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2.6.2. Bari

○ (a) Background

Bari borders the Indian ocean to the east and the Gulf of Aden to the north. It shares internal borders with Nugal region to the south and Sool and Sanaag to the east. The region is divided into six districts: Qardho, Bandarbeyla, Iskushuban, Calula, Qandala, and Bossaso. The region's capital is the coastal city of Bossaso (also Boosaaso, Bosaso), situated on the Gulf of Aden.1183

IPC estimated Bari's population at 1 232 231 as of September 2024.1184 In contrast, IOM estimated the region's population much lower at 723 755.1185 The region's main clan is the Osman Mahmud sub-clan of the Majerteen clan; the Ali Suleman clan also is very relevant politically in the region.1186 For more information on clans in the Bari region, please see section 2.6.2.1 of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021) and section 2.6.2 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 indicated Al-Shabaab's presence in the Al Madow mountains to the west, and the presence of Al-Shabaab or the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) in the Al Miskaad mountains to the east of Bossaso city. Possible ISS influence was also indicated in

central and northeastern Bari. ‘Autonomous armed forces (unionist)’ were present across Bari region including its main urban centres, except for Hableey, which was shown as under mixed, unclear and/or local control. In contrast, as of April 2023 (Map 2), the Al Miskaad mountains were assessed to be under mixed control of Al-Shabaab and the ISS. The remainder of the region was controlled by ‘autonomous armed forces (unionist)’, as were most of the main urban centres, with the exception of Timirshe (partially controlled by the ISS), Turmasale (ISS) and Dhadar (Al-Shabaab).1188

Conflict dynamics

The Somali Digest reported in April 2024 that the ISS had taken control over the Al Miskaad (also Calmiskaad) Mountains from Al-Shabaab after several years of fighting. However, the regional government continued to control access roads and the nearby population centres.1189 According to an October 2024 UN Security Council report, Al-Shabaab remained present in the western Al Madow mountains while the ISS did not control any population centres but had established bases in four of Bari’s districts: Balidhidin, Hunbays, Iskushuban, and Qandala,1190 the home district of the Ali Saleban clan, of which also ISS leader Abdulqadir Mumin was a member.1191 Both groups were running extortion schemes in Bossaso city.1192

The International Crisis Group noted that the ISS had become a ‘key component’ of the global IS network, financing other branches with funds gathered through extortion,1193 tax collection,1194 and gold mining,1195 while ISS leader Mumin reportedly rose to the ranks of IS’ global leader. Claims that he was killed in an U.S. airstrike in May 2024 were not confirmed.1196

The UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaida highlighted in a report of February 2025 that, following the attack, ISS’ operational capabilities had ‘evolved’ and that the group was using/testing unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance and the deployment of explosives.1197 Following an ISS car bomb attack on Puntland security forces in Dharjaale in December 2024, where at least 18 soldiers were killed and 30 injured, Puntland authorities launched a counteroffensive against the ISS,1198 the so-called operation ‘Hilaac’ (lightning).1199 Moreover, airstrikes on ISS positions were reported in January,1200 February,1201 and March 2025.1202 On 10 February 2024, ISS launched a major suicide attack in the vicinity of Hararyo area. 27 soldiers and about 70 fighters were killed in the attack. 1203 Puntland president Deni claimed in March 2025 that ISS and Al-Shabaab had been expelled from Bari region, and that both groups had ceased to hold ‘operational control’ in Bossaso,1204 while Hiiraan Online cited regional authorities saying that ISS had regrouped in Togga Miraale valley near Bossaso city.1205

The October 2024 UN Security Council report pointed to the smuggling of weapons between Puntland and Yemen and in this context to the seizure of arms in Bossaso in

May and August 2024, as well as to a re-emergence of piracy off the coast of Puntland. 1206

○ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

In the reference period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, ACLED recorded 191 security incidents in Bari region, including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, resulting in 830 fatalities. Figure 20 below shows their evolution per type across the reference period. At district level, the highest number of incidents was recorded in Qandala (102), followed by Bossaso (64), Iskushuban (14), Qardho (8), Calula (2) and Bandarbeyla (1 incident).1207

Security events in Bari

Figure 20. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Bari.1208

The Military Forces of Somalia (including Puntland Dervish Force, Puntland Intelligence Agency and Puntland Security Force) were involved in 105 incidents with the ISS (coded as either ‘Actor 1’, ‘Associated Actor 1’, ‘Actor 2’, or ‘Associated Actor 2’), and in five incidents with Al-Shabaab. Moreover, they were involved in seven incidents with unidentified groups (including unidentified armed groups, unidentified clan militia, and unidentified military forces). The Puntland Maritime Police Force was involved in 97 incidents with the ISS, causing 676 fatalities.1209

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

- several civilians, including women and children, were killed in an ISS attack on a military base in Dharjaale on 31 December 2024. While military facilities were targeted, several civilians were killed too in the suicide bombing;1210

- at least four civilians were accidentally killed by the strike of an unidentified military drone in Qandala district in January 2025. The drone had been targeting ISS positions in the area.1211

Conflict-related displacement

UNHCR PRMN data indicated that 15 778 individuals were newly displaced from Bari region due to conflict or insecurity in the period from 1 April 2023 to 16 March 2025. Almost all of them, 15 749 individuals, were displaced within Bari region, while a small number, 29 individuals (all of them from Bossaso), left for other regions, including Nugal and Hiraan. In the same period, 6 637 individuals were recorded to have arrived in Bari region from other regions. The district most affected by arrivals from other regions was Bossaso (4 842), while the district most affected by arrivals from other locations within Bari region was Qandala district (5 881 individuals), followed by Iskushuban (4 567 individuals), including movements within the district.1212 For information on conflict-related displacement in Bari region prior to April 2023, please see section 2.6.2 of the EUAA COI report on Somalia – Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

Several hospitals in Bossaso city shut down over extortion demands by the ISS.1213 Similarly, local businesses reportedly faced extortion demands and threats against their business.1214 Horseed Media quoted regional police saying that most businesses, NGOs and charities in the region were extorted by 'terrorist groups', and those who refused were often killed or met with violence,1215 including IED and grenade attacks on their businesses.1216

Hiiraan Online reported in March 2025 that due to the ongoing conflict between Puntland security forces and the ISS, local farmers cultivating frankincense trees were unable to reach their trees as they feared getting caught in the crossfire or bombings. Without the possibility to earn an income with the trees' harvest, many lacked the funds to pay for food, water or their children's school.1217

UNOCHA recorded three humanitarian access incidents (such as, for example, attacks on humanitarian personnel) in Bari region in 2024,1218 and an equal number of such incidents in the period from April to December 2023.1219 The driver of a car belonging to a local humanitarian organisation, the Horn of Africa Integrated Development Activities (HIDA), was injured when a landmine exploded in the Timirshe area in Iskushuban district in March 2024. The attack was reportedly targeting HIDA's director, who had been threatened in the past, but who remained unharmed.1220

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