

Somali troops in Puntland fire at crowd, wound five

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By Abdiqani Hassan

BOSASSO, July 25 (Reuters) - Troops guarding the presidential palace in the northern Somali region of Puntland on Wednesday shot at protesters angered by high costs of living due to a rise in dollar demand, resident said.

Residents accuse the Puntland administration of minting hundreds of millions of shillings and buying the U.S. dollar from local markets prompting the greenback, which is the main trade currency, to shoot up.

That has led to soaring food prices.

Hundreds took to the streets of Garowe, Puntland's administrative capital, chanting anti-government slogans but as the charged crowd approached the presidential palace, guards there began shooting.

"The troops opened fire at us and wounded five people. We were protesting at the high cost of living as a result of the rise in dollar demand," Asha Mohamed, one of the protesters, told Reuters by telephone.

"Life is unbearable. I have not fed my children anything for the last two days. Foodstuffs are so expensive."

Puntland is relatively peaceful compared to the rest of Somalia, which has had no central government since warlords chased away former dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 and plunged the country into anarchy.