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2.6.1. Nugal

(a) Background

Nugal shares internal borders with Mudug, Bari and Sool regions and an international border with Ethiopia. To the east, it borders the Indian Ocean. The region is divided into three districts: Burtinle, Eyl and Garowe. Garowe is also the name of the region's capital city.1151

IPC estimated Nugal region's population at 631 810 as of September 2024.1152 IOM, on the other hand, has a much lower estimate at 310 658 as of September 2024.1153 Puntland's dominant clans are three sub-clans of the Majeerteen/Mohamoud Saleban, including the Isse Mohamud who live mostly in Nugal region.1154 For additional information on clans in the Nugal region, please see section 2.6.1.1 of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021) and section 2.6.1 of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

(b) Actors' presence and conflict dynamics

Al-Shabaab control areas, presence and influence, along with other actors

Map 3 displaying the approximate territorial control in Somalia as of 31 March 2025, showed no presence of Al-Shabaab in Nugal region. The map indicated the presence of 'autonomous armed forces' across the region. A small area along the Galmudug-Puntland border running through Mudug region was marked as being under

mixed/unclear, and/or local control.1155 The map showed no changes compared to the situation as of April 2023 (Map 2).1156 However, in August 2024, local media reported 1157 on increased security measures following the reported infiltration of suspected Al-Shabaab militants in Garowe. For further information on relevant actors in Nugal region, please see section 2.6.1.2 of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021) and section 2.6.1 (b) of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Conflict dynamics

2023 was dominated by political conflicts between Puntland's government and president and his opponents over electoral and constitutional changes.1158 A planned change to the electoral system from a clan-based electoral model to universal suffrage was met with resistance from opponents who saw it as an attempt by Puntland's president Said Abdullahi Deni to prolong his stay in power beyond the presidential elections scheduled for January 2024. According to the clan-based model, presidency traditionally rotated between the state's three main sub-clans and President Deni, an Osman Mohamud, was expected to be followed by a member of the Isse Mohamud clan. Consequently, resistance was particularly strong in Nugal region, according to the International Crisis Group.1159 Election-related disruptions and violent incidents were reported in May,1160 and June 2023,1161 with security forces splitting along party/clan affiliation. Danab troops (a special unit of the armed forces1162), reportedly split from the government forces over the dispute, siding with Issa Mohamud-linked opposition. 1163 Existing tensions increased in November 2023, with security forces from other regions reportedly arriving in Garowe.1164 President Deni was eventually re-elected in the January 2024 polls, held under the clan-based indirect model.1165

Political conflicts between the Puntland administration and the federal government, including over the latter's alleged support for the opposition in Puntland,1166 escalated at the end of March 2024, when Puntland's government withdrew its recognition of the federal government following changes to the country's constitution.1167

○ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

In the reference period 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, ACLED recorded 51 security incidents in Nugal region, including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, causing 54 fatalities. Figure 19 below shows their evolution per type across the reference period. At district level, the (by far) highest number of incidents was recorded in Garowe (41 incidents), followed by Eyl (7) and Burtinle (3).1168

Security events in Nugal

Figure 19. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Nugal.1169

In terms of incidents involving the different factions of security forces, the Puntland Security Force (Military Force) was involved in three incidents with the Puntland Police Force (coded as either ‘Actor 1’, ‘Associated Actor 1’, ‘Actor 2’, or ‘Associated Actor 2’), in one incident with the Puntland Maritime Police Force and in one incident with unidentified militia. The Puntland Police Force was involved in seven incidents with unidentified militia. Various clan militias were involved in 18 incidents.1170

For incidents involving civilian fatalities, please see below an illustrative and non-exhaustive list:

- at least 26 people, including an unspecified number of civilians, were killed in clashes between government forces and clan militias linked to political opposition in Garowe in June 2023;1171
- one civilian was killed during clashes between government and opposition forces in Garowe in November 2023;1172
- one civilian was killed and two others injured during a security operation in Garowe in June 2024.1173

Conflict-related displacement

According to UNHCR PRMN data, 48 200 individuals were newly displaced from Nugal region due to conflict or insecurity in the period from 1 April 2023 to 16 March 2025. Of this number, 46 235 individuals were displaced within Nugal region, while 1 965 individuals left for other regions, including Bari, Sanaag and Sool. All individuals leaving Nugal for other regions were from Nugal's Garowe district. In the same period, 7 357 individuals were recorded to have arrived in Nugal region from other regions. The district most affected by arrivals from other regions was Garowe, with 6 099 individuals arriving. Garowe was also the district most affected in terms of displacement within Nugal region: 37 500 individuals were recorded to have arrived from other locations (including movements within the district).1174 For information on conflict-related displacement in Nugal region prior to April 2023, please see section 2.6.1 of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

UNOCHA recorded nine humanitarian access incidents in Nugal region in 2024,1175 and 20 incidents in the period from April to December 2023.1176 Incidents include, for example, the hijacking of a truck transporting humanitarian supplies,1177 or delays in the processing of imported aid supplies.1178

Schools in Garowe were closed in November 2023 in the context of increasing political tensions and the mobilisation of forces,1179 while local businesses and transport services faced disruptions.1180 The Horn Observer noted that schools in Garowe remained inaccessible for IDP children as they could not afford the fees,1181 while Radio Ergo reported on IDPs being evicted from Jillab IDP camp for failure to pay monthly rent.1182

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