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World Report 2024



Somalia

Events of 2023

Displaced Somalis vacate their camps after heavy floods entered their makeshift shelter in Mogadishu, Somalia, November 13, 2023.

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- [English](#)
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An uptick in fighting in several parts of the country resulted in [hundreds of civilian casualties](#) and forced [almost 650,000](#) people to flee. While famine conditions were averted, five consecutive below-average annual rains continued to have a devastating impact on the realization of the rights to food and health, [with at least 4.3 million people](#) in urgent need of food assistance.

Fighting broke out in the contested town of Las Anod, on the Somaliland-Puntland border, between Somaliland security forces and armed groups linked to the Dhulbahante clan, leaving dozens of civilians dead and forcing [over 154,000 people](#) to flee internally or, for many, to Ethiopia.

The armed group Al-Shabab conducted targeted and indiscriminate attacks that [killed hundreds of civilians](#). The offensive against Al-Shabab launched by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in 2022 in central Somalia, in which government forces supported clan militia, led to civilian displacement. In March, the president [announced](#) a new offensive in southern Somalia.

In June, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) withdrew 2,000 of an estimated 20,000 forces from Somalia as part of its expected withdrawal by late 2024. The Somali government [requested in September](#) a delay in the withdrawal of an additional 3,000 troops.

The government has not reformed Somalia's outdated penal code. It approved a law [granting](#) the abusive national intelligence agency broader powers of detention and surveillance. Authorities throughout Somalia harassed and arbitrarily arrested journalists.

Somalia criminalizes consensual same-sex conduct with up to three years in prison.

Attacks on Civilians

[According to the International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#), an increase in fighting in several parts of the country resulted in greater conflict-related deaths and injuries.

Al-Shabab's [targeted and indiscriminate attacks](#)—using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, shelling, and targeted killings—resulted in a high number of civilian casualties. The armed group [conducted attacks](#) in areas that the government had taken control of as part of its operations in central Somalia.

In June, there were clashes between security forces and armed opposition groups in Puntland's capital, Garowe, following a debate in parliament over changes to the voting system, with opposition members accusing the regional president of seeking to extend his term. Media reported that at least 26 people were killed.

Between January and September, 1.5 million people were newly internally displaced, 40 percent of whom were displaced due to conflict, the United Nations [reported](#).

The Somali government [did not hand over Al-Shabab cases](#) from military to civilian courts. Authorities throughout the country [carried out executions](#), many following military court proceedings that violated international fair trial standards.

Al-Shabab fighters continued to [execute individuals](#) accused of working or spying for the government and foreign forces, often after unfair trials.

In March, the president signed into law a National Security and Intelligence Agency (NISA) bill that granted sweeping powers of arrest, detention, and surveillance with minimal independent oversight to the abusive agency.

Displacement and Access to Humanitarian Assistance

The humanitarian situation remained dire. After Somalia faced five consecutive below-average rains, the Gu rains from March to June were better than forecasted, helping to reduce some of the immense constraints, including food price hikes. However, the rains also resulted in flash floods, [forcing tens of thousands](#) to flee in parts of the [country](#).

The UN predicted that between October and December 2023, nearly [4.3 million people](#) are expected to be acutely food insecure; between August 2023 and July 2024, 1.5 million children are expected to be acutely [malnourished](#). Somalia is [heavily dependent](#) on food imports.

Al-Shabab continued to besiege government-controlled towns. For [10 days in July](#), Al-Shabab [blocked routes](#) into Baidoa town.

Humanitarian agencies [faced serious access challenges](#) due to conflict, targeted attacks on aid workers, generalized violence, restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict, including arbitrary taxation and bureaucratic hurdles, and physical constraints due to extreme weather.

In July, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders, MSF) [announced](#) they were [withdrawing](#) from Las Anod due to increased levels of violence, recurrent attacks on medical

facilities, and injuries among medical staff.

People across Somalia [continue to face high levels of trauma](#) due to prolonged violence and humanitarian crises. However, the [availability of mental health services](#) in the country remains limited.

Freedom of Expression

Regional and federal authorities continued to harass, intimidate, and detain journalists.

Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, secretary general of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), was sentenced by a court in February, four months after his arrest after he raised concerns about a government directive restricting reporting on national security issues. Upon sentencing, the court ordered his release on the basis that he had already served his term. He was rearrested 10 days afterward and only eventually released on March 26.

In August, Mohamed Ibrahim Osman Bulbul, journalist at the privately owned broadcaster Kaab TV and member of SJS, was [detained and charged](#) with “bringing the State into contempt” and “circulating false and tendentious news.” His detention came a day after he reported on alleged government misuse of funds linked to European Union capacity-building trainings of police. A high court judge stated that he could not be charged under the criminal code and then eventually ordered Mohamed’s release in October. According to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), the SJS’s website was the victim of a cyberattack in August.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

The UN continued to [report](#) incidents of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, including against girls. The UN recorded [an increase](#) in gender-based violence from 2022 onward, documenting particularly high rates, notably domestic violence and rape, among displaced women and girls.

At time of writing, the sexual offenses bill of 2018, a progressive sexual violence legislation that stalled following [backlash](#), citing religious objections, has not been presented before parliament. The Somali criminal code classifies sexual violence as an “offense against modesty and sexual honor” rather than a violation of bodily integrity.

Abuses against Children

Grave abuses against children continued to be [documented](#) by the UN, including killing and maiming, recruitment and use, and sexual violence. Schools continued to [be attacked](#).

Children continued to be detained on allegations of Al-Shabab affiliation. The independent expert on the human rights situation in Somalia [reported](#) that Somali security forces, including members of NISA, increased their arrests and detentions of children in areas recently taken over by the Somali government from Al-Shabab. The independent expert [raised concerns](#) about the sentencing to death of six young men by the military court in Puntland, some of whom were children at the time of the commission of the alleged crime.

In July, the federal government adopted age verification guidelines that the UN said are intended to reduce the recruitment of children into armed forces and the detention and trial of children in adult [procedures](#).

A bill to domesticate the Convention on the Rights of the Child [was pending](#) before parliament at time of writing.

The [UN](#) Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 45 percent of girls are married before age 18. An estimate for boys was not provided.

Somaliland

In February 2023, fighting broke out between Somaliland security forces and armed fighters affiliated with the Dhulbahante clan following months of mounting tensions in the contested border town of Las Anod.

The Human Rights and Protection Group of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) [documented](#) 552 civilian casualties, including 87 deaths, between late December and June due to the fighting in the town. Amnesty International reported that the fighting had killed at least 100 people and injured over 600, dozens of them civilians, including women, children, and health workers. The ICRC [treated](#) 1,700 people with conflict-related injuries.

Amnesty International [found](#) that the Somaliland forces had indiscriminately shelled the town, damaging hospitals, schools, and mosques. The UN reported that as of April, the fighting had displaced [between 154,000 and 203,000 people](#), the majority women and [children](#), with most fleeing into Ethiopia's Somali region. Fighting continued at time of writing.

The authorities in Somaliland continued to restrict freedom of expression and media. On May 15, Somaliland police [arrested](#) journalist Bushaaro Ali Mohamed near the border with Ethiopia. On [August 15](#), Bushaaro was sentenced to one year in prison, accused of tarnishing the image of state institutions.

Key International Actors

Funding for humanitarian assistance improved in late 2022 but was [still underfunded](#), with the humanitarian response plan only 36 percent funded at time of writing. In April, during a visit to Somalia, the UN secretary-general called on donors to step up their support for the plan.

In September, the EU temporarily [halted funding](#) for the UN World Food Programme, after a UN internal investigation reportedly found evidence of widespread theft and diversion of assistance by landowners, local authorities, and security forces. In March, the EU [approved](#) an additional €110 million to support Somalia's armed forces and ATMIS in Somalia.

The United States [acknowledged conducting](#) at least 13 airstrikes in support of the Somali national army's operations against Al-Shabab, primarily in central Somalia. In September, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) stated that it had helped with [the medical evacuation](#) of civilians injured in a Somali government operation in El Lahelay. In January, the US [gave](#) US\$9 million in new military aid to Somali forces, the first direct military support since US forces, including Special Forces, returned to Somalia throughout 2022.

The International Crisis Group [reported](#) that Türkiye had also carried out drone strikes in Lower and Middle Shabelle.

Representatives of Somalia's key security partners, the "Quintet," from Qatar, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United Kingdom, and the US, met in June and [expressed support](#) for Somalia's military offensive and efforts to meet "the technical benchmarks on weapons and ammunition management to enable the UN security council to fully lift the arms control on the Somali federal government."

In February 2023, the UAE and Somalia signed a security agreement strengthening military, security, and counterterrorism ties. The deal apparently allows the UAE to build military bases in Somalia.

