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World Report 2023



Somalia

Events of 2022

A newly built camp for people displaced from their homes by drought is seen from the air on the outskirts of Baidoa, Somalia, October 29, 2022.

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In May, after a controversial and delayed electoral process, former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected as Somalia's president. The prolonged electoral process stalled critical rights reforms.

In 2022, the country faced a devastating food crisis following five consecutive below-average rainy seasons. Some 6.7 million people (41 percent of the population) faced [extreme hunger](#), with the United Nations [warning](#) that 300,000 people will likely face famine in the final quarter of the year. Over half of the country's children were reported to be suffering [acute malnutrition](#).

Individuals with long track records of abuse continue to be appointed into positions of authority. In August, the new cabinet of ministers included Muktar Robow, who had played a leadership role in the Islamist armed group Al-Shabab. Robow had been under house arrest for over three years without trial under the previous administration. In September, Puntland's president appointed as advisor Gen. Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan," the commander of the Somali army, who under former President Siad Barre led the destruction of Hargeisa in the early phases of the country's civil war, and later was implicated in [war crimes in southern Somalia](#).

Federal and regional authorities throughout Somalia repeatedly harassed, arbitrarily arrested, and attacked journalists. On October 8, the federal Information Ministry released a directive that "prohibited dissemination of extremism ideology messages, both from traditional media broadcasts and social media." On October 11, the [intelligence services detained](#), and the prosecution later charged, prominent and widely respected media rights advocate and freelance journalist, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, whose organization had raised concerns that the directive could restrict free speech.

The government did not move forward with the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, or the planned review of the outdated criminal code, pending since the previous administration. Upon returning to office, President Hassan Sheikh [committed to finalizing judicial reforms](#).

In Somaliland, authorities clamped down on free expression and association, with security forces reportedly using excessive and lethal force during demonstrations against alleged plans to postpone the November presidential elections.

Attacks on Civilians

By November, the UN had recorded at least 613 civilian deaths and 948 [injuries](#). The majority were killed during targeted and indiscriminate Al-Shabab attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, and shelling, as well as targeted killings. These attacks increased during the [electoral process](#), notably in February and March, and again after President Hassan Sheikh took up office, following an uptick in government-led and clan militia offensives against Al-Shabab.

On October 29, Al-Shabab conducted double car bombings at the Ministry of Education in the center of Mogadishu, killing [at least 121 people](#) and injuring [hundreds](#). On March 23, [Al-Shabab claimed responsibility](#) for a complex attack on the Beledweyne regional headquarters ahead of elections there, [killing at least 48 people](#), including a female [parliamentarian](#), and injuring over 100. Al-Shabab continued to conduct targeted killings. In January, former journalist and government spokesperson, Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimu, survived an attack, claimed by Al-Shabab, [on his car](#).

In November 2021, Uganda held a court martial in Mogadishu to try soldiers from its AMISOM troops implicated in the August 2021 [killing of seven civilians](#) around Golweyn, Lower Shabelle, following an [ambush by Al-Shabab fighters](#). The court sentenced two of the soldiers to death and three to life sentences.

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 did not meet international fair trial standards.

Al-Shabab members continued to execute individuals it accused of working with or spying for the government and foreign forces, often after [convicting them in unjust trials](#).

Outcomes remain unknown of the federal and regional investigations into the May 2020 massacre of seven health workers and a pharmacist in the village of Gololey, Balcad District, reportedly by government security forces.

Displacement and Access to Humanitarian Assistance

Somalia faced its fifth consecutive below-average rainy season. Ongoing conflict and insecurity, along with extreme weather patterns—increasing in intensity and frequency due to climate change—compounded by food-price hikes, exacerbated communities' existing vulnerabilities. Somalia is [heavily dependent on food imports](#), with up to 90 percent of its wheat supply usually from Russia and Ukraine.

Three million livestock died in 2022 because of droughts, heavily impacting pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities' [access to basic needs](#). In September, the UN warned that famine would occur in Baidoa, including among people displaced there, and Burhakaba districts in Bay region, in the last quarter of the year.

According to the Norwegian Refugee Council and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), by August, 1 million people had been internally displaced since the drought [began in January 2021](#), including [more than 800,000](#) in 2022 alone.

Humanitarian agencies continued to face serious access challenges due to [conflict](#), targeted attacks on aid workers, generalized violence, and restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict, including arbitrary taxation and bureaucratic hurdles. Media [reported](#) that United States counterterrorism legislation was hampering certain aid agencies' access to those in greatest need in Al-Shabab controlled areas. Al-Shabab continued to impose blockades on some government-controlled towns, notably the town of Hudur, and occasionally attacked civilians who broke them.

Sexual Violence

The UN continued to report incidents of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, including of girls, in which the [victims were often killed](#). Sexual violence against displaced women and girls is well documented and humanitarian actors warned [enhanced protection measures are needed](#), including legal and policing reforms as well as improved humanitarian responses.

Key legal reforms stalled, including progressive federal sexual violence legislation. The Somali criminal code classifies sexual violence as an “offense against modesty and sexual honor” rather than a violation of bodily integrity; [it also punishes same-sex relations](#). The independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia [reported](#) that the clan system continues to [deal with sexual violence cases](#) in proceedings that fail to protect the rights of survivors.

Abuses against Children

Children continue to bear a heavy toll of ongoing insecurity, conflict, drought, and lack of key reforms in the country. All Somali parties to the conflict committed serious abuses against children, including killings, maiming, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and [attacks on schools](#).

Somali federal and regional security forces unlawfully detained children, notably for alleged ties with armed groups, [undermining government commitments](#) to treat children primarily as victims. Puntland once again sentenced child offenders to death and long prison sentences for their alleged [involvement with armed groups](#). The government failed to [enact legislation](#) codifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child or introduce child rights compliant justice measures with children continuing to be [detained alongside adults](#).

The drought had a devastating impact on children's access to education. Media reported that children dropped out of school because their parents could no longer finance their [schooling](#).

Somaliland

Authorities in Somaliland continued to restrict free expression, [media](#), and association.

On August 11, security forces reportedly used excessive force to clamp down on protests against perceived plans to delay presidential elections, with [an estimated five people](#) killed and [100 detained](#). Government officials accused protesters of violence. The internet was temporarily shut down on the day of the [protests](#).

In April, several journalists were detained while covering violence in the Hargeisa central prison, with [two of them](#) initially sentenced to [16 months' imprisonment](#) but later [released](#).

In July, the authorities [suspended](#) the BBC, accusing it of “[undermining the credibility of the Somaliland State](#).” In September, the Ministry of Information revoked the license of CBA TV, a

private station [covering news on the Horn](#).

Key International Actors

Somalia was elected to the UN Human Rights Council in October 2021 in a [non-competitive slate](#).

In February, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) told media that funding under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative could be postponed if the electoral process was not [completed by May](#). In June, following the selection of the new president, the IMF disbursed US\$350 million. In July, the European Union resumed budget support and disbursed €13.5 million (\$13.8 million) to the federal government. The EU committed €120 million (\$125 million) to support the military component of the African Union Mission in Somalia/African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (AMISOM/ ATMIS), with funding [primarily covering troop allowances](#).

Following the selection of President Hassan Sheikh, the US resumed military operations in Somalia. In May, media [reported](#) that the Biden administration would send around 500 [special operations troops back to Somalia](#) with the authority to target suspected Al-Shabab leaders, and in September that authority was used to target an Al-Shabab leader.

US drone strikes increased in the [second half of the year](#). Since the start of contemporary US military operations in Somalia in 2007, the Pentagon has [not provided compensation](#) to any [civilian victims of unlawful US airstrikes](#) or their family members.

While the year started with a severe shortage in humanitarian funding, the response plan was 71 percent [funded by October](#) following significant donor mobilization, [notably by the US](#).