



SOMALIA

WHAT HAPPENED?

As Somalia's long-delayed electoral process moved ahead amid reports of manipulation, the **power struggle** between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble persisted; **tensions** ran high in Puntland and Hirshabelle states; and **Al-Shabaab** extended its grip.

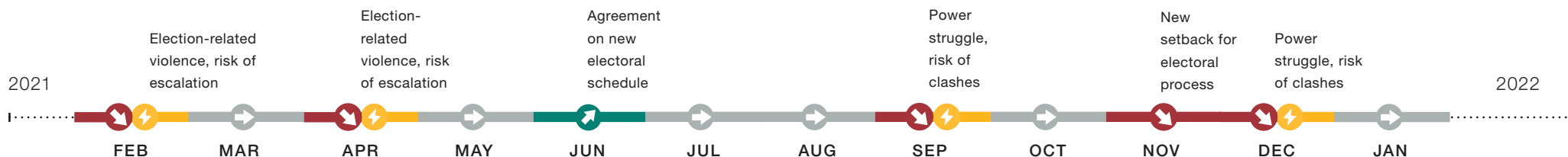
WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Government institutions are divided between the president and prime minister, while the high levels of manipulation in the election process could lead to a **contested result and political instability**, creating more room for Al-Shabaab to step up assaults.

DECEMBER TRENDS

President Farmajo attempted to suspend Prime Minister Roble, **escalating a months-long crisis** over delays in ongoing elections and raising the **risk of renewed violence between political rivals** in Somalia's capital Mogadishu; Al-Shabaab continued to present a significant security threat.

TRENDS TIMELINE



1 ➔ Indirect elections advanced amid political standoff

On 9 January, Roble and federal member state leaders struck a deal to complete long-delayed **Lower House elections by 25 February**, but undertook little meaningful effort to counter ongoing manipulation and political interference in elections; approximately a third of the seats had been selected by late January, but meeting the deadline will still be difficult.

Roble pursued efforts to gain the upper hand in his **power struggle** with Farmajo, notably trying to assert control over security institutions and reverse Farmajo policies.

2 ➔ Tensions in Hirshabelle and Puntland states

In Hiraan region, a militia upset over power-sharing arrangements flooded into the capital Beledweyne to prevent Hirshabelle President Ali Abdullahi Hussein "Guudlaawe" from visiting. Despite mediation efforts, **federal forces deployed to the city** on 26 January. Roble stated he did not authorise the operation, raising questions regarding civilian oversight of the military.

Bosasso city remained tense after Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni last year dismissed Puntland Security Forces Commander Mohamud Osman Diyano. Unclaimed explosions on 16 and 26 January killed two.

3 ➔ Al-Shabaab continued to extend its territorial reach

Al-Shabaab advanced on Balcad-Jowhar road in Middle Shabelle region (Hirshabelle state); the group also temporarily took over Baxdo and Cada Kibir villages in Galguduud region, signalling continued **expansion of its operating radius within Galmudug state**.

Al-Shabaab also launched a **series of attacks in Mogadishu**, notably killing at least eight on 12 January, seriously injuring Government Spokesperson Mohamed Moalimuu on 16 January, and killing former Hiraan Governor Abdirahman Ibrahim Ma'ow, who was running for Hirshabelle MP, on 22 January.

WHAT TO WATCH

As the voting shifts from state capitals to secondary locations, **unresolved local tensions and political jockeying by state and federal leaders** might complicate holding smooth polls.

The tug of war between Roble and Farmajo is likely to continue, as both sides look to further undermine the other.

Beledweyne may become a flash-point combining these risks, given the division over federal security deployments, intense local grievances and the planned selection of 25 Lower House seats there.

