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The State of the World's Human Rights; Somalia 2025

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the devastating armed conflict, while children faced grave violations of their rights. All parties to the conflict continued to commit serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Women and girls were exposed to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Climate change exacerbated droughts, undermining the rights to food and water and driving internal and cross-border displacement. Internally displaced people were forcibly evicted nationwide. The right to freedom of expression was severely restricted. The UN Human Rights Council terminated the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia. Somaliland authorities severely restricted the right to freedom of expression and media freedom.

Background

In January Somalia joined the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for a two-year term.

The AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) became operational in January, replacing the AU Transition Mission in Somalia. In December, the UN Security Council extended AUSSOM's mandate by one year.

A new election model for the 2026 elections, and 2024 constitutional amendments, continued to cause tension between the federal government and some of its regional member states, particularly the leaders of Jubaland and Puntland who, in June, issued a joint statement rejecting the constitutional amendments.

Tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia, arising from a memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024, de-escalated following Türkiye's mediation efforts. Following the signing of the Ankara Declaration in December 2024, the leaders of Ethiopia and Somalia made reciprocal state visits.

On 26 December, Israel became the first country to recognize Somaliland as an independent state.

Unlawful attacks and killings

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the ongoing armed conflict between the Somali government, supported by its international allies, and the armed group Al-Shabaab, with massive civilian casualties reported throughout the year. There was no accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia reported 395 civilian casualties (144 killed and 251 injured) between March and September alone. Al-Shabaab was reported to be responsible for 40% (159) of these casualties, while the others were attributed to state security forces, clan militias and other unidentified armed actors.

On 18 March journalist Mohamed Abukar Mohamed (also known as “Dabaashe”) was killed when an improvised explosive device, which was targeting President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud’s convoy, hit his residence in the Eel Gaabta area of the capital, Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, which also killed other civilians.

Children’s rights

Between March and August, the UN-mandated country task force that monitors and reports on six grave violations of children’s rights in armed conflict zones, reported 1,394 such violations affecting 1,096 children (840 boys and 256 girls). They included abductions, recruitment and use in conflict, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 77% of the verified violations while the rest were attributed to Somali security forces, clan militias and other unidentified armed actors.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, between July 2025 and June 2026, an estimated 1.85 million children aged between six months and 59 months were expected to suffer acute malnutrition, including about 421,000 children who were likely to suffer severe acute malnutrition.

Sexual and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, against women and girls continued. Between March and September, the UN reported eight incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting five girls and seven women, all of whom were internally displaced. Six incidents were attributed to unidentified armed men and two to uniformed men operating in Jubaland state. These included six incidents of gang rape and two of attempted rape.

The federal parliament failed to pass bills on sexual offences and female genital mutilation. However, in March, Jubaland state passed the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act.

Internally displaced people’s rights

Internally displaced people continued to face significant human rights violations and abuses. Nearly 550,000 people were internally displaced due to drought, floods, conflict, and food insecurity. According to the UN, more than 250,000 people – most of whom were already internally displaced – were forcibly evicted nationwide. The Banadir region accounted for 56% of the evictions.

Right to a healthy environment

Somalia suffered recurrent climate change-related droughts. Despite this, authorities failed to provide adequate clean water for domestic use after groundwater and surface water sources dried up. They also failed to protect water sources from contamination, leading to many people using contaminated water, resulting in cholera outbreaks. The drought also caused rampant malnutrition, drying up of farms, death of livestock, destruction of livelihoods and increased food prices.¹

Reduced water levels in rivers during drought led to the destruction of riverbanks by farmers trying to access water, which exposed low-lying riverine areas to floods. This was compounded by the government's failure to repair the damage.

While a lack of access to health services continued to contribute to deaths from malnutrition and cholera outbreaks, the allocated health budget remained below 5%, falling short of the 15% recommended in the Abuja Declaration. Al-Shabaab imposed taxes on water sources, food, and livestock traders, exacerbating the situation.

Inadequate climate finance provided to Somalia by high-income and high-emitting countries made it difficult for the government to budget for climate adaptation, leading to internal and cross-border displacement.

Freedom of expression

The right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, was restricted. Journalists were attacked by security forces and subjected to threats, harassment, intimidation, beatings, arbitrary arrests and prosecution.

Following multiple attacks by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu and its neighbouring towns and villages, the government stepped up attempts to control and censor journalists reporting on public interest issues, including insecurity and forced evictions. On 16 March, the minister for information issued a directive banning the publication of "statements or news that could threaten national security" or "that directly or indirectly misuses or fabricates information."

On 15 March National Intelligence and Security Agency officers raided the home of RTN Somali TV reporter Bahjo Abdullahi Salad and arrested her. She was held at Wardhigley police station in Mogadishu for about four hours in relation to a TikTok video in which she commented on the authorities' failure to clear rubbish from areas of Wardhigley district. She was released without charge.

On 18 March police arrested at least 22 journalists who had covered the attempted assassination of the president. Police raided the offices of Risaala Media Corporation, which had aired a video featuring the site of the attack, arresting five of the corporation's journalists – reporters Ali Abdullahi Ibrahim and Hamda Hassan Ahmed, cameramen Mohamed Said Nur and Abdullahi Sharif Ali, and technician Liban Abdullahi Hassan. They were interrogated at Hamar Jajab police station in Mogadishu and released later that day.

On 1 April police officers raided the offices of Five Somali TV and arrested journalists Mohamed Roraye, Ahmed Mohamud, Mohamed Abdi Afgooye and Dahir Dayah. This followed the outlet's report on the alleged desertion of police officers. They were all released without charge later that day.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

In July the National Independent Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) was established, the first of its kind in Somalia, and the appointment of nine commission members was approved by the cabinet. On 11 October, parliament approved the members' appointments, after which they were sworn into office. Sections of Somali civil society questioned the appointment process and the NIHRC's independence, arguing that the selection process was not transparent.

In October, the UN Human Rights Council terminated the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, which had been in place since 1993. The council's resolution instead tasked OHCHR, the UN human rights office, with providing technical assistance and capacity-building to Somalia, and assessing, monitoring and reporting on human rights, in consultation with the NIHRC, civil society and other relevant authorities.

Somaliland

Freedom of expression

Hopes that President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, who assumed office in December 2024, would improve the human rights situation in Somaliland were unrealized. Authorities continued to restrict freedom of expression, including by arresting and prosecuting journalists. According to the media advocacy organization Somali Journalists Syndicate, authorities in Somaliland arrested at least 24 journalists.

On 5 August, after responding to a police summons, journalist Ahmed Mohamud Dool was arrested and detained at the headquarters of the Criminal Investigations Department in the capital, Hargeisa, in relation to his Facebook post about murders in the city. The next day he was charged with "spreading false information." The Maroodi Jeh Regional Court in Hargeisa remanded him in custody for four days, after which the court granted the police permission to hold him for a further seven days, pending investigations. On 3 September, his case was

transferred to Hargeisa District Court, which fined him SOS 1,500,000 (about USD 150) before releasing him.

