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ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation

ecoi.net featured topic on Somalia: Security Situation

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1. Background Information

"The state of Somalia was born in 1960, when British Somaliland and what had formerly been Italian Somaliland united and declared independence." ([Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012](#))^[i]

"In 1969, a coup headed by Mohamed SIAD Barre ushered in an authoritarian socialist rule characterized by the persecution, jailing, and torture of political opponents and dissidents." ([CIA, 22 March 2016](#))^[ii]

"Armed opposition groups overthrew Barre's regime in 1991, and Somalia descended into civil war and anarchy." ([Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012](#))

"The ousting of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 sparks a decades-long civil war between rival clan warlords and the disintegration of central authority. Former British Somaliland declares unilateral independence." ([BBC, 4 February 2016](#))^[iii]

"Somalia lacks a unified central government. Somaliland, in the north, declared independence from Somalia shortly after the civil war broke out in 1991, although it has not been recognised by any foreign governments. Puntland, in Somalia's northeast, declared itself an autonomous state in 1998. Unlike Somaliland, Puntland does not seek independence." ([Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012](#))

"In 2000, the Somalia National Peace Conference (SNPC) held in Djibouti resulted in the formation of an interim government, known as the Transitional National Government (TNG). When the TNG failed to establish adequate security or governing institutions, the Government of Kenya, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), led a subsequent peace process that concluded in October 2004 with the election of Abdullahi YUSUF Ahmed as President of a second interim government, known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of the Somali Republic. The TFG included a 275-member parliamentary body, known as the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP)." ([CIA, 22 March 2016](#))

"In 2004, [the TNG] was replaced by the Transitional Federal Government, which initially ruled from Kenya until it moved to Baidoa in 2007. In July 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a group of Sharia courts, defeated the US-backed and secular Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The ICU took control of Mogadishu and large parts of the southern region." ([Peace Direct, January 2014](#))^[iv]

"In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of much of central and southern Somalia, imposing a strict interpretation of sharia law over the areas it ruled. [...] Ethiopian troops intervened later that year to fight ICU forces. [...] A radical offshoot of the ICU called al-Shabab, now affiliated with al-Qaeda, controls much of southern Somalia, although African Union troops have recently seen major victories against al-Shabab." ([Al Jazeera, 9 September 2012](#))

"The seizure of the capital Mogadishu and much of the country's south by a coalition of Islamist shariah courts in 2006 prompted an intervention by Ethiopian, and later, African Union, forces. [...] 2007-11 - An African Union peacekeeping force, Amisom, begins to deploy and Ethiopian troops withdraw in 2009. Al-Shabab - a jihadist breakaway from the Islamic Courts - advance into southern and central Somalia, prompting an armed intervention by Kenya." ([BBC, 4 February 2016](#))

"In 2009, the TFP amended the TFC to extend TFG's mandate until 2011 and in 2011 Somali principals agreed to institute political transition by August 2012. The transition process ended in September 2012 when clan elders replaced the TFP by appointing 275 members to a new parliament who subsequently elected a new president." ([CIA, 22 March 2016](#))

"A relatively new figure in Somali politics, academic and civic activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud beat the incumbent Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in a run-off presidential vote in September 2012. This was the first presidential election held on Somali soil since 1967, and held among members of parliament elected by clan elders. In 2015, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud shelved plans to hold the next presidential election the following as a direct popular vote, citing a lack of security and infrastructure." ([BBC, 4 February 2016](#))

"Somali lawmakers elected a new president Wednesday, choosing a former prime minister who is a dual U.S.-Somali citizen. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner after two rounds of voting by the Somali parliament in Mogadishu. Farmajo won the largest share of votes in the second round, far outdistancing incumbent leader Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and former president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed." ([VOA, 8 February 2017](#))^[v]

"The president of Somalia has told VOA that his government will not hold popular elections next year, due to continuing insecurity in the country." ([VOA, 29 July 2015](#))

"In 2012 Puntland's constituent assembly overwhelmingly adopted a state constitution that enshrines a multiparty political system. In 2014 Abdiweli Mohamed Ali 'Gaas' defeated incumbent President Abdirahman Mohamed 'Farole' by one parliamentary vote in a run-off election broadcast live on local television and radio stations. President Farole accepted the results. [...] The South West State parliament was formed in 2015 following the 2014 state formation conference, during which traditional elders and delegates elected Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adam as the region's first president. [...] In 2015 the FGS [Federal Government of Somalia] officially inaugurated the 89-member Galmudug assembly; the members had been selected by 40 traditional elders representing 11 subclans. [...] The ASWJ [Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama] refused to accept the election results and unilaterally established its own self-declared administration for those parts of Galmudug it controlled. [...] Parliamentary elections in Somaliland, last held in 2005, were overdue by 13 years. [...] In November 2017 Somalilanders overwhelmingly elected ruling Kulmiye Party candidate Muse Bihi president. Bihi was peacefully sworn in in December 2017. [...] In 2013 the FGS and Jubaland delegates signed an agreement that resulted in the FGS's formal recognition of the newly formed Jubaland administration. Ahmed Mohamed Islam 'Madobe' was selected as president in a 2013 conference of elders and representatives. [...] In 2016 the FGS launched the state formation conference for Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle regions, the final federal member state to be constituted within the federal system. The process concluded with the formation of Hirshabelle State, the formation of the Hirshabelle assembly, and the election of Hirshabelle president Ali Abdullahi Osoble in 2016, although the state assembly voted to impeach Osoble in August and elected Mohamed Abdi Waare in September." ([USDOS, 13 March 2019, Section 3](#)) ^[vi]

"The Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Raisedon Zenenga, congratulates Mr. Said Abdullahi Deni and Mr. Ahmed Elmi Karash on their election as President and Vice-President of Puntland, respectively, in yesterday's balloting in the Federal Member State's Assembly." ([UNSOM, 9 January 2019](#)) ^[vii]

2. Security Situation

"The security situation in Somalia remained volatile during the reporting period [5 November 2019 to 4 February 2020], with security incidents increasing from 239 in November to 266 in December, followed by a slight decline to 235 in January. The increase in December was recorded mainly in Al-Shabab hit-and-run attacks targeting security forces, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (two in December compared with none in November), improvised explosive device attacks and hand

grenade attacks, as well as incidents categorized under crime. A decline was recorded in terrorism-related incidents in January, compared with December, while incidents categorized under armed conflict remained the same" ([UN Security Council, 13 February 2020, p. 3](#))

"The security situation remained volatile during the reporting period [from 5 May to 4 August 2019]. Al-Shabaab continued to perpetrate violence, including carrying out attacks targeting government facilities and personnel, security forces, international partners and public places such as hotels and restaurants. A total of 228 incidents occurred during Ramadan, from 5 May to 3 June; higher than in Ramadan in 2017 and 2018. Some 35 per cent of violent incidents occurred in the Banaadir region, with southern Somalia accounting for 34 per cent, indicating that Al-Shabaab's operational focus did not change during the reporting period. Overall, security incidents declined significantly in June and July. There was, however, an increase in incidents involving improvised explosive devices in July, when there were several high-profile terrorist attacks." ([UN Security Council, 15 August 2019, pp. 3-4](#))

"U.S.-backed security forces continued offensives against Al-Shabaab: notably, unclaimed airstrikes 11 July reportedly killed dozens of Al-Shabaab militants in Jilib, Middle Juba. In north, unidentified gunmen opened fire on vehicle in Galkayo, Puntland 11 July killing at least five civilians. U.S. airstrike 27 July killed one member of Islamic State (ISIS)-Somalia." ([ICG, August 2019](#))^[viii]

"Also in Sanaag, Somaliland forces clashed with those loyal to Colonel Arre, who defected from Somaliland to Puntland in 2018, near Dhoob 10 July leaving three Somaliland soldiers and one of Arre's soldiers dead. After Arre's forces 26 July took Karin village, clashes broke out there next day between them and Somaliland troops, reportedly leaving two Somaliland soldiers dead." ([ICG, August 2019](#))

"In south, security forces killed five Al-Shabaab fighters in Gedo region 3-9 June; Al-Shabaab ambush of Kenyan soldiers in African Union mission (AMISOM) in Burgavo, Lower Juba 24 June left nine militants dead; clashes between security forces and Al-Shabaab near Bur Eyle, Bay region 22 June left eleven soldiers and five militants dead; Al-Shabaab attack on military base in Bullo Marer, Lower Shabelle 27 June left three militants and two soldiers dead; clashes between security forces and Al-Shabaab 27 June left at least eight militants dead in Jamame, Lower Juba; three Al-Shabaab militants surrendered to security forces in Bay and Gedo regions 2-11 June. In north, Al-Shabaab fighters 8 June captured military base in Af-Urur in Puntland only for Puntland forces to retake it 11 June without a fight; [...] Puntland and Somaliland forces 14 June reportedly clashed in Badhan town in Sanaag region, which both administrations claim, no casualties. U.S. claimed its airstrikes killed six Islamic State (ISIS) militants and four Al-Shabaab fighters 4-25 June." ([ICG, July 2019](#))

"The security situation remained volatile during the reporting period [from 14 December 2018 to 4 May 2019]. Al-Shabaab continued to be the main perpetrator of attacks against government facilities, government officials and security forces, as well as popular restaurants and hotels. March and April witnessed a significant increase of attacks in Mogadishu, where incidents involving improvised explosive devices occurred almost every day. Incidents involving suicide vehicle-borne, under-vehicle and remote-controlled improvised explosive devices, as well as mortar attacks and targeted assassinations, continued. In March alone, there were 77 attacks using improvised explosive devices across the country. That was the highest number in any single month since 2016. The majority of incidents were reported in Mogadishu and in the Shabelle Hoose, Juba Hoose and Gedo regions. In Mogadishu, there were 28 incidents involving improvised explosive devices, including two attacks by suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, two attacks by other vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and one complex attack." ([UN Security Council, 15 May 2019, pp. 3-4](#))^[ix]

2.1. Conflicts between clans

"Inter-clan fighting erupted in Lower Juba region in south in early Feb leaving at least twenty dead. In south and centre, security operations and Al-Shabaab attacks 2-27 Feb left at least 34 soldiers and 61 militants dead in Feb. U.S. airstrikes 2-28 Feb reportedly killed ten Al-Shabaab militants, including Al-Shabaab commander involved in early Jan attack in Kenya's Lamu county." ([ICG, March 2020](#))

"In the Sool and Sanaag regions, on 22 December, a government-backed committee facilitated a peace deal to conclude protracted conflict between two warring sub-clans in Ceel Afweyn, Sanaag region. On 2 January, the deserter militia laid down its weapons following the pardon by Mr. Bihi of the militia, its integration in the army of "Somaliland" and the exile of the militia's ringleader." (UN Security Council, 13. Februar 2020, S. 4)

"In Sanaag region (disputed between Somaliland and Puntland), rival clan militias clashed in Duud Arraale and El Afweyn 7-8 July leaving at least 25 dead." ([ICG, August 2019](#))

"after suspected Al-Shabaab militants killed police officer near Galkayo, local militia 14 June killed nine members of Rahanweyn clan which it believes provides recruits to Al-Shabaab;" ([ICG, July 2019](#))

2.2. Attacks by al-Shabaab and Islamic State (ISIS) in Somalia

"In south and centre, Al-Shabaab attacks in March left at least 22 security force members dead in Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba, Hiraan, Bay and Gedo regions, while Al-Shabaab roadside bombing 25 March left five civilians dead in Lower Juba, and in Middle Juba, Al-Shabaab 31 March executed six civilians accused of spying. In capital Mogadishu, militants 1 and 18 March launched mortars at UN compound; Al-Shabaab suicide bombing 25 March left at least four dead." ([ICG, April 2020](#))

"In Puntland state in north, Al-Shabaab militants 17-29 March reportedly killed three local officials." ([ICG, April 2020](#))

"Al-Shabaab continued to attack security forces and civilians, tensions mounted in Galmudug as rival camps appointed parallel parliaments, and in coming weeks militia fighting could erupt in Jubaland state in south. In capital Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab killed at least six people 8-11 Jan. In Lower Juba, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions in south, clashes between Al-Shabaab and security forces and Al-Shabaab attacks 7-25 Jan left at least sixteen soldiers and civilians dead, and some 80 militants." ([ICG, February 2020](#))

"In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab militants 13 Oct launched mortars at compounds of UN and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM); suspected Al-Shabaab 16 Oct killed three people; bombing 28 Oct killed at least two civilians. In south and centre, Al-Shabaab kept up attacks in Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Bay and Hiraan regions, killing at least sixteen Somali and international soldiers and three civilians." ([ICG, November 2019](#))

"In capital Mogadishu, suspected Al-Shabaab attacks on checkpoint 2 Sept, president's compound 11 Sept and govt official 18 Sept left at least seven dead; roadside bomb 30 Sept struck Italian military convoy in EU mission, no casualties. In south and centre, Al-Shabaab stepped up attacks on national forces and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops. Attacks against AMISOM 8-17 Sept left at least seventeen Burundian and five Djiboutian soldiers dead in Middle Shabelle and Hiraan regions respectively. At least five attacks on security forces and officials in Bay, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions 12-22 Sept left at least 52 dead." ([ICG, October 2019](#))

"Al-Shabaab continued to clash with security forces in south, especially in Lower Shabelle region. In Mogadishu, security forces 16 Aug killed four militants attempting to kill official; bombing 25 Aug left one dead. In Lower Shabelle, security forces 6 Aug captured Awdheegle town from Al-Shabaab; 11 Aug clashed with militants in Sham, reportedly killing at least seventeen and injuring spokesperson Ali Dhere who allegedly died 16 Aug; 25 Aug fought militants in Sablale, reportedly killing at least eighteen. Al-Shabaab attacks on military bases in Lower and Middle Shabelle 13-21 Aug reportedly left dozens of militants, at least seven soldiers and two civilians dead." ([ICG, September 2019](#))

"In Mogadishu, two Al-Shabaab attacks 8 July left nine dead; suicide car bombing near airport 22 July killed at least seventeen; suicide bombing in municipal govt HQ [government headquarter] 24 July killed six and seriously wounded others including city's mayor (Al-Shabaab said suicide bombing target was U.S. diplomat recently appointed U.N. envoy to Somalia). Al-Shabaab kept up attacks elsewhere in south, notably Al-Shabaab militants 12 July stormed hotel in Kismayo, Jubaland state capital, killing at least 26. Attacks also reported in Middle Juba, Lower Juba, Gedo and Lower Shabelle regions killing at least 50 civilians and soldiers." ([ICG, August 2019](#))

"The mayor of Somalia's capital Mogadishu has died a week after being wounded in a suicide attack that killed at least six other people." ([BBC, 1 August 2019](#))

"In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab 15 June launched two car bomb attacks in heavily secured govt areas killing eleven. [...] Al-Shabaab bombing of teashop in Af-Urur 25 June killed four Puntland soldiers and one civilian." ([ICG, July 2019](#))

2.3. Attacks by foreign troops and Somali Government forces

"[...] security forces 5 March killed eight Al-Shabaab militants in Hiraan; 16 March took back Janaale town in Lower Shabelle from Al-Shabaab militants, number of casualties unknown; 21-29 March killed at least 37 militants in Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle." ([ICG, April 2020](#))

"In Jubaland state's Gedo region in south, standoff between federal govt troops and Jubaland forces continued and fighting erupted again 2 March in Bula Hawa town near Kenyan border reportedly leaving at least eleven civilians and combatants dead." ([ICG, April 2020](#))

"Fighting erupted in Galmudug state after election of state president, and federal govt forces deployed to Jubaland state's Gedo region where fighting could intensify in coming weeks. Tensions rose in Gedo following late Jan escape from capital Mogadishu prison of former Jubaland security minister Abdirashid Janan: Janan reportedly arrived in Gedo in early Feb via Kenyan capital Nairobi,

and federal govt deployed some 700 troops to region; federal govt forces 4 Feb launched offensive and captured Dolow and Bula Hawa towns near Kenyan border prompting Janan to flee across border in Kenya to Mandera town; federal govt 5 Feb accused Kenya of interference for allegedly aiding Janan. Federal govt forces 8 Feb clashed with Jubaland forces in Bula Hawa, leaving at least two dead. Also in Jubaland, fighting 12 Feb broke out in capital Kismayo between state forces and supporters of state President Madobe's political rival, death toll unclear. In Galmudug state in centre, parliament 2 Feb elected federal govt-backed candidate Ahmed Abdi Qoor Qoor as state president; federal govt forces 27-28 Feb clashed in state capital Dhusamareb with local Sufi paramilitary group Ahlu Sunnah Waa-Jama'a (ASWJ) which opposed federal govt-controlled electoral process, at least 22 reportedly killed; ASWJ leadership 29 Feb surrendered to federal govt and announced their exit from Galmudug politics." ([ICG, March 2020](#))

"U.S. airstrikes 3-27 Jan left nine Al-Shabaab militants dead. In Bosaso, on Puntland's coast in north, security forces 6 Jan killed four suspected members of Islamic State (ISIS)-Somalia. Suspected ISIS militants shot dead former official in Bosaso 21 Jan." ([ICG, February 2020](#))

"Security forces 15-19 Oct reportedly killed several dozen Al-Shabaab militants in Gedo and Hiraan regions. Somali airstrikes 20 Oct left unknown number of militants dead in Lower Juba. U.S. airstrike 25 Oct killed three Islamic State (ISIS) militants; at least three civilians reported missing." ([ICG, November 2019](#))

"Army operations in Hiraan, Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle regions 17-27 Sept reportedly killed 80 Al-Shabaab militants. U.S. and Somali airstrikes in Middle and Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle 3-30 Sept reportedly killed 33 militants." ([ICG, October 2019](#))

"Unclaimed airstrikes in Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba 5 and 16 Aug reportedly killed dozens of militants. U.S. airstrike near Qunyo Barrow, Lower Shabelle 20 Aug killed one militant." ([ICG, September 2019](#))

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[i] Al-Jazeera is a Qatar-based TV news network.

[ii] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is the civilian foreign intelligence service of the U.S. Government.

[iii] The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster.

[iv] Peace Direct is a charity based in London which supports grassroots peacebuilders in areas of conflict.

[v] Voice of America (VOA) is the official external broadcast institution of the United States federal government.

[vi] The US Department of State (USDOS) is responsible for the international relations of the United States.

[vii] United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is the mission of the United Nations in Somalia.

[viii] The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a transnational non-profit, non-governmental organisation that carries out field research on violent conflict and advances policies to prevent, mitigate or resolve conflict.

[ix] The UN Security Council is an organ of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

This featured topic was prepared after researching within time constraints. It is meant to offer an overview on an issue and is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection. Chronologies are not intended to be exhaustive. Every quotation is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document.

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