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2.4.3. Hirshabelle - Checkpoints and road security

In April 2023, local media reported on illegal checkpoints across Hirshabelle State,1037 which were often set up by FGS troops and clan militias in areas re-captured from Al-Shabaab. Established along important transportation routes, these checkpoints had reportedly become 'hubs of extortion' for travellers.1038 According to a report published by the RVI, 18 % of all of Somalia's checkpoints were located in Hirshabelle State as of October 2023, predominantly in the Middle Shabelle region (76 %).1039 For an overview on checkpoints at country level see section 1.7 and Map 4.

According to a report by the University of Edinburgh's Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) of January 2025, checkpoints in and near the towns of Belet Weyne and Jowhar – both located along important trade routes connecting their respective regions with the south – generated tens of thousands of dollars per week in taxation revenues, while distribution was unclear and control was in the hand of 'key individuals'.1040 The income from checkpoints in Hiraan was, according to the authors, 'effectively a clan resource' for the Hawadle or any other clan entity that had control over the respective checkpoint.1041

In April 2024, ACLED pointed to Al-Shabaab fighters patrolling along the Balcad-Mogadishu road and using hidden checkpoints to collect taxes from commercial and private transport, and to watch over the presence and activities of security forces in certain areas.1042 Local media reported on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along the Balcad-Jowhar road, resulting in civilian casualties in September 2024.1043 As of November 2024, Al-Shabaab reportedly continued to control the road connecting Balcad to Jowhar. Sporadic shooting and the threat of new attacks made the road 'practically a no-go zone', according to a resident of the area.1044 The Horn Observer noted that, as of February 2025, Al Shabaab had flooded the main road between the cities of Jowhar and Mogadishu, forcing vehicles to take Al-Shabaab-controlled detours where 'heavy extortion' was imposed.1045

Two strategic towns along the Main Supply Routes from Mahadaay to Adan Yabaal were reportedly re-captured by Al-Shabaab in April 2024.1046

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