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Situation Update | September 2024

State officials in Somalia crack down on clan militia checkpoints

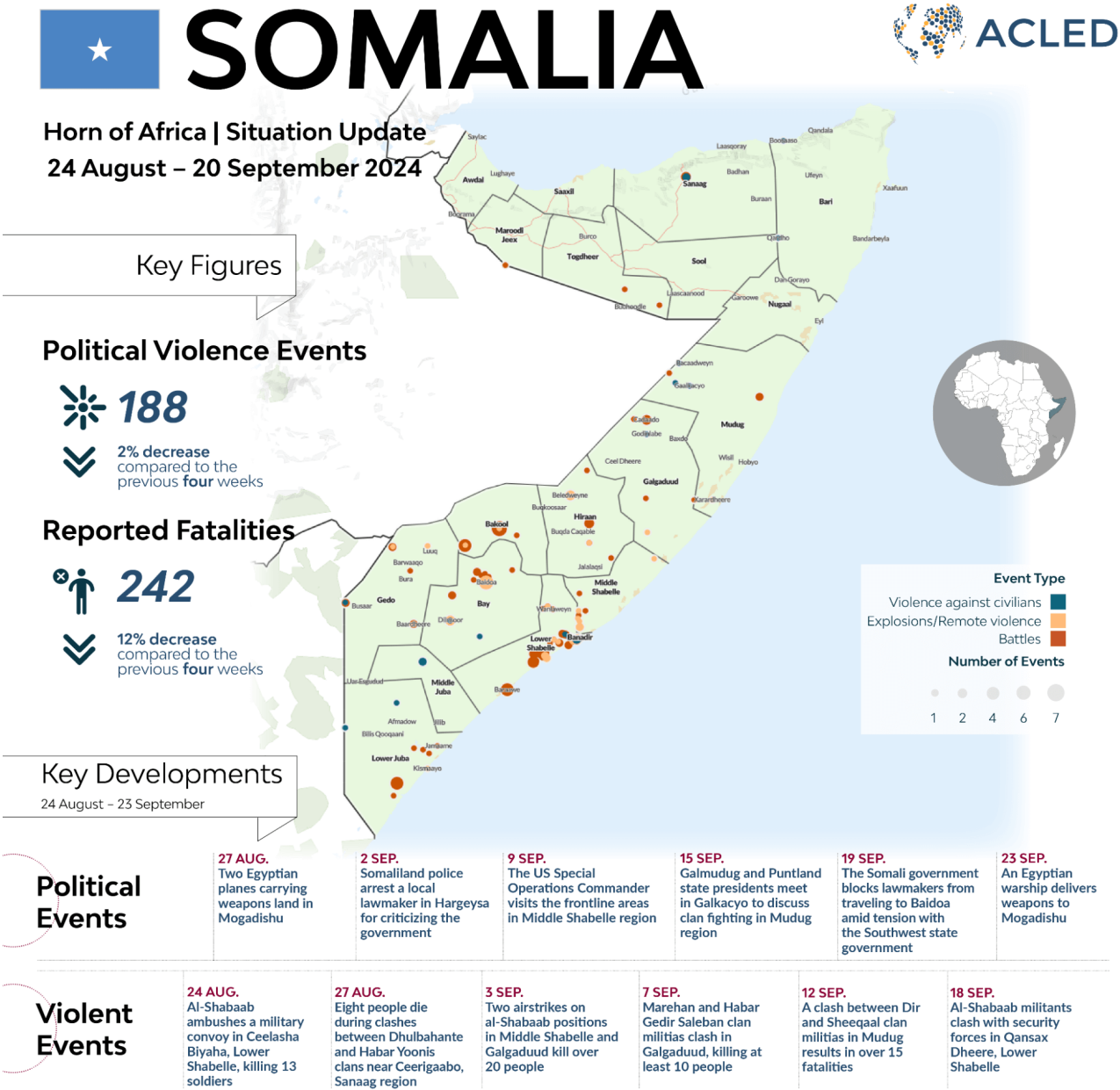
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Somalia at a Glance: 24 August – 20 September 2024

VITAL TRENDS

- ACLED records 188 political violence events and 242 reported fatalities from 24 August to 20 September 2024. Most political violence centered in Lower Shabelle region, where al-Shabaab attacks targeting security forces remained at high levels.
- Lower Shabelle region had the highest number of reported fatalities, with 51 recorded during the reporting period. Bay region followed, with 41 reported fatalities.
- The most common event type was battles, with over 112 events, followed by 51 explosions/remote violence events. Most of these battles – 74% – were between al-Shabaab and security forces, including the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

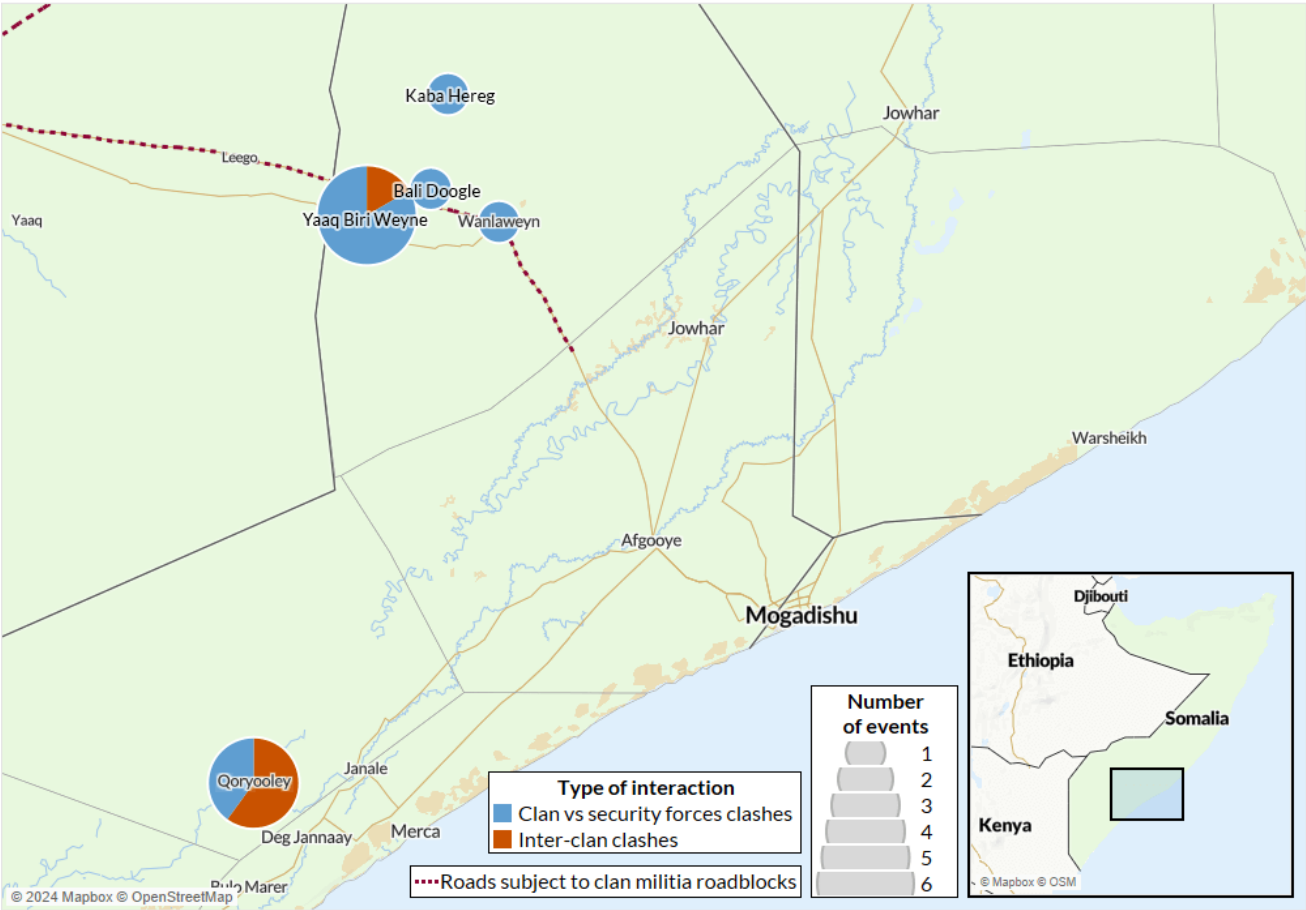


campaign against al-Shabaab, sharing the profits with fellow clan members in military and political positions. For instance, the clan militias in Yaaq Biri Weyne village in Lower Shabelle are supported by people from the same clan at the federal parliament.³

The Leysaan sub-clan militias of the Rahanweyn/Digil-Mirifle clan in Bardaale district established more than 10 illegal checkpoints targeting commercial vehicles between Bay and Gedo regions.⁴ In Lower Shabelle, the Gaaljecel sub-clan militias from the Hawiye clan stopped several commercial trucks traveling from Mogadishu to Baidoa town near Yaaq Biri Weyne town.⁵ The Southwest administration began to clear these checkpoints operated by Leysaan sub-clan militias in May, and in August, it turned its focus to the checkpoints set up by the Gaaljecel sub-clan militias in Lower Shabelle region, referring to them as illegal.⁶

In late July, Southwest administration officials, including the state security minister, visited Wanla Weyne town to meet with the clan militias and negotiate the peaceful removal of all checkpoints.⁷ However, the talks failed, and the Southwest administration began its operation against the illegal checkpoints in August. On 1 and 2 August, the Gaaljecel clan militia clashed with security forces who were escorting a commercial truck near Yaaq Biri Weyne village. This two-day clash resulted in the death of at least 10 people, and several others were injured, underscoring the severe impact of their actions. From 1 August to 20 September, the Southwest security forces and Gaaljecel sub-clan militia clashed seven times in the Lower Shabelle region, including the previously mentioned two-day clash (see map below). On 2 August, the Southwest administration announced that they successfully removed all the checkpoints and condemned the militias running illegal checkpoints as a threat to the development and coexistence of communities.⁸ However, reports indicate that the clan militias have again set up several checkpoints in other areas.⁹

Armed clashes involving clan militias in Lower Shabelle
1 May - 20 September 2024



The dispute between the Southwest security forces and the Gaaljecel sub-clan militias over the illegal checkpoints triggered fresh tensions between the Rahanweyn/Digil-Mirifle and Hawiye clans. Members of the Rahanweyn/Digil-Mirifle clan occupy prominent positions in the Southwest administration (including the presidency), whereas the militias hail largely from the Hawiye clan in Lower Shabelle region. These sub-clans have fought over land ownership for the last six years in Yaaq Biri Weyne and Wanla Weyne towns in Lower Shabelle.¹⁰ On 22 August, the Gaaljecel and Rahanweyn Hubeer sub-clan militias clashed near Yaaq Biri Weyne town. More than 10 people were killed, and 20 others were injured in this clash (see map above).

These ongoing tensions across Southwest State may provide an opportunity for al-Shabaab militants to ramp up attacks in the Bay, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle regions.¹¹ The militants are likely to take advantage of the infighting between the security forces and clan militias to carry out large-scale attacks as the security forces focus their attention on ending the illegal checkpoints.

Southwest administration dispute with the federal government over the Egypt deal

In September, disputes over the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops created a rift between the federal government and the Southwest administration in Baidoa town. Tensions rose after 25 members of parliament representing Southwest state at the federal parliament rejected the complete withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from the Bay and Bakool regions.¹² They released a statement after protests broke out on 30 and 31 August in Hudur and Waajid, two towns in Bakool region, rejecting the government's decision to deploy Egyptian troops in the country. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud responded by dismissing the Special Envoy for Health and Nutrition, who was among the 25 members of parliament who supported Ethiopia troops to remain in Southwest state. Moreover, around 40 members of parliament tabled a motion to strip parliamentary immunity from members accused of endorsing Ethiopian military activities within Somalia.¹³

The deployment of Egyptian troops, a move that carries significant geopolitical implications, was met with resistance from the Southwest administration. The [Ethiopian forces deployed to Somalia](#) in 2012 through the ATMIS and bilateral agreements to assist Somali security forces in the fight against al-Shabaab. In June 2024, the Somali government demanded all Ethiopian troops leave the country by December when the ATMIS deployment ends. This decision comes after [a memorandum of understanding was signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland](#) to provide sea access to Ethiopia in exchange for its recognition of Somaliland's statehood. Amid the tension, the Somali government signed a security pact with Egypt to provide weapons, train Somali troops, and secure their maritime borders.¹⁴

Despite the deepening tensions, de-escalating efforts are underway. The Southwest state president supported the decision of the 25 members of parliament to reject the plan and called all members of parliament representing Southwest state for consensus meetings in Baidoa town.¹⁵ In response, the Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Bare traveled to Baidoa town and met with the state president. However, the meeting ended without any agreement.¹⁶ Additionally, on 17 September, the federal government briefly suspended flights to Baidoa, the capital of Southwest state.¹⁷ The federal government denied clearance for a flight carrying Southwest state officials and soldiers who were blocked from landing at Baraawe airfield.¹⁸ Additionally, on 19 September, security forces at the Mogadishu airport blocked a member of parliament from traveling to Baidoa town.¹⁹

The dispute between the federal government and the Southwest state added to the ongoing tensions between the Hawiye and Rahanweyn/Digil-Mirifle clans over the checkpoints. In early September, clan elders from Hawiye who support the federal government threatened violence against the Southwest members of parliament from the Rahanweyn/Digil-Mirifle clan in Mogadishu.²⁰ However, lawmakers from the Hawiye clan later apologized for the remarks.²¹ The clan's alignment with the different administrations highlights the extent to which clan politics are rooted in Somalia's political and security developments.

Clan rivalries fuel regional dispute in Sanaag region

The conflict between the Dhulbahante and Isaaq sub-clans escalated yet again in Somaliland's Sanaag region. Violence broke out on 26 August after Somaliland police exchanged fire with a member of the Dhulbahante clan militia in Ceerigaabo. The clan member resisted arrest and shot at the police officers, injuring two of them before he was killed. The next day, the Naleeye Ahmed sub-clan of Dhulbahante clan and the Habar Yoonis-Muse Ismail sub-clan of Isaaq clan (from which the police officers hailed) clashed in Goof village near Ceerigaabo. At least nine people were killed from both sides, including a civilian businessman. On 28 August, Somaliland's regional administration deployed forces and imposed a curfew in Ceerigaabo to restore order. However, new violence erupted on 30 August when Somaliland security forces clashed with Habar Yoonis-Muse Ismail sub-clan militias who ambushed vehicles carrying civilians from the Dhulbahante-Naleeye Ahmed sub-clan in Ceerigaabo.

These clashes are the latest in [a year-long conflict](#) that pits the Somaliland government and the breakaway SSC administration against each other. The Somaliland administration controls several parts of Sanaag region, including its capital, Ceerigaabo, while the SSC administration controls the Sool region and the Caynabo district of Sanaag. The recent violence follows the deployment of SSC militias toward Somaliland government-controlled Ceerigaabo town in July.²² The SSC administration accuses the Somaliland authorities of targeting opposition members and supporters of the SSC. For its part, the Somaliland government holds the SSC militias responsible for spreading chaos in its territory and blames neighboring Puntland for supporting the SSC.²³ This violence is interlocked with clan grievances. The Isaaq clan dominates the Somaliland government, and the Dhulbahante clan dominates the SSC administration.

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