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2.1.3. Lower Juba

☐ (a) Background

Lower Juba region is the southernmost region of Somalia. It shares an international border with Kenya to the west and south-west and has internal borders with Gedo region to the north and Middle Juba region to the north-east. To the south-east, it borders the Indian Ocean. The region has four districts: Kismayo, Jamaame, Badhaadhe (all three located on the coast), and Afmadow. Kismayo, Lower Juba's regional capital, [548] has also been the de facto capital of Jubbaland.[549]

As of September 2024, sources variously estimated the population of Lower Juba region at 1 158 256 (IPC),[550] and 858 827 (IOM).[551] Lower Juba is inhabited by members of the Somali Bantu (also known as Jareer), the Biyomaal (Dir) clan, the Tunni (Digil-Mirifle), the Mohamed Zubier/Ogaden (Darood) and other Darood clans (including Harti), the Gaaljaal (proto-Hawiye) the Somali Bajuni and small pockets of other clans. Kismayo town has been dominated by the Ogaden clan, particularly the large Mohamed Zubeir/Ogaden subclan.[552] For further general background information on Lower Juba region, see section 2.1.3. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023). For more detailed information on Lower Juba region's clan composition, see section 2.1.3.1 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

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 was in control of Jamaame, Hagar, and Badhaadhe as well as swaths of rural territory in the

region’s north-east encompassing Jamaame district and most of Afmadow district north of the Juba River and extending into Middle Juba. The group also controlled another rural area stretching northward from Badhaadhe through Kismayo district into southern Afmadow. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab lost control of Bulo Haji (Afmadow district),553 recaptured by the SNA and allied local clan militias in June 2024554 and now under the control of the Jubbaland regional forces.555 Following the recapture of Bulo Haji, a number of strategic villages linking Kismayo and Afmadow were seized from Al-Shabaab control.556 Concurrently, the militant group mobilised fighters from Middle Juba to areas in Kismayo and Jamaame districts in August, September, and October 2024.557 According to **Map 3**, as of 31 March 2025, the rural areas outside Al-Shabaab’s full dominance were under mixed control of Al-Shabaab and Jubbaland forces.558

Both the FGS and the Jubbaland administration have invested in efforts to gain control over Jubbaland,559 deploying their respective forces to occupy military sites vacated by ATMIS and secure areas formerly controlled by the international troops.560 In late 2024, military buildups were seen in Raskamboni town,561 where the SNA deployed hundreds of troops. However, following the town’s capture by Jubbaland forces in December 2024,562 FGS forces withdrew from most areas of Lower Juba.563 According to **Map 3**, as of 31 March 2025, the previously FGS/ATMIS-controlled564 towns of Kismayo, Afmadow, Dif, Dhobley, Tabta, Jana Abdale, Koday, Kolbiyow and Raskamboni were under the control of the Jubbaland forces, while Bar Sanguni was mapped as being under mixed control of FGS coalition and Jubbaland forces.565

Conflict dynamics

Lower Juba is a region of key strategic importance to Al-Shabaab’s operations566 and the group conducted a number of attacks on military bases, including in Bar Sanguni (March and April 2024, reportedly killing dozens of soldiers)567 and Jannay Abdalla (October 2024).568

In the early months of the reference period, Lower Juba region saw some small-scale counter-insurgency operations against Al-Shabaab,569 including airstrikes and ground operations in June 2023 (Jamaame, killing two Al-Shabaab commanders)570 and July 2023 (near Afmadow town, killing dozens of fighters).571 Further SNA operations, backed by US forces, were reported in late 2023 (involving heavy clashes with Al-Shabaab)572 and early 2024, but these efforts generally remained sporadic and limited in scope.573 However, in March 2024, SNA and Jubbaland forces launched heavy-handed joint operations in Musa Haji, Bahar Saaf, Malaylay, Turdho and other areas serving as hideouts for Al-Shabaab, reportedly killing dozens of militants.574

After recapturing the Bulo Haji area in June 2024575 without facing any resistance from Al-Shabaab and the subsequent surrender of Al-Shabaab district-level leaders,576 SNA and Jubbaland forces seized further localities between Kismayo and Afmadow in early

July,577 including Lagta Qubbi, Golhadamo, Biibi, Harboole, Miido,578 and Welmaro. 579

However, on 22 July 2024, Al-Shabaab launched coordinated, multi-pronged and near-simultaneous attacks on military bases in Bulo-Haji and the towns of Harbole, Miido, and Bar Sanguni. These attacks involved at least one suicide car bomb, as well as rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms.580 Clashes between the Jubbaland forces/SNA and Al-Shabaab were reported in a number of localities in the area,581 with the FGS claiming that the attackers were repelled and dozens of militants killed.582

The following weeks and months saw military operations reportedly killing over 200 Al-Shabaab militants,583 targeted operations against the group's hideouts,584 the recapture of further Al-Shabaab-controlled territory,585 and the killing of senior Al-Shabaab figures in Badhaadhe and Kismayo.586 At the same time, the intensity of fighting decreased from mid-August 2024 as security forces cleared villages in Kismayo district from Al-Shabaab fighters.587 Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab publicly executed several men it had accused of spying.588

Amid political tensions in the run-up to the 25 November 2024 Jubbaland presidential election, a deadly clash erupted in Kismayo.589 The following month, deteriorating relations between the FGS and the Jubbaland administration escalated into an attack by Jubbaland forces on FGS troops in Raskamboni in December 2024.590 Following these hostilities, the FGS announced the withdrawal of its forces from Lower Juba,591 although SNA operations in the region continued into early 2025.592

☐ (c) Recent security trends

Security incidents, estimated civilian fatalities and casualties

Between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025, ACLED reported 497 security incidents in Lower Juba region, including battles, explosions, or other forms of remote violence and violence against civilians, causing 1 663 fatalities. **Figure 10** below shows their evolution per type across the reference period.593 At district level, Kismayo district recorded the most security incidents (176 incidents), followed by Afmadow (151 incidents) and Jamaame districts (105 incidents).594

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Figure 10. Evolution of ACLED security events coded 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' between 1 April 2023 and 21 March 2025 in

Lower Juba.595

ACLED recorded 460 incidents involving Al-Shabaab (coded as either 'Actor 1', 'Associated Actor 1', 'Actor 2', or 'Associated Actor 2'). Of these incidents, 334 involved both Al-Shabaab and the Military or Police Forces of Somalia, including 252 incidents involving Al-Shabaab and Jubbaland security forces. Meanwhile, 50 incidents involved both Al-Shabaab and Somali civilians.596

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

- in March and April 2024, Al-Shabaab carried out two attacks on Bar Sanguni military base, reportedly killing dozens of soldiers;597
- on 13 July 2024, Al-Shabaab publicly executed five men in its stronghold of Jamaame, accusing them of spying for the Somali, US and Kenyan governments; 598
- on 22 July 2024, Al-Shabaab launched coordinated attacks on bases599 of the SNA and Jubbaland forces600 in Buulo-Haji and the towns of Harbole, Miido, and Bar Sanguuni. The FGS claimed that the SNA, its allies in the Jubbaland forces and Kenyan forces had repelled the attackers;601
- on 11 December 2024, heavy clashes erupted between Jubbaland forces and the SNA in Raskamboni town,602 resulting in the killing of 75 people and the surrender and fleeing of SNA troops;603
- in the run-up to the 25 November 2024, Jubbaland presidential election, Jubbaland security forces clashed with fighters affiliated with the opposition candidate Ilyas Beddel Gabose on 23 November 2024. The violence left one of his bodyguards dead604 and two other individuals injured.605

Conflict-related displacement

Between 1 April 2023 and 16 March 2025, 50 650 individuals were newly displaced from Lower Juba due to conflict or insecurity, according to the UNHCR PRMN. Of this group, the vast majority (49 076 individuals) were displaced within the same administrative region, while 1 574 individuals were displaced to other regions, including Gedo, Middle Juba, Benadir, Bari, and Nugal. During the same period, 12 997 individuals arrived from other regions (Gedo, Middle Juba, Bay, Lower Shabelle, Benadir, and Hiraan). At district level, Jamaame was the most affected by individuals leaving for other regions (743). Afmadow was the district most affected by intra-regional IDP departures to other locations within Lower Juba region (18 335), followed by Jamaame (14 228).606 According to UNOCHA, Jamaame was one of the districts most affected by conflict-related internal displacement in 2024.607 For information on conflict-related displacement prior to April 2023, see section 2.1.3. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (February 2023).

Other impacts on civilian life

UNOCHA recorded 11 humanitarian access incidents in Lower Juba region in 2023[608] and another 22 in 2024,[609] including the destruction of a school and water and sanitary infrastructure during hostilities in Wirkooy (Afmadow district), the Jubbaland forces requiring clearances at checkpoints to access northern Kismayo (first quarter of 2024),[610] the eviction of 2 652 IDPs in Dhobley and Badhaadhe (second quarter of 2024),[611] and a mortar projectile reportedly fired by Al-Shabaab hitting the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) compound in Kismayo.[612]

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