

Rice prods Somalia on constitution

by UPI

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Somalia's new leader to speed up drafting a constitution during a meeting of African leaders in Ethiopia. Last month, former Red Crescent official Nur Hassan Hussein replaced Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi, who was having little success reining in Islamist insurgents battling loyal Somali troops and Ethiopian reinforcements since last December. Rice said she urged Hussein to rally "non-extremist" opposition parties and strive for a cease-fire, CNN reported. "I also encouraged Prime Minister Hussein to develop a timeline for the remainder of the transitional process by early January, including the drafting of a new constitution and electoral law as the first step in this process," Rice said after the meeting. A flare-up of fighting in the Mogadishu sent some 200,000 people fleeing, aid officials have said. Rice also met with leaders from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, during her visit, the report said.

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