



1.3. Conflict layers

Somalia continues to face a 'complex, multi-layered' security landscape. According the Hiraal Institute, as of late 2025, relations between the FGS and the federal members states of Puntland and Jubbaland were in a state of 'breakdown',¹⁵⁴ these two FMS essentially having left the federal governance system.¹⁵⁵ Disputes over electoral reform escalated into violent clashes between Jubbaland and FGS forces in July and August 2025.¹⁵⁶

Counter-Al-Shabaab operations continued to be conducted by the SNA, backed by community defence forces, AUSSOM and international partners.¹⁵⁷ However, after making significant territorial gains against Al-Shabaab in previous years, the government's offensive lost momentum and remained stagnant in 2025. As the FGS pursued its primary strategy of keeping Al-Shabaab out of urban centres, the group shifted its operational focus from urban to rural areas.¹⁵⁸ The group exploited political fragmentation, weaknesses within the FGS forces and discontent among local clans as it launched its offensives in Hirshabelle¹⁵⁹ and Lower Shabelle in early 2025.¹⁶⁰ In late 2025/early 2026, however, US-backed airstrikes and expanding ground operations, aided by enhanced aerial surveillance, reportedly allowed the FGS to recapture some territories from Al-Shabaab, although independent verification was difficult due to lack of access.¹⁶¹

To counter the distinct insurgent threat posed by ISS, the Puntland Defence Forces, acting independently of the FGS, continued Operation Hilaac.¹⁶² As a result, the group's strength and resources were degraded. However, it continued to operate mobile cells and hideouts.¹⁶³ For further information on Operation Hilaac and ISS, see sections [1.1. Recent political and security developments](#) and [1.2.3. Updated list of main actors](#). of this report. Other security challenges were linked to the conflict between Somaliland and SSC-Khatumo (SSC-K) in Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn.¹⁶⁴ Clan-related conflicts mainly occurred in Galmudug and Hirshabelle states and Gedo, Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions,¹⁶⁵ often involving clashes over resources such as land¹⁶⁶ and water.¹⁶⁷

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