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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Somalia – July to December 2022

01 January 2023

04 July 2022

Attacks

On 27.06.22, a vehicle carrying media workers, military officials and the governor of the region was damaged by the explosion of a landmine in Qabno (Hiraan region). Three soldiers were killed and two journalists seriously injured. At the time of the attack, media professionals were reporting on a military campaign against al-Shabaab. The following day, the Somali National Army deployed additional troops to the region to support ongoing operations against al-Shabaab as well as to secure and demine the connecting roads.

Another landmine explosion targeting African Union forces killed at least five Ugandan soldiers and injured several on the outskirts of Marka (Lower Shabelle region) on 02.07.22, according to local media reports. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

11 July 2022

Targeted explosions kill two people

A police officer was killed by the detonation of a landmine in Afgooye (Lower Shabelle) when his vehicle drove over it on 06.07.22. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

In a second incident on 06.07.22 in Mogadishu, Hashi Omar was killed by a bomb attached to his vehicle. He became famous because he spent 18 years in an Italian prison for the murder of a reporter and a cameraman before he was acquitted. So far, no one has taken responsibility.

18 July 2022

Fatalities after fighting at Bossaso airport (Puntland)

At least 15 people were killed and several injured in a major shoot-out at Bossaso airport on 11.07.22. The clash between rival forces was triggered by the arrival of Somalia's deputy speaker of parliament Sadia Yasin Samatar, who accompanied relief supplies sent by the Somali federal government for the drought-stricken Bari region. Puntland Security Forces attempted to enter the airport to escort Samatar and the aid convoy. In doing so, they ignored the ban on weapons on the premises, resulting in an armed confrontation with the airport security forces and casualties on both sides, including civilians. The plane was then turned away at the airport and flew back to Mogadishu. The incident occurred a few weeks after the Puntland authorities announced that they would stop cooperating with the federal government to protest the appointment of Hamza Abdi Barre as prime minister.

Bombing of a hotel in Jowhar (Middle Shabelle)

On 17.07.22, a suicide attack with an explosives-laden lorry outside a hotel popular with politicians in the city of Jowhar killed at least twelve people. Dozens more were injured. Several adjacent residential and commercial

buildings were reportedly damaged in the attack. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack and announced that members of the armed forces and political figures were killed. According to official reports, two regional ministers were among the injured.

Prison break in Galkayo (Mudug)

On 14.07.22, seven al-Shabaab leaders escaped from Galkayo prison. The Puntland authorities had previously sentenced the prisoners to death. Security forces said they killed one escapee and arrested three others. The other three fighters managed to escape.

25 July 2022

Cross-border attacks by al-Shabaab

On 20.07.22, al-Shabaab fighters attacked the villages of Yeed and Aato near the Ethiopian border in the Bakool region, killing at least 17 people, including at least three civilians and Ethiopian police, according to military sources. At least 63 al-Shabaab fighters were killed in subsequent cross-border fighting between al-Shabaab and Ethiopian forces in Ethiopia's Somali region, according to official figures. Al-Shabaab announced that at least 87 Ethiopian security forces had been killed. The incident happened only a few days after Ethiopian military had killed an al-Shabaab commander on the Ethiopian side of the border who had intended to set up an al-Shabaab group in Ethiopia. As there is a large presence of Ethiopian security forces in the Ethiopian-Somali border region, al-Shabaab only rarely stages attacks there.

At least two dead in Afgoye explosion

In Afgoye (Lower Shabelle region), at least two civilians were killed and others injured in an explosives attack on a market. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

Somaliland: BBC banned from broadcasting

Somaliland's Information Minister Saleban Yusuf Ali Koore announced on 19.07.22 that the British broadcaster BBC would be banned from broadcasting, because the government accuses the BBC of bias and negative reporting on Somaliland. The ban would take effect immediately and be indefinite, he said. Earlier, BBC Somali, VOA Somali and other media organisations were reportedly suspended after being accused of not accepting Somaliland's independence that it had declared.

01 August 2022

Renewed cross-border clashes

On 29.07.22, fighting broke out between al-Shabaab and Ethiopian police forces in Aato village near the Ethiopian border. Al-Shabaab allegedly fired several mortar shells at the camp of the Ethiopian Liyu police, a special unit responsible for border protection and security of supply routes for Ethiopian forces. This resulted in an exchange of fire in which at least ten people were reportedly killed and 20 others injured. At the time of the attack, members of the Somali parliament were in Aato to distribute food aid to drought-affected residents.

Three al-Shabaab leaders were reportedly killed in a subsequent joint operation by Ethiopian forces and Liyu police in the Ethiopian border region. Al-Shabaab has not yet commented on the deaths of the three leaders. It is unclear whether there were casualties on the side of Ethiopian and Somali forces. Already the week before, violent clashes had erupted in the border region and operations against al-Shabaab in Ethiopia, in which, according to official Ethiopian figures, at least 150 fighters were killed (cf. BN of 25.07.22).

Several attacks in different cities

At least eleven people were killed and others injured in a suicide attack in Marka (Lower Shabelle region) on 27.07.22. Abdullahi Ali Waafow, the town's mayor, was among the fatalities. He had fought with African Union troops against al-Shabaab in the region for years. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

In another attack on 27.07.22, seven people were killed and 14 others injured when a landmine exploded at a cattle market in Afgoye town (Lower Shabelle region). Al-Shabaab reported that the explosion killed two soldiers and claimed responsibility.

On 29.07.22, a suicide attack during Friday prayers in the car park of a mosque in Baidoa (Bay Region) killed at least 13 people, including Hassan Ibrahim Lugbur, the Minister of Justice of South West State and his son. At least 20 other people were injured.

Executions by al-Shabaab

On 31.07.22, al-Shabaab publicly executed seven people by firing squad near Buula-Fulay (Bay region), the militia announced over its Andalus radio station. Six of them were accused of spying for American and Somali intelligence services. Three of them were also allegedly responsible for the deaths of high-ranking al-Shabaab members. A government official in the region as well as the Information Minister of South West State, Ilyas Said, confirmed the details of the executions.

08 August 2022

Formation of a new cabinet

Somalia's parliament accepted the new Prime Minister's plan to revamp the cabinet by 229 votes to 7. The appointment of 25 ministers and 26 deputy ministers was also approved and accepted. Among them is Mukhtar Robow, the former spokesperson for al-Shabaab. Robow defected from al-Shabaab in 2013 and had been under house arrest since then. He holds the post of Minister of Religious Affairs in the newly formed cabinet. The perception of Robow's appointment is diverse, on the one hand, it is seen as an attempt by the government to also take ideological action against al-Shabaab. On the other hand, however, it is criticised as condoning the crimes of al-Shabaab, which Robow represented as spokesperson for the militant group.

22 August 2022

Attack on Mogadishu hotel

At least 21 people were reportedly killed and over a hundred more injured in several attacks on a hotel and the Aden Adde airport on 19.08.22 and 20.08.22. Two suicide attacks in the entrance area were followed by a hotel siege lasting almost 30 hours accompanied by exchanges of fire between Somali security forces and the attackers. According to Somali security forces they ended the attack. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack as well as for an attack at the airport in which five people died.

Several dead protesters in Somaliland

At least five people were killed and many others injured by police forces during protests in the context of the regional presidential election due in November, in Hargeisa, Burao and Erigavo on 11.08.22. Hundreds took part in the protests after talks between the government and the opposition broke down and the opposition accused the government of trying to delay the elections. Reportedly, also numerous protesters and media workers were arrested during the protests and there was an internet blackout.

05 September 2022

Clashes between rival clans

According to local reports, around 20 people were killed and many injured in clashes between two clans on 27. and 28.08.22. The reports cite a dispute over a quarry pond in Bengal, in the Galguduud region, as the reason for the clashes.

Targeted explosion kills one person

According to reports, the deputy district governor of Yaqshid (Benadir region), Moalim Hussein Filaweyne, was killed by an explosion on the night of 30.08.22. The explosive device had been attached to his car. The Islamic State in Somalia (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Attack in Mogadishu

On 01.09.22, mortar attacks on several residential areas killed at least three people and injured more than ten others, including women and children. The attacks reportedly took place near the seat of government. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Attacks by al-Shabaab in the central Somali regions of Hiiraan and Galguduud

On 03.09.22, at least 22 people were killed when seven vehicles carrying food near the town of Mahas (Hiiraan region) were set on fire and the travellers were shot at. According to reports, the convoy was escorted by Somali authorities and troops from the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Officials said the group intensified attacks on civilians in the Hiiraan region and the neighbouring Galgaduud region in response to drone attacks by the United States Africa Command (US-AFRICOM), in which 13 al-Shabaab members were reportedly killed on 16.08 and 17.08.22, as well as to the mobilisation of local clans against al-Shabaab.

On 31.08.22, al-Shabaab members bombed local water sources and telecommunication towers in the Galguduud and Hiiraan regions, according to official reports and residents' testimony. At the same time, villages and people in rural areas near Bahdo town and in El-Adde were attacked. Both regions are severely affected by the drought and access to water was already difficult.

12 September 2022

Senior al-Shabaab commanders killed; hostages freed

Somali police spokesperson Sadiq Adnan Ali Doodishe said on 10.09.22 that two senior commanders were reportedly killed and ten others injured in a military operation against al-Shabaab. At the same time, the military freed several civilian hostages allegedly held by al-Shabaab for extortion. The aim of the operation was to destroy al-Shabaab's financial centre in the town of Mubarak (Lower Shabelle region), which the group uses to raise money to buy weapons. Al-Shabaab, in turn, claims to have launched a drone attack in Mubarak, killing at least ten people and injuring dozens. This could not be independently confirmed.

Mayor of Mogadishu dismissed and successor appointed

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud surprisingly relieved the Mayor of Mogadishu and Governor of the Regional Administration, Banadir Omar Mohamud Mohamed, of his duties on 07.09.22 and appointed Hussein Jimale as his successor. A statement issued by the president indicates that the proposal to dismiss him came from the Ministry of Interior. Rumours of alleged sedition charges against opposition members circulated.

UN warns of impending famine

In a statement released on 05.09.22, the UN warned that the country was on the brink of famine that could last until March 2023. The districts of Baidoa and Burhaba in southern and central Somalia are particularly affected. Across the country, 213,000 people are acutely affected by famine and 7.8 million people, about half the population, are facing food insecurity. More than 730 children have died of starvation since the beginning of the year and the number of unreported cases is probably much higher. Humanitarian aid must be increased considerably, the UN urged.

19 September 2022

Hiiraan: SNA recaptures villages from al-Shabaab, landmine attack

Somali National Army (SNA) troops, supported by armed villagers, reportedly drove al-Shabaab out of several villages near the town of Bula-Burde in the Hiiraan region between 16.09. and 18.09.22. According to official reports, at least 30 al-Shabaab fighters were killed and five SNA soldiers were injured. The SNA intensified its operation against al-Shabaab in the region in recent weeks, mobilising locals after al-Shabaab attacked local water sources and telecommunications towers (cf. BN of 05.09.22).

During the fighting, al-Shabaab also planted a landmine on a road in Bula-Burde on 16.09.22. Four people died in the mine's explosion, including two prominent clan elders, according to media reports.

26 September 2022

US air strike

On 18.09.22, a US air strike killed 27 al-Shabaab fighters near the town of Bula-Barde in the Hiiraan region, a statement of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) released on 21.09.22 says. Civilians were not harmed. In Hiiraan, the Somali National Army and its allies launched an offensive against al-Shabaab in recent weeks (cf. BN of 19.09.22). According to AFRICOM, this was the sixth air strike in 2022.

Attack

On 25.09.22, several people were killed and injured in a suicide attack near a military base in Mogadishu. Casualty figures range from one person to 15 people. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

Somaliland: Postponement of presidential elections

Elections scheduled for 13.11.22 will be postponed until the end of next year due to technical and financial problems, according to the Election Commission. The media report that for the opposition this is an attempt by incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi to extend his term in office.

10 October 2022

Several attacks, killing of a co-founder of Al-Shabaab

A clan chief (Hawadle clan) was killed in an attack by Al-Shabaab near Moqokori (Hiran region) on 27.09.22.

A high-ranking police officer and several other persons were killed when a land mine exploded near Bal'ad (Shabelle region) on 30.09.22. Among the dead were reportedly several guards and a state television journalist. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack to date.

It has been reported that Al-Shabaab killed at least twelve civilians during a well drilling operation in Gariley (Gedo region) on 30.09.22. Equipment and building materials were allegedly also destroyed.

At least 40 people were reportedly killed and almost one hundred people injured when three car bombs exploded in several suicide attacks in Beledweyne (Hiran region) on 03.10.22. The attacks were aimed at a military base. The dead are believed to include the regional health minister and the region's deputy governor. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The attacks followed shortly after a government address in which it was stated that the co-founder of Al-Shabaab, Abdullahi Nadir, had been killed by the Somalian army in cooperation with international partners in the south of Somali on 01.10.22.

Somaliland: Senate votes to extend president Abdi's tenure

On 01.10.22 Somaliland's senate resolved by a majority vote to extend the tenure of incumbent president Muse Bihi Abdi by two years. The electoral board had previously postponed the election planned for November 2022 until 2023, on financial grounds and due to a lack of time, among other reasons (cf. BN of 26.09.22).

Warning against publishing Al-Shabaab propaganda

On 08.10.22 the deputy minister of information, Abdurahman Yusuf, announced tough action against media which publish propaganda reports in connection with Al-Shabaab, including their acts of terrorism and their ideology. He stated that this constituted a criminal offence. These measures will not apply to normal reporting on Al-Shabaab in the media, however. The minister said that the government had also launched a cyber operation in the social media and deactivated more than 40 accounts of Al-Shabaab supporters, including on Facebook and Twitter. This step has been undertaken while the armed forces are conducting a counter-offensive against Al-Shabaab.

17 October 2022

Freedom of the press

Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, secretary-general of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), was arrested at Mogadishu Airport in connection with "security issues" on 11.10.22. He was refused access to a lawyer. Prior to his arrest, SJS and four other media groups had released a statement expressing their concern regarding the effects on freedom

of speech and the safety of media representatives of the decree on reporting on Al-Shabaab propaganda which was issued on 08.10.22 (cf. BN of 10.10.22). On the same evening, Mumin shared recordings of an attack on SJS offices by armed officers of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA). He was detained until 16.10.22, with no official charges brought.

Six executions by Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab has announced that it executed six men on 13.10.22 who were accused of spying for the USA in Saakow (Middle Juba region). According to the announcement, two men were accused of being involved in the killing of Mohamed Abdibnur Marzawi and Abdulkadir Commandos, two high-ranking Al-Shabaab leaders, by US drone attacks in 2019 and 2020.

24 October 2022

Hotel siege in Kismayo

An explosion reportedly occurred on 23.10.22 outside the Hotel Tawakal in Kismayo, which is popular with local clan elders and business travellers. Following the explosion, the building was stormed by armed individuals and a seven-hour siege ensued. According to official information, at least nine people, including civilians, were killed and 47 injured. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Set-up of a hotline for people threatened by Al-Shabaab

As part of the offensive against Al-Shabaab, president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has announced the introduction of a hotline enabling members of the public to report individuals carrying out extortion on behalf of Al-Shabaab. The government states that it aims to block the collection of taxes and extorted revenue by Al-Shabaab. The government has previously warned local companies against supporting Al-Shabaab by acceding to financial demands, stating that this could lead to their business licences being withdrawn.

SJS secretary general re-arrested

Two days after being released on bail (cf. BN of 17.10.22), Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, secretary general of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), was arrested once again on 18.10.22. He was detained by the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) while on his way to Nairobi for medical treatment. There have been no official statements on the case so far.

Two parallel attacks in Hiiraan claim 21 lives

According to varying reports, between eleven and 15 people were killed when a car bomb exploded in a suicide attack in Jalalaqsi (Hiiraan region) on 19.10.22. The victims included civilians, members of the military, the town's mayor, Adan Mohamed Isse, and the district commissioner, Mohamed Nur Agajof Dabaashe. The primary objective was reportedly to destroy the town's main bridge. Six people were killed, including four civilians, in another attack targeting the bridge in the town of Bulobarde (Hiiraan region), which represents the most important link between the Somalia's southern and central regions. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for both attacks. Mobilisations of clan members and coordinated operations by the military against Al-Shabaab have been stepped up in the Hiiraan region in recent weeks (cf. BN of 05.09.22 and 19.09.22).

31 October 2022

Freedom of the press

According to the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) and the Somali Media Association (SOMA), attacks on media representatives by government agencies have increased since tougher action against media with regard to reporting on Al-Shabaab was announced (cf. BN of 10.10.22). Five journalists have been arrested to date. SJS secretary-general Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, who was re-arrested two days after his initial arrest (cf. BN of 17.10.22 and 24.10.22), was released on bail on 22.10.22 due to a deterioration in his state of health.

Executions

Two IS fighters convicted of carrying out murders on behalf of Al-Shabaab were reportedly executed by a firing squad in Mogadishu on 26.10.22. The two were allegedly involved in a series of murders of civilians and government staff. The execution of two other convicted Al-Shabaab fighters is reported to have taken place several days earlier.

Bomb attacks in Mogadishu claim more than 100 lives

It has been reported that at least 100 people were killed and more than 300 injured when two car bombs exploded outside the education ministry in Mogadishu on 29.10.22. Most of the victims were apparently civilians. The second bomb exploded just after first-aiders had arrived. The attack took place during a three-day government conference at which an intensification of efforts to fight Al-Shabaab was under discussion. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack. According to official information, this represents the most serious attack since 2017, when a truck loaded with explosives blew up at the same spot, killing more than 500 people, most of whom were civilians.

07 November 2022

Suicide attack on military training camp

According to reports in the media, at least eleven people, including members of the armed forces and civilians, were killed and at least 15 injured in a suicide attack outside the entrance to a military training camp on 05.11.22. The attacker gained access to the grounds by disguising himself as a soldier. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that the suicide attacker killed 100 members of the armed forces.

15 November 2022

Somaliland: Political crisis

The opposition has called for president Muse Bihi Abdi to resign from office. This follows in the wake of the resolution by the upper house of parliament (Guurti) in September 2022 to postpone the presidential election, which was scheduled under the constitution for 13.11.22, by two years, thereby extending the president's term in office by two years, contrary to the opposition's demands (cf. BN of 26.09.22). It has also released a written statement in which it denies the legitimacy of Bihi Abdi and his government and accuses him of abusing the constitution to his own personal advantage. The opposition is calling for the elections to be held without delay, in order to avoid a political crisis. Experts warn of an increase in social unrest.

UN: Increase in civilian casualties

The latest UN figures, released on 14.11.22, show an increase in civilian casualties, primarily as a result of Al-Shabaab. At least 613 civilians have been killed and 948 injured since the beginning of the year. This is the highest level since 2017 and almost one third more than in 2021.

Rising numbers of Somali refugees in Dadaab

The International Refugee Committee (IRC) and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) report a continual rise in the number of people fleeing from Somalia to the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya in recent months, in the face of the impending famine (cf. BN of 12.09.22). Some 20,000 refugees are reported to have arrived at the camp, with 120,000 refugees expected up to the beginning of 2023. Dadaab already holds three times more people than was originally planned, as a result of which basic services and provisions cannot be guaranteed. The IRC and other aid organisations have called on the international community to increase funding to combat the drought in the region.

28 November 2022

Attack on hotel in Mogadishu

The Villa Rossa, a hotel in the Bondhere district of Mogadishu which is frequented by politicians, was attacked on 26.11.22. The hotel is located in a security zone, close to the presidential palace and Godka Jili'ow high-security prison. The attack began with an explosion, after which armed individuals stormed the hotel. Security forces then

forced their way into the hotel and exchanges of fire ensued. At least ten people were killed and a number of people were injured. Minister of Security Dhmed Mohamed Doodishe is said to be among those injured. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

12 December 2022

Attack on NISA officers

Abdirahman Abdullahi Adan Bakaal, a high-ranking intelligence officer of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) was killed by a bomb attached to his car in the Gedo region near to the Kenyan border on 08.12.22. Six other NISA officers were also killed in the attack. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility.

19 December 2022

Humanitarian situation

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a famine (phase 5 of 5 in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, IPC, based on the country as a whole) has been averted for the time being as a result of an increase in humanitarian aid (cf. BN of 12.09.22). OCHA states that the food insecurity situation is nevertheless still to be classified as a “crisis” (phase 3). It is forecast that the situation will worsen up to June 2023 and the number of people acutely affected by malnutrition will increase threefold, from 214,000 to 727,000 (phase 5). Those pursuing agropastoral farming and internally displaced people in the Bay and Baidoa regions and in Mogadishu are particularly severely affected. The “Emergency Watchlist” published by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on 14.12.22 forecasts that Somalia will be the country most severely affected by a worsening of humanitarian crises worldwide in 2023. UNICEF reports children and juveniles dying of hunger-related illnesses. It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of deaths. The number of people affected by the drought has more than doubled from 3.2 million in January 2022 to 7.8 million in October 2022, accompanied by a proportional worsening of the emergency situation. The number of people displaced as a result of the drought has risen more than fivefold over the same period, to almost 1.3 million.

Al-Shabaab accused of forcing civilians to flee their villages

The Somali National Army (SNA) claims that Al-Shabaab fighters are deliberately attacking civilians in villages under their control and forcing them to flee their homes. According to the SNA, this is intended to prevent villagers from collaborating with the government. Al-Shabaab is further accused of kidnapping relatives of the local Maawisley militia, which is fighting Al-Shabaab on the side of the government troops. According to official information, more than 70 villages have been liberated since the beginning of the offensive in August 2022.

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Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de