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2.5.1. Galgaduud

☐ (a) Background

Galgaduud (also Galgudud) shares an international border with Ethiopia to the north-west and borders the Indian Ocean to the south. The region shares internal borders with Hirshabelle State to the west and Mudug district to the north and east. Galgaduug is divided into five districts: Cabudwaaq, Cadaado, Dhuusamarreeb (which is also the name of the region's capital city), Ceel Buur (also El Buur, Celbur) and Ceel Dheer (also El-Dheer).1047

Sources varyingly estimated Galgaduud's population at 812 638 (IPC),1048 and 622 632 (IOM),1049 as of September 2024. Main clans in Galgaduud are Habar Gidir (Hawiye) sub-clans, Suleiman (or Suliman, Saleban), Ayr, Duduble, as well as the Murasade (Hawiye) clan, and the Marehan (Darod) sub-clan.1050 For additional details on clans in Galgaduud region, please see section 2.5.1.1 of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021) and section 2.5.1 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

According to Map 3 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 31 March 2025 and Map 2 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 1 April 2023, Al-Shabaab controlled the southern-central part of Galgaduud region from the coastline up to the area north and north-east of Ceel Buur town. The remaining part of the region was marked as being under mixed, unclear and/or local control, except for the area along the border with Ethiopia. This area, including the region's capital city Dhuusamarreeb, was under the control of 'federal-aligned coalition' forces.1051

According to a map by the ISW and CTP showing Al-Shabaab's presence in the region as of June 2024, the southern and central parts of Galgaduud were assessed as being either Al-Shabaab control or support zones, except for small areas along the border with Hirshabelle State, which were assessed as Al-Shabaab-contested support zones, while the area around Ceel Dheer town in southern Galgaduud was marked as an Al-Shabaab attack zone.1052

Radio Dalsan described Galgaduud region in October 2024, as a longstanding battleground for control between government forces and Al Shabaab.1053 Government forces and allied militias briefly captured Ceel Garas in September 2023 but withdrew a few days later. The town, situated along the Dhuusamarreeb-Ceel Buur road, has reportedly been controlled by Al-Shabaab for decades.1054 In February 2025, Ma'awisley attacked Al-Shabaab positions in Ceel Buur district, one of the group's 'key operational hubs'1055 and an area that had been 'under different levels of Al-Shabaab's influence' throughout the previous 15 years. The SNA had regained control over Ceel Buur briefly in August 2023 but had to withdraw after a few days.1056

Conflict dynamics

The International Crisis Group recorded fights between government and allied forces and Al-Shabaab during the reference period.1057 The frontline, however, remained 'oscillating' and – referring to the two strategically important towns of Budbud and Osweyne – the fight for control a 'perpetual game of territorial tug-of-war', according to the Somali Digest. The SNA briefly gained and lost control over Budbud in April 2023. In August 2023, the SNA regained control over Budbud and Osweyne but again had to withdraw a few days later.1058 Fighting over Budbud continued to be reported in October 20241059 and January 2025.1060 Similarly, in August 2023, government troops withdrew from Ceel Dheer and Masagaway − areas they had recaptured only a few months earlier.1061 However, fighting in Ceel Dheer district continued throughout 20231062 and 2024,1063 with Abgaal clan militias supporting the security forces.1064 In Masagaway, intense fights re-erupted between government forces and Al-Shabaab

in January 2025[1065] after over a year of ‘stagnant’ military operations against the armed group in the area.[1066] As of February 2025, fights also continued in the Jowle area, a strategic location linking Galgaduud and Mudug regions, according to SMN.[1067]

Local media reported on deadly clashes between Marehan [Darod] and Dir clan militias in the Landhere area in April[1068] and in June 2024, presumably in the context of disputes over land.[1069] More than 10 people were killed in clashes between the Habar Gidir/Saleban clan and the Marehan/Wagar Dhac militia in September 2024.[1070] Several media reported on the killing of civilians, including children, presumably in the context of clan conflicts.[1071]

☐ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

In the period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, ACLED recorded 411 security incidents in Galgaduud region, including battles, explosions or other forms of remote violence, and violence against civilians, causing 2 509 fatalities. Figure 17 below shows their evolution per type across the reference period.[1072] At district level, Ceel Dheer recorded the highest number of security incidents (187), followed by Dhuusamarreeb (78), Cabudwaaq (66), Ceel Buur (56) and Cadaado (24 incidents).[1073]

Security events in Galgaduud

Figure 17. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Galgaduud.[1074]

In the period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, Al-Shabaab was involved in 203 security incidents against Forces of Somalia (Military Forces and Police Forces, including the Galmudug Police Force) (coded as either ‘Actor 1’, ‘Associated Actor 1’, ‘Actor 2’, or ‘Associated Actor 2’). Moreover, Al-Shabaab was involved in 84 security incidents against clan militias (including Ma’awisley as well as Habar Gidir, Marehan and other clan and sub-clan militias and unidentified clan militias).[1075]

In terms of clan conflicts, ACLED recorded 49 security incidents involving both Marehan and Dir clan and sub-clan militias in the period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025. Marehan clan and sub-clan militias were also involved in 32 security incidents with Habar Gidir clan and sub-clan militias.

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

- five boys were reportedly killed by members of the Saleban sub-clan in a village near the border with Ethiopia in August 2023, possibly in the context of a clan conflict between Saleban and Marehan subclans;1076
- a doctor and his brother, a religious teacher, were killed by armed clan militias in Ilix in December 2023.1077 The perpetrators escaped but were later arrested and executed in June 2024.1078
- a 12-year old boy from Mudug region was abducted and killed by members of a tribal militia from Galgaduud region in May 2024, allegedly as a revenge killing in the context of conflicts between communities from both regions;1079
- at least 60 soldiers and militia fighters were killed in an Al-Shabaab attack on four military bases in Ceel Dheer in June 2024;1080
- in Heraale area, three children died when a landmine exploded in the area where they were playing in July 2024;1081
- two brothers were killed by armed militias in Oodan area in August 2024. The incident is believed to be part of a conflict between Marehan and Dir clans.1082

Conflict-related displacement

According to the UNHCR PRMN, 11 203 individuals were newly displaced from Galgaduud region due to conflict or insecurity in the period from 1 April 2023 to 16 March 2025. Among them, 3 175 IDPs were displaced within Galgaduud region, while 8 028 IDPs were displaced to other regions, including Banadir, Bari, Gedo, Hiraan, Lower Shabelle, and Nugal. In the same period, 12 320 individuals arrived from other regions, including Mudug and Bakool region. The district most affected by these arrivals from other regions was Cadaado, with 9 710 individuals arriving. On the other hand, Ceel Buur was the district most affected by individuals leaving for other regions (4 361 individuals). This district was also the most affected by displacement within Galgaduud region, with 2 022 individuals arriving from other locations and 1 707 individuals

leaving for other locations (including movements within the district).1083 For information on conflict-related displacement in Galgaduud region prior to April 2023, please see section 2.5.1 of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

A water well and a water delivery tanker were destroyed by Al-Shabaab in Ceel Garas town in September 2023. The group had reportedly put land mines and explosive devices at major facilities around the town, which previously had been recaptured by government forces.1084 Another source pointed to contradicting claims, with Al-Shabaab declining responsibility, saying that the well was destroyed in a U.S. airstrike. 1085 Local infrastructure (homes and water holes) was damaged during violent clashes between clan militias in Landhere region in June 2024, according to Garowe Online. 1086

In February 2024, Al-Shabaab reportedly captured a UN helicopter that had made an emergency landing in territory controlled by the group, abducting and killing passengers.1087

In June 2024, the Horn Observer reported on deadly clashes between Marehan and Dir clan militias in Heraale area and on claims by one of the groups to have closed the local airport.1088 In October 2024, Hiiraan Online reported on the temporary closure of Galgaduud's Abudwak airport following threats from a militia group to target incoming planes. However, the source also quoted officials claiming that the closure was motivated by business and political interests.1089

Humanitarian activities were restricted due to violent incidents in Dhuusamarreeb district in September 20231090 and increased insecurity in Cadaado district in the period from July to September 2024.1091 In total, UNOCHA recorded eight humanitarian access incidents in 20231092 and five in 2024.1093 Two members of an international NGO were killed in Galgaduud region in ambushes and inter-clan violence in the period from October to December 2024.1094

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