



# COI QUERY

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**SOMALIA**

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**Reference period**

1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023

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**Topics**

1. [Major security developments](#)

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2. [Humanitarian situation](#)

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3. [Update on desertion, defection, disengagement from Al-Shabaab](#)

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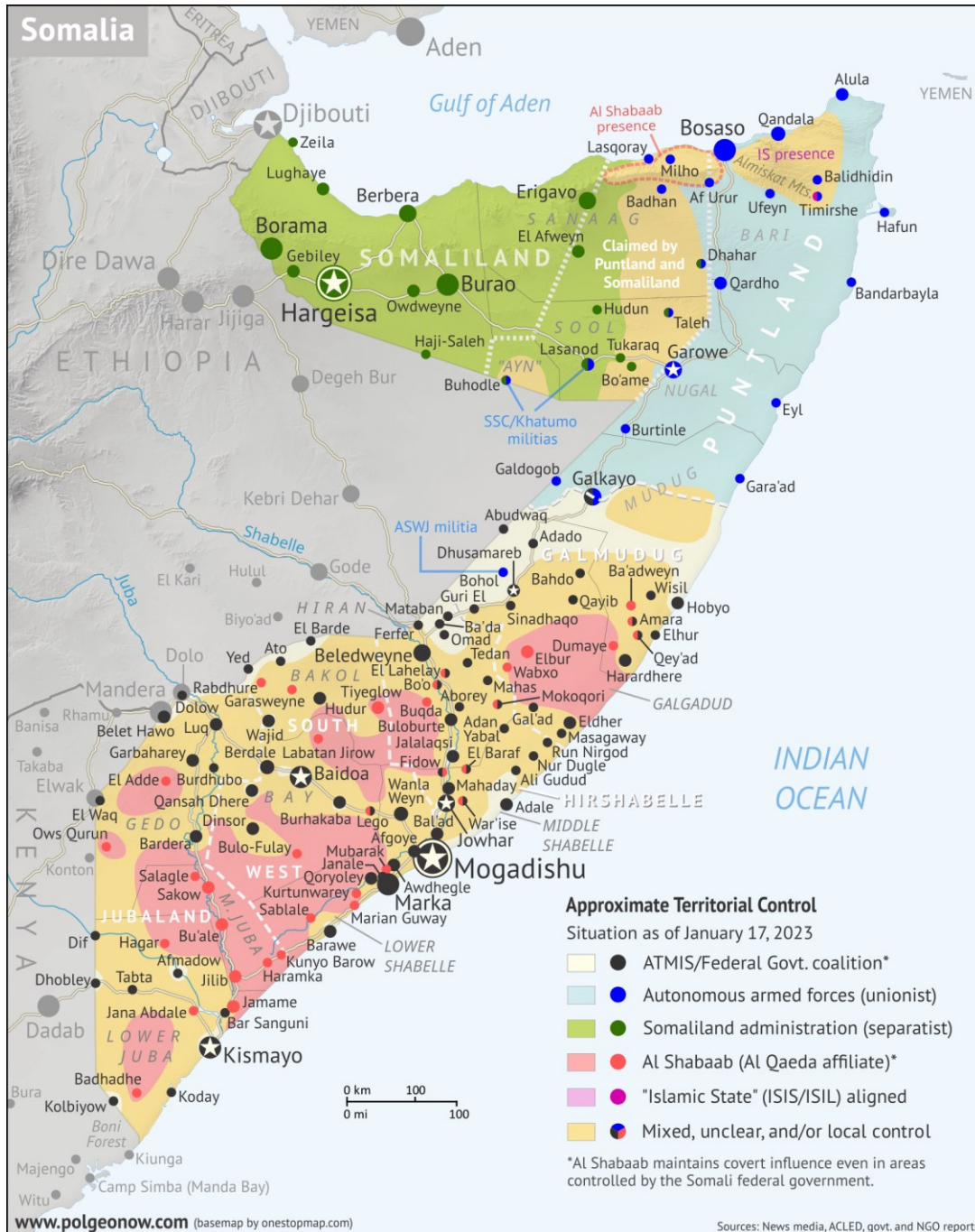
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## Map on territorial control



Map 1. Somalia - Approximate Territorial Control, 17 January 2023, [Political Geography Now](https://www.polgeonow.com).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PolGeoNow, Somalia Approximate Territorial Control, as of 17 January 2023, n.a., non-public source.



# 1. Major security developments

## 1.1. On-going conflict(s)

This report updates and builds upon the previous European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) COI [Report on Somalia: Security Situation](#) (February 2023).<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.1. Overall impacts and dynamics

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 2022 was ‘the deadliest year in Somalia since at least 2018’<sup>3</sup> and, according to a UN Secretary General report, ‘the deadliest year for civilians in Somalia since 2017’.<sup>4</sup> ACLED recorded more than 6 500 fatalities in 2022, in comparison to less than 3 500 fatalities in 2021.<sup>5</sup> According to various sources, the offensive of the Somali government against Al-Shabaab (AS), which started in August 2022 (or summer 2020, according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Critical Threats Project (CT)),<sup>6</sup> gained ground during the second half of 2022 and in early 2023.<sup>7</sup> For further details see the [EUAA Somalia: Security Situation](#) report from February 2023.

As reported by ACLED, from August 2022 onwards, the country saw a rise in conflict activity due to this government offensive. While ACLED recorded 2 000 fatalities connected to Al-Shabaab activity in the first seven months of 2022, 3 850 such fatalities and more than 1 200 political violence events as a result of Al-Shabaab activity were recorded between August and December 2022.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as noted by the UN Secretary-General, 1 524 security incidents were recorded in the period between 23 August 2022 and 7 February 2023, including 501 incidents of terrorism.<sup>9</sup> The report further noticed that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) recorded 1 059 civilian casualties (382 fatalities and 677 injured) in that period, which equalled a 153 % increase compared to the previous reporting period.<sup>10</sup> Al-Shabaab continued to be the main perpetrator,<sup>11</sup> having caused 841 civilian casualties.<sup>12</sup> With reference to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the US Department of State (USDOS) in its 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices stated that Al-Shabaab was responsible for 94 % of conflict-related civilian fatalities in that year.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> EUAA, Somalia: Security Situation, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-24

<sup>3</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70

<sup>5</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>7</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1; FT, Somali president says ‘defeat’ of al-Shabaab militants within sight, 5 April 2023, [url](#); ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 13, 14

<sup>8</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 12

<sup>10</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70

<sup>11</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70; ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70

<sup>13</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 11



**(a) Al-Shabaab strategy**

After the start of the government-led offensive against Al-Shabaab in August 2022, the group reportedly redeployed to Banadir and Lower Shabelle regions and started to ambush security forces with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), especially on the main supply routes between Belet Weyne (Hiraan region) and Balcad districts (Middle Shabelle region).<sup>14</sup> ACLED stated in March 2023 that, while government forces were focusing on their anti-Al-Shabaab operations in Galmudug which began in January 2023, Al-Shabaab was concentrating on retaking areas it lost in Hirshabelle region.<sup>15</sup>

Al-Shabaab reportedly also increased its attacks against civilians (see section [1.3.1 Major security incidents impacting civilians](#) for more details),<sup>16</sup> and changed its tactics<sup>17</sup> in that it increased the use of IEDs and adopted night combats. Lower Shabelle and Banaadir, where Al-Shabaab continued to target clan figures allied with the government and civilians,<sup>18</sup> were the regions most affected by high-impact attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab in urban centres countrywide, according to the UN Secretary General.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, according to the March 2023 International Crisis Group report, Al-Shabaab appeared to ‘be changing its approach to the population in central Somalia, realising its coercive model for securing obedience has backfired. It has started offering more carrots than sticks’.<sup>20</sup> Still, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) reported that Al-Shabaab fighters, according to the Somali National Army (SNA), were forcing civilians in villages under their control to flee from their homes in order to prevent their collaboration with the government. Moreover, the group was accused of kidnapping relatives of the *Macawisley*<sup>21</sup> militia, which had joined the government offensive against Al-Shabaab.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the Hawadle clan was reportedly singled out by Al-Shabaab for attacks, including in Mogadishu.<sup>23</sup> See below for further details.

Additionally, in late February 2023, Al-Shabaab, according to ACLED, launched a ‘special operation’, ‘targeting business owners, narcotics dealers, and *Ciyaal Wero* (local youths), who are known to rob civilians in Mogadishu, likely as a tactic to gain local support’.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/23 – The State of the World's Human Rights (Somalia 2022), 27 March 2023, [url](#), p. 327

<sup>17</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#); ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70

<sup>18</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 15

<sup>20</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>21</sup> The *Macawisley* are a mainly clan-based, state-supported independent locally mobilized militia. EUAA, Somalia: Security Situation, February 2023, [url](#), p. 84; *Macawisley* means ‘those who wear the macawis’, a Somali sarong. International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>22</sup> Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 19 December 2022, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>23</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 8, footnote 39

<sup>24</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)



## **(b) Clan participation and disengagement from the offensive**

The Somali government reportedly made use of increasing local discontent with Al-Shabaab to join forces with clan militias, in particular among the politically dominant Hawiye clan,<sup>25</sup> including its Habar Gedir,<sup>26</sup> Hawadle and Abgal subclans.<sup>27</sup> ACLED reported an increase by 31 % of involvement of clan militia in political violence in Somalia in 2022.<sup>28</sup> According to the International Crisis Group, the participation of clans in the offensive against Al-Shabaab strengthened the narrative that parts of the Somali society were ‘turning against Al-Shabaab’.<sup>29</sup> An April 2023 Financial Times (FT) article quoted a diplomat in Mogadishu referring to communities who were once under Al-Shabaab’s control rising up against the group due to growing dissatisfaction with the group’s ‘use of extortion and forced recruitment’, as an ‘insurgency within an insurgency’.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of the change in approach adopted by Al-Shabaab (see above), by the end of the year, a group of elders of the Salebaan clan, a Habar Gedir sub-clan, agreed with Al-Shabaab to withdraw its government support in Galmudug<sup>31</sup> in exchange for the release of hostages taken by Al-Shabaab and of seized property.<sup>32</sup> In late December 2023, Al-Shabaab reportedly made an agreement with a large sub-clan in the Galguduud region to not join the fighting against them.<sup>33</sup> At the end of January 2023, Somali government authorities reportedly stated to have arrested six clan elders accused of signing an agreement to withdraw their militias from the government offensive against Al-Shabaab.<sup>34</sup>

Clashes between clan-based forces and with Al-Shabaab took place in Puntland and Galmudug states and in the regions Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba, Baidoa, and Hiraan.<sup>35</sup>

## **(c) Crisis in Las Anod**

In Somaliland, after the postponing of the territory’s presidential elections in September 2022 and the extension of the current presidential term to 2024,<sup>36</sup> tensions arose and violence increased.<sup>37</sup> In the first week of February 2023, fighting erupted in Las Anod (also: Laas Canood, Laascaanood) town, the capital of Sool region, between militia from the Dhulbahante

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<sup>25</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>26</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#); ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>30</sup> FT, Somali president says ‘defeat’ of al-Shabaab militants within sight, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> SMN, ‘Odayaasha beesha dagto Cadaado ee la soo heshiiyay Shabaab oo war soo saaray,’ 25 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>33</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 13 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 6-7

<sup>34</sup> Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 6 February 2023, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>35</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>36</sup> France 24, Somaliland parties snub president after vote storm, 14 November 2022, [url](#); ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)



clan<sup>38</sup> and Somaliland security forces.<sup>39</sup> Sool region is one of three disputed regions contested by the de facto independent state of Somaliland and the Puntland State.<sup>40</sup> The fighting was reported to have been initially triggered by the killing of a local opposition party politician in December 2022.<sup>41</sup> This incident reportedly revived old tensions between the Dhulbahante clan<sup>42</sup> and Somaliland over long-standing self-determination demands of the clan.<sup>43</sup> Protests in response to the incident and calling for presidential elections in December led to the subsequent intervention of Somaliland security forces and resulted, initially, in a dozen fatalities and several injuries.<sup>44</sup>

In early January 2023, the Dhulbahante clan declared the disputed Sool and Sanaag regions as parts of the Federal Republic of Somalia and asked the Somaliland forces to withdraw from the area.<sup>45</sup> The conflict that ensued saw the military confrontation between the Somaliland's army and armed fighters affiliated with the Dhulbahante clan. Based on an Amnesty International investigation, Somaliland security forces had 'indiscriminately shelled' Las Anod and surrounding areas, including hospitals, schools, mosques and residential areas, with following impacts on the civilian population: over 100 fatalities, over 600 injured, and between 154 000 to 203 000 IDPs to neighbouring towns and villages,<sup>46</sup> as well as reportedly nearly 100 000 refugees to Ethiopia.<sup>47</sup>

#### **(d) Regional states dynamics**

In the South West State (SWS), the extension of the SWS parliament<sup>48</sup> and mandate of SWS president Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed<sup>49</sup> (also known als Laftagareen<sup>50</sup> or Lafta Gareen<sup>51</sup>) led to tensions in December 2022 between Laftagareen and the opposition which refused to

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<sup>38</sup> Sool is inhabited primarily by Dhulbahante, a Darod sub-clan, which is part of the Harti confederation together with the Majerteen clans of Puntland. EASO, Somalia Security Situation, September 2021, [url](#), p. 132

<sup>39</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 3-4; OHCHR, Somalia: UN expert deplores high death toll in Laas Caanood clashes, 23 February 2023, [url](#); MSF, Somalia and Somaliland: Indiscriminate fighting affects medical care in Las Anod, 1 March 2023, [url](#); OHCHR, Türk urges investigation after scores killed in Somalia clashes, 7 February 2023, [url](#); IFRC, DREF Application; Population Movement, Laas Caanood, Sool Region, 19 February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>40</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 3; OHCHR, Türk urges investigation after scores killed in Somalia clashes, 7 February 2023, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 13 February 2023, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>41</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 3; UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 8

<sup>42</sup> According to ISW and CT, Puntland based its claim to the disputed territories on shared clan ties with the Dhulbahante. ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>43</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>44</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 8; ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 8; ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> AI, Somaliland: Urgent investigation needed as fighting takes heavy toll on civilians in Las Anod, 20 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR, External Update #1; East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Region, Las Caanood Situation - Emergency Response in Somalia and Ethiopia, 15 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>48</sup> Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 2 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10; UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 6

<sup>49</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 6

<sup>50</sup> Horseed Media, Abdiiaziz Laftagareen: A unifying and foresighted politician dedicated to changing the Southwest State of Somalia, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> VOA, Somali Region Gets New President After Deadly Election Campaign, 19 December 2018, [url](#)



recognize the extension. The tensions led to clashes resulting in several fatalities.<sup>52</sup> According to the UN Secretary General, an agreement on the SWS parliament and subsequent presidential elections was reached during a reconciliation conference in Baidoa in early 2023.<sup>53</sup>

In Puntland, the UN Secretary General reported on disagreements in connection with local district council elections which led to clashes between armed forces loyal to the opposition and forces aligned with the Puntland government on 6 February 2023 in the capital of the state, Garowe.<sup>54</sup>

## 1.2. Armed actors and territorial control

For detailed information on armed actors and territorial control in Somalia, please refer to the previous EUAA COI report on [Somalia: Security Situation](#) (February 2023),<sup>55</sup>.

### 1.2.1. Territorial control

The International Crisis Group reported on 21 March 2023 that the gains made through the government-led Anti-Al-Shabaab operations were ‘the most comprehensive territorial gains since the mid-2010s’.<sup>56</sup> ACLED reported that more than half of 170 non-violent transfer of territory events from Al-Shabaab control to the Somali government forces in 2022, such as Al-Shabaab vacating its bases, occurred in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle regions.<sup>57</sup>

For a general overview of territorial control and contested area in Somalia see relevant section - Maps on liberated areas and approximate territorial control – in the EUAA COI report on [Somalia: Security Situation](#) (February 2023), as well as the [Map on territorial control](#) as of 17 January 2023 within this query.

For late developments and regional details see below:

- **Hiraan.** In September 2022, the former Al-Shabaab strongholds in the eastern part of Hiraan region in central Somalia were reportedly cleared by government forces.<sup>58</sup> The government offensive was supported by local clan militias, including *Macawisley*,<sup>59</sup> and the African Union as well as US and Turkish drones<sup>60</sup> in the reference period.<sup>61</sup> Simultaneously, Al-Shabaab forces kept crossing from the west of Shabelle River attempting to attack positions of

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<sup>52</sup> Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 2 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10; UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 6

<sup>53</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 7

<sup>54</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 10

<sup>55</sup> EUAA, Somalia: Security Situation, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-24

<sup>56</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>57</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>59</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>60</sup> FT, Somali president says ‘defeat’ of al-Shabaab militants within sight, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4; ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 13 January 2023, [url](#), p. 6





*Macawisley* in Hiraan.<sup>62</sup> The rest of the territory remains contested when not firmly controlled by Al-Shabaab.<sup>63</sup>

- **Middle Shabelle.** Reportedly, government forces also cleared Middle Shabelle region from the group's strongholds in the last quarter of 2022<sup>64</sup> and captured Adan Yabaal, the regional centre of Al-Shabaab in Middle Shabelle, in December 2022. The rest of the territory remains contested.<sup>65</sup>
- **Galgaduud and Mudug.** Operations were extended into Galgaduud<sup>66</sup> and Mudug regions in Galmudug state in the reference period,<sup>67</sup> which led to the capture of Al-Shabaab strongholds<sup>68</sup> such as the district capitals Harardhere in Mudug region and El Dheere in Galgaduud region in mid-January 2023.<sup>69</sup> Sources indicated that the recapture of Harardhere town was of particular strategic importance.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the capture of the two towns eliminated the two major ports of Al-Shabaab on the coast of central Somalia 'cutting key supply and smuggling lines that supply the group's activities in central Somalia'.<sup>71</sup> As a counteroffensive, on 20 January 2023, Al-Shabaab reportedly had its 'first major tactical success' through a suicide-vehicle born improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attack on a base of US-trained Danab<sup>72</sup> special forces in Gal'ad in the Galgaduud region. Gal'ad is an important crossroads town which connects the district capitals El Dheere, which was recently recaptured by Somali government forces, and El Bur, controlled by Al-Shabaab.<sup>73</sup>
- **Benadir.** Al-Shabaab's capabilities were further demonstrated through a wave of SVBIED attacks in central Somalia in January 2023 and a suicide siege campaign ongoing since September 2022 in the capital city of Mogadishu.<sup>74</sup> For more details see section [1.3.1 Major security incidents impacting civilians](#).
- **Bay.** The Somali media outlet Garowe Online reported in early December 2022 that Al-Shabaab had retaken strategic settlements in southern Somalia close to Baidoa town from government forces.<sup>75</sup>
- **Lower Juba.** On 21 January 2023, government forces captured the city Janay Abdalle in Afmadow district in Lower Jubba region and intended to use it 'as a launching pad for future operations' in Afmadow district.<sup>76</sup> As of late March 2023, the Somali government reportedly

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<sup>62</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 67

<sup>63</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4; PolGeoNow, Somalia Approximate Territorial Control, as of 17 January 2023, n.a., non-public source

<sup>64</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 13 January 2023, [url](#), p. 6; see also ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>65</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 13 January 2023, [url](#), p. 6; PolGeoNow, Somalia Approximate Territorial Control, as of 17 January 2023, n.a., non-public source

<sup>66</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>67</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4; ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>70</sup> Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 23 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 8-9; ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>71</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 19 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>72</sup> The Somali Danab ('lightning') Brigade is a US-sponsored Special operations force, that is considered Somalia's 'most professional fighting force'. Pulitzer Center, The Danab Brigade: Somalia's Elite, US-Sponsored Special Ops Force, 11 August 2020, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 25 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>74</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1; ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 25 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UN Security Council, Thirty-first report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, S/2023/95, 13 February 2023, [url](#), para. 18

<sup>75</sup> Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab retakes strategic towns in southern Somalia, 3 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 25 January 2023, [url](#), p. 2



planned to send forces to the south of Somalia even though its hold in the centre was not fully secured<sup>77</sup> and Al-Shabaab continued its resistance in this part of the country.<sup>78</sup>

## 1.2.2. (Selected) armed actors' role and capacity

### (a) US AFRICOM

According to ACLED, US forces played an important role in the government's Al-Shabaab offensive. Between August 2022 and the end of the year, US forces carried out 18 airstrikes together with Somali special unit forces on hideouts of Al-Shabaab in Middle Juba, Middle Shabelle, Hiraan, Galgaduud, and Lower Shabelle regions. Compared to 2021, ACLED reported an increase by 30 % in US airstrikes in Somalia in 2022.<sup>79</sup> According to International Crisis Group interviews with security officials and an African Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)<sup>80</sup> official carried out between September 2022 and March 2023, ATMIS 'has stayed out of direct combat thus far, but has provided artillery support in Hiraan, medevacs via helicopter and other logistical aid'.<sup>81</sup>

### (b) Kenya and Ethiopia

In the reference period, Ethiopian and Kenyan forces continued their presence in Somalia. As part of ATMIS, they were for example stationed in and around Kismayo City.<sup>82</sup> In spring 2023, sources reported that Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti had agreed to join the government offensive against Al-Shabaab.<sup>83</sup> Subsequently, in March 2023, Ethiopia reportedly sent hundreds of non-ATMIS troops to Somalia.<sup>84</sup>

### (c) Al-Shabaab

With reference to various media sources, ISW and CT stated in mid-February 2023 that the '[r]ecent Somali government operations have failed to weaken al Shabaab's attack capabilities.' For example, the group launched a series of large-scale attacks across three Somali regions on 11 February 2023, the magnitude of which demonstrated that Al-Shabaab 'retains significant capabilities throughout Somalia' and is capable of coordinating large-scale attacks in a number of areas at the same time despite the growing military pressure.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 6

<sup>78</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 6-7; ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#); FT, Somali president says 'defeat' of al-Shabaab militants within sight, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> ATMIS is a reconfiguration of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). AU, Peace and Security Council, Communique for 1068th Meeting, Communiqué Rev. 1, PSC/PR/COMM.1068 (2022), 8 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2

<sup>81</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia's Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>82</sup> defenceWeb, Ethiopian and Kenyan troops praised for work in Somalia, 11 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> africanews, US increases military support for Somalia against al-Shabab, 1 March 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Ethiopia sends non-ATMIS troops to Somalia in fight against Al-Shabaab, 8 March 2023, [url](#); AA, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti join forces for new offensive against al-Shabaab terror group, 1 February 2023, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 6 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> Garowe Online, Ethiopia sends non-ATMIS troops to Somalia in fight against Al-Shabaab, 8 March 2023, [url](#); SG, Hundreds of non-ATMIS Ethiopian troops cross border into Somalia, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1



ACLED suggested in March 2023 that the ‘threat from al-Shabaab’ persisted countrywide and that the extension of government operations into Galmudug state may overstretch the military capacity of the government-led offensive and weaken newly established bases in Hirshabelle State. According to the source, in the first two weeks of March 2023 ‘explosions and remote violence perpetrated by al-Shabaab amounted to nearly 60% of all political violence events in Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle regions’.<sup>86</sup>

In March 2023, local sources and security experts estimated Al-Shabaab number of fighters between 20 000 and 10 000.<sup>87</sup> In a February 2023 report, the USDOS estimated Al-Shabaab to have 7 000 to 9 000 members<sup>88</sup> while the UN Security Council based on Member State estimations puts the number at 7 000 to 12 000.<sup>89</sup>

Against this backdrop, ISW and CT stated, in February 2023, that the ongoing conflict on northern Somalia’s disputed regions (see section [Error! Reference source not found.1.1](#)) could relieve counterterrorism pressure on Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/the Levant (ISIS/ISIL/Daesh) group and present them recruitment opportunities.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time, several Somali media sources reported Al-Shabaab infighting in the reference period of this query.<sup>91</sup> Caasimada Online reported on Al-Shabaab clashes in December 2022 near Harardhere city because some members wanted to surrender to government forces.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, in early April 2023, clashes between two Al-Shabaab factions broke out in Central Jubba’s Jilib City around the Al-Shabaab leadership.<sup>93</sup>

#### **(d) ISIS**

In March 2023, ACLED reported that ISIL had long been known to have its base in Puntland<sup>94</sup> and USDOS stated that the group’s base was in Puntland as of March 2023.<sup>95</sup> A February 2023 report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted to the UN Security Council noted that ISIL had a ‘presence’ in Puntland and an estimated 200 to 250 members in Somalia. The report further indicated that ISIL did not have the capacity to control large terrain or to carry out complex large-scale attacks.<sup>96</sup> The UN Secretary-General reported, in February 2023, that elements aligned with ISIL carried out two attacks in Somalia, one on 29 August 2022 and another on 14 January 2023. The incident in January reportedly was an

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<sup>86</sup> ACLED, Somalia at a Glance: 1 January-17 March 2023, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> VOA, Officials Warn Against Underestimating Al-Shabab and IS in Somalia, 14 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Al-Shabaab (AS), 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 270

<sup>89</sup> UN Security Council, Thirty-first report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, S/2023/95, 13 February 2023, [url](#), para. 19

<sup>90</sup> ISW and CT, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, 16 February 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>91</sup> Caasimada, Al-Shabab infighting leads to the deaths of several militants in Somalia, 1 January 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al Shabab Infighting Escalates: Attack on Senior Foreign Leader’s House in Jilib City, 4 April 2023, [url](#); Somalilandstandard, Deadly Al-Shabab infighting amid growing Power Struggles, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> Caasimada, Al-Shabab infighting leads to the deaths of several militants in Somalia, 1 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> Garowe Online, Al Shabab Infighting Escalates: Attack on Senior Foreign Leader’s House in Jilib City, 4 April 2023, [url](#); Somalilandstandard, Deadly Al-Shabab infighting amid growing Power Struggles, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>96</sup> UN Security Council, Thirty-first report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, S/2023/95, 13 February 2023, [url](#), para. 20



armed clash in Puntland between ISIL and Darwish<sup>97</sup> forces.<sup>98</sup> According to ACLED, in 2022, the activity of the Somali branch of ISIL in Puntland state decreased compared to the year 2021.<sup>99</sup> USDOS noted that attacks claimed by ISIL against Somali government forces and other targets in 2022 received little coverage in local media reports.<sup>100</sup> Sources reported that several ISIL fighters, including senior ISIL leader Bilal Al-Sudani were killed in late January 2023 by US special forces in northern Somalia.<sup>101</sup>

## 1.3. Security incidents and trends, conflict data (about battles, remote violence, violence against civilians)

### 1.3.1. Major security incidents impacting civilians<sup>102</sup>

On 4 January 2023, Al-Shabaab launched a twin suicide car bomb in Mahas (Maxaas) town in Hiraan Region. In the course of the attacks that targeted the district commissioner's office and the local police station, at least 50 people, including security personnel and civilians,<sup>103</sup> were killed, and 70 others injured.<sup>104</sup>

On 14 January 2023, at least 30 people were killed in three suicide attacks in Hiraan region: in Jalalaqsi, two car bombs detonated near a military checkpoint and school killing at least 12 people and injuring 11. In Buulobarde, at least 18 people were killed and 24 injured by a car bomb near a police station and military base.<sup>105</sup>

On 22 January, Al-Shabaab launched a complex attack against a governmental building<sup>106</sup> in Mogadishu. In the course of the attack involving person-borne IEDs, Al-Shabaab gunmen entered the building, of which Somali security forces regained control after five hours.<sup>107</sup> The incident caused the deaths of five civilians. Four others were injured.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Galmudug's Darwish Force forms part of the Federal Police Force and is trained and supported by international actors, including the European Union Training Mission (EUTM Somalia) or the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). SJS, Galmudug's Darwish forces raid independent local media station, beat and detain journalist in Abudwak, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 22

<sup>99</sup> ACLED, Context Assessment: Heightened Political Violence in Somalia, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>101</sup> USDOD, Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Somalia Operation, 26 January 2023, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 30 January 2023, [url](#), p. 11; VOA, Somalia Welcomes Killing of IS Leader, 27 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> The following is a selection of incidents with high impact on civilians and does not claim to be representative in any sense. Moreover, please note that according to Ken Menkhaus security incidents related to clan conflicts do not always receive local media attention and hence might go under-reported in Somalia. Menkhaus, K., input from external review, 27 August 2021. As cited in EASO, Somalia – Security Situation, September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> AA, At least 35 killed, 72 wounded in Somalia twin suicide blasts, 5 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 18

<sup>105</sup> AOAV, Hirran: 30 killed in three Al Shabaab suicide attacks, 14 Jan, 17 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> In an UNSG, report the building was termed 'Banaadir Regional Administration building', while an article by VOA described it as 'the compound housing the Mogadishu mayor's office and other local government facilities'. UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 19; VOA, Somali Forces End Al-Shabab Siege on Mogadishu Mayor's Office, 22 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 19

<sup>108</sup> VOA, Somali Forces End Al-Shabab Siege on Mogadishu Mayor's Office, 22 January 2023, [url](#)



On 24 January, a mortar attack targeting Somalia's presidential palace wounded at least five people, including two high school students.<sup>109</sup>

On 21 February, Al-Shabaab killed ten civilians in a house in Mogadishu where several lawmakers were believed to be staying. The group claimed to be targeting military officials and militia fighters.<sup>110</sup>

On 4 March 2023, Al-Shabaab killed five people and injured three other civilians in a shooting at a café in Mogadishu.<sup>111</sup>

On 5 March 2023, Al-Shabaab militants were reported to have killed ten people they considered drug dealers in Yaqshid and Dayniile districts of Mogadishu.<sup>112</sup>

On 14 March 2023, Al-Shabaab targeted a guest house in Bardhere (Gedo region), leaving at least nine people killed, including five soldiers, and others injured.<sup>113</sup>

On 7 April 2023, five members of a pastoralist family were killed by armed militiamen in Balanbale district in Galgaduud region. The attack was reportedly due to a clan dispute.<sup>114</sup>

On 9 April 2023, Al-Shabaab mortared the area around Villa Somalia, while affecting the nearby house, hotel and school. The attack killed four officials and injured three civilians.<sup>115</sup>

For the period between 1 December 2023 and 18 April 2023, Airwars<sup>116</sup> listed 19 US air/drone strikes in Somalia, with one leading to civilian harm allegations:<sup>117</sup> on 30 January 2023, at least seven civilians including three children were reportedly killed in a drone strike targeting a village near Jalalaqsi town in Hiraa region.<sup>118</sup>

Between February and the beginning of March 2023, twenty-four days of clashes between Somaliland forces and the local population in Las Anod, Sool region, left 210 civilians dead, 680 others wounded, and 200 000 families displaced, according to a 3 March 2023 press conference statement by the mayor of the contested town.<sup>119</sup> For further context of these clashes, please see section [1.1](#). For further information on conflict-induced displacement, please see section Conflict-induced displacement [1.3.5](#).

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<sup>109</sup> AA, Mortar attack targeting Somalia's presidential palace wounds at least 5, 24 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> Reuters, Al Shabaab attack kills 10 at officials' house in Somalia – ministry, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>111</sup> allAfrica, Somalia: Five Killed, 3 Hurt in a Shooting At Mogadishu Café, 5 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>112</sup> SomaliMemo, Al Shabaab oo 10 qof ku dilay degmooyinka Yaaqshiid iyo Dayniile. [Al Shabaab killed 10 people in Yaqshid and Dayniile districts], 5 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> AP, Witnesses say extremist attack in Somalia kills at least 9, 14 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> Hiiraan Online, Dad isku qoys ah oo Maanta lagu dilay deegaanka Ari quruuf ee gobolka Galgaduud [People from the same family were killed today in Ari Quruf area of Galgaduud region], 7 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>115</sup> CT, Gulf of Aden Security Review, 10 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> Airwars is 'a not-for-profit transparency watchdog which tracks, assesses, archives and investigates civilian harm claims resulting primarily from explosive weapons use in conflict-affected nations including Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.' Airwars, Who we are, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> Airwars, US forces in Somalia, as of 18 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>118</sup> SG, Children among 7 civilians killed in US airstrike in central Somalia, 31 January 2023, [url](#); Airwars, USSOM371-C, as of 18 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> Defense Post (The), 210 Civilians Killed in 24 Days of Somaliland Clashes, 3 March 2023, [url](#)



### 1.3.2. Evolution of security incidents at country level

In his report on the situation in Somalia dated 16 February 2023, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) termed the ongoing attacks by Al-Shabaab, which resulted in ‘human rights violations, conflict-related sexual violence and a sharp increase in civilian casualties’, to be ‘alarming’.<sup>120</sup> In the report, covering the period from 23 August 2022 to 7 February 2023,<sup>121</sup> the UNSG referred to ‘high-impact attacks against government, security forces and civilian targets in urban centres across the country’ conducted by Al-Shabaab throughout the reporting period,<sup>122</sup> recording in sum 1 524 security incidents<sup>123</sup>.

In the period between 1 December 2022 and 14 April 2023, ACLED reported 1 069 security incidents, including 614 battles, 268 explosions or other forms of remote violence and 187 violent acts against civilians.<sup>124</sup> [Figure 1](#) below shows the security incidents per month as recorded by ACLED.

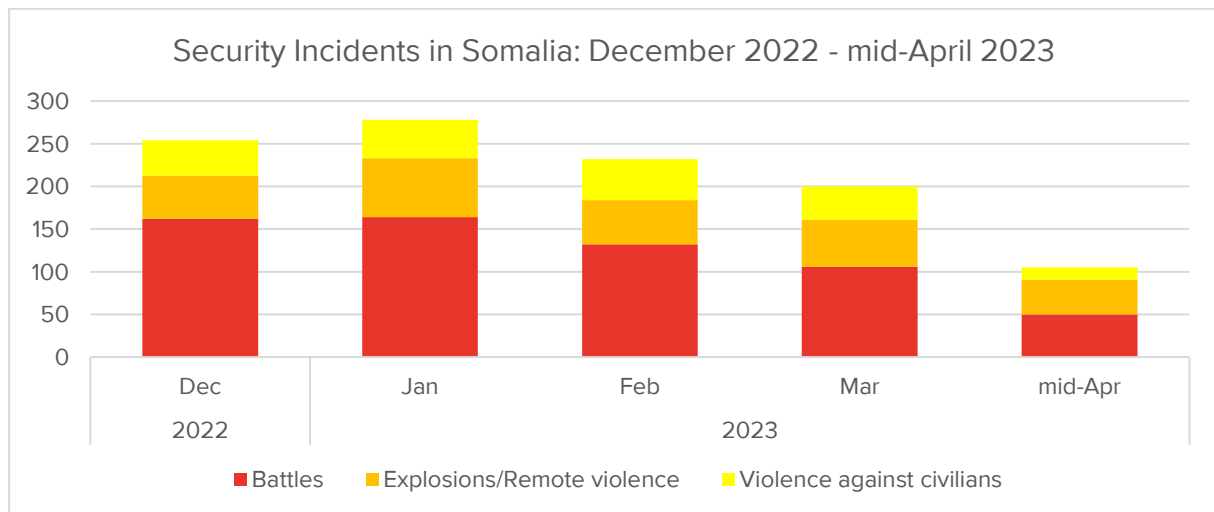


Figure 1. Evolution of security incidents coded battles, explosion/remote violence and violence against civilians from 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, based on ACLED data.<sup>125</sup>

### 1.3.3. Number of estimated fatalities and casualties

Between 23 August 2022 and 7 February 2023,<sup>126</sup> UNSOM recorded 1 059 civilian casualties, comprising 382 civilians killed and 677 injured, representing a 153 % increase from the

<sup>120</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 99

<sup>121</sup> Please note that due to different reporting cycles, the UNSG data only partially overlaps with the reference period of this report. In addition, unlike previous reports, the current UNSG report no longer provides monthly average figures on security incidents.

<sup>122</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 15

<sup>123</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 12

<sup>124</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Somalia, data covering 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, as of 19 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Somalia, data covering 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, as of 19 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> Please note that due to different reporting cycles, this data only partially overlaps with the reference period of this report.



previous period's 419 civilian casualties.<sup>127</sup> According to the AOAV<sup>128</sup>, 2022 was, by far, the year with the most civilian casualties attributed to Al-Shabaab since AOAV first started recording in 2010. By mid-January 2023, AOAV had already recorded 100 civilian casualties (including 65 deaths and 35 injuries) ascribed to the use of explosives by Al-Shabaab in 2023.<sup>129</sup>

While no dataset could be found on the number of conflict-related civilian casualties (deaths and injuries) in Somalia for the reference period, [Table 1](#) shows the numbers of incidents and estimated fatalities (without distinction as to civilian and non-civilian) that were recorded by ACLED<sup>130</sup> between December 2022 and mid-April 2023 in Somalia, by type of incident.

<b>Somalia</b>	<b>Number of incidents</b>	<b>Number of estimated fatalities</b>
Battles	614	2 766
Explosions/Remote violence	268	394
Violence against civilians	187	164
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 069</b>	<b>3 324</b>

Table 1. Number of security incidents and fatalities by type of incident for the period between 1 December 2022 and 14 April 2023, based on ACLED data.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 70. Please note that no information on UNSG data collection methodology could be found within the time limits of this report.

<sup>128</sup> Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) is a London-based NGO, whose research and advocacy work focuses on the incidence and impact of global armed violence. AOAV, What do we do to address the impact of weapons?, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> AOAV, Hiiran: 30 killed in three Al Shabaab suicide attacks, 14 Jan, 17 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> For more details on ACLED's methodology in regard to fatality figures, please see ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Fatality Methodology, January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>131</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Somalia, data covering 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, as of 19 April 2023, [url](#)



### 1.3.4. Security incidents and fatalities per type and region

Based on ACLED data, [Figure 2](#) shows the number of security incidents by type and region between December 2022 and mid-April 2023, with the highest number of incidents recorded in Benadir (264 security incidents), followed by Lower Shabelle (175 security incidents).

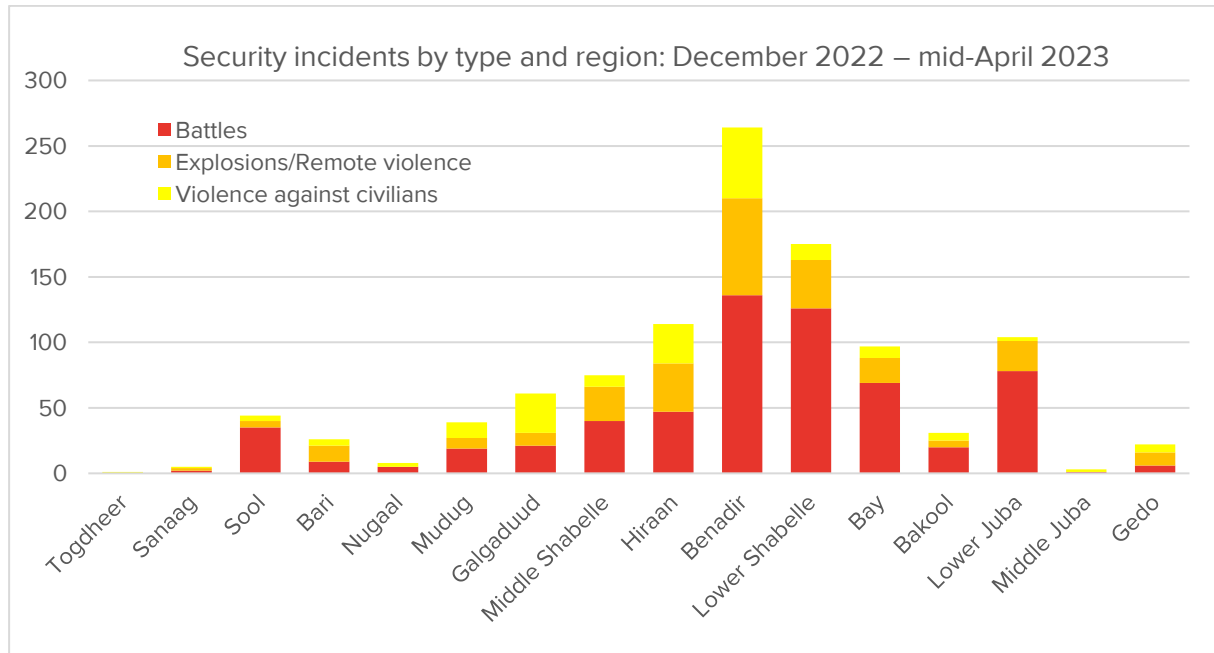


Figure 2. Number of security incidents by type and region for the period between 1 December 2022 and 14 April 2023, based on ACLED data.<sup>132</sup>

For the period between December 2022 and mid-April 2023, the highest number of estimated fatalities was recorded in Middle Shabelle with 919 fatalities, followed by Mudug (528 fatalities), according to ACLED data (see [Figure 3](#)).

<sup>132</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Somalia, data covering 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, as of 19 April 2023, [url](#)



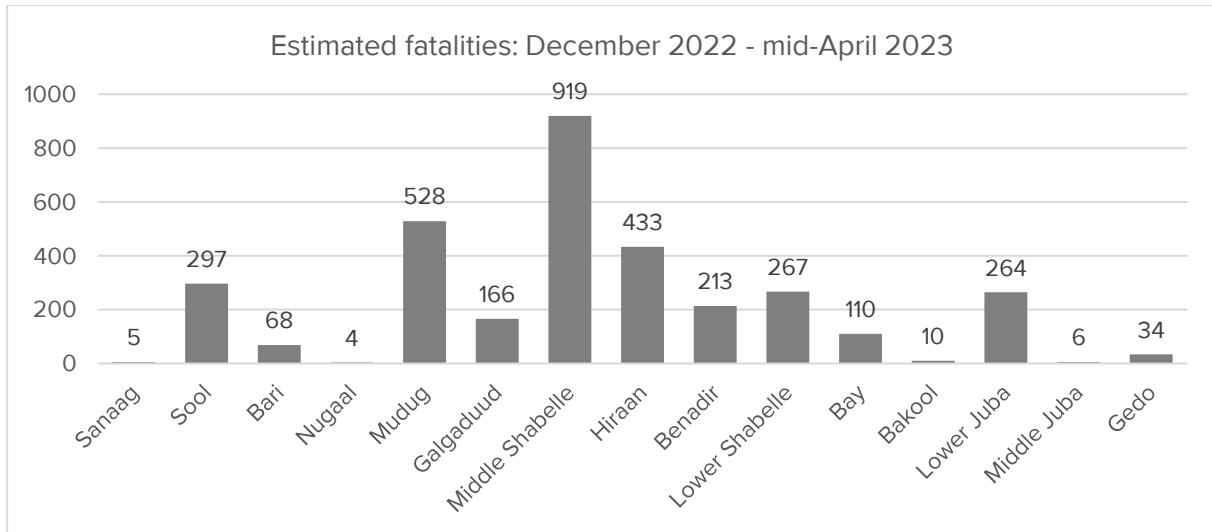


Figure 3. Number of fatalities by region for the period between 1 December 2022 and 14 April 2023, based on ACLED data.<sup>133</sup>

### 1.3.5. Conflict-induced displacement

Between December 2022 and March 2023, the UNHCR Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN)<sup>134</sup> reported 412 429 conflict/insecurity-induced newly displaced individuals across Somalia. Of these, 227 317 (or 55 %) were displaced in January 2023 alone,<sup>135</sup> as shown in [Figure 4](#).

<sup>133</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Somalia, data covering 1 December 2022 to 14 April 2023, as of 19 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> In terms of UNHCR displacement figures, the drafters worked with the publicly available data file. Regarding the specific date, the data file contains a 'Month End' (e.g. 31/03/2023) column, which was recoded by the drafters into multiple columns (Day; Month; Year). The figures presented here comprises the data coded as Month 12/Year 2022 or subsequent. In some regions these figures differed from those presented in the interactive dashboard available at [url](#).

<sup>135</sup> EUAA analysis based on UNHCR, PRMN Datafile – Somalia, as of 10 April 2023, [url](#)

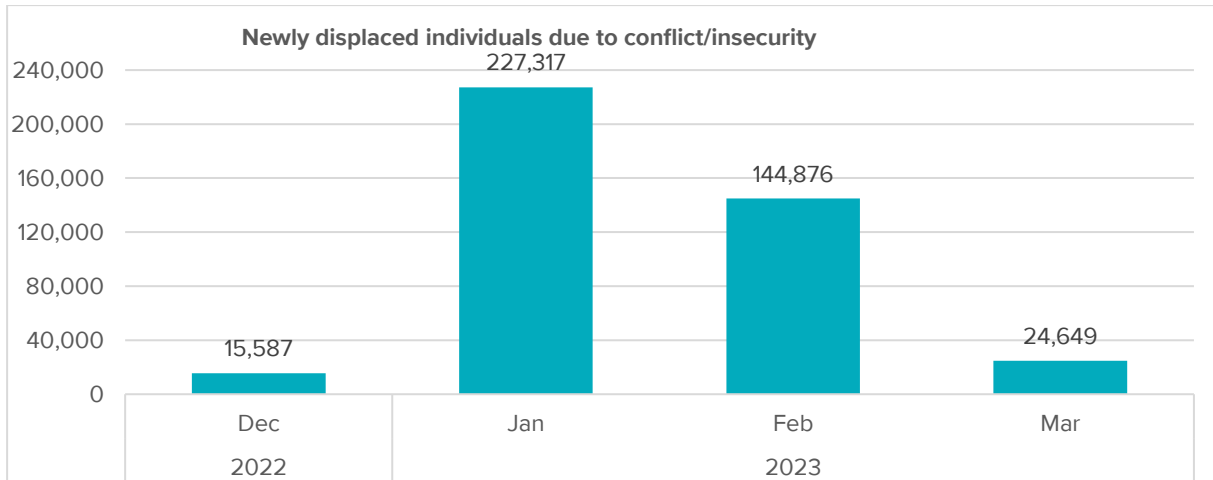


Figure 4. Number of newly displaced individuals due to conflict/insecurity per month in the period between 1 December 2022 and 31 March 2023, based on UNHCR PRMN data.<sup>136</sup>

In the reference period, Sool region and Galmudug state were particularly affected by internal displacement: in Sool, this was due to above-mentioned clashes in Las Anod in February 2023,<sup>137</sup> and in Galmudug, it was due to the ‘expansion of the counterinsurgency operations’ since January 2023.<sup>138</sup> For an overview of conflict/insecurity-induced displacements per administrative regions (departures and arrivals) between December 2022 and March 2023, please see [Figure 5](#) below.

<sup>136</sup> EUAA analysis based on UNHCR, PRMN Datafile – Somalia, as of 10 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>137</sup> UNHCR, Tens of thousands arrive in Ethiopia, fleeing recent clashes in Somalia, 17 February 2023, [url](#); Defense Post (The), 210 Civilians Killed in 24 Days of Somaliland Clashes, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>138</sup> ACAPS, Somalia - Key crises to watch in 2023, 14 April 2023, [url](#), p. 7

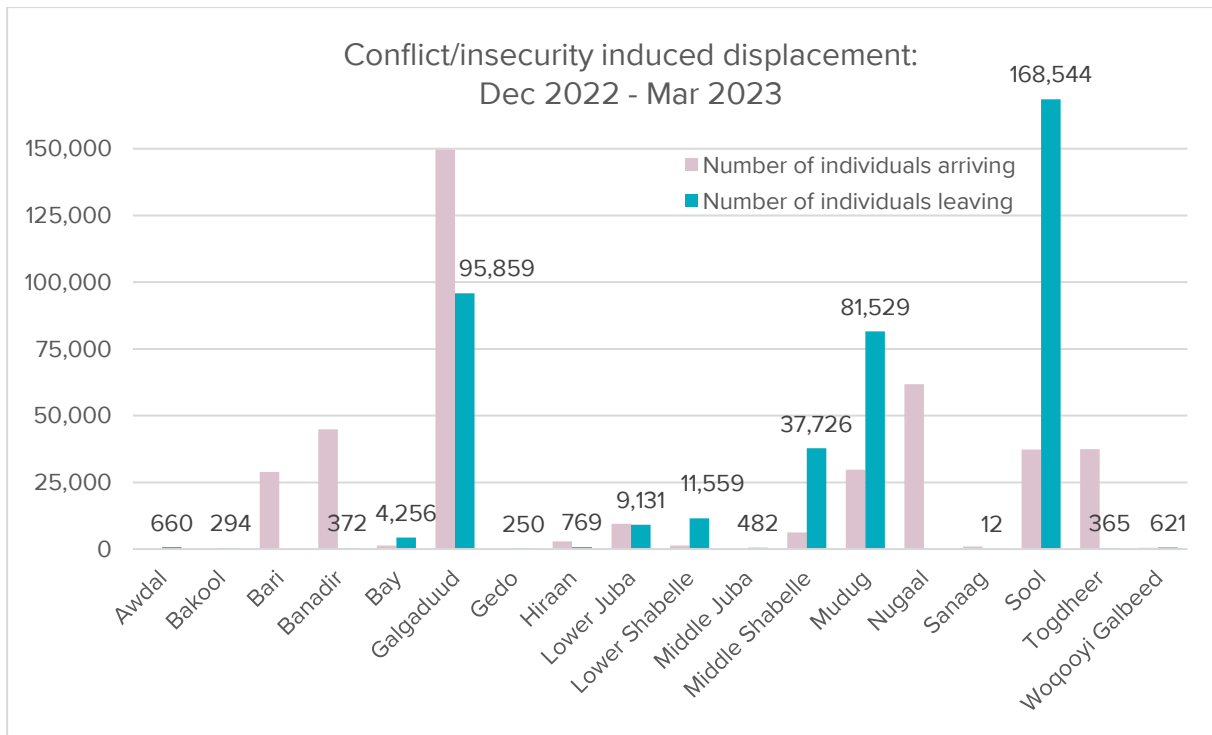


Figure 5. Number of newly displaced individuals arriving and leaving in Somali administrative regions in the period between 1 December 2022 and 31 March 2023, based on UNHCR PRMN data.<sup>139</sup> Please note that the numbers displayed in the figure are those of individuals leaving.

### 1.3.6. Other impacts on civilian life

As of February 2023, UNOCHA reported on about 120 confirmed areas of hazardous explosive ordnance (EO) covering a total of over 60 square kilometres, mainly along the Somali-Ethiopian border. The large-scale EO contamination significantly affected the well-being of civilians in Puntland, Galmudug, Jubbaland, Hirshabelle and Southwest regions ‘due to limited access to land resources and restricted freedom of movement which subsequently obstructs commerce and aid delivery to population centres’.<sup>140</sup> Regarding freedom of movement, the International Crisis Group (based on an interview with a Somali analyst) noted, in March 2023, that the establishment of ad hoc militia checkpoints led to particular frustration among local communities.<sup>141</sup>

The risen level of violence in the country has reportedly caused an upsurge in sexual violence incidents.<sup>142</sup> In his report covering the period from 23 August 2022 to 7 February 2023, the UNSG referred to eight incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including four rapes, three gang rapes and one attempted rape, affecting six women as well as a 7-year-old and a 14-year-old girl.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> EUAA analysis based on UNHCR, PRMN Datafile – Somalia, as of 10 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 93

<sup>141</sup> International Crisis Group, Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 9, footnote 42

<sup>142</sup> ACAPS, Somalia - Key crises to watch in 2023, 14 April 2023, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>143</sup> UNSG, Situation in Somalia, S/2023/109, 16 February 2023, [url](#), para. 79



In the course of the above-mentioned clashes in Las Anod, the city's main hospital reportedly came under attack twice. On 19 February 2023, Somaliland forces were accused of bombing and damaging the hospital's solar panel, which provides the hospital's electricity.<sup>144</sup> On 28 February 2023, mortar shelling caused the destruction of two of the hospital's three ambulances.<sup>145</sup>

Data accessed through the NRC Eviction Information Portal<sup>146</sup> recorded 62 040 individuals being forcibly evicted<sup>147</sup> in Somalia for the period from 1 December 2022 to 30 March 2023. The majority (77 % or 47 616 individuals) were evicted from Benadir region.<sup>148</sup>

In an April 2023 publication, ACAPS<sup>149</sup> noted that the ongoing conflict not only endangered the safety of the civilian population in combat zones but also adversely affected the food security of neighbouring communities.<sup>150</sup> (For more detailed information on the humanitarian situation, please see section [2](#).)

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<sup>144</sup> Garowe Online, [Twitter], posted on 19 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> AP, Doctor: Hospital in disputed Somaliland city shelled, 1 dead, 28 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>146</sup> The available datasets included in addition to data on forced evictions, data on 'eviction preventions' as well as on 'lawful' evictions (not coded as 'forced'). The latter two categories were filtered out.

<sup>147</sup> NRC defines 'forced evictions' as the 'removal against their will of people from their homes and/or land which they occupy, without any form of legal or other protection'. NRC, An Unnecessary Burden: Forced Evictions and Covid-19, 1 July 2020, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>148</sup> NRC, Eviction Information Portal, Data Sets, Somalia – 1 December 2022 to 30 March 2023, as of 30 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>149</sup> ACAPS is a non-profit project that provides independent information and specialises in the analysis and assessment of humanitarian need. ACAPS, Who We Are, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> ACAPS, Somalia - Key crises to watch in 2023, 14 April 2023, [url](#), p. 7

## 2. Humanitarian situation

### 2.1. People in need of humanitarian assistance

According to UNOCHA estimates, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid has constantly risen and almost doubled since 2019.<sup>151</sup> For 2023, UNOCHA estimates that 8.25 million people<sup>152</sup> (49 % of the total population of 16.9 million) will be in need of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, including 1.5 million children under the age of five, and 3.6 million children between the ages of five and 17.<sup>153</sup> The most severe needs among the Somali people are: WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), with 8 million people (47 % of the population) estimated to be in need of WASH assistance in 2023, as compared to 6.4 million in 2022; health care: 6.7 million people (40 % of the population), as compared to 6.5 million in 2022, and food security: 6.7 million people (40 % of the population), as compared to 3.5 million in 2022.<sup>154</sup> While needs are rising,<sup>155</sup> access to aid remains constrained, with IDPs and minority clans often being subjected to discriminating or exploitative access-restrictions put in place by ‘gatekeepers’.<sup>156</sup> Health care remains limited mainly for people living in rural areas, for IDPs, as well as for the population living in areas controlled by non-state armed actors, like Al-Shabaab.<sup>157</sup> Also, two-thirds of the population living in drought-affected parts of the country have no access to essential health care.<sup>158</sup>

### 2.2. Drought and food insecurity

Somalia has faced multiple drought episodes in recent years and decades.<sup>159</sup> The current drought started in 2021<sup>160</sup> and dragged on to a point where reports referred to it as Somalia’s worst/longest drought in decades.<sup>161</sup> In a February 2023 report, the multi-partner initiative Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) states that substantial humanitarian assistance and relatively better rain performance in the rainy season of October-December

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<sup>151</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>152</sup> Besides 8.25 million, the report on some pages also mentions the figure of 8.2 million. UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 48, 49

<sup>153</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 6, 8

<sup>154</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 8; UNOCHA, 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, October 2021, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>155</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>156</sup> ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, December 2022, [url](#), p. 20; TNH, The Hunger Road: Somalis on Surviving the Worst Drought in Decades, 31 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 24-25, 76

<sup>158</sup> UNOCHA, Press Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, 5 April 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>159</sup> Reuters, Somalia’s worst drought in four decades means millions need aid, 15 March 2022, [url](#); World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, Country Somalia, undated, [url](#); Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>160</sup> Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), p. 2; IOM, DTM, Somalia ETT Drought Induced Displacement Gedo Region, 20 December 2022, [url](#), p. 1; ACAPS, Somalia - Overview, 13 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>161</sup> ACAPS, Somalia - Impact of drought: Banadir and Bay regions, 27 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1; Guardian (The), The Fear of the F-word: Somalia Avoids Famine Declaration as Hunger Spreads, 6 December 2022, [url](#); NRC, Snapshots From a Drought Destroying Lives, 3 June 2022, [url](#)



2022 are likely to avert a renewed<sup>162</sup> famine in the January-June 2023 period. However, the report also projects for April to June 2023 that a risk of extreme acute food insecurity will still remain, as well as a risk of local famine in some areas.<sup>163</sup> In a mid-April report UNOCHA notes that the most recent rainfalls since mid-March 2023 will, on the one hand, probably play a positive role for vegetation and water availability and therefore for human and livestock survival. On the other hand they will come with sudden flooding in some parts, causing other problems for the population. The report also notes that the overall performance of the *Gu* ('long rains') rainy season, lasting from April to June, is forecasted to be 'below average' and that 'drought conditions are persisting in areas of Somalia'.<sup>164</sup>

For the period from January to March 2023, the acute food insecurity of around five million people (29 % of the population) is classified as IPC phase 3-5 (crisis or worse),<sup>165</sup> with about 1.36 million (8 %) being classified as IPC phase 4 (emergency), and around 96 000 people (0.6 %) as IPC phase 5 (catastrophe/famine), with the latter living in the southern and central regions Banadir, Bay and Bakool. The February 2023 projection for the months from April to June 2023, estimates that in this period about 6.5 million people will be acutely food insecure, i.e. classified as IPC phase 3-5 (crisis or worse), including around 223 000 people classified as IPC phase 5 (famine/catastrophe).<sup>166</sup>

A study conducted at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine estimates that in 2022, drought in Somalia was responsible for excess mortality<sup>167</sup> of 43 000 deaths, with 51 % of fatalities being children under five.<sup>168</sup> The highest estimated drought-related mortality rates were found to have occurred in the southern and central regions, especially in Bay, Banadir and Bakool.<sup>169</sup> However, the study points out that the vast majority of drought-related deaths did not occur in these relatively small areas classified as IPC Phase 5 (catastrophe/famine), but in the much larger portions of the population classified as IPC Phases 3 and 4 (crisis and emergency) across the country.<sup>170</sup> For the period January to June 2023, the study forecasts excess deaths ranging from 18 100 to 34 200.<sup>171</sup>

Besides drought, other factors contributing to food insecurity include continued violence, environmental damages, poor infrastructure,<sup>172</sup> and widespread poverty<sup>173</sup> combined with a still

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<sup>162</sup> With regard to the famine 2010-2012 in south-central Somalia. Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>163</sup> IPC, Somalia Multi Partner Technical Release on Somalia 2022 Post Deyr Assessment and IPC Analysis Results, 28 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>164</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>165</sup> IPC food insecurity classification: Phase 1: None/Minimal; Phase 2: Stressed; Phase 3: Crisis; Phase 4: Emergency; Phase 5: Catastrophe/Famine. IPC, Understanding the IPC Scales, June 2022, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>166</sup> IPC, Somalia Multi Partner Technical Release on Somalia 2022 Post Deyr Assessment and IPC Analysis Results, 28 February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>167</sup> Assuming 2015-2016 circumstances with absence of a drought crisis as the counterfactual. Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 8, 17

<sup>168</sup> Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 12

<sup>169</sup> Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 14

<sup>170</sup> Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 14, 17

<sup>171</sup> Checchi, F. and Watson, O., Mortality patterns in Somalia: retrospective estimates and scenario-based forecasting, LSHTM, February 2023, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>172</sup> WFP, Somalia Country Brief - January 2023, 15 March 2023, [url](#), p.1; IMF, Somalia, December 2022, [url](#), pp.3-8

<sup>173</sup> Poverty rate in Somalia: 70 % of the population. IMF, Somalia, December 2022, [url](#), p. 9

high food price level<sup>174</sup> - even though recent months saw a partial easing of the food price crisis,<sup>175</sup> which had been triggered also by the war in Ukraine.<sup>176</sup>

## 2.3. Floods and cholera

In March 2023, three weeks after the early start of the Gu rainy season (April to June), several areas in Somalia were struck by heavy rains and flash flooding.<sup>177</sup> More than 175 000 people were affected, most of which were from the Gedo region of Jubaland State<sup>178</sup>, where a flash flood killed more than 21 people and caused enormous damage to farmland, livestock, and infrastructure;<sup>179</sup> and from Bay region in South West State.<sup>180</sup> The rainfalls also came at a time of increasing disease outbreaks, which might worsen due to the risk of people ingesting contaminated water.<sup>181</sup>

Cholera is endemic in Somalia<sup>182</sup>, with repeated outbreaks since 2017<sup>183</sup> and an increasing number of reported cases compared to recent years.<sup>184</sup> As of April 13, the first months of 2023 saw at least 4 000 suspected cases of cholera (17 deaths), primarily in the states Jubaland and South West.<sup>185</sup>

## 2.4. Impact on displacement

According to the UNHCR Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN),<sup>186</sup> in 2022 drought was the main cause of new displacement, with almost twice as many drought-displaced people (1 179 371) as conflict-related displaced people, while other reasons, such as flooding, only played a minor role in that year. In the first quarter of 2023, however, conflict was the main reason for the documented new displacements in Somalia, while drought was responsible for the displacement of 243 983 people. Most of those displaced by drought during the first quarter of 2023 were people from the regions of Bay (88 625 people - mainly displaced within Bay), Lower Shabelle (50 440 - mainly displaced to Banadir), Bakool (41 596 - mainly displaced within Bakool), Gedo (35 255 - mainly displaced within Gedo) and Middle Juba (13,939 - displaced to Middle Juba, Gedo and Lower Juba). Flood-induced new

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<sup>174</sup> VOA, One Year Later, Somalia Still Feeling Effects of Ukraine War, 24 February 2023, [url](#); WFP, Somalia Country Brief - January 2023, 15 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1; FEWS NET and FSNAU, Somalia Food Security Alert, 28 February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>175</sup> FEWS NET and FSNAU, Somalia Food Security Alert, 28 February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>176</sup> VOA, One Year Later, Somalia Still Feeling Effects of Ukraine War, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>177</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu Rainy Season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 2, 3 April 2023, [url](#), p.1

<sup>178</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>179</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>180</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 3

<sup>181</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 Flash Floods Update No. 1, 23 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>182</sup> ECHO, Published ECHO Daily Flash of 04 April 2023, 4 April 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>183</sup> UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>184</sup> Medair, Water in the Drought, 27 March 2023, [url](#); ECHO, Published ECHO Daily Flash of 04 April 2023, 4 April 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia, 8 February 2023, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>185</sup> UNOCHA, Somalia: Gu rainy season 2023 – Flash Floods Update No. 3, 13 April 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>186</sup> In terms of UNHCR displacement figures, the drafters worked with the publicly available data file. In some regions these figures differed from those presented in the interactive dashboard available at [url](#).



displacement within the first quarter of 2023 was seen in the month of March, with 132 478 people being affected, which were displaced within Gedo (94 106 people), within Bay (22 344), within Galgaduud (8 550) and within Nugaal (4 273).<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> EUAA analysis based on UNHCR, PRMN Datafile – Somalia, as of 10 April 2023, [url](#) (15 368 were displaced due to other reasons, according to the referenced source)



## 3. Update on desertion, defection, disengagement from Al-Shabaab

For detailed information on desertion, defection and disengagement from Al-Shabaab up until 9 December 2022 and for terminological definitions, please refer to [EUAA's report on desertion, defection and disengagement from Al-Shabaab](#) published in February 2023.

### 3.1. (Potentially) registered cases of defection

Media sources reported various cases of defections in the reference period,<sup>188</sup> including of high-ranking Al-Shabaab officials.<sup>189</sup> According to an April 2023 article by the African online media platform Nation, defections from Al-Shabaab were increasing,<sup>190</sup> including an increasing number of young people, according to an article by the Somali National News Agency (SONNA).<sup>191</sup> Quoting Somali officials, VOA reported that more defections were to be expected if the government offensive against Al-Shabaab was to 'continue the pressure'.<sup>192</sup> Defections were, for example, reported in Middle Shabelle,<sup>193</sup> Lower Shabelle,<sup>194</sup> Hirshabelle,<sup>195</sup> Bay<sup>196</sup> and Galgaduud regions.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, sources reported about clashes between Al-Shabaab and members who wanted to defect to government forces in the reference period.<sup>198</sup>

According to a March 2023 ICCT report, research with former Al-Shabaab members has demonstrated that many decided to leave the group because they did not want to be further endangered. At the same time, a prominent driver motivating exit, especially in Galgaduud and in Hiraan, has been an increased awareness of Al-Shabaab brutality against local communities. The report further indicated that opportunities to leave the group may increase

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<sup>188</sup> Radio Muqdisho, Senior Al-Shabab commander and three militants surrender to Somali Government Forces, 19 December 2022, [url](#); VOA, Somalia's Defector Rehabilitation Centers Face Financial Uncertainty, 29 December 2022, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab militants surrender in Somalia, 6 January 2023, [url](#); Horn Observer, Al-Shabaab operative defects to Somali govt, 26 March 2023, [url](#); SONNA, Two Al-Shabaab militants surrender to the army in Galgudud region, 4 April 2023, [url](#); SONNA, Hope in Defection: The Rise of Somali Children Surrendering to the Government from Alshabaab, 6 April 2023, [url](#); Nation, Inside Hassan Sheikh's 'big tent' strategy to crush al-Shabaab, 16 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>189</sup> Radio Muqdisho, Senior Al-Shabab commander and three militants surrender to Somali Government Forces, 19 December 2022, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commanders surrender in Somalia, 20 December 2022, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders in Somalia's army, 30 March 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>190</sup> Nation, Inside Hassan Sheikh's 'big tent' strategy to crush al-Shabaab, 16 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>191</sup> SONNA, Hope in Defection: The Rise of Somali Children Surrendering to the Government from Alshabaab, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>192</sup> VOA, Somalia's Defector Rehabilitation Centers Face Financial Uncertainty, 29 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>193</sup> VOA, Somalia's Defector Rehabilitation Centers Face Financial Uncertainty, 29 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>194</sup> Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders in Somalia's army, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>195</sup> Radio Muqdisho, Senior Al-Shabab commander and three militants surrender to Somali Government Forces, 19 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>196</sup> Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#); Horn Observer, Al-Shabaab operative defects to Somali govt, 26 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>197</sup> SONNA, Two Al-Shabaab militants surrender to the army in Galgudud region, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> Caasimada, Al-Shabab infighting leads to the deaths of several militants in Somalia, 1 January 2023, [url](#); Nation, Inside Hassan Sheikh's 'big tent' strategy to crush al-Shabaab, 16 April 2023, [url](#)



due to limitations imposed on Al-Shabaab's ability to enforce involvement, resulting from developments in connection with the government offensive, such as Al-Shabaab's losses of territory or the unclear situation that often came with the group's withdrawals from areas.<sup>199</sup>

For further information on overall trends and defection numbers see the [EUAA's report on desertion, defection and disengagement from Al-Shabaab](#) published in February 2023.

## 3.2. Amnesty and rehabilitation

### 3.2.1. Amnesty

In the reference period, the Government of Somalia reportedly upheld the amnesty for Al-Shabaab defectors,<sup>200</sup> and promised to offer them rehabilitation,<sup>201</sup> including in April 2023 when President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud invited al-Shabaab affiliates to 'take advantage of the general presidential amnesty to renounce violence, extremism and terrorism'.<sup>202</sup> For further details on the Amnesty policy see the [EUAA's report on desertion, defection and disengagement from Al-Shabaab](#) published in February 2023.

### 3.2.2. Rehabilitation and funding issues

In the reference period, funding issues were reported in connection with the national rehabilitation programme for individuals defecting from Al-Shabaab.<sup>203</sup> Harun Maruf, quoting a VOA Somali article from 28 March 2023, indicated that, by then, an agreement had been reached: the donors continued to fund the three militant defector rehabilitation centres in the country while the FGS agreed to gradually takeover responsibility for their management. Due to the funding pause, staff and guards of the centres have not been paid for more than three months.<sup>204</sup>

According to a report by Martine Zeuthen of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), as of April 2023, more than 2 000 defectors from Al-Shabaab had taken part in the country's rehabilitation programmes and skills training.<sup>205</sup> VOA reported in December 2022 that 450 defectors were part of the National Program for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants at the time.<sup>206</sup> For further details on rehabilitation capacity and beneficiaries see

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<sup>199</sup> ICCT, The 'Off-Ramp' From al-Shabaab: Disengagement During the Ongoing Offensive in Somalia, 7 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>200</sup> Caasimada, Villa Somalia backtracks on claim of Al-Shabab peace talks request, 8 January 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#); Goobjoog News, Security Meeting between Somalia's frontliners and Somali Federal Government held in Mogadishu, 2 February 2023, [url](#); Radio Dalsan, Senior Al-Shabaab commander surrenders in Somalia, 28 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> Radio Muqdisho, Senior Al-Shabab commander and three militants surrender to Somali Government Forces, 19 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>202</sup> The Reference, Defection and surrender: Al-Shabaab enters stage of decline in face of strikes by Somali army, 20 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>203</sup> Hiiraan Online, Somali military court sentences former al-Shabaab defector to 15 years in prison for rejoining group, 5 March 2023, [url](#); VOA, Somalia's Defector Rehabilitation Centers Face Financial Uncertainty, 29 December 2022, [url](#); Nation, Inside Hassan Sheikh's 'big tent' strategy to crush al-Shabaab, 16 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>204</sup> Harun Maruf, [Twitter], posted on 29 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>205</sup> Zeuthen, M., The National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants in Somalia, RUSI, April 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>206</sup> VOA, Somalia's Defector Rehabilitation Centers Face Financial Uncertainty, 29 December 2022, [url](#)



the [EUAA's report on desertion, defection and disengagement from Al-Shabaab](#) published in February 2023.

### 3.2.3. Islamic conference

In January 2023, an Islamic conference was held in Mogadishu<sup>207</sup> in connection with the government's Al-Shabaab offensive.<sup>208</sup> More than 300 Muslim clerics from Somalia and the diaspora<sup>209</sup> reportedly took part and showed their support for the government's offensive against Al-Shabaab.<sup>210</sup> Sources reported that conference participants denounced religious extremism as un-Islamic and urged the public to support the government offensive against extremist groups.<sup>211</sup> VOA reported that the meeting was part of the government's 'triple offensive against al-Shabaab, which includes military and financial operations in addition to countering extremist propaganda'.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> VOA, Clerics in Somalia Vow to Counter Al-Shabab, 27 January 2023, [url](#); Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#); ATMIS, Somali Clerics Denounce Religious Extremism and Commend the Government on the Offensive against Terror Groups, 28 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>208</sup> VOA, Clerics in Somalia Vow to Counter Al-Shabab, 27 January 2023, [url](#); ATMIS, Somali Clerics Denounce Religious Extremism and Commend the Government on the Offensive against Terror Groups, 28 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> ATMIS, Somali Clerics Denounce Religious Extremism and Commend the Government on the Offensive against Terror Groups, 28 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> VOA, Clerics in Somalia Vow to Counter Al-Shabab, 27 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>211</sup> Garowe Online, Al-Shabaab commander surrenders to Somalia troops, 29 January 2023, [url](#); ATMIS, Somali Clerics Denounce Religious Extremism and Commend the Government on the Offensive against Terror Groups, 28 January 2023, [url](#); VOA, Clerics in Somalia Vow to Counter Al-Shabab, 27 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> VOA, Clerics in Somalia Vow to Counter Al-Shabab, 27 January 2023, [url](#)



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