

## 2.7.1. Sool

### ○ (a) Background

According to [Map 3 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 31 March 2025,1230](#) and [Map 2 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 1 April 2023,1231](#) Sool region is part of the areas disputed between Somaliland and Puntland. Sool shares an international border with Ethiopia to the south and internal borders with Sanaag region to the north, Togdheer region to the west, and Nugal and Bari regions to the east. It is divided into four districts, Taleex (also Taleh), Xudun (also Hudun), Caynabo (also Aynabo or Ainado) and Laas Caanood (also Laas Anood). The capital of Sool is Laas Caanood. According to the reference map, Togdheer region's Buhodle (or Buuhoodle) district and parts of Burco district are part of the disputed areas. [1232](#)

As of September 2024, sources variously estimated the population of Sool region at 548 975 (IPC),[1233](#) and 84 024 (IOM).[1234](#) Most of Sool's population belongs to the Dhulbahante clan,[1235](#) which is part of the Darod family. The Dhulbahante are not affiliated with Somaliland's dominant Isaaq clan.[1236](#) A map produced by the Max Planck Institute and published by Somalia expert Markus Hoehne in a February 2023 article on crisis in Sool region shows Dhulbahante territories in eastern Sool and also in Togdheer's Buhodle district.[1237](#) Members of the Dhulbahante clan refer to Togdheer region as Cayn.[1238](#) The map also shows a smaller Warsangeli (Darod) territory in the northeastern area bordering Puntland's Bari region and Sanaag region.[1239](#)

On 6 February 2023,[1240](#) elders and leaders established the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn-Khatumo (SSC-Khaatumo, SSC-K) administration,[1241](#) representing the Dhulbahante clan along with the Fiqishine and Madiban clans.[1242](#) SSC-K led efforts to remove Somaliland forces in August 2023 and has since declared its allegiance to Somalia rather than Somaliland.[1243](#) In October 2023, the Federal Government of Somalia formally recognised the SSC-K administration.[1244](#) The leader of SSC-K is Abdikhadir Ahmed Aw Ali Firdhiye.[1245](#)

Events and incidents taking place in Buhodle district are covered in this section and not in the section [2.8.3 Togdheer \(Somaliland\)](#).

For additional details on clans in Sool region, please see section 2.6.3.1 of the [EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation](#) (September 2021) and section 2.7.1 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, notably SSC-Khatumo

According to [Map 3 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 31 March 2025](#), Al-Shabaab did not control any territory in the Sool region,<sup>1246</sup> which is consistent with the situation reported in [Map 2 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 1 April 2023](#).<sup>1247</sup> As of 31 March 2025, the area between Gumays, Buhodle, and Tukaraq, including Laas Caanood, was reported as the 'core control zone' of SSC-K (marked as being controlled by 'Autonomous armed forces (unionist)'). These towns were also directly controlled by these 'autonomous armed forces'. The 'estimated area of political influence' of SSC-K further included Taleh and Hudun. Meanwhile, Qorilugud and Oog were reportedly under the control of the Somaliland administration, and the border areas west of Xudun, Gumays, and Buhodle were under mixed control between the 'Autonomous armed forces (unionist)' and the 'Somaliland administration (separatist)'.<sup>1248</sup>

In contrast, as of 1 April 2023, Gumays and the Goja'ade base near Laas Caanood were reported to be under the control of the Somaliland administration. The towns of Buhodle, Xudun, and Taleex, as well as the area stretching from the western border to Laas Caanood, Tuqaraq, and Taleex, were under mixed control.<sup>1249</sup>

### Conflict dynamics

Please also see the paragraph on 'SSC-Khatumo versus Somaliland' in section [1.3 Conflict layers and main developments](#) of this report for an overview of the conflict dynamics in Sool. For background information and additional details see the [EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation](#) (February 2023),<sup>1250</sup> and the [EASO COI report Somalia: Actors](#) (July 2021).<sup>1251</sup>

Between February and August 2023, there was intense fighting between Somaliland forces and Dhulbahante clan militias, supported by allied clans.[1252](#) According to a June 2023 article by Markus Hoehne, from March 2023 onward, the conflict around Laas Caanood involved fighters from Dhulbahante, Warsangeli, Majeerteen and other clans (the Harti clan coalition) on one side and clans like Ise and Gadabursi besides Isaaq clans on the Somaliland army side. The majority of the Harti clan coalition, however, belonged to the Dhulbahante clan.[1253](#) In May 2023, for example, fighting took place around the villages of Dhabansaar and Samakab.[1254](#) Multiple clashes and mortar exchanges were reported from 24 to 27 June 2023 in and around Laas Caanood.[1255](#) In August 2023, SSC-K launched a counteroffensive against Somaliland forces, driving them out of Laas Caanood.[1256](#) A new frontline emerged between Oog and Guumays in western Sool, aligning roughly with the boundary between the Isaaq and Dhulbahante clans.[1257](#) Troops remained deployed along the frontlines and both sides sent reinforcements to the area in September 2023.[1258](#) In December 2023, Somaliland forces and Dhulbahante clan militias continued to strengthen their positions near the frontline in Sool region, raising concerns about renewed fighting.[1259](#) Reportedly, in the first half of 2024, the situation in Sool remained calm, despite troop movements of Somaliland forces and Dhulbahante clan militias along the frontline.[1260](#)

In January 2025, fighting between Somaliland and SSC-Khatumo forces resumed in Sool, with clashes erupting in Guumays, in Oog area. The clashes resulted in casualties, though exact numbers were unclear.[1261](#) Ongoing military movements had heightened tensions, sparking fears of the conflict spreading further.[1262](#) Early March 2025, members of Habar Je'lo (sub-clan of the Isaaq) and Dhulbahante clans clashed in the disputed village of Buq Dharkayn. The confrontation involved both government forces and troops from SSC-Khatumo. The violence led to numerous casualties, with dozens reported killed or injured.[1263](#)

Other incidents involving violence between clan militias were also reported in Sool region. In November 2023, violence between militias of Habar Je'lo and Dhulbahante clans was reported[1264](#) near Oog in the areas of Buq Dharkayn and Maygaale.[1265](#) Further clashes in the region between Habar Je'lo and Dhulbahante clan members were reported in early November 2024, this time in Qorilugud and Gadgad, in Togdheer's Buhodle district.[1266](#)

- (c) Recent security trends

### **Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties**

Between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025, ACLED reported 126 security incidents in Sool region (including Buhodle district), including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, causing 334 fatalities. Figure 21 below shows their evolution per type across the reference period. At district level, Laas Caanood recorded the most security incidents (59), followed by Buhodle district (53 incidents) and Caynabo district (14 incidents) between April 2023 and 21 March 2025.[1267](#)

## Security events in Sool: 1 April 2023 - 21 March 2025

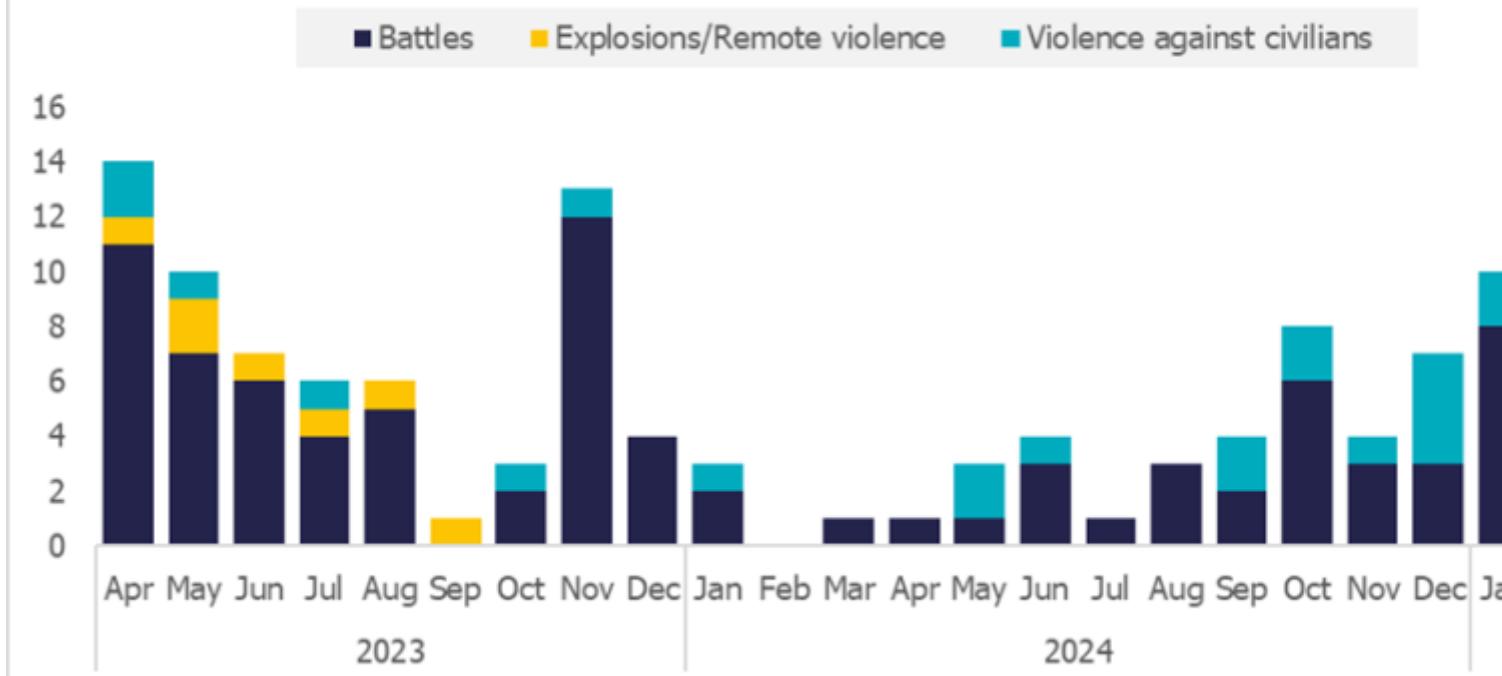


Figure 21. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Sool.[1268](#)

Military forces of Somaliland and Sool, Sanaag and Cayn Militia (SSC) were involved in 56 incidents resulting in 255 fatalities.

For incidents resulting in fatalities, including civilian deaths, please see below an illustrative and non-exhaustive list:

- on 11 July 2023, a health facility in Laas Caanood was attacked, resulting in the killing and wounding of dozens of people, including health care workers and patients;[1269](#)
- in August 2023, Jama Kadiye Elmi, an 81-year-old poet, was killed in Laas Caanood when artillery hit the car in which he was travelling;[1270](#)
- in early November 2024, members of the Habar Je’lo and the Dhulbahante clans clashed near Shangeed and Qorilugud villages in Buhodle district.[1271](#) There were concerns that the violence had

‘claimed multiple lives’; [1272](#)

- on 7 March 2025, clashes involving Somaliland forces and SSC Khaatumo fighters broke out in Buq Dharkayn, resulting in an unspecified number of casualties. [1273](#)

## Conflict-related displacement

According to the UNHCR PRMN, 54 077 individuals were newly displaced from Sool region (including Buhoodle district) due to conflict or insecurity in the period from April 2023 to 16 March 2025. Among them, 48 294 IDPs were displaced within Sool region (including Buhoodle), while 5 783 IDPs were displaced to other regions, including Bari, Nugal, Togdheer, and Woqooyi Galbeed. 36 118 were displaced within the region to Buhoodle district. In the same period, 4 633 individuals arrived from other regions, including Nugal, and Sanaag regions. Xudun was the district most affected by arrivals from other regions (2 392 individuals, all arriving from Ceerigaabo) during the reference period, while Laas Caanood was the district most affected by individuals leaving for other regions (3 072), including Bari, Nugal, Togdheer, and Woqooyi Galbeed. [1274](#) For information on conflict-related displacement prior to April 2023, please see section 2.4.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation \(February 2023\)](#).

According to UNHCR’s Somalia Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) fighting in Buhodle district in November 2024 resulted in the displacement of 26 550 individuals. The conflict caused widespread displacement, especially in areas such as ‘Qorilugud, Shangeed, Gocondhaale, Maygaagle, Galgal, Harufadhi, Sooljoogto, Xadhadhan, and Shimbiraale’. [1275](#)

## Other impacts on civilian life

UNOCHA recorded 6 humanitarian access incidents in Sool region (excluding Buhoodle district) in the period from April to December 2023, [1276](#) and another 15 in 2024, [1277](#) including, for example, movement restrictions impeding humanitarian activities. [1278](#)

In 2023, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) recorded 10 incidents of violence against or obstructing healthcare in Laas Caanood in the period between February and July 2023. Additionally, eight incidents were recorded in which explosive weapons damaged hospitals and injured health workers. [1279](#) Laas Caanood General Hospital was struck by mortars and artillery, resulting in damages and disruptions. [1280](#) Between 8 June and 5 October 2023, UNSOM recorded at least eight civilian casualties in Laas Caanood, including four killed and four injured. Six of the victims were medical staff. [1281](#)

In April 2023, AOAV reported that hospitals, schools, and residential areas in Laas Caanood had repeatedly been shelled since the outbreak of heavy fighting in February 2023. [1282](#) Also in April 2023, Amnesty

International shared ‘findings that Somaliland security forces indiscriminately shelled the town [of Laas Caanood], damaging hospitals, schools and mosques, killing and injuring civilians, and displacing tens of thousands of people.’ [1283](#)

In November 2024, the World Food Program (WFP) suspended its humanitarian operations in Somalia's SSC-Khaatumo region due to insecurity and the looting of food aid. [1284](#)

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