



2.4.2. Middle Shabelle

Middle Shabelle is divided into four districts, Adan Yabaal, Cadale, Balcad (also Bal'ad) and Jowhar. Jowhar city serves as the capital of both Middle Shabelle region and Hirshabelle State. [514](#) As of January 2026, the population was estimated at 1 053 608.[515](#) For more background information on Middle Shabelle, see section 2.4.2. 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, Al-Shabaab controlled parts of Adan Yabaal and Cadale districts along the border to Hiraaan, while most of the region's remaining area was under mixed control. Al-Shabaab also controlled the towns of Nur Dugle, Hawadley, Adan Yabaal, El Baraf, and Fidow. The latter three towns had still been under 'federal aligned coalition' or mixed control at the beginning of the reference period, according to [Map 2](#) of 31 March 2025. The towns of Jowhar, Mahaday, Balcad and Cadale and its surroundings remained under 'federal aligned coalition' control as of 31 March 2026, according to [Map 3.516](#)

Al-Shabaab launched an offensive in February 2025 and until mid-May 2025, the group managed to regain control over most of the territory it had lost in Middle Shabelle since 2022,[517](#) including the key towns of Adan Yabaal,[518](#) and, in early June 2025, Hawadley.[519](#) According to the Critical Threats Project (CTP), Al-Shabaab's offensive focused on key areas between government-controlled towns in the Shabelle River valley near a major highway[520](#) – such as Balcad and Jowhar[521](#) – to isolate these towns and reestablish support and supply zones.[522](#) As of January 2026, Al-Shabaab reportedly controlled the areas of Raaga Ceelle, Xaaji Cali, Masjid Cali Gaduud, Nur Dugle, and Ruun Nirgood.[523](#)

Security operations were reported in the areas of El Baraf in November,[524](#) and Jabad Godane in December 2025[525](#) and January 2026,[526](#) when government forces regained control over the area,[527](#) reportedly with the support of Turkish troops.[528](#) Security operations were also reported in Maxaa Saciid,[529](#) Qaahira[530](#) and Raaga

Ceelle district in February 2026.[531](#)

Kaab TV reported on inter-clan fighting in Middle Shabelle involving Jareer and Abgaal, Gaaljecel and Jareer, Cabdalla Caroone and Celi, and Moobleyn and Jareer Weyne clans, respectively.[532](#) Other reports described conflicts involving Abgaal subclans,[533](#) and Abgaal/Hawiye and Shidle clans,[534](#) respectively.

○ Recent security trends

In the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, ACLED recorded 457 security incidents in Middle Shabelle region, including battles, explosions or other forms of remote violence, and violence against civilians, causing 1 149 fatalities.[535](#)

Figure 25: Evolution of security events and fatalities in Middle Shabelle per month, based on ACLED

Figure 25: Evolution of security events and fatalities in Middle Shabelle per month, based on ACLED data.[536](#)

Figure 26: Evolution of security events in Middle Shabelle per type, based on ACLED data.

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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 223 security incidents against Military Forces of Somalia and associated actors (predominantly Hawiye-sub-clan militias). Moreover, Al-Shabaab was involved in 72 security incidents against various (sub-)clan militias. 16 security incidents involved clashes between (sub-)clan militias, and 41 incidents involved violence against civilians, mainly by Al-Shabaab, (sub-)clan militias and unidentified clan militias and armed groups.[538](#)

Illustrative security incidents

- Two civilians were killed in Burdheere village/Adale district in May 2025 in a suspected clan revenge killing.[539](#)
- More than 40 local elders were abducted by Al-Shabaab in the Afarta Tuulow area in May 2025, reportedly for refusing to fulfil the group's demands.[540](#)

- At least seven passengers were killed when a bus carrying about 20 civilians struck a roadside landmine in the Kudkudaaleey area in January 2026.[541](#)

- **Conflict-related displacement**

According to the UNHCR PRMN, 9 421 individuals were newly displaced from Middle Shabelle region due to conflict or insecurity in the period from April 2025 to February 2026, most of them within the region. For example, large numbers were moving from Adan Yabaal to Cadale district in April 2025, within Jowhar district in October 2025 and January 2026, and within Balcad district in January 2026. In the same period, no individuals arrived from other regions to Middle Shabelle.[542](#) According to the UN Panel of Experts, over 98 % of conflict-related displacement recorded during between September 2024 and October 2025 was linked to Al-Shabaab.[543](#)

Other impacts on civilian life and humanitarian situation

A December 2025 map by UNOCHA showed ‘very heavy restrictions’ regarding humanitarian access in large parts of Adan Yabaal, Cadale and Jowhar districts located along the border to Hiraan as well as in north-western areas of Balcad district.[544](#) In total, UNOCHA recorded 26 humanitarian access incidents in 2025, including armed clashes and road blockages.[545](#) Regarding the food insecurity situation as of January 2026, IPC reported that about 61 % of the total analysed population of 1 053 608 were either in Acute Food Insecurity IPC Phase 2 (stressed, 36 %), 3 (crisis, 20 %) or 4 (emergency, 4 %).[546](#) NRC recorded the eviction of 2 732 individuals in Middle Shabelle region in 2025 and early 2026 (all of them recorded in 2025).[547](#) Radio Ergo reported on displaced persons in camp near Warsheikh town facing food and water shortages, lack of shelter, as well as lack of access to education and health services.[548](#)

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