

# TRAGIC PLIGHT OF VICTIMS IN NEW AFRICAN FAMINE



**RAIL CHIEF Paul Plummer**  
**'Extra 6,400 trains a week in four years'**

BY NEIL LANCEFIELD  
SOME 6,400 more train services will run each week by 2021, a study claims.

The ongoing £50billion investment in the rail network will result in an 11% rise in weekday services, according to the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train companies and Network Rail.

It said operators run over 1,350 more trains a week than in 2013 and that by 2021 there will be better timetables around Britain.

Punctuality on the rail network is at its lowest point since 2006. RDG chief Paul Plummer said: "We're reversing decades of under-investment."

But Mick Cash of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, said: "We will believe this when we see it. There simply aren't the trains and staff available."



**ASSAULT Lucy Spraggan**  
**X Factor Lucy 'cut & bruised in bite attack'**

BY SALLY WARDLE  
FORMER X Factor star Lucy Spraggan has been attacked outside a bar in the early hours.

The singer-songwriter is said to have suffered cuts and bruises to her face, as well as being bitten.

She posted photos of her injuries online including an image showing a clump of hair, suggesting it was ripped out in the assault.

Lucy, 25, wrote: "That's my own hair. Was attacked tonight after the show in Brighton, along with my guitarist and wife."

Sussex police said two women from London, one aged 26, the other 27, have been arrested on suspicion of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and bailed until April 15.

Lucy, on the X Factor in 2012, has had hit singles including Tea and Toast.



**BY TOM PARRY**  
Mirror's Special Correspondent, who visited Somalia to report on the drought

**HER mournful cry was so faint, tiny Hamdi Ahmed could barely be heard above the other wailing children in the malnutrition ward.**

Looking at the desperately ill Somali girl's face racked with pain, I could almost see her life slipping away before my very eyes.

Limp in the arms of her mother, the six-month-old weighed less than 8lb, the same as an average British baby at birth – and less than half the weight she should have been.

Born at the epicentre of the worst Somali drought since 1950 – it has not rained for three years – Hamdi had been battling starvation since the day she was born.

Her head was covered in white blotches, her mouth red with a sore rash, and her eyes painfully sealed over.

It made me wince instinctively just to look at her.

In drought-stricken Somalia, Hamdi was the worst of many malnutrition cases I witnessed.

Yet, back in the comfort of Britain, news of her death less than a week later still came as a terrible shock.

Doctors had tried everything to save her, but apparently she was already too far gone when she had been brought in by mum Fadumo, 28.

### MALNUTRITION

Across the East African nation, nearly 363,000 vulnerable children are chronically ill through malnutrition, while six million people are in need of food aid.

In total more than 20 million people have been afflicted by an unprecedented food crisis across four countries, including South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen.

In the Horn of Africa, drought is also causing families in northern Kenya and Ethiopia to go without food and water.

The tragic fate of children like Hamdi graphically illustrates the stark and appalling reality behind these incomprehensible statistics.

I was told of her death late last week by local Save The Children staff. It was devastating news for them too.

Last night doctor Said Hamed, who did his best to treat the ailing youngster, told me: "Hamdi's case is one of the worst I have seen since this drought started. It has been getting progressively worse since she arrived at the clinic."

"There was no way that we could properly rehydrate her."  
"She could not swallow. She also had an infection to her gastro-intestinal system related to malnutrition."

"Her mother is also very malnourished

# A tiny grave in the desert and a mother shattered by unbearable grief. Amid the horror, there is one mercy, little Hamdi's suffering is over. And one question...

# How many more must die?

**20M**  
Number affected across Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen

and therefore she has not been able to breastfeed," he explained.

"When we pronounced Hamdi dead she was so distraught.

"Afterwards we helped her with the burial ritual. The little girl was wrapped in muslin and placed in a fresh grave in the ground near here. All of us were very, very sad when she died. It is a terrible thing."

Fadumo's exhausting three-day

journey to the stabilisation clinic from her remote community to get help for her daughter had been in vain. Dr Hamed told me the poor child had been sick for three months. Her immune system had essentially given up.

Living days away from the nearest medical help, by the time her mother had started the long trek towards refugee camps in Garowe it was already too late.

And as Britain's main aid agencies

launched a major appeal to raise funds for the worst food crisis in decades, grief-stricken Fadumo was burying her youngest child in a tiny grave in the desert near the clinic.

It is one of more than 100 that have been dug and covered over with mounds of stones in the last few weeks, between piles of rubbish and animal carcasses.

To see any child suffering the pains of acute malnutrition is upsetting. To

observe the pain Hamdi was suffering was almost unbearable.

However, there is some good news, positive signs that the relentless efforts of local medics are saving lives.

Another child I met in the outlying desert camp of Shahda, two-year-old Abdulrahman Mahamud, is thankfully on the mend after receiving treatment at an emergency clinic.

He was diagnosed with pneumonia

and his brother Abdullahi with bronchitis following a 100-mile march across the parched plains in search of food and medicine. Both contracted the complications because of severe malnutrition when their family lost all its livestock to the drought.

When I met frail Abdulrahman his wrists were so thin that when concerned doctors took measurements, he was marked down as being in the

"red section" – meaning his state was so bad it was feared he could die. Yet in the space of a week, the circumference of his wrists have increased by 1.5cm, happily showing he is putting on weight and winning his fight for survival.

It is for children like Hamdi and Abdulrahman that Britain's Disasters Emergency Committee launched one of its

biggest ever appeals. Thirteen aid agencies came together to launch a television appeal for donations as the crisis gets worse day by day.

Sir Mo Farah, who grew up in Somalia, backed the appeal, saying: "As a father of four, it hurts to see children without food and water, but this is a reality being faced by parents in East Africa right now."

"The drought is really bad and there are millions of children at risk of starvation. I was born in Somalia and it breaks my heart to hear stories of suffering."

Save The Children's staff in Somalia have been so affected by the unfolding catastrophe they are sacrificing part of their salaries to buy vital equipment for the clinic in which Hamdi died.

The charity's chief executive Kevin Watkins, who travelled to Somalia with the Mirror, made an impassioned plea for help: "This is a life and death moment for tens of thousands of children. We have to act now to save these innocent lives."

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**FINAL DAYS**  
Mum cradles frail tot Hamdi



**GRAVES**  
Freshly dug for victim of drought

Pictures: ANDY STENNING



**DESPERATE**  
Scavenging for food at camp



**FOOLHARDY Lee De Paauw**  
**Brit's horror as croc bites teen in 'dare'**

BY DANYA BAZARAA  
A BRITISH backpacker has told how a teenager was mauled by a crocodile after jumping into an infested river for a "dare".

Sophie Paterson, 24, watched in terror as the victim screamed for help as he was savaged.

Lee De Paauw, 18, escaped by repeatedly punching the croc in the Johnstone River in North Queensland, Australia.

Sophie, from Yeovil, Somerset, said he had bragged about being able to swim with crocodiles in infested waters before being dared to jump in.

She said: "He was saying 'I can swim out' and so we said, 'go on then', but we didn't think he would do it."

The teenager suffered fractures and lacerations as he was tossed around by the 10ft crocodile.



**RACER Mason with McLaren**  
**Pink Floyd's Nick in race track smash**

BY LOUIE SMITH  
PINK Floyd drummer Nick Mason pranged his £3million car while driving a lap of a race track yesterday.

The 73-year-old rocker lost control performing a demonstration lap in his McLaren F1 GTR.

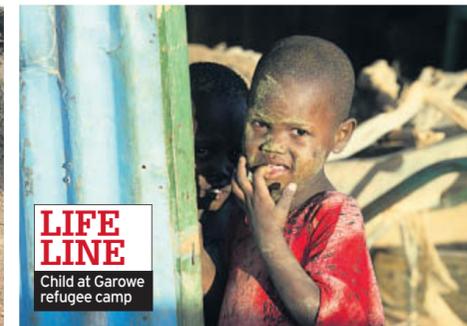
The sports car skidded off the circuit at a corner and slid across grass before crashing into a bank at Goodwood in West Sussex.

Mason was unhurt but the front of his car was damaged. The track was red-flagged while marshals picked up debris and the McLaren was towed away.

Mason, who has taken part in the classic Le Mans 24-hour race, owns one of the world's best private car collections. His Ferrari 250GTO is said to be worth £25million and he also collects Maseratis, Aston Martins and Bugattis.



**PARCHED**  
Tom in barren desert at Garowe



**LIFE LINE**  
Child at Garowe refugee camp

## How you can help

THE Disasters Emergency Committee has launched one of its biggest ever appeals. Thirteen aid agencies came together in a TV appeal for donations. Money raised by the DEC appeal will help those affected in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Britain's Department for International Development pledged to match every pound donated up to £5million.

To donate to the East Africa Crisis Appeal, log on to [www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk)



**HEARTBREAKING** The Mirror's front-page story on the famine