

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1076
Land:	Somalia
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom in the world 2024. Somalia
Udgivet:	februar 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. september 2024



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2024

Somalia

8

NOT FREE

/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	2/40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	6/60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

8/100

Not Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Note

The numerical scores and status listed here do not reflect conditions in Somaliland, which is examined in a separate report. *Freedom in the World* reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

Overview

Somalia has struggled to reestablish a functioning state since the collapse of an authoritarian regime in 1991. Limited, indirect elections brought a federal government to power in 2012. By 2016, it had established five federal member states, though these semiautonomous regions are often at odds with the central government. The government's territorial control is also contested by a separatist government in Somaliland and by the Shabaab, an Islamist militant group. No direct national elections have been held to date, and political affairs remain dominated by clan divisions. Amid ongoing insecurity, human rights abuses by both state and nonstate actors occur regularly.

Key Developments in 2023

- The government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud—supported by the national army, clan militias, and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), continued to make advances against the Shabaab during the year, seizing control of several towns across the country.
- The Shabaab responded with attacks of its own, killing hundreds of clan militia fighters and civilians in various assaults. In the second half of the year, the group managed to regain some ground in central Somalia.
- The ATMIS began a planned withdrawal of troops from Somalia despite the ongoing conflict, with a full withdrawal expected by December 2024.
- In May, the state of Puntland held district council elections that featured direct suffrage, marking Somalia's first statewide application of a one-person, one-vote system in several decades.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

0/4

Under the 2012 provisional constitution, the president is elected by a two-thirds vote in the Federal Parliament to serve a four-year term. The president shares executive power with a prime minister, who must have the support of Parliament.

In May 2022, former president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (2012–17) was chosen to serve another term after three rounds of voting by lawmakers. His opponent, incumbent president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (known as Farmaajo), ultimately conceded defeat. Hamza Abdi Barre took office as prime minister that June, replacing Mohamed Hussein Roble, and a new cabinet consisting of 75 ministers, deputy ministers, and state ministers was appointed in August.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

0/4

Somalia has not held direct national legislative elections since 1969. Members of the 54-seat Upper House are elected by state assemblies. The lower house, the House of the People, is elected under a system in which clan elders choose delegates, who in turn select lawmakers.

Upper House elections were begun in July 2021 and completed that November after months of political disputes. Elections for the lower house started in November 2021 and were also highly divisive, finally concluding in late April 2022. Opposition groups and observers criticized both sets of elections, alleging political manipulation, improper interference, and vote buying.

Federal member states similarly employ clan-based power-sharing systems rather than direct popular elections to form their legislatures. However, in May 2023, the semiautonomous state of Puntland held historic elections for district councils, marking the country's first statewide direct voting in over 50 years. The balloting was largely peaceful, though some opposition groups attempted to enforce a boycott in their areas, destroying election materials and triggering election postponements in three of the state's 33 districts.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

0 / 4

The electoral framework in place as of 2023 did not provide for universal suffrage. Balloting has generally been the result of an ad-hoc process based on lengthy negotiations among the country's main clans.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

1 / 4

Legislation enacted in 2016 allowed the first formal registration of political parties since 1969. The National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) has since registered more than 100 parties. However, parliamentary elections to date have maintained a clan-based system, and the significance and role of political parties remains unclear.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

1 / 4

The lack of direct elections prevents any group from gaining power through democratic means, though an opposition candidate won the 2022 indirect presidential balloting, leading to an orderly rotation of power.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

0 / 4

Ordinary citizens are largely unable to participate in the political process as voters, and clan delegates are generally expected to vote based on their clan affiliation rather than their own political choice.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

0 / 4

Presidential candidates are required to be Muslim, according to the provisional constitution.

The current political system is designed to ensure some representation for the country's many clans, but the prevailing "4.5" formula gives the four largest groups—the Hawiye, Darod, Dir, and Rahanweyn—eight out of every nine positions, marginalizing all other clans. The system is also affected by intraclan rivalries and dominated by clan leaders, who do not necessarily represent the common interests of their respective groups.

Women's political participation is limited by discriminatory attitudes and hostility from incumbent elites, and the interests of women are poorly represented in practice. The parliamentary framework mandates a 30 percent quota for women's representation, but the elections that ended in April 2022 resulted in only 54 women in the House of the People (less than 20 percent); there are 14 women in the Upper House (less than 26 percent).

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

0 / 4

The government, which is not democratically elected, has little practical ability to implement its laws and policies even in parts of the country it controls. Relations between the federal government and the administrations of the federal member states remain poor.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

0 / 4

Corruption is rampant in Somalia, and state agencies tasked with combating it do not function effectively. Impunity is the norm for public officials accused of malfeasance.

A 2019 law called for the creation of state and national anticorruption commissions; the members of the national commission were appointed in 2021. The government ratified the African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption in 2020. However, these steps have yet to result in tangible progress toward accountability and deterrence.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

0 / 4

Government transparency is limited. Officials are not required to make public declarations of their income and assets, and oversight procedures for public contracts are not well enforced. There is no law guaranteeing public access to government information.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

1/4

While the provisional constitution calls for freedom of the press, journalists regularly face harassment, arbitrary detention, suspension, fines, and violence from both state and nonstate actors. The media law includes protections for journalists' rights but also vaguely worded provisions criminalizing the dissemination of "false information," reports that conflict with the "national interest," and incitement to violence and clan divisions.

Journalists continued to face arrests and physical violence during 2023. In August, Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul, an editor with Kaab TV, was arrested in Mogadishu after reporting on alleged police corruption. He was cleared by a court and released almost two months later. Also in August, Goobjoog TV reporter Abdifatah Yusuf Beereed was detained by police overnight after interviewing police officers regarding their salaries.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

0/4

Nearly all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, though there is a very small Christian community whose members generally do not practice their religion in public. Conversion from Islam is illegal in some areas, and suspicions of conversion can draw societal harassment throughout the country. Despite containing clauses that promote religious freedom and outlaw religious discrimination, the provisional

constitution recognizes Islam as the state religion and forbids the promotion of any other faith.

In areas under their control, the Shabaab use violence to enforce their interpretation of Islam, including execution as a penalty for alleged apostasy.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

1/4

Despite limited funding and infrastructure, as well as other challenges, universities operate in major cities. Academics reportedly practice self-censorship on sensitive topics. Islamic instruction is required in all schools except those operated by non-Muslim minority groups. Schools under Shabaab control integrate radical interpretations of Islam into the curriculum.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

1/4

Individuals enjoy some freedom of expression in more secure areas of the country, but criticism of powerful figures in the state and society can draw reprisals, and social media posts that touch on sensitive political or religious topics are subject to criminal punishment. Open debate is severely restricted in areas controlled or threatened by the Shabaab.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

1/4

Although the provisional constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, security officials require approval for demonstrations and have used violence—including gunfire—to suppress unauthorized protests.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

1 / 4

Local civil society groups, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and United Nations agencies have been able to conduct a wide range of activities in some parts of the country, but they face difficult and often dangerous working conditions. Regional authorities and security forces have reportedly harassed, extorted, obstructed, and attempted to control NGOs and aid groups, and the Shabaab generally do not allow such organizations to operate in their territory.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

1 / 4

Independent labor unions are active in Somalia and have worked to expand their operations and capacity. However, constitutional and legal protections for union activity are not always respected. The Federation of Somali Trade Unions has reported threats, dismissals, attempts at co-optation, and other forms of repression and interference from both government officials and private employers.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

0 / 4

The judicial system in Somalia is fractured, understaffed, and rife with corruption. Its authority is not widely respected, with state officials ignoring court rulings and

citizens often turning to Islamic or customary law as alternatives, including in courts run by the Shabaab.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

0/4

The country's police, intelligence, and military services do not observe safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, and their work is undermined by corruption. Clan politics and other external factors often play a role in the outcome of court cases. Military courts routinely try civilians, including for terrorism-related offenses, and do not respect basic international standards for due process.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

0/4

The ongoing armed conflict with the Shabaab has featured numerous terrorist attacks on government, international, and civilian targets, as well as indiscriminate lethal violence and excessive force against civilians by government security services, international troops, and local militias. The Shabaab also engage in public executions of those they suspect of working with the government or international forces.

The ongoing government offensive against the Shabaab has engendered more violence, with the militant group retaliating against the national army and its allies. In late May 2023, Shabaab fighters attacked an ATMIS base in the Lower Shabelle region, reportedly killing more than 50 Ugandan soldiers.

Government authorities carry out executions ordered by military courts after flawed proceedings. Detainees in government custody are at risk of torture, and perpetrators generally enjoy impunity.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

0/4

While the provisional constitution and legal system offer some formal protections against discrimination based on sex, clan, and other categories, they have little force in practice. Women face widespread disadvantages in areas including housing, education, and employment, and members of marginalized clans and some non-Somali ethnic groups suffer disproportionately from economic exclusion and violence.

Same-sex sexual activity can be punished with up to three years in prison under the penal code, and individuals accused of engaging in such activity are subject to execution in Shabaab-controlled areas.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

0/4

Travel throughout Somalia is dangerous due to periodic combat, attacks on civilians, and the presence of checkpoints controlled by security forces, militias, the Shabaab, and other armed groups that commonly extract arbitrary fees and bribes from travelers.

Nearly four million people were internally displaced in Somalia at the end of 2023, having been forced to move due to conflict and insecurity as well as drought, flooding, and other disasters in recent years.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

0/4

The provisional constitution guarantees property rights, but securing ownership is complicated by a mixture of formal and informal or traditional systems governing land rights. Procedures for registering property and businesses are impeded by corruption and other barriers, and disputes can lead to intimidation and violence. The Shabaab manage elaborate extortion and “taxation” schemes, placing tremendous pressure on business owners.

Women do not enjoy equal rights to inherit property and are often denied the assets to which they are legally entitled due to discriminatory social norms.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

0 / 4

Forced and child marriages are widespread, and the Shabaab impose forced marriages with their fighters. Individuals can face strong societal pressure to marry or not marry within certain clans. Female genital mutilation is extremely common despite a formal ban.

Sexual violence remains a major problem, especially for displaced persons. Perpetrators include government troops and militia members.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

0 / 4

Child labor and trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor are common. Refugees and internally displaced people are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Children are abducted or recruited to serve as fighters by the Shabaab and to a lesser extent by government and militia forces.





On Somalia

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Country Facts

Population

17,600,000

Global Freedom Score

8/100 **Not Free**

Other Years

2023

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ADDRESS

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA

press@freedomhouse.org