

## SOMALIA

## WHAT HAPPENED IN AUGUST?

Al-Shabaab killed more than twenty people in its **first major assault in the capital** Mogadishu since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's return to power. A new government formed, and tensions rose over possible presidential term extensions in South West and Jubaland states.

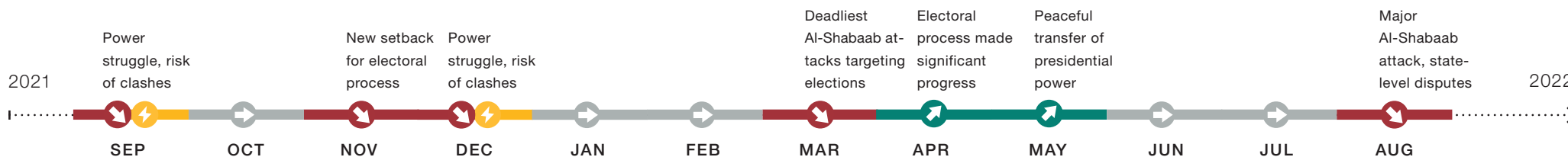
## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

President Mohamud's honeymoon period is over. Al-Shabaab's attack on the capital has eroded the security forces' confidence, while state-level term extensions are straining the relationship between Mogadishu and federal member states, providing an **early test for Mohamud's reconciliation agenda**.

## JULY TRENDS

President Mohamud went on a regional tour to **reset foreign policy**. At home, a deadly firefight erupted between Puntland state security units, while **Al-Shabaab militants targeted Ethiopian police units** near and across the border with Ethiopia.

## TRENDS TIMELINE



### 1 ➔ Deadly Al-Shabaab assault hit Mogadishu

On 19 August, Al-Shabaab militants launched a **complex attack** on Mogadishu's Hayat hotel, killing **at least 21 people** during a 30-hour siege. Mohamud in following hours declared an **"all-out war"** against the jihadist group.

Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab's late July incursion into Ethiopia brought about a swift reaction. In early August, **Ethiopian airstrikes** targeted multiple locations in Somalia, while an **anti-Al-Shabaab operation** by Somali government forces in Hirshabelle region's Mataban and Mahas districts picked up pace.

### 2 ➔ Political temperature rose following state-level term extensions

**South West state** President Abdiaziz Lafta-Gareen faced growing opposition after prominent politicians in July formed the South West Salvation Council, demanding presidential elections at the state level in December 2022. Lafta-Gareen argues that the state parliament in 2020 extended his mandate until December 2023.

Meanwhile, **Jubaland state's** parliament on 21 August extended the state administration's term by one year, pushing prospective elections to August 2024. Political actors from Gedo region and former allies of Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe opposed the extension.

### 3 ➔ New government unveiled, endorsed by parliament

On 2 August, Prime Minister Hamza Barre unveiled a **75-member cabinet**, most of whom belong to President Mohamud's party. Certain clans or political actors who felt bypassed expressed discontent, but MPs overwhelmingly endorsed the cabinet on 7 August.

The appointment of **former top Al-Shabaab leader Mukhtar Robow as religion minister** reflects Mohamud's determination to combat Al-Shabaab beyond military means and sends a signal to members of the jihadist group, even as Al-Shabaab's top leadership has declared him an "apostate".

## WHAT TO WATCH

The government will likely accelerate efforts to **counter Al-Shabaab militarily, financially and ideologically** to demonstrate it can make progress in the security realm.

The proliferation of one-year term extensions may become a political challenge if they **incite unrest within member states**, forcing the federal government to intervene in an issue it has thus far avoided.

Somalia's humanitarian situation is growing increasingly dire, with **internal displacement on the rise** due to four consecutive failed rainy seasons.

