



SOMALIA

WHAT HAPPENED IN MAY?

Somalia concluded its prolonged electoral cycle with the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president. Outgoing President Farmajo accepted defeat and formally handed over power. Al-Shabaab launched its **largest attack on the African Union mission** since 2019.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The presidential vote and smooth transfer of power brings the protracted and hugely divisive **electoral cycle to a relatively orderly close**. Building on this momentum, there is **renewed hope** that Somali leaders will now prioritise tackling security and governance challenges.

APRIL TRENDS

Somalia's election process made **significant progress**: after most members of parliament were sworn in, both houses selected speakers, paving the way for the **presidential vote**. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab attacks continued and the AU Transition Mission (ATMIS) got off to a bumpy start.

1 ➡ A peaceful transfer of presidential power

The **presidential election**, fifteen months overdue, **unfolded smoothly**, ending a convoluted indirect electoral process. On 15 May, former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud emerged from a crowded field of 30 contestants to defeat incumbent President Farmajo in the third round of voting.

The result was accepted across the political spectrum. Farmajo congratulated Mohamud and urged support for the incoming administration. Farmajo formally **handed over power** to Mohamud on 23 May in the capital Mogadishu **without major incident**.

2 ➡ Tensions in lead-up to vote outside Mogadishu

Ahead of the presidential vote, tensions related to the electoral cycle surged in some member states. In Puntland, Vice President Ahmed Karash replaced officials close to Puntland leader Said Deni, who was in Mogadishu running for president.

On 13 May, violence flared in Galmudug when Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) Sufi militia fighters entered the state capital Dhusamareb as they tried to solidify their position ahead of the presidential vote; up to **twelve people were killed** before ASWJ retreated.

3 ↘ Largest Al-Shabaab attack on AU mission since 2019

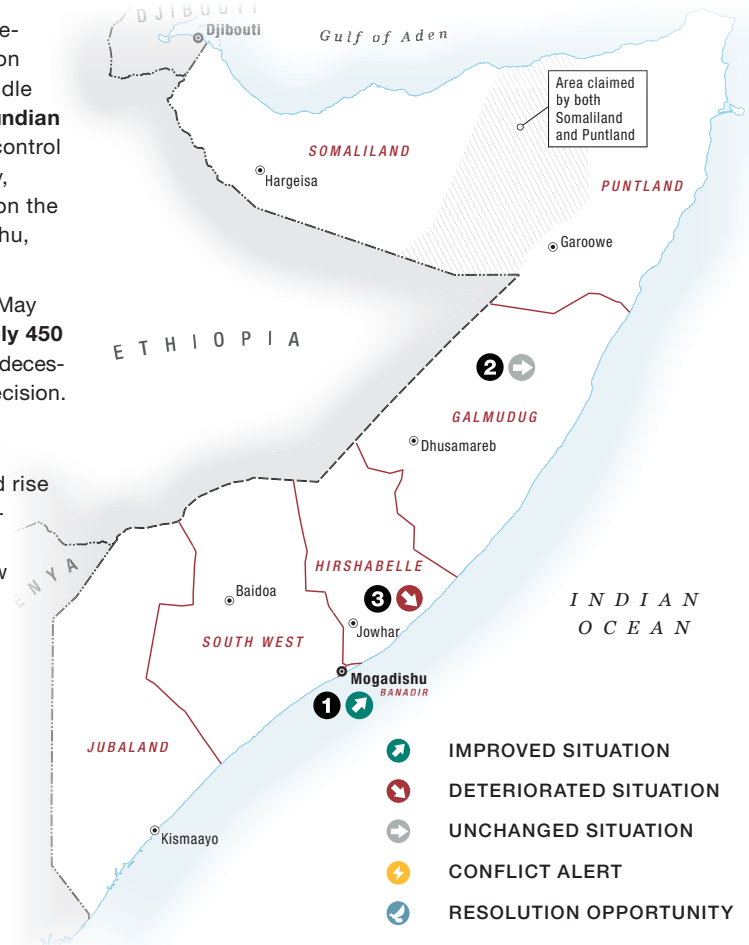
On 3 May, Al-Shabaab launched a large-scale offensive against the AU Transition Mission base in Ceel Baraf village, Middle Shabelle region, **killing at least 30 Burundian peacekeepers**. Militants remained in control of the outpost until 17 May. On 15 May, Al-Shabaab launched a mortar attack on the presidential election venue in Mogadishu, leaving no casualties.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Biden on 16 May announced the **return of approximately 450 U.S. troops** to Somalia, reversing his predecessor Donald Trump's 2020 withdrawal decision.

WHAT TO WATCH

Tensions within member states could rise further with elections concluded. Communities that put grievances on hold pending the polls' completion may now be impatient for the new government to address their complaints and could **grow frustrated absent progress**.

How President Mohamud navigates the new government's **relationship with regional leaders** who opposed his ascent to power will be an early indicator of his commitment to his campaign slogan of "no retaliation" against political opponents.



TRENDS TIMELINE

