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2.1.1. Gedo

(a) Background

Gedo, Somalia's second-largest region,[418] is located in the southern part of the country. It shares international borders with Kenya to the west and Ethiopia to the north-west and internal borders with Bakool to the north-east, Bay to the east and Middle Juba and Lower Juba to the south. The region is divided into six districts: Garbahaarey (or Garbaharey), Luuq, Doolow, Belet Xaawo (or Bulo Hawa), Ceel Waaq (or El Waq/El Wak) and Bardhere (or Baardheere).[419] The region's capital is Garbahaarey.[420] Due to its porous borders with Kenya and Ethiopia, Gedo has significant strategic value.[421] Long-standing disputes between the Jubbaland administration and the federal government over Gedo have kept the region in a state of semi-autonomy.[422]

As of September 2024, sources variously estimated the population of Gedo region at 975 586 (IPC),[423] and 713 299 (IOM).[424] Gedo's clan composition is diverse. The Marehan (Darood) is the most powerful clan in political and military terms, dominating virtually all of the territory west of the Juba river. On the eastern bank, the Rahanweyn clan predominates in rural areas.[425] For more detailed information on Gedo region's clan composition, see section 2.1.1.1. of the EASO COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (September 2021).

(b) Actors' presence and conflict dynamics

Al-Shabaab control areas, presence and influence, along with other actors

A variety of armed actors were present in Gedo region.426 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 most of Gedo's territory, including the towns and surroundings of El Adde (central Gedo) and Cows Qurun (western Gedo) as well as large rural territories extending across most of Ceel Waag and Belet Xaawo districts and parts of Garbahaarey district and southward into Middle Juba region. Control over the rural surroundings of Garbahaarey, Belet Xaawo, Burdhubo and Bardhere towns continued to be mixed between Al-Shabaab and the FGS-aligned coalition.427 In the remaining rural areas, including around Doolow, Luuq and Ceel Waaq towns, control has been mixed between Al-Shabaab and Jubbaland regional forces since FGS forces withdrew from parts of Gedo following a suspension of ties between the Jubbaland State and the FGS in November 2024.428

Map 3 shows that as of 31 March 2025, the previously FGS-controlled429 towns of Doolow, Luuq and Ceel Waaq were under the control of the Jubbaland regional forces. Meanwhile, Garbahaarey, Belet Xaawo and Burdhubo remained in the hands of the FGS coalition, while control of Bardhere was mixed between the FGS coalition and Jubbaland forces.430 Other sources similarly noted that, as of December 2024, the FGS controlled Garbahaarey431 and had a military presence in Belet Xaawo,432 while the Jubbaland forces controlled Doolow.433

Gedo region continued to be a strategic target for Al-Shabaab's activities due its proximity to Kenya.434 The group continued to sustain a significant presence in the region,435 where its operations aimed at weakening local governance and disrupting cooperation with Kenya in security matters.436 However, in August 2024, the SNA and the Jubbaland Dervish Force437 recaptured ten villages along the strategic Luuq–Doolow road that had previously served as military strongholds for Al-Shabaab to exert control, including by demanding bribes and instilling fear among residents.438

Attempts by both the FGS and the Jubbaland administration to gain control over Jubbaland resulted in military buildups in the Ceel Waaq area in November 2024.439 Amid escalating tensions with Jubbaland forces,440 the FGS mobilised forces the following month,441 airlifting troops into the regional capital Garbahaarey.442 In late 2024, Gedo further saw a buildup of Ethiopian forces443 who had reportedly seized key strategic airports in September 2024444 (including those in Garbahaarey, Bardhere, Luuq and Doolow)445 and taken control of several villages in the region's north.446

Conflict dynamics

As of late December 2024, the situation in Gedo has been described as being 'volatile' 447 and affected by crisis as tensions between Jubbaland authorities and the FGS were escalating into violent clashes.448

In the early months of the reference period, Al-Shabaab carried out a number of attacks

on military bases that were being operated by ATMIS troops (on the outskirts of Doolow town[449] and near Bardhere airport, both in June 2023)[450] or had been handed over from ATMIS to local forces[451] (at Giriley in July 2023).[452] Attacks on such military sites involved twin bombings using explosive-laden cars[453] or were carried out with firearms.[454] Giriley base, a military site whose control had been transferred to the Jubbaland Dervish Force, notably first came under Al-Shabaab attack on 4 July 2023[455] and was then briefly[456] captured on 13 July 2023,[457] the second attack leaving at least one civilian dead.[458] The temporary capture of the base highlighted vulnerabilities of the state forces, raising fears that Al-Shabaab could exploit a vacuum left by the departure of ATMIS forces.[459]

In early August 2023, the FGS launched a new counter-insurgency campaign named Operation Black Lion.[460] Forces of the SNA and Jubbaland Dervishes retook strategic sites from Al-Shabaab along the Luuq–Doolow road (August 2023),[461] with further operations by Jubbaland and Ethiopian forces reported the following month.[462] At least one suspected Kenyan airstrike in Al-Shabaab-held El Adde town caused civilian deaths (September 2023).[463]

The launch of Operation Black Lion in the summer of 2023 was followed by a rise in Al-Shabaab attacks on local officials supporting counter-insurgency.[464] The reference period also saw Al-Shabaab publicly executing five men it accused of spying for the FGS, the Jubbaland State or the USA (June 2023).[465] The group further carried out deadly bombings against SNA forces travelling between Luuq and Doolow,[466] as well as in Belet Xaawo.[467] Moreover, unclaimed IED attacks killed civilians on the Belet Xaawo–Doolow road (May 2024)[468] and a senior official in Belet Xaawo (January 2025).[469]

Amid escalating tensions between FGS and Jubbaland authorities, their forces recently clashed in Doolow in December 2024[470] (leaving at least four people dead),[471] Ceel Waaq in January 2025 (leaving two dead)[472] and Bardhere in February 2025[473] (leaving six dead).[474]

Gedo is one of the country's regions in which clan violence has been reported to be particularly widespread.[475] Indeed, 2024 saw a notable increase in clan violence.[476] In early July 2024, fighting between two rival clan-based militia groups in Luuq district involving both light and heavy weaponry[477] resulted in a death toll ranging between four and 30 or more fatalities.[478] It was believed that these clashes had been sparked by land disputes.[479] Further clashes between tribal/clan militias were reported in the same district in October 2024 (resulting in between six and 20 or more deaths)[480] and February 2025 (causing an unconfirmed number of deaths).[481]

☐ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

Between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025, ACLED reported 248 security incidents in Gedo region, including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, causing 180 fatalities. **Figure 8** below shows their evolution per type across the reference period.482 At district level, Bardhere district recorded the most security incidents (60 incidents), followed by Belet Xaawo (48 incidents) and Garbahaarey and Luuq districts (47 incidents each).483

484_ACLED_somalia_security_2025

Figure 8. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in Gedo.484

ACLED recorded 191 incidents involving Al-Shabaab (coded as either ‘Actor 1’, ‘Associated Actor 1’, ‘Actor 2’, or ‘Associated Actor 2’). Of these incidents, 135 involved both Al-Shabaab and the Military or Police Forces of Somalia, including 16 incidents involving Al-Shabaab and Jubbaland security forces. A further six incidents involved both the Rahanweyn-Moalim Weyne and Rahanweyn-Gawaweene subclan militia, while another seven incidents involved Rahanweyn-Moalim Weyne subclan militia and Marehan clan militia.485

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

- on 13 July 2023, Al-Shabaab captured the strategic Giriley military base from Jubbaland forces following a firefight. At least one civilian was killed in the attack, along with two soldiers.486 The Jubbaland Dervish Forces recaptured the base the next day;487
- on 16 May 2024, at least two civilians were killed and five others injured when an unclaimed landmine struck their vehicle on the Belet Xaawo–Doolow road;488
- on 5 February 2025, FGS forces attacked the Bardhere district headquarters.489 Six people were killed in ensuing clashes with Jubbaland forces;490
- on 20 October 2024, clashes between rival clans in Luuq district left between six and 20 or more people dead.491

Conflict-related displacement

Between 1 April 2023 and 16 March 2025, 94 452 individuals were newly displaced from Gedo due to conflict or insecurity, according to the UNHCR PRMN. Of this group,

the vast majority (90 641 individuals) were displaced within the same administrative region, while 3 811 individuals were displaced to other regions, including Middle Juba, Lower Juba, Bakool, Bari, and Nugal. During the same period, 26 778 individuals arrived from other regions (Middle Juba and Lower Juba, Bakool, Bay, Hiraan, Middle and Lower Shabelle, and Galgaduud). At district level, Luuq, by a wide margin, was both the district most affected by IDPs departures to other regions (3 540, including 3 510 who were displaced in July 2024) and by intra-regional IDP departures to other locations within Gedo region (84 611 including around 45 000 in July 2024 and another 36 000 in October 2024).492

According to UNOCHA data, some 42 000 people were displaced due to violence between clans in the Luuq area between 5 and 7 July 2024, including 12 000 who fled to hard-to-access areas outside Luuq town such as Ceel Boon, Yurkud, and Bashiiro. Some of the IDPs fled towards Wajid town in South West State.493 Further clashes in October 2024 displaced another 30 000 people, including individuals who had previously been affected by displacement or had recently returned.494 Additional large-scale displacement resulted from escalating violence between FGS and Jubbaland forces in Bardhere in early February 2025.495

For information on conflict-related displacement prior to April 2023, see section 2.1.1. of the EUAA COI Report on Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

UNOCHA recorded 28 humanitarian access incidents in Gedo region between April and December 2023496 and another 29 over the year 2024,497 including security forces opening fire on a vehicle of humanitarian workers at an IDP camp and hitting one aid worker (first quarter of 2024),498 the killing of two humanitarian workers amid the clan conflict in Luuq (July 2024), the hijacking of a lorry transporting humanitarian supplies in Doolow (third quarter of 2024),499 an attack by clan militias on an NGO office in Burdhubo, and the detention of humanitarian staff (fourth quarter of 2024).500 Earlier, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition recorded the hijacking of a lorry carrying medical supplies (third quarter of 2023).501 Moreover, the inter-clan clashes that erupted in Luuq town in early July 2024 led to the burning of a main market with hundreds of shops.502

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