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Escalating Conflict in Middle Shabelle: Thousands Displaced Amid Clashes Between Somali National Army and Al-Shabaab

 Displaced Families	 Displaced Individuals	 Coordinates	 Incident Date
2,536	15,216	2.9250° N 45.9040° E	March 1 – 8

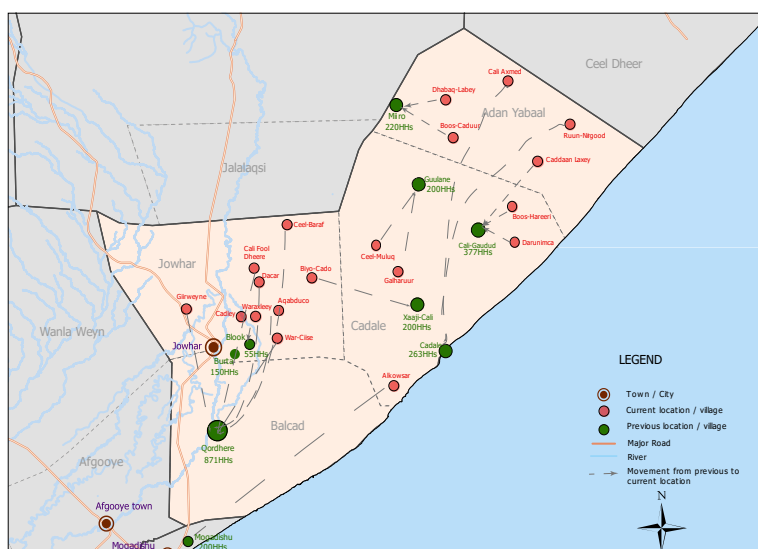
BACKGROUND

In Middle Shabelle, ongoing conflict between Al-Shabaab and the Somali National Army (SNA), supported by local militias, continues to escalate. The fighting has intensified across multiple fronts, with Al-Shabaab attempting to recapture areas previously liberated by the SNA in 2024. In addition, airstrikes carried out by international allies in coordination with the SNA have compounded the situation.

As a result of these clashes, around 2,536 households (approximately 15,216 individuals) have been forcibly displaced from their homes, fleeing to neighbouring towns and villages. The areas receiving the highest number of displacements include Gordhere, Masajid Cali Gaduud, and Cadale, where a total of 1,511 IDPs have sought refuge.

In addition to the conflict, the region is facing a severe drought, which is particularly affecting the pastoralist communities. These communities are left with urgent humanitarian needs, however the heightened insecurity and the presence of Al-Shabaab and other non-state actors have severely restricted humanitarian access. Areas such as Biyo Cade and Ceel Baraf remain inaccessible, leaving the displaced communities in these regions highly vulnerable.

Reports from the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) highlight the dire conditions in displacement sites. PSMN monitors have identified the most vulnerable groups among those forcibly displaced, who face heightened protection risks, including children, pregnant and lactating women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.



Previous Location / Village	Current Location / Village	Number Displaced
Ceel Baraf Caadley Cali Foldheere Warcise Caqabduco Giirweyne Indhacad	Gordhere	871
Boos Hareeri Darunimca Cadaan laxeeey	Masajid Cali Gaduud	377
Run Nirgood Ceel Cali Ahmed	Cadale	263
Boos Caduur Dhabaqlabey	Miir	220
Galharuur Ceel Muluq	Guulane	200
Alkowsar	Mogadishu	200
Biyacado	Xaji Cali	200
Ceel Salebaan	Burta	150
Wararaxley	Blook	55
Total individuals		15,216
Total households		2,536

PROTECTION RISKS

Unlawful Impediments or Restrictions on Freedom of Movement, Siege, and Forced Displacement: Affected populations have been forced to flee their homes, while their freedom of movement has been restricted to areas that are largely inaccessible to humanitarian assistance.

Presence of Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance: Displaced communities have come across areas planted with mines by Al-Shabaab, posing a risk to civilian lives. Fortunately, no injuries or fatalities have been reported amongst the displaced.

Child and Forced Family Separation: The chaos of conflict has led to widespread family separations, leaving many individuals unable to reunite with their loved ones, increasing their vulnerability.

Gender-Based Violence: In particular women and girls who have been forcibly displaced by the conflict face heightened risks of various types of violence, including physical and psychological abuse, conflict-related sexual violence, sexual assault, harassment, and exploitation.

Attacks on Civilians and other Unlawful Killings, and Attacks on Civilian Objects: Displaced communities face heightened risks of violence, and recruitment by armed groups, particularly in unprotected settlements. Many people have been forced to abandon their homes, livelihoods, and possessions in their urgent attempts to seek safety.

URGENT NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS



At the time of publishing this Flash Alert, there is little to no humanitarian response reported as reaching the affected displaced population. In order to trigger an immediate emergency response, UNHCR are requesting that the Area Based Coordination (ABC) and Operational Cell (OC) activate the inter-sectoral minimum response package considered under the Integrated First-Line Response Framework (IFLR) for the upcoming 3-months period, after which a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) will be required. Coordination between humanitarian actors and authorities, and advocacy for safe access to hard-to-reach locations is also required.

Immediate humanitarian assistance: Given the displacement, there are critical protection needs for the displaced individuals inclusive of psychosocial support and clearance of explosive hazards, and response to community callouts during an explosive ordnance accident or physical evidence of the presence of UXO. Additionally, immediate emergency needs include shelter, NFIs, food, safe drinking water, communal latrines and treated mosquito nets.

Protection measures: To ensure the safety of vulnerable populations—especially children, women, the elderly, and those with disabilities should be a priority. This could include establishing safe spaces, tailored response for persons with disabilities, providing legal assistance and tracing of family members.



The PSMN (Protection & Solutions Monitoring Network) is a UNHCR-led project that identifies and reports on displacements, as well as the protection risks and incidents driving such population movements. On behalf of UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 10 local partners across Somalia conduct data gathering—primarily through interviews with affected communities and key informants—and monitor displacement trends at strategic locations.

To request further details on displacement, please contact SOMMOPMN@UNHCR.ORG