

**AUGUST/SEPTEMBER TRENDS**

The new front line between Dhulbahante clan militias and government forces stabilised in September after the Dhulbahante captured several army positions near Las Anod, the capital of Sool region, effectively driving Somaliland forces out of Dhulbahante territory. Election-related tensions have dissipated after President Bihi in late August accepted a compromise with the opposition.

**WHAT TO WATCH IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS**

**1 Fighting for control of Sool region could resume, drawing in wider array of actors**

Dhulbahante leaders, who have long rejected Somaliland’s state-building project, which they view as both secessionist (vis-à-vis Somalia) and serving the dominant Isaaq clan’s interests, will continue steps toward establishing their own administration in Sool region.

President Bihi could attempt to re-enter lost territory in Sool to reverse losses ahead of **November 2024** Somaliland elections. He could do so to try to strengthen internal cohesion after the recent deal on elections restored Isaaq unity.

Clan militias on both sides of the Isaaq-Dhulbahante front line could take up arms against each other, fuelling intercommunal violence.

If the conflict resumes, quietly supportive neighbouring Puntland could send state forces more overtly into the fray to shore up Dhulbahante militiamen, with a view to protecting Dhulbahante’s control of Sool region.

**TO WATCH** A spark from either side could set off new fighting on the frontline between Oog and Guumays towns in Sool. The conflict could expand to other parts of Somaliland if Dhulbahante militias push further into areas that are inhabited by Dhulbahante but are of mixed clans, such as parts of Cayn and Sanaag; Puntland could be forced to withdraw support to Dhulbahante if electoral violence flares in lead-up to January 2024 elections in Puntland state.

**Potential Consequences**

A resumption of conflict between Somaliland and the Dhulbahante would likely take on increased clan undertones, pitting the Isaaq against the wider Darod clan (of which the Dhulbahante are part). This would likely result in more intense fighting, intercommunal violence and further displacement.

**2 Election-related tensions might turn violent in some locations**

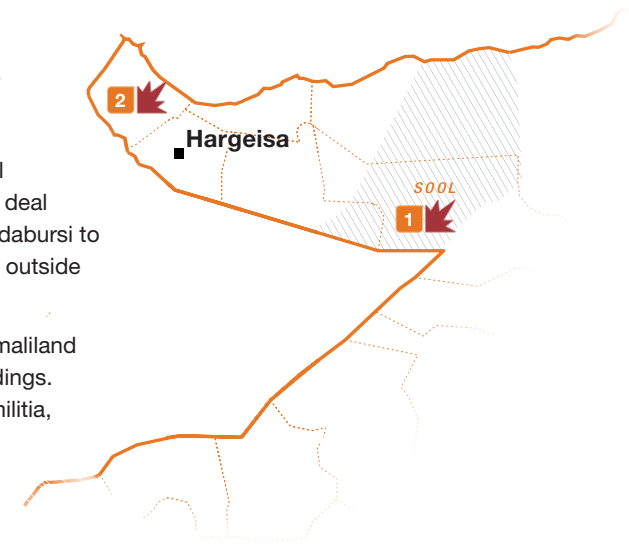
In Awdal region, the Gadabursi clan’s resentment regarding perceived marginalisation in Somaliland may grow, as evidenced by Hilaac political association’s rejection of the election deal (and other attempts by prominent Gadabursi to organise themselves, both inside and outside Somaliland).

Clan tensions in different parts of Somaliland may be inflamed by electoral proceedings. Notably, newly-formed Haber Yonis militia, which has recently agreed to lay down arms, could re-emerge if implementation of electoral agreement stalls; unresolved conflict between Haber Yonis and Haber Jeclo sub-clans may continue to result in small-scale skirmishes around El Afweyn.

**TO WATCH** Implementation of August election deal, including the National Election Commission’s announcement of a new electoral roadmap.

**Potential Consequences**

If implementation of electoral agreement does not proceed smoothly, it could be a trigger for inter-clan violence and increase risk of disputed results.



**Flashpoint**

**Published October 2023**

On the Horizon offers a snapshot into emergent conflicts and crises in the next three to six months in a clear, accessible format, identifying triggers, key dates to watch and potential behaviour of conflict actors, to support global conflict prevention efforts.



Methodology: The information provided above relies on our monthly global conflict tracker, **CrisisWatch**, and qualitative assessments provided by Crisis Group’s analysts based in or near conflict areas. The selection is not exhaustive, and should be read in conjunction with country/regional reports and other early warning products, all available at [crisisgroup.org](https://www.crisisgroup.org).