



2.2.3. Lower Shabelle

Lower Shabelle region is divided into seven districts: Marka, Wanla Weyn, Afgooye, Qoryooley, Baraawe, Kurtunwaarey, and Sablaale. The region's capital is Marka,[384](#) while the city of Baraawe serves as the official capital of the South-West State.[385](#) As of January 2026, Lower Shabelle's population was estimated at 1 656 402.[386](#) For more detailed background information on Lower Shabelle, see section 2.2.3. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Security Situation (May 2025).

○ **Actors presence and conflict dynamics**

According to [Map 3](#) Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 31 March 2026 and [Map 2](#) Somalia – Approximate Territorial Control as of 31 March 2025, Al-Shabaab controlled nearly all of the region's central, southern and south-western rural areas, as well as the towns of Kurtunwaarey and Sablaale. The towns of Marka, Janale, Qoryooley, Bullo Mareer, Baraawe, Afgooye and Wanla Weyn remained under the control of the 'federal-aligned coalition', while Awdhegle shifted back to the FGS's realm of control. Most of the rural hinterlands of the above-mentioned FGS-controlled towns, as well as those of Benadir/Mogadishu, were mapped as being under mixed control between Al-Shabaab and the federal-aligned coalition.[387](#) In March 2026, the FGS deployed hundreds of Haramcad special police units to Baraawe to strengthen FGS positions in the town and to secure a corridor leading towards Buur Hakaba in Bay region.[388](#)

Shortly before the beginning of the reference period, Al-Shabaab intensified its attacks on security forces and in an offensive in March 2025 captured the strategically crucial towns of Sabiid-Anole, Awdheegle and Bariire[389](#) southwest of Mogadishu[390](#) which had served as SNA forward operating bases.[391](#) These towns, along with Janale, contain bridges across the Shabelle River that play a critical role in the movement of people, commercial goods, and agricultural produce.[392](#) Al-Shabaab then went on to advance towards Mogadishu through Afgooye district and set up additional checkpoints along the Afgooye–Mogadishu road, but refrained from assaulting Mogadishu.[393](#) In

response, the SNA in mid-June launched operation ‘Silent storm’ to recapture the three bridge towns taken by Al-Shabaab in March³⁹⁴ and secure the supply routes southwest of the capital.³⁹⁵ During this counteroffensive, the SNA and AUSSOM forces reconquered Sabiid-anole in June³⁹⁶ and, after a protracted battle, Bariire in August.³⁹⁷ Over the remainder of the reference period, the SNA also retook the towns of Awdeghle,³⁹⁸ Darulsaalam and Mubarak.³⁹⁹ The FGS further claimed to have captured several localities that had long been Al-Shabaab strongholds, including Jilib Marka, Gendershe, and Dhanaane.⁴⁰⁰ FGS-led targeted operations resulted in the killing of key Al-Shabaab commanders,⁴⁰¹ but also in civilian casualties.⁴⁰²

Overall, Lower Shabelle was one of the regions with the highest numbers of reported IED incidents, affecting civilians both as direct and indirect victims.⁴⁰³ Late 2025 saw a reported rise in local clan conflicts in parts of Lower Shabelle,⁴⁰⁴ with killings by clan militias reported, amongst others, in Wanla Weyn,⁴⁰⁵ Afgooye, and Qoryooley districts, while tensions were at elevated levels in Marka town.⁴⁰⁶

○ Recent security trends

In the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, ACLED recorded 976 security incidents in Lower Shabelle region, including battles, explosions/other forms of remote violence, and violence against civilians, causing 1 905 fatalities.⁴⁰⁷

Figure 19: Evolution of security events and fatalities in Lower Shabelle per month, based on ACLED

Figure 19: Evolution of security events and fatalities in Lower Shabelle per month, based on ACLED data.⁴⁰⁸

Figure 20: Evolution of security events in Lower Shabelle per type, based on ACLED data.

Figure 20: Evolution of security events in Lower Shabelle per type, based on ACLED data.⁴⁰⁹

In the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the following actors (coded as either ‘Actor 1’ or ‘Actor 2’) were, among others, involved in security incidents: Al-Shabaab was involved in 613 security incidents against Military and Police Forces of Somalia and 73 incidents of violence against civilians, while Military and Police Forces of Somalia were involved in 33 such incidents. (Sub-)clan militias were involved in 13 incidents against Military and Police Forces of Somalia, eight incidents against Al-Shabaab, 26 instances of clashes with other (sub-)clan militias, and 24 incidents of violence against civilians.⁴¹⁰

Illustrative security incidents

- In late September 2025, forces linked to the South-West State were accused of having killed 13 people in an ambush in the outskirts of Yaaqberi-weyne town as these civilians had gathered to resolve community disputes.[411](#)
- On 9 December 2025, artillery shelling that struck a village near Afgooye town left more than 30 civilians dead, according to residents, who attributed the barrage to a branch of NISA.[412](#)
- In late March 2026, clashes following an Al-Shabaab attempt to retake Mubarak town, captured by SNA and AUSSOM forces earlier in the month, resulted in over 40 militants being killed.[413](#)
- In mid-May 2025, an unclaimed IED attack targeting a vehicle near Baraawe Airport left at least one person dead and two others injured.[414](#)
- On 9 November 2025, retaliatory attacks between rivalling clans in Dudumay village (Wanla Weyn district) that had been triggered by the murder of an elderly man resulted in the deaths of six members of the same family.[415](#)
- **Conflict-related displacement**

According to the UNHCR PRMN, 8 870 individuals were newly displaced in Lower Shabelle region due to conflict or insecurity during the period from April 2025 to February 2026. Most of them were displaced from areas located in Afgooye district (5 826) and Wanla Weyn (1 756) districts. A majority of 7 705 individuals of those displaced in Lower Shabelle fled to Benadir.[416](#) The UN Panel of Experts held that over 90 % of conflict-related displacement recorded during between September 2024 and October 2025 was linked to Al-Shabaab.[417](#) Amongst others, armed clashes in Mubarak and Darusalam towns in March 2026 resulted in the displacement of around 2 364 individuals.[418](#)

Other impacts on civilian life (e.g. infrastructure damage, evictions, access to health, access to food, note on humanitarian situation)

A December 2025 map by UNOCHA showed 'heavy' and 'very heavy restrictions' regarding humanitarian access across most areas of Lower Shabelle, except in the towns of Afgooye, Wanla Weyn, Qoryooley, Marka and Baraawe and their surrounding rural areas.[419](#) UNOCHA recorded 12 humanitarian access incidents over the year 2025.[420](#) As of January 2026, the IPC reported that about 67 % of the total analysed population of 1 656 402 were either in Acute Food Insecurity IPC Phase 2 (stressed, 40 %), 3 (crisis, 23 %) or 4 (emergency, 4 %).[421](#) NRC recorded the eviction of 558

individuals in Lower Shabelle region (all of them recorded in 2025).[422](#) Al-Shabaab detonated a bridge in Bariire town in June 2025 which had served as one of the core bridges in the region.[423](#)

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