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2.5.2. Mudug

○ (a) Background

Mudug region is divided between Galmudug (Southern Mudug) and Puntland (Northern Mudug). The region borders Ethiopia to the northwest and the Indian Ocean to the east. It shares internal borders with Galgaduud region (Galmudug State) to the south and west, and with Nugal region (Puntland State) state to the north. Mudug is divided into five districts: Xarardheere (also Harardhere), Hobyo, Gaalkacyo (also Galkayo), Galdogob and Jariiban. The region's capital is Gaalkacyo city,[1095] which is divided into two administrative areas controlled by Galmudug and Puntland, respectively.[1096]

Sources varyingly estimated Mudug's population at 1 470 309 (IPC),[1097] and 613 906 (IOM),[1098] as of September 2024. Dominant clans are the Darod (Majerteen-Omar Mahmoud sub-clan) in the North, and the Hawiye (Habar Gidir Sa'ad sub-clan) in the South. Other clans include the Lelkase (Darod), Sheikhal, Dir and Marehan.[1099] For additional details on clans in Mudug region, please see section 2.5.2.1 of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021) and section 2.5.2 of the EUAA COI report on 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, the northern and southern parts of Southern Mudug were under mixed, unclear and/or local control involving Al-Shabaab and 'fede ral-aligned coalition' forces. Mudug's central part was fully controlled by 'federal-aligned coalition' forces while Al-Shabaab fully controlled an area stretching from the border with Galgaduud region to the towns of Ba'adweyne, Amara and Qey'a. The latter two towns were shown as being controlled by Al-Shabaab. Ba'adweyne town was under mixed or unclear control, involving Al-Shabaab and 'federal-aligned coalition forces'. Northern Mudug was under control of 'autonomous armed forces (unionist)'. These forces and 'federal-aligned coalition' forces had mixed control over Gaalkacyo city.1100 According to Map 2 Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 1 April 2023, Ba'adweyne and Amara were under control of Al-Shabaab at the beginning of the reference period, while Qey'ad was under mixed or unclear control, involving Al-Shabaab and 'federal-aligned coalition' forces. 1101

Garowe Online noted, in May 2024, that Mudug region was 'usually a hotbed' for Al-Shabaab fighters, who kept regaining control of Xarardheere town, an area previously liberated by government forces.1102 Operations against Al-Shabaab in the area continued as of September 2024.1103 As of February 2025, government forces and aligned forces reportedly regained control over 'key areas' in southern Mudug that had been controlled by Al-Shabaab 'for an extended period'.1104

Conflict dynamics

Several sources reported on operations by government and allied forces against Al-Shabaab in the second half of 20231105 and early 2024.1106 In the period 9-14 March 2024, however, following the withdrawal of government and allied forces, Al-Shabaab reportedly managed to regain control over several areas in Mudug, including Ba'adweyne, Caad, Camaara, and Xiinlabi.1107 According to local sources, the government forces' initial successes slowed down due to logistical challenges, difficulties in holding recaptured territories, the armed group's persistence,1108 but also low morale, unpaid salaries, corruption and internal political discord among other reasons.1109 Operations against Al-Shabaab continued to be reported in September 1110 and October 2024.1111 In early 2025, government forces launched operations together with local forces targeting Al-Shabaab positions in Camaara in January1112 and in Ba'adweyne in February 2025.1113

Halqabsi News reported in January 2024 on a suspected revenge killing in western Mudug in the context of longstanding clan disputes involving clans in Mudug and

Galgaduud.1114 Violent clashes between Sa'ad and Lelkase sub-clans over grazing land were recorded in Galdogob district in October 2023,1115 and June1116 and December 2024.1117 Deadly clan conflicts over resources were also reported between Sheikhal and Dir in Jariiban district1118 and between clan militias from Adado and Gaalkacyo in October 2024.1119

○ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

In the period from 1 April 2023 to 21 March 2025, ACLED recorded 233 security incidents in Mudug region, including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, causing 1 841 fatalities. Figure 18 below shows their evolution per type across the reference period.1120 At district level, the highest number of incidents was recorded in Xarardheere (103 incidents), followed by Gaalkacyo (62), Hobyo (40), Galdogob (19) and Jariiban (9 incidents) in the period between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025.1121

Security events in Mudug

Figure 18. Evolution of ACLED security events coded 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Mudug.1122

Al-Shabaab was involved in 110 security incidents against Forces of Somalia (Military and Police Forces, including the Puntland Police Force and Puntland Prison Guards) (coded as either 'Actor 1', 'Associated Actor 1', 'Actor 2', or 'Associated Actor 2'). Moreover, Al-Shabaab was involved in 53 security incidents against clan militias. With regard to inter-clan conflicts, ACLED recorded 37 security incidents involving Habar Gidir clan and sub-clan militias and Lelkase clan militia and 11 incidents involving Sheikhal and Dir clan militias.1123

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

- a drone strike targeting Al-Shabaab fighters reportedly killed five civilians in El Lahelay village in September 2023;1124
- five members of a family were killed and six others injured in a suspected revenge attack in western Mudug in January 2024;1125
- 20 civilians, including women and children, were kidnapped by armed militias in Hiiglo-Ceelle village in February 2024;1126
- six civilians, including three children, were killed in deadly clan clashes in western Mudug in June 2024.1127

Conflict-related displacement

According to a report by the UN Secretary-General of September 2024, covering the period from 24 May to 20 September 2024, displacement caused by clan violence remained widespread, notably in Mudug and Galgaduud regions, among others.1128 UNHCR noted that a renewed outbreak of clan violence in Galdogob district led to the displacement of 8 010 individuals in December 2024.1129

According to the UNHCR PRMN, 30 787 individuals were newly displaced from Mudug region due to conflict or insecurity in the period from 1 April 2023 to 16 March 2025. Among them, 16 285 individuals were displaced within Mudug region, while 14 502 individuals left for other regions, including Banadir, Bari, Galgaduud, and Nugal. No individuals arrived from other regions during the reporting period. The district most affected by individuals leaving for other regions was Xarardheere (14 070 individuals). In terms of displacement within Mudug region (including movements within the district), Gaalkacyo was the district most affected by arrivals, with 11 725 individuals arriving from other locations, as well as by departures, with the same number (11 725) of individuals leaving to other locations (including one incident involving the departure of 11 400 individuals, recorded in December 2024).1130 For information on conflict-related displacement in Mudug region prior to April 2023, please see section 2.5.2 of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

UNOCHA recorded 15 incidents of humanitarian access restraints in Mudug region in the period from 1 April to 31 December 2023,1131 and 17 incidents of humanitarian access restraints in 2024. Incidents included, among others, the temporary suspension or revocation of licenses,1132 the carjacking of a humanitarian organisation's car and clan hostilities that disrupted humanitarian operations.1133 A doctor was reportedly shot dead in his health centre in an alleged revenge killing in Gaalkacyo town in

September 2023.1134

A ‘vital’ water well was reportedly destroyed during violent clashes between two clans of the Majerteen sub-clan in Xarfo town in Mudug region in December 2024. Due to the violence, many of the local population fled and schools remained closed.1135

UNHCR noted that inter-clan fighting in Galdogob district in June 2024 led to the displacement of thousands of people, disrupting children’s education and restricting the local population’s freedom of movement.1136 Radio Ergo reported on displaced families in southeastern Mudug lacking the money to buy food or water while host communities were overburdened.1137

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