

COI QUERY

Country of Origin/Topic	Somalia
Question(s)	<p>Security situation in Puntland and Somaliland (January – 15 November 2019):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short description of the region <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Somaliland 1.2 Puntland 2. Control of territory and presence/activities of non-state armed groups <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Somaliland 2.2 Puntland 3. Recent security trends, impact on the civilian population and overview of documented incidents with civilians casualties <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Sanaag and Sool 3.2 Somaliland 3.3 Puntland
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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 12 December 2019. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Short description of the region



Map 1: Administrative division of Somalia.¹

¹ UN, Somalia, Map No. 3690 Rev. 10, December 2011, [url](#)



1.1 Somaliland

Somaliland declared its independence after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991.² In spite of not being internationally recognised, Somaliland has its own political and governmental institutions, police and armed forces and its own currency.³ In its profile on Somaliland, the BBC News reported that 'the former British protectorate has also escaped much of the chaos and violence that plague Somalia.'⁴

Somaliland has a population of around 3,5 million people and the city of Hargeisa serves as its capital.⁵ Approximately half of the population leads nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life.⁶ Somaliland borders Djibouti to the west, Ethiopia to the south, and Puntland to the east.⁷ UNHCR estimated that 9 % of Somalia's 2,65 million IDP's reside in Somaliland.⁸

Sources indicate that the Isaaq are the main clan in Somaliland⁹, with Dir, Darood and other clans living in the area as well.¹⁰ A 2017 joint Austrian-Swiss fact-finding mission in Somalia (BFA FFM) found that 'the clan system in Somaliland is more homogenous than in south and central Somalia. It nevertheless plays an important role (...).'¹¹

Dr. Joakim Gundel, a political analyst specialised in complex emergencies with a focus on Somalia, noted during an Austrian Red Cross and Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) COI Workshop in 2009: 'Somaliland does not regard itself as a clan-based state, and its borders reflect its former colonial boundaries (i.e. of what was British Somaliland), and not clan borders. Somaliland thus includes clans that may be relevant elsewhere if it were a clan-based state.'¹²

In July 2018, International Crisis Group reported that the relations between Somalia and Somaliland 'remain tense'.¹³ Covering the period from November 2017 to February 2019, a report by the Dutch foreign ministry noted that 'the federal government struggled to assert power and influence over individual member states, including Somaliland, which regards itself as an independent state.'¹⁴

² Bradbury, M. and Healy, S., Endless war a brief history of the Somali conflict, Conciliation Resources, February 2010, [url](#); CIA, The World Factbook, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

³ BBC News, Somaliland profile, 14 December 2017, [url](#); Irish Times (The), Somaliland: A profile, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 37

⁴ BBC News, Somaliland profile, 14 December 2017, [url](#)

⁵ Somaliland Biz, Country Profile, n.d., [url](#)

⁶ Irish Times (The), Somaliland: A profile, [url](#), accessed 26 November 2019; UNPO, Somaliland, January 2017, [url](#)

⁷ Republic of Somaliland (The), Somaliland Geography & Climate, n.d., [url](#)

⁸ UNHCR, Somalia Situation; Population of Concern to UNHCR; as of 30 September 2019, 30 September 2019, [url](#)

⁹ UNPO, Somaliland, January 2017, [url](#)

¹⁰ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia: Report on a Lecture by Joakim Gundel, 15 December 2009, [url](#); EASO, Somalia Security Situation, December 2017, [url](#); IRB, Somalia: Treatment of returnees in Somaliland by authorities and society; ability of an individual to relocate to Somaliland, including access to employment, housing, and social services, 19 March 2019, [url](#)

¹¹ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#)

¹² ACCORD, Clans in Somalia: Report on a Lecture by Joakim Gundel, 15 December 2009, [url](#), p. 5

¹³ International Crisis Group, Somalia-Somaliland: The Perils of Delaying New Talks, 12 July 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ Netherlands (The), The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Country of Origin Information Report on South and Central Somalia, March 2019, [url](#), p. 7

1.2 Puntland

Puntland declared itself independent from the Federal Republic of Somalia in August 1998. Unlike Somaliland, Puntland does not want to be recognized as an independent state but prefers to stay a part of the Somali federation¹⁵, as one of the five Somalia's federal states.¹⁶ Puntland has been described as a 'semi-autonomous region of Somalia'.¹⁷ In September 2018, leaders of the five federal states including Puntland reportedly suspended their ties with the central government in Mogadishu.¹⁸ In May 2019, Puntland's state government issued a document detailing its suspension of cooperation with the federal government, stating that it 'would not recognize any new federal laws, and that it would stop coordinating on constitutional review, elections, and national security'.¹⁹

The city of Garowe serves as Puntland's political capital²⁰ while Bosaso is seen as its economic capital.²¹ Puntland has an estimated population of 2,4 million people, according to the BBC.²² In August 2019, UNHCR noted that out of 2,6 million IDP's in Somalia, 358,000 were present in Puntland.²³ The BFA FFM report noted that the border between Somaliland and Puntland is not 'exactly defined'.²⁴

About its society, Dr. Joakim Gundel noted that '[i]n contrast to Somaliland, Puntland is very much a clan-based administration, primarily based on the Majerteen clan, and is thus disputing some of the territory inside Somaliland inhabited by clans that belong to the same family as the Majerteen'.²⁵ Dr. Gundel further explained that Majerteen are part of the Harti group within the Darood clan.²⁶ A 2017 EASO report on Somalia indicated that apart from Majarteen, Jambele (Hawiye), Dir and Jaaji are present in Puntland.²⁷

2. Control of territory and presence/activities of non-state armed groups

2.1 Somaliland

State actors

Michael Horton, a Jamestown Foundation fellow focusing on issues related to Yemen and the Horn of Africa, noted in an article published in November 2019:

¹⁵ BBC News, Puntland profile, 11 March 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶ Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁷ Bloomberg, Puntland Leader Vows to Defeat Terrorists to Attract Investors, 15 September 2019, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland, 12 August 2009, [url](#); Xinhua, UN envoy decries tensions between regional states in Somalia, 9 July 2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ EastAfrican (The), Somalia's federal states gang up against Farmajo, 8 September 2018, [url](#); VOA, Somali Regional States Suspend Ties With Federal Government, 8 September 2018, [url](#)

¹⁹ Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ Bloomberg, Puntland Leader Vows to Defeat Terrorists to Attract Investors, 15 September 2019, [url](#); UNSOM, SRGS Swan visits Puntlands capital, 8 July 2019, [url](#)

²¹ TRT World, UN report says a Daesh faction has grown significantly in Somalia, 11 November 2017, [url](#); VOA, Somali Puntland Forces Attack al-Qaida-Linked Militia, 25 July 2010, [url](#)

²² BBC News, Puntland profile, 11 March 2019, [url](#)

²³ UNHCR, UNHCR Somalia: Operational Update (1-31 August 2019), 31 August 2019, [url](#)

²⁴ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), p. 97

²⁵ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia: Report on a Lecture by Joakim Gundel, 15 December 2009, [url](#), p. 5

²⁶ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia: Report on a Lecture by Joakim Gundel, 15 December 2009, [url](#), p. 12

²⁷ EASO, Somalia Security Situation, December 2017, [url](#), p. 108

‘The government of Somaliland exerts control over most of its territory. The Borama-Hargeisa-Berbera-Burao area, which includes Somaliland’s largest cities, is relatively safe and secure. However, Somaliland’s border with Puntland and the eastern reaches of its territory are vulnerable to infiltration by al-Shabaab and, to a lesser degree, the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS). It is here that Somaliland’s police, army, and intelligence service are being most severely tested.’²⁸

Somaliland has its own police and armed forces, functioning independently from the federal government.²⁹ Officers of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) Police, whose role is to support the federal and state police, are deployed to Puntland, according to the information provided by their website.³⁰

The BFA FFM report noted that every clan in Somaliland has its own militia.³¹ A July 2019 report by the Swedish Migrationsverket noted that [informal translation] ‘civilians [in Somaliland] face intensive clashes and disputes between several clan militias that have systematically adopted warfare with heavy artillery.’³²

Non-state actors



Map 2: Areas of operation of Al-Shabaab as of 1 October 2018.³³

²⁸ Horton, M., How Somaliland Combats al-Shabaab, CTC Sentinel, 26 November 2019, [url](#), p. 24

²⁹ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 97-100, 105; VOA, Somaliland Celebrates Independence Despite Lack of International Recognition, 17 May 2019, [url](#)

³⁰ UNSOM, Police, n.d., [url](#)

³¹ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 97-100, 105

³² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7

³³ The American Enterprise Institute, Critical Threats Project, Al-Shabaab Area of Operations, 1 October 2018, [url](#)



Al-Shabaab

In his November 2019 article, Michael Horton stated that '[n]otably, al-Shabaab has failed to establish an enduring foothold in the unrecognized Republic of Somaliland', and added that 'Al-Shabaab has not launched a large-scale attack in Somaliland since 2008.'³⁴

The July 2019 Migrationsverket report found that [informal translation] 'no significant activity has been noted by Al-Shabaab in Somaliland, thanks to more stable and better structures within the Somaliland government compared to the rest of Somalia.'³⁵

Quoting a confidential source, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands wrote about the security situation in Somaliland the following [covering the period from November 2017 to February 2019]:

'There were hardly any attacks by Al-Shabaab in Somaliland. Checks are carried out along all access roads and travellers must show a passport to enter Somaliland. The security apparatus in Somaliland is effective. There have been attempted attacks in recent years, but these have been thwarted. The population composition in Somaliland is much more homogeneous than in other parts of Somalia. There is one dominant clan, with subclans. A confidential source reports that there is strong social control in Somaliland: 'People know exactly what is happening in their neighbourhood'. A community watch system is used.'³⁶

2.2 Puntland

State actors

In September 2019, FDD's Long War Journal summarised that the Puntland security forces, the Somali military, and the US military are active in Puntland.³⁷ Other sources also reported on the presence of federal Somali forces in Puntland.³⁸ The UNSOM Police officers are active in Puntland as well.³⁹ Sources indicate that AMISOM forces are not present in Puntland.⁴⁰

Puntland's armed forces are seen as 'autonomous armed forces' because of their independent operation.⁴¹ According to the 2017 BFA FFM report, they consist of Puntland Defence Forces (PDF), Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), presidential guards, and police forces.⁴²

³⁴ Horton, M., How Somaliland Combats al-Shabaab, CTC Sentinel, 26 November 2019, [url](#), p. 20

³⁵ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 37

³⁶ Netherlands (The), The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Country of Origin Information Report on South and Central Somalia, March 2019, [url](#), p. 15

³⁷ FDD's Long War Journal, Islamic State trains in Somalia's Puntland, 22 September 2019, [url](#)

³⁸ Bloomberg, Puntland Leader Vows to Defeat Terrorists to Attract Investors, 15 September 2019, [url](#); Political Geography Now, 13 August 2019, [url](#)

³⁹ UNSOM, Police, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰ AMISOM, AMISOM Military Component, n.d., [url](#); Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁴¹ Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁴² Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 87-88



The UN Security Council indicated that the Puntland Security Force, which is 'a 600-strong elite counter-terrorism unit mentored and supported by the United States', acts with impunity and with no civilian supervision.⁴³

Non-state actors

According to the 2017 BFA FFM report, Puntland's armed forces include various clan militias.⁴⁴ In June 2017, a piece by Foreign Affairs noted that 'clan rivalries have intensified'⁴⁵ in Puntland.

No further information on these militias could be found in the consulted and used sources.

Information on the presence and activities of Al-Shabaab and ISS in Puntland is presented below.

Al-Shabaab

A July 2019 report by Swedish Migrationsverket found that '[e]ven though the security situation in Puntland is relatively stable, the state administration is considered weak resulting in an increased presence of Al-Shabaab, ISS and Somali militias.'⁴⁶

The Dutch government report covering the period of November 2017 – February 2019 noted that Al-Shabaab have strengthened their position in Puntland.⁴⁷ In an overview of the situation in Somalia dating 2018, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stated that Al-Shabaab were responsible for 'numerous high-profile bombings and shootings' in Puntland.⁴⁸

The group maintains its positions in the Golis and Galgala Mountains⁴⁹, where they are 'waging an active insurgency', according to the UN Security Council. The same source noted that at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, 'Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) faction in Somalia engaged in an armed struggle, within both the ISIL faction's heartland in Puntland and in Mogadishu.'⁵⁰

⁴³ UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), para. 152

⁴⁴ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 87-88

⁴⁵ Foreign Affairs, Puntland's problems, 15 June 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 6

⁴⁷ Netherlands (The), The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Country of Origin Information Report on South and Central Somalia, March 2019, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁸ CIA, The World Factbook, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁹ FDD's Long War Journal, Shabaab moves into Somaliland town, 18 November 2019, [url](#), USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Al-Shabaab, 1 November 2019, [url](#); UNSC, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 November 2018, [url](#), para. 65

⁵⁰ UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), para. 17, 130

Islamic State is Somalia (ISS)

The ISS was established as an independent organised group in October 2015 under a leadership of a former Al-Shabaab official with a base in Puntland. The ISS and Al-Shabaab have consequently developed into a rivalry, with both sides declaring war to each other in 2018.⁵¹ Sources indicate that, similarly to Al-Shabaab⁵², the ISS is based in the mountain region of Puntland, including in the in the Golis and Bari mountains.⁵³

The 2017 BFA FFM report found that [informal translation] ‘the only active group of IS in Somalia’ is in Puntland. According to the source, the IS were active mainly in Ali Saleban, then in the Bari region Bari, especially in Iskushuban, and also in the mountains south from Qandala.⁵⁴ CIA country profile on Somalia states that ISS conducted ‘directs operations, recruitment, and training’ from Puntland.⁵⁵

According to an article by CTC Sentinel, Al-Shabaab ‘reasserted itself’ in Puntland on 8 June 2017, when the group’s fighters took over the Af-Urur military base, while killing around 50 Puntland security forces. According to the source, the group had some 450-500 members at the time.⁵⁶ On 20 July 2018, Reuters reported that Al-Shabaab took control of the whole Af-Urur town.⁵⁷ In August 2018, the town was recaptured by the Puntland’s security forces, with the Al-Shabaab fighters fleeing ‘into the hills’.⁵⁸ According to an estimate by the Puntland Security Sources made in November 2018, the ISS may had some 340 members in Puntland at the time.⁵⁹ [...]

FDD’s Long War Journal reported on an increased number of the ISS-claimed attacks, noting that the ‘ISS claimed 13 operations in Puntland last year [2018], while in the previous two years combined, it only made 12 claims for the region.’⁶⁰

UN Security Council reported that ‘[i]n Puntland, the faction [the ISS] underwent a violent change of leadership towards the end of 2018, and subsequently began a concerted campaign to extort “taxes” from Puntland-based businesses, employing tactics similar to those of Al-Shabaab.’⁶¹ In August 2018, a local news provider Garowe Online reported that the ISS were able to impose taxes on some

⁵¹ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#); Weiss, C., Reigniting the Rivalry: The Islamic State in Somalia vs. al-Shabaab, CTC Sentinel, April 2019, [url](#), p. 29

⁵² FDD’s Long War Journal, Shabaab moves into Somaliland town, 18 November 2019, [url](#), USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Al-Shabaab, 1 November 2019, [url](#)

⁵³ Garowe Online, Somalia: ISIL-linked faction imposes tax on businesses in Bosaso, 15 August 2018, [url](#); FDD’s Long War Journal, Shabaab moves into Somaliland town, 18 November 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁴ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 88-89

⁵⁵ CIA, The World Factbook, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁶ Anzalone, Ch., Black Banners in Somalia: The State of al-Shabaab’s Territorial Insurgency and the Specter of the Islamic State, CTC Sentinel, March 2018, [url](#), p. 13; Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), p. 92

⁵⁷ Reuters, Al Shabaab captures strategic town in Somalia’s Puntland, 20 July 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Reuters, Somali Puntland forces recapture strategic town from al Shabaab: officer, 17 August 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁹ UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), para. 56

⁶⁰ Weiss, C., Reigniting the Rivalry: The Islamic State in Somalia vs. al-Shabaab, CTC Sentinel, April 2019, [url](#), p. 30

⁶¹ UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), p. 3

businesses in Bosaso.⁶² For example, the group successfully extorted ‘several hundred thousand dollars’ from a local telecommunications company. Employees of other companies refusing to pay the money were killed. UNSC indicated that ISIL aimed to establish ‘a revenue base’ in Puntland and added that ‘Puntland remains the primary entry point for illicit arms into Somalia; the arms are typically shipped using small-scale speedboats from Yemen.’ The source listed the following ‘[a]pproximate locations of ISIL faction strongholds in Puntland’s Bari region’: Dhasaan, Bir Mirale, Garaar, Dhadaar, Shebaab, Harti Dewq/Buqu.⁶³

In September 2019, photos from an ISS training camp ‘somewhere in Puntland’s Bari mountains south of Bosaso’ were published.⁶⁴

3. Recent security trends, impact on the civilian population and overview of documented incidents with civilians casualties

A brief overview of recent security trends first in the disputed regions of Sanaag and Sool and then separately in both, Somaliland and Puntland, follows.

1.1 Sanaag and Sool

Somaliland and Puntland have been in a conflict over the disputed Sanaag and Sool regions for more than ten years.⁶⁵ The UNSC noted that ‘[t]he conflict has fuelled instability, increased the displacement of local residents and allowed Al-Shabaab and ISIL to further entrench within the region’.⁶⁶

One of the reasons behind the conflict is a distribution of clans in the region⁶⁷. While Somaliland, with Isaaq as its main clan, was created following the boundaries from the colonial times, Puntland was established along the clan lines as a ‘Darod/Harti confederation’. Parts of Sool and Sanaag are inhabited by clans belonging to Puntland even though formally designed as parts of Somaliland through colonialism.⁶⁸ Additionally, in the Sool region, resources-related conflicts between clans remain ‘a major concern’, according to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).⁶⁹ Migrationsverket indicated that clan conflicts mostly related to the control of resources do happen in the region, with more intense clashes in the border region with Puntland or to Ethiopia.⁷⁰

⁶² Garowe Online, Somalia: ISIL-linked faction imposes tax on businesses in Bosaso, 15 August 2018, [url](#)

⁶³ UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), p. 84, paras. 60, 130

⁶⁴ Long War Journal, Islamic State trains in Somalia’s Puntland, 22 September 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁵ ACAPS, Somalia, Somaliland drought, 20 February 2019, [url](#); Reuters, Dozens killed in clashes between two Somali regions in land dispute, 25 May 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UNSC, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 November 2018, [url](#), paras. 125-126

⁶⁷ ACCORD, Clans in Somalia: Report on a Lecture by Joakim Gundel, 15 December 2009, [url](#), p. 5; HRC, Situation of human rights in Somalia, 16 September 2019, [url](#), paras. 40, 66; Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/ear27.pdf>, accessed 11 December 2019, p. 4

⁶⁸ Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁹ UNOCHA, 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Somalia, November 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 38

In 2011, Dulbatante, a local majority clan, created an independent Khatumo administration with a goal to free Las Anod, capital of the Sool region, from both, Somaliland's and Puntland's forces.⁷¹ The administration claims the Dulbahante-clan populated regions Sool, Sanaan and Cayn.⁷²

International Crisis Group noted that 2018 was 'an exceptionally violent year' regarding the dispute, with some 20 armed confrontations reported between January and June.⁷³ Throughout 2018, continued confrontations between both sides caused 'dozens of casualties' and estimated 2,500 civilian displacements.⁷⁴ One source estimates that the clashes caused 200 – 300 casualties between January and May 2018.⁷⁵

In January 2018, the town of Tukaraq in Sool, controlled by Puntland since 2007, was captured by the Somaliland forces.⁷⁶

In May 2018, other clashes in Tukaraq between the Somaliland and Puntland forces took place, leaving estimated 45 - 100 people dead.⁷⁷ In Las Anod, a fighting between both sides caused 48 deaths in the same month.⁷⁸ Other clashes with unknown number of casualties between the forces were reported on 22 June 2018.⁷⁹ In October 2018, more than 50 people were killed during clashes between two clan militias near Las Anod.⁸⁰

In 2019, increased tensions were reported in the border region.⁸¹

Chronological overview of selected security related incidents and developments in the region in 2019:

- On 7 April 2019, clashes between the Somaliland forces and a local militia reportedly affiliated with Puntland in Tukaraq 'resulted in an unknown number of fatalities', according to the UNSC.⁸²
- On 21 May 2019, clashes near Badhan caused seven deaths.⁸³

⁷¹ Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁷² Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 6. August 2018, 6 August 2018, [url](#), p. 5

⁷³ International Crisis Group, Averting War in Northern Somalia, 27 June 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁴ UNSC, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 November 2018, [url](#), para. 124

⁷⁵ Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), p. 11

⁷⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019 - Somaliland, 4 February 2019 [url](#); HRW, Somalia - Events of 2018, 17 January 2019, [url](#); UNSC, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 November 2018, [url](#), para. 124

⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, Averting War in Northern Somalia, 27 June 2018, [url](#); Reuters, Dozens killed in clashes between two Somali regions in land dispute, 25 May 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 39

⁷⁹ UNSC, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 November 2018, [url](#), paras. 125-126

⁸⁰ Hiiraan Online, Inter-clan fighting kills over 50 in northern Somalia, 23 October 2018, [url](#); SMN (Shabelle Media Network), The Death Toll From Inter-Clan Fighting In Northern Somalia Rises To 50, 24 October 2018, [url](#)

⁸¹ ACAPS, Somaliland drought, 20 February 2019, [url](#); Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), pp. 9-10, 16

⁸² UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia S/2019/393, 15 May 2019, [url](#), para. 18

⁸³ Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), pp. 13

- On 14 June 2019, the Somaliland and Puntland forces clashed in the town of Badhan in the Sanaag region, with no reported casualties.⁸⁴
- On 14 June 2019, the Somaliland and Puntland forces clashed again near Tukaraq.⁸⁵
- Between 7 - 8 July 2019, 18 civilian deaths were recorded as a result of inter-clan violence in the Sanaag region by the UNSC.⁸⁶ International Crisis Group reported on 25 deaths, clarifying that the violence took place in Duud Arraale and El Afweyn.⁸⁷
- In July 2019, a special UN representative for Somalia visited Puntland to talk about a peaceful resolution of the tensions over the Sanaag and Sool regions. The representative expressed concerns over 'this continuing problem and the sporadic fighting in areas of Sool and Sanaag in recent months.'⁸⁸
- On 12 August 2019, 12 people died after a clan-related violence in the town of El Afwein (in Sanaag).⁸⁹
- On 20 August 2019, four casualties were recorded as a result of clashes following an attempt by a Somaliland governor to the town of Hadaftimo.⁹⁰
- On 23 August 2019, it was reported that a convoy of Somaliland's government representatives was attacked by a Puntland militia in the Sanaag region.⁹¹
- In September 2019, a map published by the UN Security Council indicates that Al-Shabaab 'administer' the area in the north-east of the Sanaag, around the coastal town of Laasqoray.⁹²
- On 18 November 2019, FDD's Long War Journal, quoting various local sources, reported that Al-Shabaab may have captured the town of Gacan Maroodi in the Sanaag region.⁹³

Data by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) suggests that during the period of 1 January - 30 November 2019, a total number of 45 security incidents took place in the disputed territories of Sool and Sanaag, including 35 battles, 8 acts of violence against civilians and 2 explosions/remote violence.⁹⁴

The following main actors involved in the incidents were recorded by the source: military forces of Somaliland, civilians and unidentified armed groups.⁹⁵

3.2 Somaliland

Sources indicate that Somaliland is considered to be the most stable part of Somalia.⁹⁶

⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Somaliland, January-November 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁶ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia S/2019/661, 15 August 2019, [url](#), para. 10

⁸⁷ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Somaliland, January-November 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Xinhua, UN envoy decries tensions between regional states in Somalia, 9 July 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁹ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Somaliland, January-November 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Mahmood, O.S., Overlapping claims by Somaliland and Puntland, ISS, [url](#), pp. 13

⁹¹ East African Business Week, Somaliland, Puntland In Fresh Battle Over Disputed Area, 23 August 2019, [url](#)

⁹² UNSC, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), p. 49

⁹³ FDD's Long War Journal, Shabaab moves into Somaliland town, 18 November 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁴ ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁵ ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁶ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), p. 94; Irish Times (The), Somaliland: A profile, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 37

Migrationsverket listed the ongoing border conflict between Somaliland and Puntland and ‘general crime’ as the biggest security concerns in Somaliland.⁹⁷ The same source stated that ‘infrequent attacks from Al-Shabaab and ISS have taken place [in Somaliland]. With altogether 124 attacks, reported by ACLED during the same period [from March 2018 to March 2019], causing 99 deaths the attacks in Somaliland are considered the lowest in numbers compared to other Somali states.’ The Migrationsverket report concluded that some 10 security incidents with some 8 people killed took place each month in Somaliland in the said period.⁹⁸

A May 2019 article by Voice of America (VOA) news provider noted that Somaliland ‘enjoys relative peace and stability, unlike Somalia, where African troops are helping the government fight al-Shabab and Islamic State militants.’⁹⁹

In November 2019, it was reported that in Awdal and Selal, a new armed group called Awale was created. The group has reportedly warned the Somaliland government of a possible ‘warfare’ and asked all foreigners to immediately leave Somaliland.¹⁰⁰ On 13 November 2019, the Somaliland government indicated that it is willing to implement the use of force against the so-called Awale group, according to the Somali Dispatch news.¹⁰¹

Data by ACLED suggests that during the period of 1 January - 30 November 2019, a total number of 37 security incidents took place in Somaliland (Awdal, Togdheer and Woqooyi Galbeed), including 11 battles, 16 acts of violence against civilians and 10 explosions/remote violence.¹⁰²

The following main actors involved in the incidents were recorded by the source: civilians, unidentified armed groups and police forces of Somalia.¹⁰³

FDD’s Long War Journal maintains an interactive database of the ISS-claimed attacks in Somalia, including in Somaliland. The database recorded no such attack in Somaliland in 2019.¹⁰⁴

No further information on the incidents with civilian casualties in Somaliland could be found in the consulted sources.

In relation to the IDPs, a September 2019 report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia noted that ‘[t]here is a vacuum in the legal framework to protect internally displaced persons in Somaliland. They lack access to basic health services, education, land, shelter and employment. They face eviction from the land upon which they are squatters. Women and girls face multiple violations of their rights and are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence.’¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 37

⁹⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), pp. 6, 37

⁹⁹ VOA, Somaliland Celebrates Independence Despite Lack of International Recognition, 17 May 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ ACLED, Regional Overview: Africa 10 - 16 December 2019, [url](#); Somaliland Standard, Somaliland: Rebel Group Dubbed Awale Unveiled in Awdal and Selal provinces, 12 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Somali Dispatch, Somaliland Minister Of Commerce Threatens Fighters in Awdal Region, 13 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰² ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰³ ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ FDD, Long War Journal, Claimed Islamic State Attacks in Somalia, latest updated 9 January 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ HRC, Situation of human rights in Somalia; Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, 16 September 2019, [url](#), para. 101

3.3 Puntland

The July 2019 Migrationsverket report noted that the security situation in Puntland is ‘relatively stable’, but some ‘minor clashes’ do occur, especially in forms of targeted assassinations in Bosaso and Galkaacy. This is not the case in Garowe, likely because of higher presence of the security forces, according to the source [informal translation].¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the 2017 BFA FFM found Puntland to be stable.¹⁰⁷

A September 2019 report on the situation of human rights in Somalia by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) reported on cases of young men traveling from Puntland to the Gulf states being arrested, tortured and executed on ground of being suspected Al-Shabaab members. The same source also noted that fighting between clans happens ‘east of Somaliland, along the border with Puntland’ and also ‘during floods and droughts when people from strong clans invade the land of less powerful clans.’¹⁰⁸

The UN Security Council reported on ‘acts of torture and inhumane and degrading treatment’ committed by the Puntland Security Force, a Bosaso-based counter-terrorism unit. The source further noted that ‘civilians, including children, continued to be detained and subjected to military trials by Puntland military courts. Many of the defendants had been detained on terrorism-related charges following security sweeps in Bosaso and Galkayo in February and March 2019. Some defendants, including four children aged 16 and 17, were sentenced by military courts in Puntland.’¹⁰⁹

Data by ACLED suggests that during the period of 1 January - 30 November 2019, a total number of 74 security incidents took place in Puntland (Bari and Nugaal), including 31 battles, 21 acts of violence against civilians and 22 explosions/remote violence.¹¹⁰

The following main actors involved in the incidents were recorded by the source: unidentified armed groups, Al-Shabaab and civilians.¹¹¹

The FDD’s Long War Journal database of the ISS-claimed attacks in Somalia recorded one such attack in Puntland in 2019, when Islamic state shot at perceived Christians in Bosaso, leaving four persons wounded.¹¹²

The July 2019 Migrationsverket report stated:

‘In Puntland, 226 different security-related incidents were reported during the period 20 March 2018 to 20 March 2019 with a total of 154 fatalities. Six of the incidents have resulted in ten or more deaths and these have been carried out by Puntland Security Forces (PSF), AFRICOM, Al-Shabaab and ISS. Three of the incidents are linked to an attack that AlShabaab

¹⁰⁶ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁰⁷ Austria, BFA, Sicherheitslage in Somalia, August 2017, [url](#), pp. 85-86

¹⁰⁸ HRC, Situation of human rights in Somalia, 16 September 2019, [url](#), paras. 40, 66

¹⁰⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 1 November 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letter dated 27 September 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, 1 November 2019, [url](#), p. 5, para. 149

¹¹⁰ ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹¹ ACLED, Dashboard, Somalia, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹² FDD, Long War Journal, Claimed Islamic State Attacks in Somalia, latest updated 9 January 2019, [url](#)



carried out against PSF in Boosaaso on June 1, 2018, with subsequent counter-attacks from PSF and AFRICOM the following day.’¹¹³

Chronological overview of selected security related incidents and developments in the region in 2019:

- On 4 February 2019, Al-Shabaab shot dead a head of an UAE-owned company in Puntland, allegedly for his ‘illegal presence’ in Puntland.¹¹⁴
- On 14 April 2019, a deputy leader of the ISS was killed in Puntland’s Bari region.¹¹⁵
- On 8 May 2019, 13 ‘terrorists’ were killed in a US strike in Puntland.¹¹⁶
- On 8 June 2019, the town of Af-Urur came under the control of Al-Shabaab, until it was retaken by the Puntland’s forces three days later.¹¹⁷
- On 27 October 2019, up to three civilians were reportedly killed after an airstrike in the Ameyra village in the Golis Mountains.¹¹⁸

In 2019, several US AFRICOM (United States Africa Command) airstrikes against the militant groups in Puntland were reported, including in April¹¹⁹, May¹²⁰, June¹²¹ and October¹²².

¹¹³ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 33

¹¹⁴ Africa News, Expat port operator killed in Somalia, explosions rock Mogadishu, 4 February 2019, [url](#); Press TV, Al-Shabab kills UAE-owned firm boss in Somalia’s Puntland , conducts deadly blast in capital, 4 February 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Africa News, Deputy head of Islamic State in Somalia killed by airstrike, 14 April 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Arab News, US air strike kills 13 Daesh fighters in Somalia, 10 May 2018, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Political Geography Now, Last Update 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Garowe Online, Three civilians ‘missing’ after U.S. airstrike in Somalia’s Puntland, [url](#); VOA, Villagers: US Drone Strike in Somalia Kills Frankincense Collectors, 27 October 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ VOA, Suspected US Airstrike Hits Islamic State Militants in Somalia, 25 October 2019, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Reuters, U.S. air strike kills 13 Islamic State fighters in Somalia: U.S. military, 10 May 2019, [url](#)

¹²¹ All Africa, Somalia: U.S. Military Says Six Militants Killed in Puntland Airstrike, 6 June 2019, [url](#)

¹²² VOA, Suspected US Airstrike Hits Islamic State Militants in Somalia, 25 October 2019, [url](#)



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