his pocket, and when the young man ran after him he was arrested. At the police station he paid KSh7,000—roughly U.S.\$80.00—for the return of his ID. “Who is Kenyan now?” Moha demanded. “And that guy has never seen Somalia. They’re just going by color of the skin” (interview, May 6, 2014).

Moha’s brother, Farah, told me another story, which also was reported in the media, about an ethnic Somali senator from Tana River County who was arrested on Juja Road, a main artery leading from Eastleigh to downtown. “You know, they’re looking for the face,” he said, gesturing toward his own face. “So when the senator showed his ID, they told him, ‘hii umenunua’ [you’ve bought this]. So then, he pulled out his senator’s ID, but they told him, ‘This was made on River Road’” (interview, April 29, 2014).

In both stories one detects a trope of uncertainty surrounding Somali identity and the accepted dichotomy of Somali versus Kenyan, criminal versus innocent. One day as my taxi was crawling through a congested area of Eastleigh after being stopped at a main checkpoint, the driver noted to me nonchalantly, “Somalis all look alike. If one throws a grenade, and he’s standing just there,” he said, gesturing toward the sidewalk crowded with hawkers, stalls, and pedestrians, “you’ll never know it was him.” His statement reflects the idea that Somalis were not only dangerous, but dangerously indistinguishable. This trope, as Whittaker (2012) reminds us, permeates Kenyan history. In her writing on forced villagization during the Shifta War, she quotes a Kenyan minister for housing in 1967: “All the *shifta* look exactly the same as other Somalis. . . . One of the failures of modern scientific methods is that they have not been able to design an instrument, which would tell that a particular Somali was a *shifta*, and the other was a loyal citizen” (2012:361). If one substituted “Al Shabaab/alien” for “shifta” in the housing minister’s speech, it could easily be mistaken for the Kenyan government’s contemporary sentiments about Somalis inside its borders.

Attempts to differentiate Somali aliens-cum-criminals from Somali-Kenyan nationals are often based on fine-tuned readings of bodies and embodied signifiers.¹⁴ Young men spoke about being stopped and screened in Eastleigh and at the numerous police checkpoints on the 470-km road connecting the Dadaab camps to Nairobi. At these checkpoints and at the microborders within Nairobi, police officers looked for bodily signs such as vaccination scars to relay information about nationality. For example, the absence of the raised scar from BCG tuberculosis vaccine—which was routinely given in Kenya but not in Somalia—was considered proof of foreignness. The use of the scar as evidence also marked its bearer as a member of a “civilized” society, while the unscarred arm derived from a country held back by over two decades of civil war and lacking basic

development standards such as vaccination programs. Ethnic Somalis who failed to communicate fluently in Swahili were also assumed to be foreign born.¹⁵ The story of the Somali-Kenyan senator mistaken for a refugee or foreign terror suspect, however, both instantiated the uncertainty of identity while revealing the absurdity of ethnic profiling.

In this context, some refugees made use of the instability and uncertainty of both identity documents and ethnic and national identities. As Kelly writes, there is a “doubling” that takes place when papers represent bodies, “enabl[ing] people to take advantage of the gaps between the ‘known’ and the ‘unknown’ aspects of their person” (2006:102). Somali refugees used their knowledge about these systems of classification and profiling to subvert them. For example, during the security operation youths attempted to avoid identifying themselves as refugees by presenting student ID cards. National registration in Kenya is required at age eighteen, so a high school ID might allow a refugee to “pass” as a Somali-Kenyan. A young woman I know pretended to be her own child’s sister, faking adolescence in order to escape the requirement of holding the national ID required as an adult. Young people who had grown up in Kenya often used their fluency in Swahili to subvert being identified as a refugee. Ultimately, as Kelly writes (2006:102), “meanings and implications of particular documents were never stable and consistent, and their use meant handing over your fate to the unpredictable whims” of soldiers and police. While in these scenarios people avoided arrest by making use of the “gaps” in information and the indeterminacies of how bodies may be read, such strategies worked in unpredictable ways. Like the documents, bodies were also unreliable “texts”—both for security agents and refugees.

By contrast, money, though not always a perfect guarantee of safety, worked in more predictable ways. Like the state’s anxiety over forged or illicitly obtained documents, refugees had their own anxiety about the unreliability of their hard-earned papers—documents for which they often waited in lines for hours, on which they spent money traveling to and from government and U.N. offices over the course of months or even years, but which were nonetheless vulnerable to corrupt police and the changing tides of government policies. Operation Usalama Watch revealed the distrust of official documents that was shared by the state and its agents on one hand, and refugees on the other. But shillings, by contrast, were a form of paper invested by all with reliable meaning, and viewed by both state agents and refugees as valid and trustworthy.

Exchanging Papers: “Money Is My ID”

On a national level, the public display of security, including checkpoints, roundups, and mass detentions, created a performance that the Kenyan government needed amidst public outcries against its ineffectiveness in the face of a worsening security environment in the country, particularly after the Westgate attack. At the level of everyday encounters between security

agents and suspects, checking identity documents in order to identify terror suspects was also a performance under the guise of which Kenyan state authorities extorted money. Refugees participated in this system by taking advantage, when possible, of the opportunity to pay money in lieu of arrest, detention, or forcible relocation or deportation. Bribery and extortion are common practices in Kenyan bureaucratic and law enforcement contexts. But because of its targeted nature during the operation, Eastleigh residents saw it as a moneymaking scheme. “They call us ATMs,” Eastleigh residents said (see also Warah 2013).¹⁶

One day in late April I sat in a small travel office in Eastleigh as Bashir, the travel agent, told me about increasing numbers of people booking flights back to Somalia. He described a recent day when he had stepped out of the office to walk next door to the currency exchange, planning to exchange the KSh18,000 that had been paid by a customer for U.S. dollars so that he could book the customer’s airline flight. As he stepped outside, a police officer stopped him, asking to see his ID. When he opened his wallet to retrieve his document, the police officer reached in and pulled out the money (the equivalent of about U.S.\$200), and walked away. Cartoons and photos satirizing these kinds of police abuses circulated on social media. One pictured a policeman leaning back at his desk, his blue shirt stretched over a fat stomach as if covering a giant balloon. “Tumekula Eastleigh mpaka tumeshiba,” the caption says: “We’ve eaten Eastleigh until we were full.”

“Eating” is a common metaphor for corruption in various parts of Africa—getting fat by consuming the legitimately earned resources of others. In Kenya, the request for a bribe is often expressed through metaphors of food and drink—“chai” and “soda” are euphemisms for “kitu kidogo” (a little something, small bribes). Larger bribes may be phrased in the idiom of large animals that are commonly eaten. Moha told me about going to a police station during Operation Usalama Watch and being asked “umeleta ngamia” (Have you brought a camel)? “Hapana,” he replied, “nimeleta mbuzi” (No, I’ve brought a goat). When he handed over a few hundred shillings the officer looked at him askance. “Hii ni mbuzi mdogo sana” (This is a very small goat)—his way of asking Moha to raise the bribe, which he did. The trope of police officers “eating” Eastleigh (“wamekuja Eastleigh kukula,” or “they’ve come to Eastleigh to eat”) signified that people saw much of the financial transactions going on throughout the operation as typical of the Kenyan police. It targeted the Somali community in a way that made its members feel increasingly helpless, angry, and alienated, and yet it was consistent and predictable. Moha and the police officer both knew the language of negotiation, and what to expect from each other.¹⁷ This is not to say that such encounters did not produce fear, anxiety, and anger. However, money proved to be a predictable tool in refugees’ attempts to evade the government relocation directive and lay claim to the city they had made their home over the course of years and sometimes decades.

Farah told me a story that was circulating around his neighborhood at the time which comically allegorized such encounters.

There are some guys living in a room in Eastleigh. They have no money, so they decide that they better get prepared to be taken by the police. They pack their bags. They have everything ready. They say, "Okay, we have no money, now we can get a free trip home. We'll go to Kasarani, and then back to Somalia." When the police come, they tell them, "Okay, we're ready. Take us." The police say "What are you guys talking about?" They laugh and leave them there with their packed bags. Because you know, they're not looking for criminals. They're just looking for money. (Personal communication, April 29, 2014)

Without money to pay the requisite bribe, the young men assumed they would be deported—the free trip home. Finding people willing to be arrested, and therefore with no leverage to garner a bribe, the police had no interest in taking the youths in as suspects.

Caplan and Torpey write that "human agency remains a decisive factor in the genealogy of identification practices, which tend automatically and immediately to generate strategies by individuals (and sometimes even by organized groups) to undermine their effectiveness" (2001:7). How did money emerge in Kenyan identification regimes as part of strategies "to undermine their effectiveness," and what are the broader articulations of money's power as it is used by different social actors? Because of the relatively stable value of money, refugees were able to use it in strategic ways, weaving it into narratives and technological processes to make it operate to their advantage.

Moha and Farah told me a story of a young Somali man and two young Somali women who were driving back to Eastleigh after their university class in the evening when police stopped them on the road. The man had a national ID but the women did not. The police demanded KSh3,000 (about U.S.\$33), but the man had only KSh1,000. He agreed to give the officer what he had and to pay the rest by MPesa—the ubiquitous mobile money transfer system. Back in their car, the student called Safaricom, the telecom company that runs MPesa, to report that he had sent the money to the wrong phone number, and the money was immediately removed from the officer's account. Realizing what had happened, the officer called the young man (using the phone number linked to the money transfer message) and told him, "If I see you, you're in big trouble."

"The guy was very clever!" Moha said, referring to the Somali man. "But that guy [i.e., the police office] will never trust a Somali. He will never be merciful," said Farah (personal communication, April 29, 2014). Moha and Farah's comments evoked the two sides of the relations between Somalis and the state. Remarking that the young man was clever, Moha commented on his capacity to control his fate in opposition to the will of state, which was denying him protection and rights. In commenting that the officer "will

never trust a Somali,” Farah highlighted ethnic stereotyping and the structural subjugation enacted through ethnic identity in Kenya, and more implicitly, the confines of other identities—foreignness, treachery, and criminality—that are mapped on to Somali ethnicity.

A young mother of three, Hodon, told me about how the police came to her door at around 1:00 a.m., dragging her from the house as she shouted that she could not leave her children, ages six, eight, and ten. Upon finding her with the police in the stairwell, a neighbor paid KSh1,000 (about U.S.\$11) for her release. Some days later, police again banged on Hodon’s door, asking to see identification. Rejecting her UNHCR papers, they asked her about her husband. She explained to me that although her husband was in the United States, that information would have suggested to the officers that she had money. Therefore, she told them that her husband was with his other wife in Mombasa, and that she was alone with her children and had only one hundred shillings to feed them that day. Believing that she had nothing to give them, they told her, “Go to the camp, you can’t stay here,” before moving to the next door (personal communication, May 28, 2014).

Stories such as these suggest how refugees found ways to resist arrest and extortion using their knowledge about the importance of money hidden beneath the guise of security. Nevertheless, as Caplan and Torpey write, “states and their subjects/citizens . . . [play] cat-and-mouse with individual identification requirements. . . . Even if . . . the game is never entirely decided in advance, . . . so far the cat has held the better cards” (1998:7). Refugees had to navigate a system in which they had little leverage against the state besides money, making them the victims of extortion. And eventually money, unlike a legal document, runs out. While many Somalis in Eastleigh had some financial resources—many relying on relatives abroad who could assist them (Lindley 2010)—in reality the operation created considerable hardship.

In the narrative that opened this article, Moha described how he had convinced the police that he was a Kenyan. But about three months later he was arrested on the street. By that time, in late June, the camouflaged GSU and the navy-clad police officers with their large trucks had all but disappeared from Eastleigh’s streets. Instead, local talk told of “CIDs”—officers from the Criminal Investigation Department—on patrol in unmarked cars. Moha was walking on Seventh Street near the market on First Avenue when a man got out of a vehicle and commanded him to “lete ID yako” (bring your ID).

As he recounted this story, Moha showed me, carefully with his hands, how he took out his expired high school ID card while slipping his alien card into his pocket. He was presenting himself as a Somali-Kenyan who, while clearly over eighteen based on the birth date on his school ID, had not had time to register for his national identity card. After some discussion, the young officer called over his superior. “Uko na twenty thousand?” (Do you have twenty thousand?) the senior officer asked—the equivalent of

about U.S.\$220 and the cost of approximately two months of Moha's household rent. Moha was instructed to enter the back of the car and was driven through Eastleigh, where the officers picked up three more young men—an Ethiopian and two other Somalis. Before reaching Pangani Police Station, they let the Ethiopian man go for free, and the two other Somalis paid KSh5,000 each (approximately U.S.\$55) for their release.¹⁸

Moha had nothing close to the large sum of money the police were asking for. Nor could he call the family members he lived with, or most of the other people on whom he typically relied who were also documented refugees, since the police would most certainly ask for their IDs and arrest them, too. Instead he called a Somali-Kenyan friend who "knows how to talk to the police well." It took a couple of hours for the friend to leave his shop in the care of his sister and reach the police station. In the meantime, Moha sat in the back of a police car, having convinced the officers not to take him inside, knowing that if they did his release would cost more money and he could also end up spending a night in one of the station's infamous cells.

Moha's friend paid KSh2,000 (roughly U.S.\$22) late in the afternoon. Before leaving, Moha told the officer, "Now give me a receipt! I may just be picked again on my way back!" The policeman, he told me, looked at him with disdain. Moha said that he had no money for bus fare and could not risk walking the mile back home, passing more police and soldiers. The police gave him and his friend a ride—perhaps they were on their way back to the neighborhood anyway. "Next time we meet in Eastleigh, buy me lunch," the officer said as he dropped Moha at the edge of Eastleigh on Juja Road. Asking Moha to buy him lunch, the officer expressed the idea that they had made a business transaction—perhaps even a fair one, in which Moha exchanged money for freedom—but also that Eastleigh was a place where one could go to "eat." "You won't see me again!" Moha shouted. "I didn't even know what I was saying," he told me. "You're just living with anger. I was awake all night. I couldn't sleep. My eyes were red. . . . It's not a lot of money, but that money wasn't theirs! I had planned to use that money." But, he concluded with resignation, "Let money be your identity" (personal communication, June 23, 2014).

With this comment—"let money be your identity"—Moha seemed to resign himself to the fact that paper currency was, however unjustly, the only sort of paper that satisfied the agents of the state. Moha was not alone in expressing this sentiment, and months later, in September, he recounted a story of a friend who had never registered as a refugee. He had told Moha that he didn't need a refugee document, because, "money is my ID." In asking the policeman for "a receipt," Moha expanded the notion of money as identity document, but also made a critique. By asking for a receipt, he pointed out that he should not have to pay again—that he deserved a paper that could be used continuously to protect his rights, unlike currency, which he had to produce anew each time he was stopped and which was continuously depleted.

Both observing the way money works, and making a critique of their own position as refugees, many Somalis in Nairobi discussed money as the single resource to protect their ability to continue living there, and to benefit from the jobs, business, and educational opportunities that the city provides, and to live a life of relative dignity that many said the camps could not offer. Amidst extortion, bureaucratic offices that closed up one day with no notice about when they would reopen, and documents whose meaning could change overnight, people talked about money as the only paper they carried that consistently “worked.” Pointing this out was a critical reflection on their lived experiences. The inability of money to fulfill the role of an identity document speaks, of course, to the structures of marginalization within which refugees live, and which Operation Usalama Watch highlighted. In claiming money as one’s government, refugees made a claim on certain rights despite their marginality vis-à-vis citizenship. Writing about the nation-state in the context of World War I and II, Hannah Arendt (1973) argued that without the protection of a government, no other institution could guarantee human rights. Moha, and his friend who stated that “money is my ID,” pointed out their exclusion from a system of nation-states, but also highlighted their ability to fashion a way to resist this exclusion. Through this discourse, Somalis appeal to a concept of international human rights that cannot be guaranteed by the United Nations, but can be devised through the supranational power of capital and in the “grey zones” of everyday corruption (Robertson 2006).

Conclusion

Refugees in Kenya are currently engaged in a struggle over control of the “legitimate means of movement” (Torpey 1998:240). The UNHCR and partner NGOs (both Kenyan and international) support the freedom of refugees to live in cities in accordance with the U.N. Convention on Refugees. But as they navigate between the UNHCR and the Kenyan state—which share, if uneasily, responsibility for managing this population—and between international law and Kenyan domestic law, refugees use money to stake their own claim to a right to move freely and reside where they wish.

Operation Usalama Watch was a security effort that widened an already existing space for large-scale extortion of refugees, who were suddenly deemed illegal occupants of the city. Refugees, Somali-Kenyans, and critics of the government more broadly, saw the operation as a sign of the depths of corruption to which Kenyan politics had in many ways descended. Refugees were hostage to the corruption, and yet they also used their knowledge of the system to make it work as well as it could for themselves and their families.

Veena Das writes that examining the bribery of officials by the poor is important for understanding “how states manage populations at the margins, and also how those living in these margins navigate the gaps between laws and their implementation” (2006:241; see also Anjaria 2012; Witsoe 2011).

"There are then neither pure victims nor noble resisters . . .," she writes, "but a series of partnerships through which state and community mutually engage in self-creation and maintenance" (2006:251). By saying that "money is your government" and speaking of money as ID, refugees in Kenya made a statement about the meanings of refugee-ness and the state. They are disempowered by "the national order of things" (Malkki 1995a:512), a nation-state system from which they are excluded (Agamben 1998; Arendt 1951). By using and claiming money as "ID," they make a claim to a transnational identity tied to capital, and a community that is produced and maintained in significant ways through powerful cultural norms that obligate Somalis in North America or Europe, for example, to support their family members in places like Somalia and Kenya (Lindley 2010).

These claims open a space in which to consider the complex social and political meanings of identity documents and corruption. Without rights tied to nation-states, what resources do refugees appeal to? Somali refugees in Kenya are not taking part in the "flexible citizenship" of global elites (Ong 1999), despite the fact that they often benefit from transnational circulations of money through remittances. Many are poor and unemployed, and if "money is your government," there is a large divide between wealthy and poor refugees, and those with or without relatives abroad. In an even larger context, the notion of "money as government" contributes to our understanding of the political meanings of money in this transnational community, and how refugee and diaspora identities are produced vis-à-vis both state and nonstate institutions. It contributes to a picture of the historical and sociological complexity of both security and corruption and the layers of political struggles beneath security operations, as well as how these systems intersect with specific communities and histories to produce what Das (2006:174) calls the "underlife of politics."

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Notes

1. The names used throughout are pseudonyms. I met Moha and his brother, Farah—both in their early twenties—through a mutual friend. Moha and Farah had left Somalia as children, and had lived in a number of places in East Africa. For several years, they had been living on their own in Eastleigh. They had attended high school there, and at the time of my research Farah was taking

college classes while Moha was doing some piecemeal work. Eventually, both left Kenya through a family sponsorship program.

2. Eastleigh is almost always written and talked about as a Somali neighborhood, but as Kochoe and Carrier (2014) point out, it is a distinctly multiethnic neighborhood.
3. Kenya hosts refugee populations from nine countries. Somalis make up 73% of documented refugees in the country as a whole, and 63% of documented refugees in Nairobi (UNHCR 2014).
4. *Kituo cha Sheria vs. Attorney General*, 2013. The court ruling does not mention the numbers of unregistered refugees, but refugee service providers in Nairobi say that there are thousands of undocumented refugees. For example, Riva Jalipa, a staff member at the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, estimated that there may be one undocumented refugee for each of the 50,000 documented refugees (personal communication, July 2, 2012).
5. The closing was ordered by the Secretary for Interior and National Coordination, Joseph Ole Lenku. After the overturning of the first relocation directive, Nairobi's Department of Refugee Affairs registration office had been open for only about two weeks prior to the second directive and the reclosing.

Somali refugees in Nairobi have not been the only targets of government surveillance and security operations. The Muslim majority coast region of Kenya has its own complex relationship with the state, which has recently involved assassinations of Muslim clerics. See, for example, Al Jazeera's investigative documentary "Inside Kenya's Death Squads" (2014).
6. Some Eastleigh residents theorized that the government had planned the Eastleigh blasts in order to justify the operation. I have no documented evidence to substantiate that claim, but it stood as an important framework for some people to understand the multiple forms of violence in their community.
7. Other refugee communities in Nairobi were also affected by the operation, both in and outside of Eastleigh. More than 160 Banyamulenge Congolese, for example, were arrested from their church in Kasarani and forcibly relocated to the Dadaab camps.
8. As noted by one of the anonymous reviewers of this article, Somali refugees in Nairobi are not only receivers of remittances, but also senders.
9. While beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting the class dimensions that played out in the operation between poor Kenyan police and soldiers, and the refugees whom they perceived as having much greater wealth. This perception was based on the visible business success of some members of the community, and knowledge of kinship and business networks spread throughout the diaspora, including in wealthy countries like the U.S., Canada, and Sweden. Somali cultural and religious obligations to give money to relatives and friends in need also had an impact on refugees' access to money when they needed to pay bribes (see Lindley 2010), fueling these exaggerated ideas.
10. The UNHCR took over the management of refugee camps in Kenya in 1991, after 400,000 Somalis entered the country fleeing the civil war (Horst 2006). Since the creation of the Department of Refugee Affairs in 2006, the government has taken an increasingly active role in the management of refugee issues. Though there is no path to citizenship for its refugees, Kenya, as a relatively stable country in the region, has remained an important host for the last two and a half decades for those fleeing from Somalia, DR Congo, Sudan, South Sudan,

- Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Despite people's grievances, I have heard refugees of various nationalities praise Kenya for its willingness to host them over the years.
11. As of 2014, UNHCR began transitioning the registration process fully to the Government of Kenya. However, in May 2016 the Government of Kenya closed its Department of Refugee Affairs and threatened to close its refugee camps, citing security issues and hardship due to lack of financial support from the international community. At the time of writing, it is uncertain in what ways Kenya will continue to manage refugee affairs within its borders.
 12. This is based on information garnered from a year and a half of fieldwork, but I have no formal sources on how many people are registered in the camps but living in Nairobi.
 13. Recent journalistic articles have addressed the politics of national registration for people coming from border areas, and Somalis in particular. See, e.g., Boniface (2013); Nyabola (2014); Hajir (2014).
 14. For other work on "reading bodies" for evidence of criminality, see, for example, Kaluszynski (2001); Lugo (2008); Moodie (2010). For ways bodies are sites of evidence in refugee and other humanitarian contexts, see, e.g., Fassin and D'Halluin (2005); James (2010); Malkki (1996).
 15. David Lyon writes about "the steady shift from identification papers to body surveillance" over the last half century (2005:310) and the ways in which biometric technologies have taken the place of "the person's own claims to a particular identity" and the use of "papers and cards" (2005:291–92). This shift emerged from global capitalism's needs for "more foolproof, and fraudproof, methods of establishing identity," he argues (2005:296). Today, "some part of the physical body—eye, hand, finger, face, voice—is presented to the verification machine . . . turn[ing] the body into a password" (2005:297). Timothy Longman writes about the role of bodily readings in the Rwandan genocide, when a person's identity as a Hutu or a Tutsi was "revealed by their lineage, physical appearance, and other factors; the official documentation was not enough in and of itself to create a Hutu or Tutsi" (2001:356). In Kenya, too, documentation was insufficiently reliable. Bodies were not scanned by biometric machines, but they were viewed through the lens of classificatory schemas about race and identity (see Malkki 1995b). In postcolonial Africa, where racialized identities have been constructed and fixed through systems of colonial governance (see Brennan 2012; Iliffe 1979; Malkki 1995; Thompson 1995), suspicion of identity documents and reliance on "the body as a text" (Lyon 2005:297) operates in attempts to verify the identity of "suspects."
 16. A number of scholars have written about the role of money in the life of Somali refugees. Jennifer Hyndman (1997), for example, writes about the transnational flows of donor money into refugee camps that render refugees less mobile, since they are effectively confined to camps that are the recipients of greater and greater investments. Anna Lindley (2010), who writes about Somali refugees and remittances, discusses the ways in which money reshapes borders and social worlds of Somali refugees who send and receive money from abroad. Lindley and Hyndman both demonstrate how money travels where people often cannot. Lindley points out, for instance, that remittance money works to produce diaspora communities and reproduce kinship and clan relationships over space and time. In the context of Operation Usalama Watch, remittance money was also key, reproducing kinship bonds and obligations as people from

throughout the diaspora sent money to free their relatives from detention and forced relocation or deportation.

17. For reasons involving both my own security and those of the people I worked with, and also for more pragmatic methodological reasons, I did not interview police officers. Ethnographic research with police officers in this and similar contexts would undoubtedly speak in interesting and important ways to this topic.
18. I heard of police officers citing the fact that Ethiopians were not likely to be members of the Somali group al-Shabaab as an explanation of why this population was less likely to be arrested, even those who were living in the city illegally. But some of my Somali interlocutors attributed Ethiopians' relative safety from police harassment to perceptions that, unlike Somalis, they do not have money.