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The Horn in October:

Shifting Alliances, Conflict Dynamics, and Strategic Opportunities

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Foreword

"The Greater Horn" Strategic Brief offers a monthly synthesis of key diplomatic and security trends in one of the world's most volatile yet consequential geopolitical theatres. This edition, covering developments from October 2025, draws on open-source intelligence, strategic assessments, policy briefings, and regional commentary to deliver nuanced, non-partisan, and research-driven insights into strategic complexities, internal vulnerabilities, emerging partnerships, and geopolitical recalibrations shaping the region's trajectory. Intended to inform regional policymakers, analysts, and stakeholders, the briefing is produced by independent experts committed to regional stability, cooperative security, and evidence-based policymaking.

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Executive Director & Editor-in-Chief,
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The Horn in October: Shifting Alliances, Conflict Dynamics, and Strategic Opportunities

Executive Summary

October 2025 marked a month of renewed confrontation, accelerated diplomacy, and deepening geopolitical fault lines across the Greater Horn region.

Ethiopia adopted a more assertive posture amid heightened tensions with Eritrea, marking a clear shift from détente to open confrontation. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized lawful and equitable Red Sea access as a matter of national survival.

Eritrea, meanwhile, intensified anti-Ethiopian rhetoric, aligned closely with Egypt, and deepened its involvement in Sudan's conflict. Despite growing international scrutiny, Asmara sought legitimacy through selective multilateral engagement, while amplifying propaganda.

Djibouti strengthened its position as the Red Sea's logistics hub, balancing energy cooperation with Ethiopia and expanding partnerships with Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

Somalia advanced political and economic reforms amid persistent insecurity and tensions over Ethiopia's defiance of its e-visa policy.

Somaliland, meanwhile, deepened Gulf and Ethiopian ties, reaffirming its de facto sovereignty and independent governance despite Mogadishu's objections.

Sudan's conflict reached a critical turning point as the RSF's capture of El Fasher cemented control over Darfur, fueling atrocities, famine, and further state collapse amid deepening Russian engagement at Port Sudan.

South Sudan grappled with political instability and severe flooding even as it sought greater diplomatic visibility and UN mission reform.

In **Kenya**, the sudden death of Raila Odinga triggered nationwide unrest, testing state resilience amid fiscal strain and IMF-driven reforms.

Overall, October revealed a region at an inflection point—where Ethiopia's assertive diplomacy and economic defiance contrasted with Sudan's implosion, Eritrea's belligerence, and Kenya's internal reckoning. The Greater Horn now stands at the crossroads of deterrence and diplomacy, its stability contingent on whether emerging alignments can transform confrontation into coordinated resilience.

Section One: Power Shifts, Strategic Autonomy, and Regional Fractures

1.1 Ethiopia: Reckoning, Diplomacy under Pressure, and Economy in Defiance

October showcased Ethiopia's proactive diplomacy, strategic autonomy, and economic resilience. The government signaled vigilance against Eritrean aggression while defending GERD operations, emphasizing climate resilience and regional stability. Prime Minister Abiy highlighted the imperative of Red Sea access for economic self-reliance, linking infrastructure, digital transformation, and trade diversification to national growth. Defense industrialization advanced through the 44th commando cohort and domestic production of drones and munitions, reinforcing operational readiness and sovereignty. Ethiopia expanded multilateral engagement across BRICS, China, and the UN, strengthened Somali corridor diplomacy, and demonstrated frontier alertness near Afar. The month affirmed Addis Ababa as a regional anchor navigating deterrence, reform, and connectivity. The month affirmed Addis Ababa as a regional anchor navigating deterrence, reform, and connectivity.

Diplomatic Shift from Détente to Open Confrontation

The month opened with Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Gedion Timothewos, sending a formal letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, accusing Eritrea of "actively preparing to wage war," alleging Asmara's destabilizing effort, a charge that signaled the collapse of post-2018 détente and the resurfacing of structural mistrust between the two states.

For the first time since the 2022 Pretoria Agreement, Addis Ababa invoked Eritrea's name in the language of imminent aggression, a notable shift from restrained ambiguity to open confrontation. Eritrea's reported military mobilizations along the border, coupled with alleged supply lines into Tigray and Amhara, reflected a strategy of attrition: to destabilize Ethiopia internally while maintaining plausible deniability internationally.[1]

Egypt's official narrative blames the GERD for "man-made" floods,[2] asserting historic Nile entitlements while selectively ignoring technical analyses that show the dam's design is meant to buffer extreme flows and reduce downstream flood risk when operated correctly, and evidence.

Ethiopia's response has been explicit: GERD retained excess Blue Nile runoff and lessened what would otherwise have been worse flooding in Sudan and beyond, while critics in Cairo have disproportionately highlighted worst-case scenarios without confronting domestic water-use inefficiencies that aggravate vulnerability downstream.[3] Egypt's irrigation network

[1] Addis Standard. "Ethiopia Accuses Eritrea and TPLF of Colluding to 'Wage War,' Involvement in Recent Attack on Woldiya City in Amhara Region." October 7 2025.

[2] EgyptToday. "Egypt Blames Ethiopia for 'Man-Made Flood' from GERD Endangering Downstream Nations." October 3, 2025.

[3] Huang, Zeqin, Xuezhi Tan, Thian Yew Gan, Bingjun Liu, and Xiaohong Chen. "Thermodynamically Enhanced Precipitation Extremes Due to Counterbalancing Influences of Anthropogenic Greenhouse Gases and Aerosols."

still suffers measurable conveyance and seepage losses that raise legitimate questions about internal water management and resilience, and those structural weaknesses matter as much as any upstream operation when explaining who bears the harm in a flood year. If the basin is to manage growing climate volatility, blaming the upstream country alone will not reduce harm; the political impulse to preserve historical water privileges must give way to technical cooperation on forecasting, coordinated releases, and investment in conveyance and flood protection so all three countries, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, can build climate resilience together.

In this fraught environment, Ethiopia's strategic calculus is measured yet resolute. Determined to avoid preemptive escalation, Addis Ababa has projected readiness for deterrence while framing Eritrea's actions as "illegal interference" and "moral regression."[4] This dual posture, assertive diplomacy paired with defensive vigilance, underscores Ethiopia's effort to maintain regional stability while protecting its sovereignty and national interests amid a volatile Horn of Africa security landscape.[5]

PM Abiy's Parliamentary Reckoning on the Red Sea

On October 28, in the 6th round, 5th year session of the House of People's Representatives, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed fielded lawmakers' questions on Ethiopia's economic trajectory, macroeconomic reforms, and the strategic imperative of Red Sea access[6]. Amid rigorous scrutiny from both ruling and opposition benches, one cluster of inquiries cut to the core of national sovereignty and survival.

P.M. Abiy reframed the Red Sea question as a matter of historical continuity and national equity rather than confrontation.[7] He argued that Ethiopia's current landlocked status lacks a formal constitutional or institutional basis, calling it a "historical imbalance" that continues to shape the country's economic vulnerabilities. By invoking the absence of any official decision in 1993 to relinquish sea access, he situated the debate within a broader narrative of self-determination and development, emphasizing Ethiopia's need for sustainable access to trade routes in a way that aligns with international law and regional stability.

The Prime Minister also called for pragmatic engagement with Eritrea, describing relations not as adversarial but as "unfinished business"[8] requiring dialogue and economic cooperation. While noting concerns about illicit trade and cross-border insecurity, he underscored the shared social and cultural ties between the two countries and the potential benefits of structured cooperation over confrontation.

Economic Self-Reliance

[4] ADF Magazine. "Heated Rhetoric Raises Specter of Renewed War in Horn of Africa." October 28 2025.
[5] NewsGhana. "Ethiopia Accuses Eritrea of War Preparations Alliance." October 8 2025.
[6] Institute of Foreign Affairs. "PM Abiy Addresses #Red Sea, #Nile Waters Issues." October 29, 2025.
[7] Albawaba News. "Ethiopia's PM Warns on Access to Red Sea." October 28, 2025.
[8] Eurasia Review. "Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed Warns Access to Red Sea Is Existential." October 29, 2025.

On the economic front, Prime Minister Abiy highlighted progress under the Homegrown Economic Reform (HGER) agenda,[9] citing improved macroeconomic indicators, such as the inflation rate decline to 11.7% and the renewal of the $3.4 billion IMF Extended Credit Facility (ECF).[10] His remarks portrayed infrastructure and digital transformation as central to economic self-reliance, linking projects like the Koysha Dam, expanded rail connectivity, and the "Digital Ethiopia 2025" program to broader national goals of industrialization and export diversification.

The government's decision to adjust the foreign exchange auction rate to 148.1[11] birr per dollar was presented as a step toward gradual liberalization and investor confidence, though concerns remain about inflationary pressure and private-sector competitiveness. In this framing, access to the sea was not depicted as a military pursuit but as an economic necessity to reduce trade costs and improve long-term resilience.

Ethiopia's Strategic Autonomy Through Defense Industrialization

Ethiopia's National Defense Force inaugurated its 44th commando cohort, reflecting a broader national strategy to align human capital with defense industrialization. Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, Field Marshal Birhanu Jula, asserted that Ethiopia's continued existence is a testament to national resilience.[12] The initiative integrates advanced training with domestic production of drones and munitions through SkyWin Aeronautics and the Homicho Ammunition Complex, reducing foreign dependence and enhancing readiness. By linking disciplined training, industrial expansion, and national pride, Ethiopia positions itself as a self-reliant security actor, advancing operational autonomy and regional influence.

Infrastructure as Strategy: Railways, Connectivity, and Continental Trade

At the National Railway Business and Investment Summit on October 21, the Ethiopian Railway Corporation announced plans for a $1.58 billion standard-gauge line linking northern Ethiopia to Red Sea ports in Tadjourah, Assab, and Massawa.[13] Signaling Addis Ababa's commitment to regional connectivity under its AfCFTA-driven integration strategy, despite ongoing arbitration with Turkish contractor Yapi Merkezi. Complementing this, Ethiopia and Djibouti have renewed efforts to deepen trade and economic cooperation, addressing critical sectors such as aviation and energy through discussions on Ethiopian Airlines and the National Oil Company.[14] This coordinated approach aims to resolve

[9] AllAfrica. "Ethiopia's Prime Minister Presents Economic Performance Report to Parliament." *AllAfrica*, October 28, 2025.

[10] International Monetary Fund (IMF). "IMF Executive Board Completes Third Review Under the ECF Arrangement and 2025 Article IV Consultation for Ethiopia." *IMF Press Release No. 25/234*, July 2, 2025.

[11] Fana Broadcasting Corporate. "NBE Sets Birr 148.1007 per USD in Tenth Foreign Exchange Auction." *Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC)*, October 14, 2025.

[12] Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. "National Resilience Forged by Generations of Heroes — Remarks of the Chief of General Staff, Field Marshal Birhanu Jula." October 25, 2025.

[13] The Reporter Ethiopia. "Ethiopia's New Railway Plan Envisions Direct Line to the Red Sea." *The Reporter Ethiopia*, October 25, 2025.

[14] Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia, Djibouti Renew Commitment to Further Consolidate Trade, Economic Cooperation."

operational bottlenecks, diversify trade routes, secure Red Sea access, and foster a favorable investment environment, balancing immediate practical solutions with long-term regional economic resilience and competitiveness.

Simultaneously, Ethiopia's outreach to the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) on a new international airport project further highlights its focus on logistics and digital infrastructure as growth drivers.[15] These partnerships align with efforts to enhance air cargo capacity and attract investment in fintech and e-commerce, potentially unlocking additional support from the World Bank and regional lenders.

Multilateral Engagement and Ethiopia's Expanding Diplomatic Arena

Amid these assertive moves, Ethiopia's diplomatic stage widened, showcasing its enduring centrality in the Horn of Africa's stability discourse. This influence was demonstrated on two key multilateral fronts: Ethiopia successfully hosted the 11th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa in Bahir Dar[16] and the UN Security Council–AU Peace and Security Council Joint Consultative Meeting[17] . Leveraging its role as host and anchor state, Ethiopia advocated for crucial national interests, primarily emphasizing the need for predictable financing and African ownership of peace operations, themes consistent with its broader push for UN reform.[18] The presence of international partners, including EU Special Representative Annette Weber,[19] different countries, and the subsequent praise during UN 80th anniversary commemorations for Ethiopia's peacekeeping record, bolstered Addis Ababa's credibility and secured ODA offsets against prior aid cuts,[20] reinforcing its national interest in AU centrality and amplifying African voices on debt-climate linkages at global forums.

Simultaneously, Addis Ababa executed a strategic pivot towards multipolar security diversification. India and Ethiopia held their inaugural Joint Defense Cooperation meeting in New Delhi, co-chaired by Amitabh Prasad and Maj. Gen. Teshome Gemechu, reaffirming ties in training, intelligence, and counterterrorism.[21]Parallel to this, Russia has intensified its engagement, recognizing Ethiopia as both a vital BRICS partner and a pivotal actor in African security. Recent high-level discussions, most notably Foreign Minister Sergey

ENA, March 3, 2025.

[15] Okebiorun, Olamilekan. "U.S. Backs $10 Billion Ethiopian Airport Following Record Aircraft Purchase." *Business Insider Africa*, October 1, 2025.

[16] Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). "Tana Forum: Africa's Security Issues Should Be Addressed by Africans—Deputy PM and FM." *ENA*, October 2025.

[17] Amani Africa. "Annual Joint Informal Seminar and Consultative Meeting Between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council." *Amani Africa*, October 2025.

[18] Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). "Ethiopia's Hosting of UN–AU Joint Meeting Demonstrates Its Central Role in African Peace and Security." *ENA*, October 2025.

[19] European External Action Service (EEAS). "EU Special Representatives." *EEAS*, accessed October 2025.

[20] United Nations. "Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council Hold Annual Joint Consultative Meeting." *United Nations Press Release SC/16205*, October 2025

[21] Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Inaugural India–Ethiopia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting Held in New Delhi." *PIB*, October 21, 2025.

Lavrov's meeting with Gedion Timotheos, underscored Moscow's endorsement of Ethiopia's strategic objectives, including its pursuit of maritime trade access.[22] This political alignment is reinforced by tangible technical cooperation: the Rosatom partnership for civilian nuclear energy development and shared aspirations for a multipolar world order. Ambassador Evgeny Terekhin highlighted BRICS as the platform for deepening economic and technological integration between the two nations.[23]

October marked a dynamic month for Ethiopia's diplomacy, showcasing broad engagement across continents. High-level talks in Moscow deepened Ethiopia–Russia cooperation in trade, energy, and nuclear technology, while China reaffirmed its All-Weather Partnership through expanded collaboration in investment, manufacturing, and science. Strengthened relations with Kuwait, Romania, and Azerbaijan highlighted Ethiopia's growing global outreach in trade, technology, and multilateral cooperation. Additionally, Ethiopia conveyed solidarity with Kenya during a national mourning period.[24] Participation in the 151st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva further underscored Ethiopia's active role in advancing humanitarian and regional diplomatic priorities.[25]

This strategic alignment offers Addis Ababa a diplomatic counterweight and access to high-impact energy technology outside traditional Western financing models. Ultimately, these overlapping events showcased Ethiopia's defining paradox: a nation under significant domestic strain yet universally viewed as an indispensable anchor state, leveraging its diplomatic necessity abroad to protect and advance its strategic interests at home.

Regional Diplomacy and the Somali Corridor

On the regional front, Ethiopia's diplomacy oscillated between pragmatism and outreach. The back-to-back visits of Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Somaliland's Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi[26] to Addis Ababa signaled Ethiopia's renewed balancing act in the Somali sphere. While formal discussions remained undisclosed, the optics were deliberate:[27] Ethiopia reaffirmed its role as the Horn's indispensable interlocutor, even as maritime ambitions cast shadows over its relations with.

This dual diplomacy leverages the power of its large population to assert strategic autonomy and secure diversified trade access. Though formal talks remain undisclosed, the visits reflect

[22] Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). "Signing of Action Plan for NPP Construction Historic Milestone: FM Gedion." October 21, 2025.

[23] TASS. "Trade Turnover between Russia, Ethiopia More Than Doubled in 6 M 2025 — Russian Ambassador." October 21, 2025.

[24] BBC News. "At least three dead after Kenya police open fire to disperse mourners of ex-PM Odinga." *BBC News*, October 16, 2025.

[25] Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). "151st IPU Assembly and Related Meetings." *IPU*, 2025.

[26] AllAfrica. "Somalia: Ethiopia-Somaliland MOU — The Promise Unfulfilled and the Stakes of President Abdullah's Visit to Addis Ababa." *AllAfrica*, October 14, 2025.

[27] Somaliland Chronicle. "Ethiopia Must Now Compete: President Cirro Departs for Addis After UAE Marathon as Congress Authorises Hargeisa Office." *Somaliland Chronicle*, October 14, 2025.

Ethiopia's existential necessity to build trust and mitigate regional backlash, framing the engagement as an essential step in its journey to secure economic gateways.

These visits underscored Addis Ababa's pragmatic engagement with both Somalia and Somaliland as functional partners, guided by strategic national interests. This corridor diplomacy advances Ethiopia's goal of port redundancy, reducing $1.5 billion annual reliance on Djibouti through the Berbera MoU, while promoting regional stability within IGAD frameworks in alignment with mutual respect for sovereignty.

The visit of top officials, including Intelligence Chief Redwan Hussein and Minister-Advisor Getachew Reda, in the Afar region, near the Eritrean border, Bure[28]. Simultaneously, the public presence of these same high-ranking officials near the eastern frontier, even with military escort, served as a powerful, non-confrontational demonstration of Addis Ababa's resolve to consolidate its sovereignty and regional position. This operational dual-track diplomacy, engaging a neighboring military leader while symbolically asserting an essential national objective, is a calculated act of statecraft, allowing Ethiopia to enhance security, protect commercial links, and leverage its indispensable status as a regional anchor.

Strategic Outlook: Between Deterrence and Diplomacy

On October 29, Justice Minister Hana Arayaselassie led a delegation to the China-Africa Prosecutors' Forum in Guangzhou,[29] inking MoUs on legal aid and anti-trafficking, extending BRI to rule-of-law ties. Ethiopia's challenge moving forward lies in synchronizing its three fronts: internal cohesion, economic modernization, and calibrated deterrence.

The months ahead will test whether Addis Ababa's dual posture, a reformist economy with a revisionist geography, can stabilize into enduring strength, or whether the Horn's cyclical volatility will once again reclaim its gravitational pull. Ultimately, Ethiopia's national interest demands bold diversification: yuan-debt swaps to ease $5.38B burdens,[30] AfCFTA rail links for 8-10% sustained growth,[31] and Tana Forum diplomacy to forge multipolar hedges against Western aid volatility. November's IMF review looms as a litmus test; success here could unlock 9% FY growth,[32] failure risks default and sanctions, imperiling the very sovereignty that Prime Minister Abiy champions. With these additions, the briefing gains fuller depth, revealing Ethiopia's multifaceted resilience.

[28] Mohamed Kheir Omer (@mkheirom). "PM Abiy's advisors Redwan Hussein and Getachew Reda have appeared on the Regional Afar State overlooking the border to Eritrea." *X*, October 22, 2025.

[29] Addis Insight. "Hanna Arayaselassie Appointed Minister of Justice as Husband Gedion Timotheos Takes Over Foreign Affairs." *Addis Insight*, October 18, 2024.

[30] Ethio Negari. "Ethiopia Seeks to Swap $5.38 Billion Chinese Debt into Yuan." *Ethio Negari*, October 21, 2025.

[31] Institute for Security Studies (ISS). "Can Infrastructure Development Drive Inclusive Growth in Ethiopia?"

[32] Reuters. "IMF's Board Approves Second Review of Ethiopia's $3.4 Billion Program." *Reuters*, January 17, 2025.

1.2 Eritrea: Escalating Tensions, Regional Maneuvering, and Heightened Propaganda

Eritrea's October political landscape was marked by sharpening regional frictions, quiet but significant diplomatic moves, and growing scrutiny from international actors. Persistent repression and human rights abuses continued domestically, while Eritrea's foreign posture grew more assertive amid rising tensions with Ethiopia and deepening involvement in Sudan's conflict.

Human Rights and Religious Persecution

The official Jehovah's Witness church released its latest report on the persecution of its members in Eritrea. Dated June and published in early October, it stated that "the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Eritrea continues unabated," noting 64 members—37 men, 26 women, and one 17-year-old girl—imprisoned indefinitely without charge or trial.[33] The report stood out as one of the few mainstream condemnations of Eritrea's ongoing religious persecution, an issue that has largely faded from international attention. Despite its significance, the publication gained little media coverage and went largely unnoticed.

Eritrea–Ethiopia Relations and Regional Tensions

Tensions between Asmara and Addis Ababa escalated sharply through public exchanges at the United Nations and a series of indirect rhetorical confrontations.

At the 80th UN General Assembly, Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh met with the UN Secretary-General, referring to "reckless provocations and expansionist ambitions cloaked in the name of access to the sea." He reiterated that Eritrea "will not be invited into such reckless agendas under any circumstances," a clear rebuke directed at Ethiopia.[34]

Days later, Ethiopia's October 2 letter to the UN accused Eritrea of "repeated provocations" and described what it called an evident "Tsimdo" alliance between Asmara and the TPLF. The letter stated that "the FANO launched a punitive offensive supported and instigated by the Eritrean Government and the TPLF," and directly named Asmara as "the main architect of these nefarious activities." Ethiopia called on Eritrea to "cease its direct and indirect acts of hostility."[35]

Eritrea dismissed Ethiopia's accusations of preparing for war as "provocative sabre-rattling." Information Minister Yemane Ghebremeskel, speaking to AFP, described Addis Ababa's letter to the United Nations as a "deceitful charade" and accused Ethiopia of conducting an

[33] Jehovah's Witnesses. "ERITREA: the Life of Jehovah's Witnesses." Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses, June 2025.

[34] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "FM Osman Saleh met UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres yesterday and discussed matters of mutual interests and concern…." *X*, September 30, 2025.

[35] Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Letter to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (2 October 2025)." MinBane, October 8 2025.

"intense propaganda campaign aimed at whipping up irredentist ambitions."[36] The TPLF issued a letter of its own to the UN and key international actors, accusing Ethiopia of violating the Pretoria Agreement and "attempting to portray the aggressor as the victim and the victim as the aggressor."[37]

Within Eritrea, Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel attacked Ethiopia's positions in multiple statements, including in a response to the Ethiopian President's parliamentary speech, which included statements on Ethiopia's "Two Waters Doctrine". He stated that there was "no palpable geographical overlap, intersection or confluence; legal analogy; geopolitical symmetry or other shared attributes between these two divergent themes that one can invoke by any stretch of imagination."[38]

Meanwhile, reports of a "Tsmdo" alliance between Eritrea and the TPLF persisted. Similarly, unverified photos circulated of Fano fighters holding both Eritrean and Ethiopian flags without the national emblem.[39] The TPLF formally called on Eritrea for collaboration to avert what it described as a looming war in the Horn.[40] Following the appointment of Tadesse Worede as interim regional president, the TPLF regained control in Tigray and strengthened its coordination with Asmara under the "Tsmdo" framework.

In an address to the Ethiopian Parliament, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed commented on Ethiopia's access to the sea and efforts that were made to reintegrate Assab following the 2018 rapprochement, noting the challenges that prevented these initiatives from taking root. He directly addressed the Eritrean government, urging it to cease "facilitating weapons smuggling," halt "illegal trade and human trafficking," and end "black market activities conducted abroad." The Prime Minister emphasized the need for peaceful dialogue and cooperation.[41]

In a symbolic response, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki arrived in Cairo for a five-day visit with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.[42] Officially centered on "Red Sea security," the trip followed Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's sharp remarks on Eritrea's hostility, signaling coordinated posturing by Asmara and Cairo against Ethiopia's renewed maritime ambitions.

[36] Addis Standard. "Eritrea Dismisses Ethiopia's War Allegation as 'Provocative Sabre-Rattling'." October 9, 2025.

[37] Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). "Clarification on the Allegations by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Appeal for Renewed Commitment to the Full Implementation of the Pretoria Agreement." *Facebook*, October 9, 2025

[38] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "PP's obsession (yesterday's speech in 'House of People's Representatives') with the 'Two Waters'…." *X*, October 7, 2025.

[39] Eritrean Press (@EritreanPress). "#ጽምዲ #Amhara." *X*, October 4, 2025.

[40] Borkena. "TPLF Makes a Formal Call for Eritrea 'To Work Together'." October 8, 2025.

[41] Fana Television. "Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) Responds to Questions Submitted by Members of Parliament and Provides Clarifications (Part 2)." *YouTube*, October 28, 2025.

[42] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "President Isaias Afwerki and President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi held …" *X*, October 30, 2025.

Diplomatic Activity

Beyond the Ethiopian front, Eritrea pursued active regional and multilateral engagement throughout the month.

Sudanese Prime Minister Kamil Idris visited Asmara from October 9–10 with a ministerial delegation. He met President Isaias Afwerki to discuss bilateral relations and Sudan's war, reaffirming Eritrea's support for the Sudanese Armed Forces against the RSF. The visit, described by Idris as "historic," concluded with agreements to strengthen political, economic, social, and cultural cooperation.[43]

Eritrea also took part in the COMESA meeting (October 6–9), represented by Ambassador Beyene Russom[44], and expanded its diplomatic outreach, especially through its embassies in Cairo and Addis Ababa. European diplomats held meetings with their Eritrean counterparts. Eritrean envoys—Berhane G. Solomon in Cairo, Biniam Berhe in Addis Ababa, and Ambassador Sophia Tesfamariam—intensified anti-Ethiopian rhetoric across their social media platforms.

Domestically, Eritrea commemorated the 80th anniversary of the UN's creation. UN Resident Coordinator Nahla Valji wrote an op-ed on Shabait, calling the UN–Eritrea relationship "an example of an effective partnership."[45] The Ministry of Information echoed this tone in its own statement. Considering the fraught relationship Asmara had with the UN in the past decades, the change in tone and approach of its foreign policy is increasingly becoming apparent.

Armed Groups and Security

In parallel, non-state actors linked to Eritrea's regional political climate gained visibility. The Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) announced the graduation of a new batch of fighters, hinting at expanding capacity and declaring that "armed resistance is the only way" to "uproot" the current regime. RSADO leaders also mentioned developing "naval capabilities," suggesting ambitions beyond its traditional Afar base within Ethiopia.[46]

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan issued a warning that any aircraft or drones departing from neighboring countries to assist the Sudanese Armed Forces "will be regarded as legitimate targets." Eritrea, a reported host of SAF-aligned training camps and temporary aircraft shelters, was implicitly included in this threat. RSF drones possess sufficient one-

[43] Sudan News Agency. "Dr. Idris: Visit to Asmara Was Historic; Agreements Reached to Strengthen Sudan–Eritrea Partnership." *Sudan News Agency*, October 10, 2025.

[44] Ghideon Musa (@GhideonMusa). "Eritrea, represented by its Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Beyene Russom, participated in the 20th COMESA." *X*, October 9, 2025.

[45] Valji, Nahla. "Eritrea and the UN at 80: An Example of Effective Partnership." *Shabait*, October 25, 2025.

[46] Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation. "Official Military Statement." October 21, 2025.

way range to strike Eritrean territory.[47]

International Media and External Assessments

Eritrea re-entered international media discussion amid warnings of a potential regional conflict.

On October 2, The Economist published "Africa's Most Secretive Dictatorship Faces an Existential Crisis," portraying Ethiopia as expansionist and seeking control of Assab.[48] The report drew a sharp response from Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel, who tweeted that The Economist "continues to excel in notoriety to churn out another grotesquely speculative report against Eritrea."[49] Later, Foreign Policy, on the 21st, ran "The Risk of a New Ethiopian-Eritrean War Is Growing," a comparatively balanced piece calling for negotiation over sea access.[50]

Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department's 2025 Investment Climate Report, released in late September, painted a bleak picture of Eritrea's economy and business environment.[51] The information minister again dismissed it as "replete with a litany of factual inaccuracies and policy misinterpretations."[52] Throughout October, Eritrea's Ministry of Information maintained a steady stream of rebuttals, responding to both international assessments and Ethiopian state narratives with heightened frequency and rhetorical intensity.

Eritrea's strategy combined defensive diplomacy with aggressive propaganda, seeking to deflect scrutiny while maintaining regional leverage. Proxy operations and involvement in illicit networks amplified insecurity in the Horn, highlighting a regime more focused on strategic manipulation than transparency or reform.

1.3 Djibouti: Constitutional Reform, Strategic Diplomacy, and Regional Restraint

Federal Political Developments

In a significant move this month in Djibouti, the National Assembly unanimously passed Bill No. 2025-03/ADP on October 26, introducing amendments to the 1992 Constitution. The reforms raise the presidential age limit from 75 to 85 years, effectively removing the barrier

[47] Rich Tedd (@AfriMEOSINT). "Many have cast doubt on Hemedit's claim that the RSF is capable of striking airports in neighbouring countries said to support the SAF." *X*, October 23, 2025.

[48] The Economist. "Africa's Most Secretive Dictatorship Faces an Existential Crisis." October 2, 2025.

[49] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "The Economist (4–10 Oct. 2025 Edition) continues to excel in notoriety to churn out another grotesquely speculative report against Eritrea." *X*, October 6, 2025.

[50] Woldemariam, Michael, and Abel Abate Demissie. "The Risk of a New Ethiopian-Eritrean War Is Growing: Changing Dynamics in Tigray Could Erode the Current Balance of Uncertainty." October 21, 2025.

[51] U.S. Department of State. *2025 Eritrea Investment Climate Statement*. September 2025.

[52] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "US State Department 'September 2025 Investment Climate Report on Eritrea,' is replete with a …" *X*, October 11, 2025.

for current President Ismail Omar Guelleh to seek a sixth term.[53] The amendments also establish that women are now eligible to run for the presidency and transfer interim presidential authority to the President of the National Assembly during transitions. The government frames these changes as modernizing measures, while opposition critics and human rights organizations, including the Djiboutian League for Human Rights, characterize them as enabling a presidency for life. The legislative process continues, awaiting a potential referendum or final ratification.

It is notable that throughout the month, as Afar tensions flared, RSADO launching operations against Eritrea,[54] Ethiopia accusing Asmara of proxy arming in the Afar Triangle,[55] and Red Sea access disputes escalating, Djibouti has remained silent, issuing no public statements, diplomatic notes, or mediation overtures despite its 35% Afar population and long-standing role as a neutral broker in the Horn. This absence of commentary stands in contrast to Djibouti's usual engagement in regional crises. This suggests that the timing be linked to the October 26 parliamentary vote lifting the presidential age limit to 85, enabling President Guelleh's potential sixth term amid domestic backlash, with ratification set for November 2.

Additionally, the National Assembly opened its 2025 session under Speaker Dileita Mohamed Dileita, prioritizing ratification of international agreements, including membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and conducting scrutiny of government financial reports.[56] Key priorities included the ratification of several international agreements, notably advancing Djibouti's formal membership and commitments within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to strengthen diplomatic ties and collaborative efforts on regional issues. Concurrently, the assembly undertook rigorous scrutiny of government financial reports, emphasizing fiscal accountability through detailed audits and transparent budgeting practices. Discussions also spotlighted oversight of major transport and infrastructure projects, such as port expansions and railway developments.

Following this, reports emerged of a potential coup d'état, prompting heightened alert levels within security services.[57] Although no concrete incidents materialized to substantiate these rumours, the swift mobilization exposed deep-seated governance tensions, fuelled by growing dissent within elite political circles and among opposition groups disillusioned with President Ismail Omar Guelleh's long tenure. These alerts were particularly amplified by the ongoing controversy surrounding the recent constitutional amendments, which paved the way for extended rule by raising the presidential age limit and altering succession protocols.

Diplomatic Engagements and Regional Cooperation

On October 26, Djibouti and Qatar signed two memorandums of understanding during a visit

[53] Al Jazeera. unanimous passage on October 26, 2025, raising age limit from 75 to 85, enabling Guelleh's sixth term. (2025)
[54] Borkena. Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization.2025
[55] Allafrica. Ethiopia-Based, Anti-Eritrea Regime Afar Group (2025)
[56] Africa Press. opening of 2025 session under Speaker Dileita Mohamed Dileita. (2025)
[57] Africa Intelligence. potential coup reports. (2025)

by Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, to Doha.[58] The agreements, inked in a ceremony hosted by Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jaisim Al-Thani, establish a joint government committee to oversee expanded cooperation across diverse sectors and formalize regular political consultations to align on shared interests, leveraging longstanding ties in trade facilitation, security enhancements, and investment opportunities. Discussions showed a mutual commitment to fostering stability, with particular emphasis on collaborative initiatives addressing challenges in the Horn of Africa, such as counter-terrorism and maritime security, and bridging economic corridors between the Gulf and East African regions, positioning both nations as key players in regional resilience and prosperity.

Djibouti continued to leverage its diplomatic status, hosting an EU-Japan symposium on Red Sea maritime security and initiating preliminary talks for a trilateral summit with Yemen and Somalia.[59] These discussions focused on developing coordinated responses to maritime threats, including Houthi attacks and piracy, through joint patrols and intelligence sharing. This aligns with Djibouti's chairmanship of IGAD and reinforces its role as a mediator and stability broker in the Horn of Africa.

In another major development, Djibouti hosted the Fifth Türkiye-Africa Business and Economic Forum in Istanbul, where a joint statement called for strengthened economic ties amid global challenges.[60] Djiboutian delegates, led by key representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, actively spotlighted untapped opportunities in logistics, leveraging the country's strategic port infrastructure at the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and renewable energy initiatives, including solar and wind projects aimed at sustainable development. These presentations aligned seamlessly with Djibouti's national diversification goals, seeking to reduce reliance on traditional port revenues by attracting Turkish investments in green technologies and digital trade corridors. The forum culminated in a landmark joint statement, the Istanbul Declaration, which called for enhanced bilateral trade targets ambitiously aiming for $40 billion between Türkiye and Africa by year's end and collaborative frameworks to address infrastructure financing and value chain integration, reinforcing Djibouti's position in the East African hub for pan-continental economic resilience.

Following this, on October 30, Djibouti commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Arta Peace Conference, the Somali-led process hosted in 2000 that facilitated the reconstitution of Somalia's federal government.[61] President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh inaugurated the "Arta Peace Monument" as a reconciliation center, joined by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The event reaffirmed Djibouti's mediation role in the Horn, with bilateral talks focusing on counter-terrorism and economic integration.

[58] Gulf times. the agreements on joint committee and consultations, emphasizing strengthened ties.2025
[59] Horn Diplomat. Somaliland, Yemen and Djibouti Coast Guards Meet in Djibouti to Bolster Red Sea Security
[60] TRT Africa. Türkiye-Africa business forum to strengthen partnership
[61] Somaliguardian. President Mohamud's arrival for the 25th anniversary hosted by President Guelleh.

Security and Defense Posture

The National Police and Customs demonstrated effective domestic security capacity with a major cocaine seizure of over 119 pellets valued at approximately $150,000. Led by the dedicated Narcotics Brigade under the command of Captain Houssein Mohamed Abdou, the bust involved swift coordination between law enforcement units, including body scans and immediate medical interventions to safely extract the pellets, leading to the prompt arrest and charging of the four individuals whose identities remain undisclosed pending trial for offenses related to the transport, possession, and distribution of illicit substances. This operation, led by the Narcotics Brigade, highlighted Djibouti's ongoing collaboration with Interpol in combating regional drug trafficking networks.[62]

The Ministry of Communication signed the UN Convention on Cybercrime in Hanoi, committing Djibouti to harmonizing its digital laws with international standards. This accession obligates Djibouti to align its national legislation with the convention's standards, including criminalizing offenses like unauthorized data access, system interference, and cyber-enabled fraud, while fostering cross-border investigations and capacity-building initiatives to protect critical infrastructure in an increasingly digitized world. Building directly on the country's recently enacted Digital Code in June 2025, which establishes comprehensive frameworks for data protection, electronic transactions, and cybersecurity governance, this step enhances its investment attractiveness for economic diversification beyond port services.[63]

1.4 Somalia and Somaliland

The Federal Republic of Somalia: Federal Tensions and Cross-Border Incursions

The description of Somalia in October 2025 was patent by countervailing forces. The federal government pushed forward with major domestic reforms and worked to improve its position internationally. At the same time, it faced a continuing fight against Al-Shabaab, a deepening humanitarian crisis, and disputes with regional states.

The Federal Government of Somalia actively worked to consolidate authority and manage composite relationships with Federal Member States, achieving mixed results. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's direct talks with Jubaland leader Ahmed Madobe in Kismayo focused on resolving a spun-out political dispute.[64] This dialogue, reportedly facilitated by Kenyan mediation, sought to foster cooperation on security and electoral preparations for 2026. However, these talks occurred against a setting of deep mistrust and previous failed negotiations. The FGS had reportedly activated a Plan B, exploring the establishment of a

[62] Dawan Africa. Djibouti Customs Foils Cocaine Smuggling Attempt.(2025)
[63] Tech africanews. Djibouti Signs the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime
[64] Allafrica.(2025) Somalia: Talks Between Somali President Hassan Sheikh and Jubaland Leader Ahmed Madobe End Without Agreement

parallel Jubaland administration in Garbahaarey, indicating the fragility of the reconciliation process.[65] Reports also emerged of President Mohamud seeking President Madobe's support for a potential term extension in exchange for recognizing his contested 2024 election, highlighting the deep electoral move underway.[66]

The FGS continued to advance a constitutional review process and plans to shift to a universal suffrage model for the 2026 elections.[67] These reforms have generated significant resistance from opposition figures and Federal Member States, particularly Puntland and Jubaland, who view them as a centralization of power that undermines the federal model. This political infighting has diverted attention from critical national priorities, including the fight against Al-Shabaab.

Concurrently, the FGS's implementation of a centralized e-visa system, intended to modernize immigration and boost revenue, sparked immediate backlash from regional authorities.[68] Puntland condemned the move as illegal, arguing it violates its constitutional autonomy, while Somaliland outright rejected it, reaffirming its own visa-on-arrival policy. This policy has caused travellers confusion, risks of double taxation, and emphasizes the fundamental challenges of Somalia's federal structure, serving as a digital front in the battle over sovereignty and revenue sharing.

As a result, Ethiopian Airlines has decided to stop enforcing the Somali federal government's new e-visa requirement for passengers traveling to Hargeisa, Somaliland, and is instead allowing travellers to obtain visas on arrival. This move comes in response to a directive from Somaliland authorities, which had warned airlines they would face bans from its airspace if they required the Somali e-visa. In reaction to the airline's decision, Somalia's former ambassador to Kenya, Mohamed Nur Tarsan, has criticized[69] the move as a challenge to Somalia's sovereignty and is urging the government to take firm action, which could include banning Ethiopian Airlines from Somali airspace and airports.

Security Situation: Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism Efforts

The security apparatus continued to operate under conditions of sustained and significant threat, with Al-Shabaab demonstrating continued capacity to conduct high-profile attacks and make territorial gains, even as national and international forces pursued counter operations. Al-Shabaab maintained a relentless campaign of violence. A major assault on the Godka Jilicow intelligence and prison facility in Mogadishu on October 4, just hours after the government had lifted roadblocks and declared the city safe, exposed critical

[65] Somali guardian(2025).Somalia government eyes parallel in jubaland after talks collapse
[66] Somali guardian(2025).Somalia president seeks Jubaland support for term extensions amid political tension
[67] International crisis group.(2025). constitutional review process and shift to universal suffrage for 2026 elections
[68]Garowi online.(2025).somalias new E-visa rule
[69] Somali guardian. Somalia's former ambassador calls for ban Ethiopian airlines.(2025)

vulnerabilities in the capital's defenses.[70]

In response, the Somali National Army, with international support, deployed additional troops to Mogadishu and conducted operations. The government also launched a national Counter-IED Strategy, supported by UNMAS, to combat Al-Shabaab's primary weapon.[71] Decentralized counter-terrorism efforts also saw success, such as the Galmudug regional forces neutralizing an Al-Shabaab cell in central Somalia.[72]

Security cooperation was a key theme. The SNA engaged with the European Union for funding through the European Peace Facility[73] and held talks with Nigeria on counterterrorism cooperation. Egypt advanced plans for troop deployments under bilateral agreements and the AU Support and Stabilization Mission. However, AUSSOM faced a severe funding shortfall, receiving only 27% of its 2025 budget,[74] which threatens to erode its operational capacity and accelerate a shift toward bilateral security arrangements.

Additionally, U.S. Africa Command conducted multiple airstrikes, including one targeting ISIS-Somalia positions and another on October 26 that reportedly killed Al-Shabaab co-founder Mahmoud Abdi Hamud, also known as Jaafar Gurey, in Middle Juba's Bu'aale stronghold.[75] A third strike hit Al-Shabaab fighters. These operations, coordinated with the Federal Government of Somalia FGS, highlight Washington's sustained drone campaign despite broader aid reductions, but raise concerns over civilian risks and Al-Shabaab retaliation in urban areas like Mogadishu.

Although these operations show a growing link between Yemen's Houthi rebels and Somali terrorist groups like al-Shabaab and ISSOM are bringing regional instability, as the Iran-backed Houthis act as ideological military contractors.[76] This partnership involves smuggling advanced weaponry, including drones and missiles, through Somali ports, with arms sales generating significant profits. Furthermore, al-Shabaab has reciprocated by sharing its coastal intelligence and piracy expertise, strengthening the Houthis' capacity to threaten maritime traffic. Consequently, this collaboration has disrupted global shipping, forced trade reroutes, and triggered a resurgence of piracy, all while providing the Houthis with a lucrative revenue stream and extending the reach of terror groups across the Horn of Africa.

Strategic Diplomacy and International Partnerships

On October 15, finance ministers from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan convened in Washington, D.C., on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings for a high-level Horn of Africa Initiative session. Chaired by Somalia's Finance

[70] Al jazeera. Al-Shabab fighters killed in Mogadishu prison assault, Somalia confirms
[71] Africa Defense Forum.(2025). Somalia's Counter-IED Strategy Is 'Whole-of-Society' Effort
[72] Security Council Report.(2025). Galmudug forces neutralizing Al-Shabaab cell
[73] European union.(2025). European Peace Facility Mission deepens EU-Somalia security cooperation
[74] AllAfrica.(2025). AU's Somalia Peace Mission Cannot Deliver On Funding Pledges Alone
[75] United states Africa. command U.S. Forces Conduct Strike Targeting ISIS-Somalia(2025)
[76] adf-magazine. Houthi Support of Somali Terror Groups(2025)

Minister Bihi Iman Egeh and co-chaired by World Bank Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa Ndiame Diop, the meeting successfully mobilized $13.6 billion in commitments from key partners, including the African Development Bank, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.[77] Discussions centered on advancing the Borderlands Roadmap, a strategic framework aimed at enhancing cross-border trade, developing urban economic hubs, and improving resource management to foster stability and unlock main economic corridors across the region.

Complementing these, strategic partnerships received a boost through high-level talks on October 24 in Botswana, where Eastern Africa Standby Force Director Brigadier General Paul Kahuria Njema engaged with Southern African Development Community Executive Secretary Elias Magosi.[78] The discussions emphasized benchmarking best practices in peacekeeping and crisis response, while addressing pressing regional hotspots such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia's persistent insurgencies. Key agenda items included preparations for the Maritime Command Post Exercise 2025, innovative approaches to youth and climate-related challenges, and forging deeper bilateral partnerships to enhance operational interoperability.

Somalia actively pursued deeper international engagement, focusing on both economic partnerships and managing regional relations. The U.S.-Somalia Presidential Trade Forum[79] convened in Mogadishu, displaying a desired shift in bilateral relations toward trade, investment, and strategic economic partnerships. Co-organized by the Somali Embassy in Washington, D.C., and Clean Port Ventures, the two-day event drew over 15 U.S. business delegations, Somali government officials, diaspora entrepreneurs, and private sector leaders. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's opening address framed it as a new era of mutual prosperity, aligning with Somalia's Centennial Vision 2060 for economic self-reliance.

Following this, the International Monetary Fund completed its fourth review of Somalia's economic program, praising debt management progress while urging further revenue reforms.[80] Led by IMF Mission Chief Ran Bi and Somali Finance Minister Bihi Egeh, the staff-level agreement praises Somalia's strong performance in debt management and fiscal discipline, while emphasizing the need for accelerated revenue mobilization to build resilience against external shocks. Board approval is pending, which would unlock approximately US$30 million, bringing total disbursements to $100 million since the program's launch in December 2023

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made a surprise visit to Addis Ababa on

[77] AllAfrica.(2025) Summary of the meeting's emphasis on economic corridors and resource sharing among the six countries.(2025)
[78] Eastern Africa Standby Force. SADC Hosts EASF Benchmarking Visit to Strengthen Regional Peace and Security Cooperation
[79] Hiiraan Online. Somali President opens Somalia–U.S. Presidential Trade summit
[80] International monetary fund .IMF fourth review praising debt management and urging revenue reforms

October 12, 2025, [81] where he held talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to ease diplomatic tensions over Jubaland and Ethiopia's ties with Somaliland, while focusing on strengthening bilateral relations, regional stability, and mutual security cooperation against threats like al-Shabab. This aligns with findings that the government sought to block Somaliland President Irro's planned visit to Addis Ababa, illustrating the ongoing diplomatic struggle over Somaliland's status.

Furthermore, based on investigative reports, the United Arab Emirates has been using Bosaso Airport in Somalia's Puntland state as a key hub for a covert logistics operation to supply the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan.[82] The operation, which has been running for the past two years, involves frequent flights of white IL-76 heavy cargo planes originating from the UAE. These aircraft, which sometimes change their arrival times, are met with tight security during the rapid offloading of undisclosed materials, which are then immediately transferred to other standby aircraft destined for Sudan. The port of Bosaso is also part of this flow, having funneled over 500,000 containers marked as hazardous during this period. This airlift is a central component of the UAE's support for the RSF, which has been accused of committing atrocities in Sudan's civil war.

Somaliland: Sovereignty, Regional Diplomacy, and Security Engagements

Federal Relations & Sovereignty Assertions

Somaliland continued its pursuit of sovereignty recognition and institutional independence from the Federal Government of Somalia throughout October 2025, engaging in both diplomatic and technical confrontations that display its claim to statehood.

Somaliland authorities categorically rejected Mogadishu's newly implemented centralized e-visa system, framing it as an unconstitutional infringement on their autonomous governance. The Minister of Civil Aviation and Airports, Fuad Nouh, issued a firm statement emphasizing Somaliland's exclusive control over its borders and airspace, threatening legal action and potential airline restrictions against the policy, which he characterized as a malicious plan targeting Somaliland travellers.[83] This stance, backed by cross-party consensus including the Waddani Party's October 27 condemnation as coercive and discriminatory,[84] underscores Hargeisa's de facto independence amid Mogadishu's centralization push. The dispute has stranded diaspora travelers, prompted airline policy shifts, and revealed e-visa vulnerabilities, potentially handing personal data to Al-Shabaab.

Regional Dynamics & Diplomatic Moves

October 2025 witnessed diplomatic realignment with Somaliland, demonstrating both

[81] Ethiopian news agency.Ethiopia’s PM Abiy Meets Somalia’s President Sheikh Mohamud
[82] Middle east eye. the UAE's secret Sudan war operation at Somalia's Bosaso
[83] Borkena. Somaliland : Diplomatic Statement and National Warning.(2025)
[84] Hiiraan com. Somaliland’s Waddani party accuses Somalia of targeting(2025)

cooperation with regional actors and continued tension with Mogadishu. In a development that signals a potential recalibration of northern Somali politics, Somaliland and Puntland reached a security understanding during talks in Nairobi on October 4-5. This agreement, focused on coordinating border stability and operations against Al-Shabaab and ISIS-linked militants, represents diplomacy despite longstanding territorial disputes over Sool and Sanaag.[85] The agreement's careful wording, referring to the Government of Somaliland rather than the Republic of Somaliland, reflects a deliberate linguistic compromise that acknowledges governance without implying sovereignty, allowing both administrations to protect their constitutional narratives while enabling operational cooperation.

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi conducted his first official visit to Addis Ababa since taking office, meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.[86] Discussions centered on security cooperation against regional threats like Al-Shabaab, expanding trade corridors through Berbera Port, and advancing the January 2024 Memorandum of Understanding on Ethiopia's sea access in exchange for potential recognition of Somaliland's independence. The leaders toured Berbera Port facilities virtually and in person, with emphasis on infrastructure upgrades to handle increased Ethiopian cargo volumes. Agreements were reached on joint energy projects and mobility enhancements, including visa-free travel for business delegations. President Irro met with additional Ethiopian officials, including Defense Minister Abraham Belay and Trade Minister Mamo Mihretu. The visit concluded with a joint press statement affirming commitment to the partnership.

Security Situation & Humanitarian Landscape

Somaliland's security apparatus focused on both internal governance and external cooperation throughout October, while simultaneously addressing humanitarian needs within its territory. Despite the diplomatic breakthrough with Puntland, underlying tensions persist in the regions of Sool and Sanaag, where competing claims between Somaliland, Puntland, and local clan administrations continue to create vulnerability. These areas remain points that challenge Somaliland's territorial integrity and require careful military and diplomatic management. The security pact with Puntland aims specifically to address instability in these regions through joint committees and local reconciliation initiatives.[87]

Somaliland's Coast Guard Commander participated in a tripartite meeting with counterparts from Yemen and Djibouti at the Djibouti Coast Guard headquarters.[88] This initiative, hosted Djiboutian Ministry of Defense and supported by French naval advisors, aimed to operationalize joint mechanisms for securing vital shipping lanes that handle over 10% of global trade. Somaliland's participation, led by Admiral Ahmed Hurre Haariye, Commander of the Somaliland Coast Guard, affirmed Hargeisa's de facto role as a key security actor,

[85] Dawan Africa. Puntland and Somaliland Reach Security Agreement in Nairobi Talks
[86] All Africa. Somaliland President Arrives in Ethiopia for Talks.(2025)
[87] Hiiraan Online. Somaliland-Puntland security understanding in Nairobi.(2025)
[88] Horn Diplomat. Somaliland Coast Guard tripartite meeting with Yemen and Djibouti.(2025)

particularly in protecting approaches to Berbera Port, which has seen a 25% cargo surge in 2025 amid Ethiopia's diversification from Djibouti. The discussions built on prior bilateral pacts, such as Somaliland's July 2025 cooperation agreement with Taiwan's Coast Guard, and responded to Houthi disruptions that have rerouted $1 trillion in annual trade.

The fundamental tension between Mogadishu's centralized vision and Somaliland's assertion of sovereignty continues to frame their relationship. Somaliland's Minister of Health Development, Dr. Hussein Bashir Hirsi Wahan, officially launched a two-day National Conference on Regional Hospitals at the Hargeisa Cultural Center, attended by over 200 stakeholders, including regional health directors, hospital administrators, international partners, and civil society representatives.[89] Titled Strengthening Regional Healthcare, Infrastructure, Delivery, and Resilience, the event assesses the performance of Somaliland's six key regional hospitals in Hargeisa, Burao, Borama, Berbera, Gabiley, and Erigavo amid ongoing economic pressures from aid shortfalls and inflation. This initiative, budgeted at $250,000 with support from the World Health Organization and the European Union, prioritizes actionable upgrades to address critical gaps in maternal health, emergency response, and chronic disease management, demonstrating the Ministry's commitment to equitable service provision despite federal disputes with Mogadishu and internal fiscal strains.

International Positioning & Diplomatic Outreach

Somaliland maintained its diplomatic engagement with international partners throughout October, cultivating relationships that support its legitimacy quest while addressing global challenges.

Somaliland's Defence Minister, Mohamed Yusuf Ali, held discussions with U.S. Congressman Chris Smith in Washington, advocating for strengthened bilateral ties, security cooperation, and potential recognition.[90] The discussions, conducted in Washington, D.C., centered on bolstering U.S.-Somaliland security cooperation, countering Al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia threats, and advancing Somaliland's long-standing quest for international recognition. This encounter aligns with a perceived pivot in U.S. policy under the Trump administration, emphasizing strategic competition with China in the Horn of Africa while leveraging Somaliland's democratic stability and Berbera Port's role in Red Sea logistics.

Additionally, Somaliland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a formal diplomatic statement and national warning to the International Civil Aviation Organization,[91] escalating its campaign to reclaim control over its airspace. The document, titled Diplomatic Statement and National Warning, asserts Somaliland's sovereign rights based on its pre-union independence on June 26, 1960, and accuses the Federal Government of Somalia in

[89] SomalilandMoHD. the conference opening at Hargeisa Cultural Center
[90] All Africa. Somaliland Defence Minister Meets U.S. Congressman Chris Smith Amid Push for Stronger Ties
[91] Borkena Article. Somaliland: Diplomatic Statement and National Warning

Mogadishu of weaponizing airspace management as political pressure to undermine Hargeisa's autonomy. It warns that revenues from overflight fees, estimated at $5–10 million annually for Somaliland's portion, risk funding Al-Shabaab, given alleged ties between Mogadishu elites and the group.

1.5 Sudan: Decisive Fragmentation, Fall of El Fasher, and Geopolitical Pivot

October 2025 proved to be a critical inflection point in the Sudan conflict, defined by the fall of the Sudanese Armed Forces' (SAF) final major stronghold in Darfur and the confirmation of devastating famine conditions. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) achieved a monumental military victory by capturing El Fasher, signaling a decisive shift toward national fragmentation and bolstering the political legitimacy of its proposed parallel government.[92] Simultaneously, the humanitarian crisis metastasized, culminating in the formal confirmation of Famine (IPC Phase 5) in North Darfur.[93] Diplomatic efforts were characterized by coordinated, yet fundamentally challenged, regional and international alignment focused on securing a political track. This coordination, however, was undercut by the SAF's hardening geopolitical pivot, most notably the advancing agreement for a Russian military base in Port Sudan. The confluence of military consolidation, systematic starvation, and deepening geopolitical fault lines indicates a high probability of sustained, high-intensity conflict.

Conflict Dynamics and Strategic Frontline Shifts

The seizure of the SAF's 6th Division headquarters in El Fasher by the RSF represents the most significant territorial victory since the war's inception in April 2023. This event effectively grants the RSF near-total military command of the Greater Darfur region, fundamentally altering the calculus of the conflict. The fighting raged intensely through October, culminating in the SAF troops vacating the strategic 6th Division base on Sunday, October 26th, retreating under heavy shelling and artillery attacks from the paramilitaries.

The seizure of El Fasher concluded a nearly 500-day siege and triggered immediate reports of devastating atrocities, with social media videos and eyewitness accounts documenting extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians, aid workers, and refugees.[94] The World Health Organization (WHO) condemned the drone strikes and ground incursions that destroyed incubators and wards, labeling them as a "shocking massacre" that weaponizes healthcare amid famine.[95]

In a rare concession, on October 29, RSF commander Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti) announced an internal investigation into El Fasher violations, including killings

[92] Arab News. 2025. "Sudanese Paramilitaries Advance into Military's Last Stronghold in ..."
[93] FEWS NET. 2025. "Sudan."
[94] Human Rights Watch. 2025. "Sudan: Mass Atrocities in Captured Darfur City."
[95] World Health Organization. 2025. "WHO condemns killings of patients and civilians amid escalating violence in El Fasher, Sudan."

and rapes, amid video evidence and international pressure.[96] However, this could be seen as a potential PR deflection, urging independent probes.

The UN Security Council's October 30 briefing on Sudan reinforced the Council's unified condemnation of the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) assault on El Fasher and associated atrocities. In its press statement, the Council demanded that the RSF lift the siege, halt hostilities, and ensure unhindered humanitarian access in accordance with international law, reaffirming its rejection of any parallel governing authority in RSF-held territories. The statement also urged all states to refrain from external interference and uphold Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[97]

In parallel, UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper vowed personal accountability for RSF commanders,[98] echoing African Union and Arab League condemnations of ethnically targeted violence. The humanitarian fallout remains catastrophic: four UN agencies (IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP) issued a joint appeal on October 23, warning that famine risks and mass atrocities are escalating across Darfur, with more than 11 million displaced and an additional 300,000 newly displaced each month.[99] Despite this, the $4.2 billion 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan remains only 27 percent funded, severely constraining aid operations amid RSF-imposed berms, mines, and access denials.

These attacks realized the grave warnings from the UN Human Rights Chief of "large-scale, ethnically driven attacks" against the 260,000 trapped civilians. International bodies, including the League of Arab States (LAS), responded with strong condemnation, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and demanding safe passage for the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to avert mass starvation, which was confirmed to be underway nearby in the Zamzam IDP camp. [100]

Compounding these fears, Satellite imagery analyzed by the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale University (HRL)[101] confirmed significant evidence of close-quarter battle in the area, with multiple buildings damaged and the facility itself bearing signs of heavy destruction. The images correlated with footage released by the RSF, which claimed capture of the base.

The international community has expressed mounting outrage over the atrocities unfolding in El Fasher following its capture by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Reports of mass killings, ethnically targeted violence, and grave breaches of international humanitarian law have drawn strong condemnation from the African Union (AU), Arab states, and international organizations alike. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali

[96] BBC News. 2025. "Sudan RSF chief promises investigation as anger mounts over El Fasher."
[97] United Nations Security Council. 2025. "Press Statement SC/16204."
[98] United Kingdom. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. 2025. "Foreign Secretary Statement on Rapid Support Forces in El Fasher."
[99] International Organization for Migration. 2025. "IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP Urge Immediate Action…"
[100] FEWS NET. 2025. "Sudan."
[101] Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health. 2025 "*Human Security Emergency: Day Two of RSF Control: Mass Killings Continue in El-Fasher*

Youssouf, voiced deep concern over the escalating violence, condemning in the strongest terms the "grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including alleged war crimes and ethnically targeted killings of civilians."[102]

Similarly, the Arab League and several Arab nations, including Türkiye,[103] joined in denouncing what they described as "horrific atrocities" and "grave humanitarian violations" in El Fasher. A joint statement from regional powers emphasized the need for an immediate humanitarian truce, the protection of civilians, and the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. [104] Egypt's Foreign Ministry reiterated its support for Sudan's unity and sovereignty, while Saudi Arabia reminded the RSF of its obligations under the *Jeddah Declaration on the Protection of Civilians* signed in May 2023.[105]

The UN has also urged the RSF to establish safe corridors for fleeing civilians, while armed groups allied with the Sudanese army allege that up to 2,000 civilians were killed between 26 and 27 October—claims the RSF has denied.[106]

The consolidation of Darfur control provides the RSF with a contiguous, resource-rich administrative territory, substantially strengthening the legitimacy and practicality of its announced parallel government, the Sudan Founding Alliance ("Tasis").[107] This military success provides the RSF with significant political leverage, shifting the conflict from a mere struggle for the national capital to a high-risk scenario of national fragmentation. While the AU[108] and other international bodies have rejected the "Tasis" announcement, its control over a defined, vast territory renders the rejection increasingly moot in practical terms.

Furthermore, the SAF's failure to hold El Fasher, despite its strategic importance and the public criticism received from local civilian groups, signals critical institutional and tactical deficiencies, especially in logistics and the coordination of air and ground operations. The criticism from the Resistance Committees highlights a significant fissure between the official military structure and local pro-democracy movements, indicating that if the SAF cannot reliably defend its own core areas, local populations will be forced either to rely on independent defense mechanisms or accept RSF control, further eroding the SAF's claim to national authority.

[102] African Union Commission. 2025. "The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Condemns Atrocities in El Fasher, Sudan."
[103] Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *"No: 216, 28 October 2025, Regarding the Recent Developments in El Fasher, Sudan."*
[104] TRT World. 2025. "Arab states condemn RSF 'atrocities' in Al Fasher, call for immediate truce in Sudan."
[105] Al Arabiya English. 2025. "Saudi Arabia condemns grave human-rights violations in Sudan's Al Fashir."
[106] ABC News. 2025. "Sudan paramilitary group accused of killing 2,000 civilians in El-Fasher."
[107] Al Jazeera English. 2025. "RSF Paramilitary-Led Coalition Forms Parallel Government in War-Torn Sudan."
[108] African Union Commission. 2025. "Press Statement of the 1292nd Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Held on 29 July 2025…"

Tactical Evolution of the SAF and the RSF

The conflict remains characterized by intense, high-lethality tactics that demonstrate a profound disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law. The fighting features heavy and often indiscriminate use of drones, artillery, airstrikes, and ground operations.[109] This reliance on indirect fire, especially in densely populated urban environments like Khartoum and El Fasher, is the primary mechanism driving high civilian casualty rates.

A notable development in October was the RSF's systematic expansion of infrastructure warfare into Sudan's economic heartland. RSF forces targeted key infrastructure in the south and east, including a drone strike near the Sennar reservoir and the hydroelectric plant. Furthermore, drones struck a power transformer in Singa, the capital of Sennar State, causing a confirmed power outage.[110]

The RSF appears to view targeting critical infrastructure such as power and water facilities as a deliberate strategy to erode the SAF's governing capacity and to inflict collective punishment on civilians in SAF-held or contested areas, such as Sennar and Blue Nile. Effectively crippling the central government's ability to provide essential services, effectively widening the scope of the war beyond mere territorial control to societal asphyxiation.

The conflict's increasing externalization was underscored by the SAF's claim in early October that it killed foreign mercenaries fighting for the RSF in El Fasher, reportedly from Colombia and Ukraine.[111] This follows the UN Security Council's focus on mercenary involvement, condemning the "Participation of Mercenaries" in massacres and summary killings.[112] The presence of foreign fighters indicates that military capacity is now less dependent on national loyalty and more on external, monetized support networks, suggesting links to global conflict economies. If high-value fighters are being recruited globally, it signifies a persistent and substantial flow of external financing and logistics to the RSF,[113] which the UNSC sanctions are specifically attempting to constrain.

Unprecedented Humanitarian Collapse and Famine Status

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan has metastasized into the world's largest internal displacement emergency, confirmed by accelerating famine conditions and the systemic disintegration of essential services.

Critically, Famine (IPC Phase 5) is confirmed to be currently ongoing in the Zamzam IDP camp in North Darfur. This confirmation is based on reasonable evidence that all three

[109] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2025. "Sudan: UN expert alarmed by escalating drone attacks, urges protection of civilians."
[110] Sudan Tribune. *"RSF expands drone attacks in Sudan, hits power station in Sinnar."*
[111] Africanews. 2025. *"Sudan army claims Colombian and Ukrainian mercenaries killed in Darfur."*
[112] United Nations. 2025. *"Security Council 16165 (Press Release)".*
[113] Horn Review. 2025. "Ukraine's Shadow in El Fasher: Outsourced Warfare and the Horn's Fragile Order."

Famine thresholds (acute malnutrition, mortality, and food deficit) were passed in June.[114] There is a severe risk of Famine expanding into nearby settlements and across Greater Darfur, South Kordofan, Khartoum, and Al Fasher locality.

Overall, more than 24 million people face acute food insecurity. The malnutrition crisis threatens the nation's future, with 16 million children requiring assistance, and more than 2.1 million people at risk of acute malnutrition by the end of 2025. Sudan currently harbors more people experiencing famine conditions than the rest of the world combined.[115] The famine in Zamzam is interpreted not as a natural disaster but as a direct consequence of deliberate siege and access denial by armed parties, underscoring the weaponization of starvation as a primary tactic in the conflict. Humanitarian convoys, including vital food and medicine, have been stalled for months due to frontlines, mines, and access denials.

The conflict has systematically destroyed the physical infrastructure necessary for public health and basic survival, creating conditions ripe for mass disease outbreaks. In affected areas, over two-thirds of all main hospitals are out of service. The few remaining functional hospitals are highly vulnerable to closure due to chronic shortages of medical staff, supplies, safe water, and electricity. The failure of infrastructure and sanitation has triggered severe public health crises. October saw targeted interventions by organizations like Qatar Charity in Al Jazirah and the Red Sea States to respond to widespread outbreaks of dengue fever and cholera.[116]

The long-term damage extends to human capital: 14 out of 17 million school-aged children are out of school,[117] representing a near-total collapse of the education sector. This destruction of education and health services is layered upon an already inadequate baseline; prior to the conflict, only 35% of the population enjoyed a reliable power supply from the national grid.

As Sudan descends deeper into famine and infrastructural collapse, the crisis is no longer purely humanitarian; rather, it is inherently political. The breakdown of governance and the weaponization of aid access have reshaped diplomatic calculations, hardening factional divisions and complicating mediation efforts across regional and international fronts.

Political Fragmentation and Diplomatic Gridlock

October saw renewed, coordinated diplomatic efforts aimed at securing a political solution, but these attempts are constrained by hardening political divisions within Sudan and fragmented international interests, effectively neutralizing positive momentum.

Mediation efforts are characterized by increasing alignment among regional and international

[114] FEWS NET. 2025. "Sudan."
[115] International Rescue Committee. 2025. *"Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."*
[116] ReliefWeb. 2025. *"Qatar Charity: Health Sector Response in Sudan – Al Jazirah and Red Sea States."*
[117] UNICEF. 2025. *"Sudan: 14 million Children Out of School as Education System Collapses Amid Conflict"*

partners. The African Union (AU) and IGAD welcomed the Joint Statement issued by the Quad peace roadmap. However, this positive momentum was challenged by persistent political disunity: a planned civil society conference in Addis Ababa, which aimed to promote unity among Sudanese civilian groups, was postponed in October after some of the expected participants declined to attend, citing insufficient consultation.[118]

Despite this diplomatic coordination, practical implementation remains stalled due to overt geopolitical interference. Members of the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) held their annual joint consultative meeting on October 17 but were unable to agree on a final outcome document by the conclusion of the meeting.

Furthermore, indirect preliminary talks between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were held in Washington, D.C.,[119] under U.S. mediation, marking a tentative step toward ceasefire negotiations. Each delegation held separate meetings with U.S. officials focusing on a truce, humanitarian access, and transitional security arrangements. Crucially, the SAF delegation simultaneously urged Washington to pressure the UAE to end its alleged support for the RSF.[120] This direct accusation exposes a major geopolitical rift within the mediation Quad itself, where one of the key participants is accused of fueling the opposing side. This conflict of interest fundamentally neutralizes external pressure aimed at de-escalation.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials also raised concerns over Sudan's deepening military cooperation with Russia, particularly the planned naval facility in Port Sudan. While the talks signal renewed diplomatic momentum, they coincided with the fall of El Fasher and ongoing RSF drone attacks in Sennar and Blue Nile, reflecting the widening gap between diplomatic progress and realities on the ground.[121]

The RSF's formalization of the "Tasis" parallel government, fueled by its military consolidation in Darfur, is a preemptive political maneuver designed to challenge the international community's push for a single, unified civilian transition process. By achieving de facto control over a large territory, the RSF aims to recast any future negotiations as dialogue between two sovereign or semi-sovereign entities, rather than two warring factions, making the goal of preserving Sudan's unity significantly harder.

Moreover, October saw critical developments in reinforcing international legal and accountability frameworks, signaling a focus on deterring external military influence and pursuing retrospective justice. In a significant move toward accountability for past conflicts, the International Criminal Court (ICC) ruled that Sudanese militia leader Ali Kushayb, one of the leaders of the Janjaweed militia, was guilty of twenty-seven counts of war crimes and

[118] Africa Intelligence. 2025."Civil society conference in Addis Ababa postponed." *Sudan • Eastern Africa and the Horn.*
[119] Dabanga Radio TV Online. 2025. "US indirect talks between Sudan Army and RSF ahead of ceasefire negotiations."
[120] Mada Masr. 2025. "Sudan Nashra: Fasher falls to RSF amid military silence…"
[121] Ibid.

crimes against humanity.[122] This marks the court's first conviction related to the 2003–2020 conflict in Darfur, setting a precedent for gender-based persecution accountability.

While the ICC conviction provides necessary retrospective justice for the Darfur conflict, it may not immediately deter current atrocities by field commanders, on both sides, who are primarily fighting for their survival and or profit. However, by coupling the ICC decision with the renewed, targeted UN arms embargo enforcement, the international community attempts to constrain the physical and logistical means by which current atrocities are being committed.

The paralysis of political dialogue has created a vacuum increasingly filled by external actors. With both the SAF and RSF courting foreign patrons to offset domestic weakness, Sudan's war has transformed into a multi-layered proxy contest, one that threatens to redraw the strategic map of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.

Geopolitical Alignments and Strategic Fault Lines

The month of October underscored Sudan's deepening geopolitical entanglement, with Washington and Moscow emerging as opposing poles in an increasingly fragmented regional order. American officials expressed serious concern over Sudan's growing military cooperation with Russia—particularly the reported establishment of a Russian logistical and technical support facility in Port Sudan. U.S. policymakers view the deal as a destabilizing development that risks transforming the Red Sea into a theater of great-power rivalry.[123]

In parallel, Sudanese ministerial delegations intensified engagement with Moscow throughout the month. High-level visits by the Energy and Finance ministers sought to fast-track port, infrastructure, and investment agreements, reflecting Khartoum's intent to formalize and operationalize its partnership with Russia. This pivot can be seen as a rescue strategy by the SAF; an attempt to offset battlefield losses and declining influence among Gulf and Western backers by securing alternative political and military support from Moscow.

The Port Sudan base agreement, initially reached earlier in the year, thus acquired renewed significance in October. It now represents a strategic hedge by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's leadership, designed to counterbalance Western diplomatic pressure and ensure a lifeline of external resources. This recalibration underscores the SAF's broader effort to reassert itself geopolitically while avoiding concessions in internationally mediated political transitions.

Consequently, Sudan's conflict has transcended its domestic dimensions, evolving into a proxy contest along the Red Sea corridor. The combination of militarization, shifting

[122] Reuters. 2025. "ICC convicts first Darfur militia leader of war crimes."
[123] Mada Masr. 2025. "Sudan Nashra: Fasher falls to RSF amid military silence…"

alliances, and foreign patronage has entrenched the Red Sea's status as a contested strategic zone, one where Sudan functions not merely as a battleground, but as a flashpoint in the emerging global and regional power struggle.

Synthesis

The situation in Sudan remains highly fluid, with rapid shifts on the battlefield and in political alignments underscoring the unpredictable trajectory of the conflict. The RSF's consolidation in Darfur, coupled with the SAF's strategic pivot toward Russia, reflects a volatile reordering of both domestic and regional power structures. Local, regional, and international alliances are in constant flux, complicating mediation efforts and heightening the risk of wider instability. The conflict's spillover potential into neighboring Horn of Africa states cannot be discounted, as displacement flows, armed mobilizations, and external patronage create an environment where sudden escalations are increasingly likely. In this context, Sudan exemplifies a worst-case scenario of regional fragility, where war dynamics, famine, and geopolitical maneuvering converge to produce profound uncertainty and enduring instability across the Horn of Africa.

1.6 South Sudan: Political Fragility, Humanitarian Crisis, and Regional Diplomacy

October closed as a month of mounting pressure on Juba from three directions: political turbulence at the center of state power, a sharp deterioration in humanitarian conditions across the country, and frenetic regional diplomacy aimed at preventing wider escalation.

President Salva Kiir's travels and outreach shaped the political calendar in late October. On 25 October, the president flew to Abu Dhabi for what his office described as an investment and bilateral-relations visit, his third trip to the United Arab Emirates this year.[124] The mission was presented as economic in purpose, but it came at a time when Juba sought both cash and external backing to stabilize domestic politics and shore up security cooperation.

The delegation of the Abyei Area Committee, led by Minister Pieng Deng Kuol, travelled to Ethiopia to brief Guang Cong, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, on developments in Abyei ahead of his forthcoming report to the United Nations Security Council, while also meeting with Ethiopia's foreign minister, Gedion Timothewos, to discuss regional cooperation and connectivity.[125] This diplomatic move signals South Sudan's intent to keep Abyei's status on the regional agenda and possibly to enlist the UN and Ethiopia as mediators or guarantors. By bringing the issue to the Horn of Africa forum, Juba shifts from bilateral Sudan-South Sudan talks toward a broader multilateral framing, which may give South Sudan more leverage but also draws in extra external players and complexity.

[124] Obaj Okuj. "Kiir Travels to UAE to Strengthen Economic and Investment Ties." *Eye Radio*, October 25, 2025.
[125] Sudans Post. "Abyei Committee Briefs UN Envoy in Ethiopia on Region's Situation." *Sudans Post*, October 2025.

Domestic command politics produced one of the month's most conspicuous shocks. On 9 October, Kiir dismissed the army chief of staff and then reinstated the predecessor after only three months in office.[126] The abrupt reshuffle underlined instability inside the security apparatus and fed speculation about rivalries within the presidency and the armed forces. The move has immediate implications for chain-of-command clarity and for how commanders engage on the ground where tensions are already high.

Alongside those internal shifts, regional diplomacy accelerated. The African Union appointed a senior former Somali prime minister as its special representative to South Sudan, signaling an AU push to reassert a mediation role as the domestic crisis deepened.[127] The appointment is intended to provide a fresh interlocutor for both Juba and opposition elements and to coordinate AU engagement with other regional actors.

On October 31, during the trial of former First Vice-President Riek Machar and seven senior SPLM-IO members, lead investigator Maj. Gen. Basilio Thomas Wani told the court he had no material evidence linking the accused to the late White Army commander Tor Gile Thoan, who is alleged to have led the March 2025 attack on the SSPDF garrison at Wich-Yar-Adiu. The admission came amid defense arguments that the investigation committee lacked legal legitimacy, that arrests were carried out without required legislative consent, and that crucial chain-of-custody and oath-taking procedures were dropped — a set of developments that observers say seriously undermines the prosecution's case. The next hearing is scheduled for Monday, 3 November 2025, when cross-examinations will continue.[128]

The United Nations human-rights and fact-finding bodies sounded a sustained alarm in October. A UN commission urged the African Union and the UN Security Council to act "decisively" as the crisis deepened, stressing the need for protection, accountability, and a credible political transition.[129] UN human-rights officials issued similar warnings that, without timely international engagement, the risk of large-scale conflict and mass violations would rise. These calls framed the month's diplomatic activity and put pressure on regional capitals to move beyond statements to tangible mediation and protection measures.

On 7 October, South Sudan and Sudan pledged to reactivate long-standing cooperation agreements focused on border security, oil infrastructure protection, intelligence sharing, and economic ties. The announcement followed a visit by South Sudan's foreign minister to Port Sudan, where he relayed a message from President Salva Kiir to Sudan's Sovereign Council

[126] Logonyi, Denis. "South Sudan president fires military chief after three months, reinstates predecessor." *Reuters*, October 9, 2025.

[127] *African Union.* "AUC Chairperson received H.E. Abdiwelli Ali, the AU Special Representative and Head of Mission to South Sudan." October 13, 2025.

[128] Sudans Post. "Machar Trial: Investigator Delinks Accused from White Army." *Sudans Post*, October 31, 2025.

[129] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "South Sudan: UN Commission Urges AU and UN Security Council to Act Decisively as Crisis Deepens." October 13 2025.

leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.[130] While the two countries originally signed a comprehensive pact in 2012, practical implementation has been weak—this revival suggests both governments now view cooperation as a priority amid regional instability.

On 17 October, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) warned that a 15 % budget cut, part of a broader UN financial crisis, would severely hamper its operations in South Sudan even as political violence and displacement continued to rise. UN Secretary-General's special envoy Jean-Pierre Lacroix held talks with President Salva Kiir and senior ministers, calling for increased cooperation from Juba to mitigate the funding shortfall while underscoring the mission's role in protecting civilians. [131]

In a bold reported move on 30 October, South Sudan formally demanded a sweeping overhaul of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), calling for a major reduction of international troops, the closure of several field bases, and a shift of the mission's focus away from direct protection of civilians toward national-led stabilization and reconstruction efforts.[132] The announcement surprised diplomats and analysts alike, as it signals Juba's intent to assert greater sovereignty and reshape the UN presence in line with its own priorities.

Meanwhile, a reported mass defection struck a major blow to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) when more than 11,000 of its fighters, led by Maj. Gen. Peter Gatkek Tolchieck and Lt. Gen. Keer Kai Geu formally joined the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) on 25 October in Nyirol County, Jonglei State. The ceremony publicly marked their pledge of allegiance to President Salva Kiir's government and was hailed by SSPDF leadership as a "bold decision". The SPLA-IO described the matter as "sensitive" and announced internal investigations into the alleged defections, signaling deep strain within the opposition's military wing.[133]

The violence and insecurity translated into major population movements. UN reports published in mid-October estimated that roughly 300,000 people had fled their homes in 2025 because of the conflict dynamics, a figure that emphasized how localized clashes and the broader political crisis have become drivers of displacement.[134] The displacement figures increased the urgency of international relief appeals and raised practical questions about access and protection for civilians.

South Africa's deputy president arrived in Juba in October with an explicit mandate to revive

[130] Sudan Tribune. "South Sudan, Sudan Pledge to Revive Cooperation Agreements on Border and Security." *Sudan Tribune*, October 7, 2025.

[131] Sudan Tribune. "UN Mission in South Sudan Faces 15% Budget Cut amid Rising Violence." Sudan Tribune, October 18 2025.

[132] Radio Tamazuj. "South Sudan Seeks Overhaul of UN Mission, Citing New Priorities." *Radio Tamazuj*, October 30, 2025.

[133] Sudans Post. "Over 11,000 SPLA-IO Forces Defect to SSPDF in Major Blow for Machar." *Sudans Post*, October 25, 2025.

[134] Ali, Faisal. "Conflict Sends 300,000 People Fleeing from South Sudan in 2025: UN." *Al Jazeera*, October 13, 2025

a stalled peace process.[135] The visit, and other shuttle diplomacy, reflected Pretoria's interest in preventing South Sudan's crisis from spiraling into a regional conflagration. At the same time, South Sudan's foreign minister completed talks in Khartoum and returned to Juba, illustrating the way capitals in the neighborhood are trying to manage spillover risks from Sudan and other conflicts. These diplomatic moves occurred against the backdrop of competing external influences and urgent appeals from the UN.

Natural hazards compounded human despair. Heavy seasonal rains and river flooding in October affected large parts of the country and forced mass displacement. UN and humanitarian reporting documented nearly one million people impacted by the floods and warned of an elevated risk of disease outbreaks and food insecurity as communities lost homes, water sources, and crops.[136] The floods, therefore, amplified an already fragile humanitarian picture and complicated access for relief organizations.

Regional security spillovers were another worrying theme. Officials in Darfur publicly accused South Sudanese mercenaries of a leading role in an attack on El Fasher, highlighting how the Sudan war and armed networks beyond national borders are tying into South Sudan's own security challenges.[137] Whether those allegations are borne out in full, the rhetoric highlights how neighboring conflicts are now narrated as mutually reinforcing, and how Juba's security choices carry cross-border consequences.

Taken together, October 2025 framed South Sudan as a state at once diplomatically active and institutionally brittle. The presidency pursued external partnerships and investment talks while simultaneously managing fraught personnel changes in the military. Regional and multilateral actors moved to head off deterioration by appointing envoys and pressing for action, but UN bodies warned that declarations must be matched by decisive measures to prevent renewed large-scale fighting. Meanwhile, the floods and mass displacement turned a political crisis into an immediate humanitarian catastrophe that will absorb scarce resources and complicate peacemaking efforts in the months ahead.

1.7 Kenya: Political Shock, Fiscal Reckoning and the Limits of State Capacity

Kenya is grappling with the aftermath of the sudden death of veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga, which has ignited national mourning and protests that have erupted into chaos. The government's struggle to manage large crowds has exposed significant shortcomings in public order, raising urgent questions about its legitimacy. Concurrently, President Ruto's approval of controversial legislative bills aimed at digital governance has stoked fears of regulatory overreach amid the national turmoil. This convergence of events has intensified public discontent and prompted elite repositioning, further undermining civic trust and

[135] *Radio Tamazuj*. "South Africa's Deputy President Arrives in Juba to Push Stalled Peace Deal.", October 8, 2025.
[136] OMMCOM NEWS. "Nearly 890,000 People Affected By Floods In South Sudan: UN." *Ommcom News*, October 14, 2025.
[137] *Sudan Tribune.* "Darfur Governor Says South Sudan Mercenaries Lead Attack on El Fasher.", October 23, 2025.

complicating the already strained relationship between civil society and state institutions. As the nation navigates this precarious landscape, the implications for political stability and institutional integrity are profound.

Political Developments and Institutional Dynamics

The sudden passing of veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga on October 15 took precedence over national development, triggering national mourning and mass mobilization, and security concerns.[138] Public funerary ceremonies in both Nairobi and Kisumu entailed tumultuous scenes, lethal stampedes, and confrontations with security forces that resulted in multiple deaths and hundreds of injuries. These incidents heavily impacted Kenya's political discourse and exposed the state's curtailed capacity to control large crowds.

On the same day, President Ruto approved key legislative bills that signal the government's intent to modernize regulations and expand new national revenues. The bills include the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes (Amendment) Act and the Virtual Asset Service Providers Act, among others.[139] This sparked public discourse over digital governance and civil liabilities alongside the timing of it; right with the national shock of Odinga's death and attendant protests, it amplified fears of regulatory overreach.[140] These concerns collectively intensified public tensions and led to elite repositioning, which undermined the government's legitimacy. These could potentially erode civic trust and accelerate frictions among civil societies, the opposition, and state institutions.

Economic Policy and Fiscal Management

Following the IMF delegation's visit to Nairobi on September 25, the mission was completed on October 9 after assessing macroeconomic reforms with a focal point on fiscal credibility, debt sustainability, and public governance, and further discussed reforms that could pave the way for a new program.[141] On the condition that a program proceeds, an emphasis on revenue measures, transparency, and state-owned enterprise reforms is to be expected. This could have implications of short-term fiscal tightening or policy reform that can aggravate political tensions and improve investor confidence if reforms are credible.

Kenya shows further ambition in the recent issuance of $1.5 billion in Eurobonds aimed at refinancing existing debts and easing repayment pressures, reflecting a critical balancing act.[142] The fiscal challenges require robust debt management strategies that need to provide not just short-term relief these bonds provide but a long-term one in order not to overburden

[138] Evelyne Musambi. "Kenya Police Fire at Mourners and 2 Die as Violence Erupts at Viewing of the Body of Raila Odinga," Associated Press, October 16, 2025.
[139] Michael Omond., "Government Clarifies Concerns over Eight Recently Assented Bills," Kenya News Agency, October 23, 2025.
[140] Lesley Anne Warner. "The Death of Odinga, a Consummate Dealmaker, Upends Kenyan Politics," World Politics Review, October 20, 2025.
[141] International Monetary Fund. "IMF Staff Concludes Visit to Kenya." IMF News, October 9, 2025.
[142] Ecofin Agency. "Kenya Cuts Borrowing Costs with New $1.5 Billion Eurobond, Extends Debt Maturities." Ecofin Agency, October 4, 2025.

the nation.

Complementing this, the government maintained active trade diplomacy with the U.S., seeking greater trade opportunities and extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to expand market access and foreign investment.[143] This push is a strategic hedge that would bolster export demand and diversify strategic partnerships beyond China. Nevertheless, trade negotiation timelines and conditionalities impose medium-term uncertainty. For the region, a stronger Kenyan economy and deeper U.S.–Kenya commercial ties would secure Nairobi's regional centrality through ports, logistics, and finance.

Domestic Security and Border Challenges

On the domestic level, the security management of mass mourning events exposes critical crowd control gaps, leading to fatalities and widespread public incredulity. How the anti-terrorism legislation is to be applicable in cases of political protests remained contentious, instilling concerns about the potential politicization of security mechanisms.

A major methamphetamine sequestration off Mombasa and Kilindini Port resulted in the arrest of six Iranian nationals, [144]showcasing Kenya's augmenting role in fighting against sophisticated maritime drug trafficking in the western Indian Ocean. This case blends domestic security with global diplomatic complexities.

On October 28, a tourist Cessna Caravan crashed near Kwale/Diani, killing 11, including foreign nationals, many of whom were EU nationals. This incident puts the aviation safety standards, search and rescue readiness, and bilateral consular cooperation under scrutiny.

Contrary to the economic and political integration, security risks persist as recurring violence involving Dassanech militias around Lake Turkana has caused fatalities and disrupted communities, testing existing peace accords and border governance.[145]

International Diplomacy and Multilateral Engagements

On the international level, Kenya's leadership continued defending its leading role in the UN-endorsed Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti while highlighting funding and equipment deficits.[146] Debates were going around both the domestic and the international communities, like the UN, CSIS, and regional outlets, scrutinizing Kenya's heavy involvement and mission outcome. Its active role exposes it to an opportunity to enhance its international profile as well as reputational and capabilities risk. Kenya's Human rights posture is under fire, Fred Matiangi and rights groups say unresolved disappearances and

[143] Gacuruzwa, Eric. "Kenya Pushes for U.S. Trade Deal and AGOA Extension to Boost Exports." FurtherAfrica, September 29, 2025.
[144] Anadolu Agency. "6 Iranians Prosecuted in Kenyan Court over $63 M Meth Trafficking Case." Anadolu Agency, October 27, 2025.
[145] Ngasike, Lucas. "Tension High along Kenya–Ethiopia Border after Fresh Militia Attacks." *The Standard* (Kenya), October 10, 2025.
[146] "Kenya-Led Anti-Gang Mission in Haiti Ends with Mixed Results," Le Monde, October 2, 2025.

weak protection of citizens are hurting the country's image. The UN accused Kenya of Human rights abuses, which Mudavadi said were being investigated and handled by independent bodies. Mudavadi assured the international community that there are no human rights abuses happening and that they will cooperate with these investigations to come to a conclusive decision.

Diplomatic efforts are escalating over the Iranian narcotics arrests, with Kenya managing prosecution and consular issues. In late October, Kenya's foreign affairs apparatus confirmed cases of Kenyans being lured into fighting in the Russia-Ukraine war and noted discussions with Russian authorities to secure the release of affected citizens.[147] These issues highlight how transnational criminal and illiberal non-state activities could quietly convert into diplomatic files, necessitating Kenya to balance law enforcement, human rights, and diplomatic reciprocity.

In the month of October, economic diplomacy was the core external agenda, with ongoing IMF engagements and U.S. trade negotiations centered on the AGOA extension period. However, its success depends on internal political stability and credible policy commitments.

Amid the confusion with the US, Kenya has been increasingly fastening trade and integration with China to bolster economic ties and infrastructure development. New trade agreements were made to compensate sectors like tea, coffee, and fishing that were at risk of losing market access post-AGOA. The purpose of this deal was to make Asian markets easy to access, as there was fear of integration. Kenya and China have been in a decade-long deal on the Chinese-financed Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) towards the Ugandan border. The project was envisioned to deepen regional integration within the Great Lakes region. While there is a deal of financial and operational burden surrounding the SGR might overwhelm Kenya's debt sustainability, proactive steps such as changing the China Exim debts from dollars to Yuan have reduced costs by $215 million.[148] To further conjoin their relation, Kenya Airways has launched a new flight route that goes from Haikou, China, to Johannesburg, South Africa.

Regional Engagement and Bilateral Cooperation

Regionally, Kenya maintained its role as a security and diplomatic hub, continuing discussions on Somalia's stability, reforms of the African Union and UN, and strategic trade partnerships. However, domestic upheaval impaired elite attention and resources. If Kenya fails to stabilize its internal security and governance gaps, its capacity in shaping the Horn of Africa's security architecture, maritime security, counter-terrorism, refugee and migration management would be compromised.

[147] AFP. "Kenyans Being "Lured" into Fighting for Russia in Ukraine, Foreign Ministry Says." The Moscow Times, October 27, 2025.
[148] "Why Kenya's Swap of U.S. Dollar Debt Boosts Its Fiscal Position." Yahoo Finance

Where economic integration is concerned, Kenya is eager to join their banks, such as KCB and Equity, though the World Bank warns not to refer to Saricom's bad beginnings.[149] But Kenya remains unchanging, emphasized by KCB's chief executive, who praised the "visible transformation" of Ethiopia's finance sector and said the bank sees realistic paths to enter, including acquisitions and exemptions to ownership caps. Strategic competition between Ethiopia and Kenya is portrayed through nuclear programs. While Kenya has engaged Chinese partners for a 1000MW unit in Siaya for 2034, Ethiopia works with Russia's Rosatom for a 1200 MW plant targeted for 2032.[150] This progression is seen parallel to President William Ruto's promise to change Kenya to be among the first-world nations by 2055.

President William Ruto attended the Nairobi COMESA summit to push an execution agenda that included digital integration, a single air market, removal of visa barriers, and a KSh 12.9 billion increase in Kenyan shareholding across African financial institutions to crowd in investments. Kenya also leveraged side talks with Egypt that reaffirmed their long-standing diplomatic relations.[151] Both countries agreed to deepen cooperation in various sectors like pharmaceuticals, agriculture, irrigation, and other key sectors, and also emphasized working together to foster peace and stability.

Kenya closes the month marked by public strain, active diplomacy, and national mourning. The passing of Raila Odinga set the tone with gatherings and clashes, while the state advanced new digital and financial laws and completed an IMF review as a $1.5 billion Eurobond loan eased near-term pressure. External engagements featured AGOA talks with the US, deepening ties with China, leadership at the COMESA summit, and close coordination with Egypt. Security and justice headlines included a major drug seizure linked to Iranian suspects, the Diani air crash, border violence around Lake Turlana, debate over the Haiti mission, and UN human rights scrutiny. Overall, the month reflects a country balancing grief, reform, and regional ambition, with public trust and institutional performance under close watch.

Section Two: MENA Region, Gulf, and Global Engagement

2.1 Egypt: International Diversion to Undermine Ethiopia and Mask Domestic Crises

Egypt has intensified its rhetoric regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), framing Ethiopia's operations as a significant threat to downstream livelihoods through "man-made" floods. This narrative positions Egypt as the historical guardian of the Nile, invoking longstanding agreements to bolster its claims. However, it often overlooks critical hydrological facts and technical assessments that demonstrate the dam's potential benefits.

[149] Martin K.N. Siele. "Kenyan banks want to enter Ethiopia despite the risks," Semafor Africa, October 13 2025.
[150] Aloo, Herald. "Kenya vs Ethiopia: Who Will Blink First in Nuclear Power Race?" The Africa Report, October 3, 2025.
[151] Daily News Egypt. "Egypt's PM, Kenya President Discuss Cooperation on Sidelines of COMESA Summit." Daily News Egypt, October 9, 2025.

Simultaneously, President El-Sisi's engagement in Middle East diplomacy, including mediation efforts in Gaza, appears to serve as a distraction from pressing domestic issues and internal opposition. This complex interplay of external posturing and internal challenges shapes the current political landscape in Egypt.

Egypt's Accusatory Rhetoric on GERD and Flood Management

Egypt's media and official statements have amplified a story: Ethiopia's operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam caused a "man-made" flood and therefore threatens downstream livelihoods.[152] Cairo's public messaging leans on the legacy of the 1929/1959 Nile agreements and frames itself as the primary guardian of Nile flows, casting Ethiopia's actions as unilateral and reckless. That narrative, however, selectively ignores key hydrological and operational facts that the GERD was designed to buffer extreme inflows and smooth seasonal peaks, and multiple technical assessments and engineering analyses show the dam can and does reduce downstream flood risk when operated as intended. Framing the story solely around historic entitlements also sidesteps the more salient point that attribution of these recent floods to deliberate mismanagement has not been demonstrated with clear, basin-wide hydrological evidence.

Marking a significant escalation in the protracted dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi's declaration that Egypt "will not stand idly by" and will take "all necessary measures"[153] represents a calculated shift from diplomatic negotiation to coercive posturing. This bellicose rhetoric, which frames Ethiopia's actions as an "irresponsible approach," serves a dual purpose: it galvanizes domestic support while signaling to the international community that Cairo's 'red lines' are being approached. The crucial question, however, is how far Egypt is willing to escalate beyond mere pronouncements. For now, the current phase of intense informational and diplomatic warfare, aimed at isolating Ethiopia and tarnishing its international reputation by portraying it as a regional destabilizer, is merely the opening maneuver in a broader playbook of coercive diplomacy.

El-Sisi's Diversionary Diplomacy: Masking Domestic Failures

El-Sisi has amplified Egypt's role in Gaza mediation, facilitating indirect negotiations on Donald Trump's 20-point ceasefire proposal amid ongoing Israeli strikes in areas like Gaza City, which claimed civilian lives even as talks progressed. Building on this momentum, Egypt hosted the Gaza Peace Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh on October 13, co-chaired by El-Sisi and U.S. President Donald Trump.[154] The event drew over 20 world leaders, including

[152] Anadolu Agency. 2025. "Egypt Accuses Ethiopia of 'Reckless' Dam Management Behind Nile Floods, Warns of Threat to Lives."

[153] The Arab Weekly. 2025. "Sisi Says Egypt 'Will Not Stand Idly By' as Ethiopia Mishandles Nile Dam."

[154] "Sharm El-Sheikh Peace Summit." *Egyptian Government Portal.*

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, but notably excluded direct representatives from Israel and Hamas.[155]

Discussions focused on endorsing the ceasefire's fundamentals, such as disarming Hamas and establishing a multinational stabilization force, with Egypt positioned as a lead contributor to post-war security in Gaza. During the summit, President El-Sisi awarded U.S. President Donald Trump the prestigious Order of the Nile, signaling strengthened U.S.-Egypt ties and highlighting Egypt's pivotal role in regional mediation[156]. Trump arrived in Egypt for the summit, praising El-Sisi's mediation and even inviting him for a ride in "The Beast," symbolizing strengthened U.S.-Egypt ties.[157]

Egypt might leverage these bolstered U.S. ties to revive Trump-led mediation on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), pressuring Ethiopia through conditional U.S. aid or diplomatic isolation to secure binding agreements on water flow and dam operations. This personal rapport might tilt negotiations in Egypt's favor, framing the dispute as a U.S. strategic interest in African stability.

Moreover, during the summit, a formal document supporting the ceasefire was signed, emphasizing Egypt's indirect influence through coalitions with partners like Qatar and Turkey.[158] El-Sisi reiterated Egypt's commitment to regional stability, linking the Gaza deal to broader Middle East dynamics, including potential extensions to conflicts in Lebanon and Sudan.

Further advancing alliances, Egypt participated in the inaugural EU-Egypt Summit in Brussels, where President El-Sisi met with EU leaders to discuss migration, economic partnerships, and Gaza reconstruction.[159] However, critics argue that this international engagement allows the regime to divert attention from domestic issues, such as the arbitrary imprisonment of activists for Palestine solidarity protests and the harsh crackdown on Sudanese refugees.[160] Despite the EU publicly welcoming El-Sisi and commending Egypt's "vital stabilizing role," human rights organizations have expressed strong dismay over the situation.

Critics point out that EU funding has faced criticism for potentially enabling abuses like detentions and deportations under El-Sisi's policies.[161] They argue that the EU has made concessions without establishing measurable benchmarks for human rights progress in exchange for financial support. This raises significant questions about the EU's commitment

[155] "World Leaders Gather in Egypt to Throw Weight Behind Gaza Ceasefire."

[156] Egypt Today. "Egypt's President Sisi Awards US President Trump Order of the Nile."

[157] The Times. Al-Atrush, Samer, Gabrielle Weiniger, Venetia Menzies, and Joshua Thurston. 2025. "Israeli Hostage Release: World Leaders in Egypt for Peace Summit — as It Happened."

[158] Xinhua. 2025. "Document to Support Gaza Ceasefire Deal Signed at Summit in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh."

[159] European External Action Service. 2025. "EU-Egypt Summit, 22 October 2025."

[160] Amnesty International. "EU/Egypt: Partnership Means Holding Each Other to Account for Human Rights Violations."

[161] Valcic, Vuk. "EU Embraces Authoritarian Egypt for Help on Gaza, Migration."

to its own human rights standards, with some suggesting that its prioritization of stability and cooperation on issues like migration control could inadvertently embolden authoritarian practices in Egypt.

Later in the month, El-Sisi also met with Kuwait's Prime Minister to reinforce bilateral ties and discuss the Gaza ceasefire implementation.[162] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's involvement in the mediation process highlighted shifting alignments, with Egypt leveraging these partnerships to enhance its regional capabilities.

However, President El-Sisi's chase for diplomatic glory in Gaza mediations and pacts with the U.S., EU, Qatar, and Turkey veils Egypt's internal decay, where his economic fumbles, marked by resource-draining megaprojects and botched reforms, deepen stagnation and inequality for the masses. This outward focus deflects from his autocratic arsenal of arrests, media censorship, and emergency decrees that pulverize opposition, perpetuating unaccountability and eroding societal trust. These tactics expose a systemic betrayal: elevating global stature over domestic renewal extinguishes the Arab Spring's blaze of hope for democracy, justice, and shared welfare, reducing it to echoes of repression and broken pledges, where power eclipses the people's plight and risks igniting broader instability.

Expanding Influence and Alliances to Counter Ethiopia

Shifting focus to maritime and security domains while sustaining the anti-Ethiopia narrative, Egypt's Foreign Minister declared Red Sea governance as exclusive to coastal states.[163] This assertion aimed to entrench Egypt's supremacy and sustain narratives undermining Ethiopian regional activities, integrating with El-Sisi's GERD ultimatums to depict upstream policies as comprehensive threats. By imposing exclusionary security frameworks, Egypt established itself as a regional enforcer, promoting rivalry over joint initiatives, which exposes Cairo's strategic anxieties and its readiness to weaponize sea governance against Ethiopia amid intertwined Nile conflicts. This policy endangers key shipping lanes and intensifies frictions in a piracy-prone and ecologically fragile zone, positioning Egypt as an obstructive force in interstate dynamics, likely weakening partnerships and impeding unified security frameworks vital for enduring stability.

Capitalizing on this restrictive posture, Egypt's EU summit engagement stressed collaboration but covertly advanced its perimeters, securing EU endorsements against the GERD while ignoring Ethiopia's valid rights, thus extending the month's confrontational drive into supranational venues. This alignment not only globalized Egypt's grievances but also hid its operational shortcomings in flood scenarios, broadening constraints linked to Red Sea policies. In wider terms, this reflects Egypt's exploitative approach in Euro-African relations, advancing self-interested goals at the expense of balanced resolutions to basin

[162] Xinhua. "Egypt's President, Kuwait's PM Discuss Ties, Gaza Ceasefire." October 30, 2025.
[163] Ibrahim Khazen. "Egypt Says Red Sea Security Depends Solely on Littoral States' Will."

challenges under climate pressures, treating upstream developments as shared perils and evading fair negotiations for sustainable outcomes, thereby depending on external backers to uphold outdated prerogatives.

Continuing this self-serving approach, Egypt and the EU have sought additional international support for Somalia's stability,[164] while conveniently aligning with Cairo's agenda to diminish Addis Ababa's regional dominance. This maneuver exemplifies Egypt's opportunistic exploitation of multilateral platforms to advance its neocolonial interests in the Horn of Africa, repurposing anti-terrorism aid as a geopolitical weapon in its relentless campaign against Ethiopia's sovereignty.

Building on diplomatic advances, Egypt collaborated with Turkey to prepare a Cairo reconstruction summit by the month's close, claiming stakes in recovery phases and fortifying bonds to cement Middle Eastern sway,[165] redirecting focus from domestic shortcomings and aligning with prior mediations and Trump's plan for sustained leverage, transforming disputes into vehicles for power augmentation. Given the reported cooperation between Turkey and Egypt, if reconstruction materiel were to fall into al-Shabaab's hands and further destabilize Somalia, that outcome would plainly contradict Turkey's interests after an estimated $1 billion of investment in the country, which would also strain Turkey's relationship with Egypt; Egypt would be well advised to proceed cautiously.

As a militarized outgrowth of this expansion, Egypt confirmed troop commitments to Somalia via AUSSOM after consultations between Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Somalia's Ahmed Moalim Fiqi,[166] evolving from earlier operations to bolster anti-insurgency measures while restating pledges to defend water rights and resist unilateral GERD moves impacting the lower riparians. This involvement embeds Cairo in continental defense to erode Ethiopia's Horn dominance, redirecting military resources toward Nile rivalries and demonstrating Egypt's outreach to marginalize Addis Ababa, entangling ties in drought-affected zones where emphasis on curbs sacrifices GERD's collaborative energy benefits, exemplifying Cairo's fusion of security and hydrology absent mutual gains.

Finalizing these initiatives, the EU and Egypt issued a joint water security declaration,[167] endorsing global standards that bolstered Egypt's position while excluding Ethiopia's entitlements, enlisting EU resources to internationalize Cairo's demands and presenting them as universal rules rather than conceding to reciprocal equity. Connected to Red Sea edicts and Somali engagements, it escalated restrictions on upstream endeavors, advancing an Egypt-focused paradigm of water stewardship that critiques autonomous projects while pushing pacts benefiting Cairo, highlighting Egypt's orchestration of alliances to protect its

[164] Hiiraan Online. "EU and Egypt Call for Greater International Support to Strengthen Stability in Somalia."
[165] APA News. "Egypt, Turkey Plan Gaza Reconstruction Summit in Cairo."
[166] Ahram Online. "Egypt, Somalia Review Deployment of Egyptian Troops to AU Stabilization Mission."
[167] European Commission. "Joint Statement EU–Egypt Summit." October 22, 2025.

shares against environmental shifts, stressing legacy claims over progressive fairness for shared progress.

In sum, Egypt's Gaza diplomacy is a strategic performance designed to mask its true foreign policy objective: undermining Ethiopian sovereignty. Cairo also skillfully weaponizes its role as a regional mediator to build international coalitions it can leverage against the GERD. This dual-pronged approach manufactures a foreign crisis to distract from domestic failures, sacrificing genuine regional cooperation to preserve its historical and unsustainable dominance over the Nile.

2.2 Yemen: Houthi Attacks, Regional Countermeasures, and Gulf of Aden Front

Yemen's multifaceted conflict escalated significantly in October, marked by the Houthis' aggressive expansion of economic and military actions against global interests, prompting a stronger international and regional counter-response. The Houthis issued economic sanctions on US energy giants and extended their maritime attacks into the Gulf of Aden, which led the Netherlands to push for an EU terrorist designation of the group. Concurrently, a strategic counter-Houthi bloc, reinforced by the UAE, consolidated its military capabilities, including a new base on Zuqar Island, while Israel executed a high-value strike, killing the Houthi military chief. The conflict's scope broadened further with reports of Houthi ties to Somali terror groups like Al-Shabaab, creating an integrated conflict zone in the Gulf of Aden/Horn of Africa. These escalations, compounded by Houthi detention of UN staff and persistent threats from AQAP and explosive remnants of war, solidify a pattern of deepening conflict polarization and systemic risk to global trade.

Yemen's Houthis' decision to sanction major US energy and shipping companies, including Chevron and ExxonMobil, marks a significant escalation in the economic dimension of its conflict with the United States.[168] Framed as a reciprocal measure following US sanctions, this move signals a direct, albeit largely symbolic, challenge to US economic interests and global energy markets. The action solidifies the narrative of the Houthi movement, Ansarallah, as an active component of the Iranian-led "Axis of Resistance," capable of defying Western economic pressure. The simultaneous claim of targeting a Dutch ship violating a ban on Israeli ports underscores the militarization of the maritime domain in the context of the Gaza conflict.[169] The pattern suggests an increasing willingness to employ both economic and military tools to project influence, directly challenging the US and its allies and further jeopardizing the fragile Omani-mediated ceasefire. The principal implication is the deepening of the proxy conflict and the continued instability of key global shipping lanes.

[168] The Cradle. "Yemen Imposes Sanctions on US Energy Giants Including Chevron, ExxonMobil." The Cradle, accessed October 29, 2025.
[169] U.S. Naval Institute. "Houthis Attack Dutch Ship in the Red Sea," October 2, 2025. Accessed October 26, 2025.

In a contrasting diplomatic effort to stabilize non-Houthi-controlled areas, the meeting between UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and Yemeni Prime Minister Salem Saleh bin Braik (representing the internationally recognized government in Aden) highlights the ongoing political efforts in the south.[170] The discussions, which centered on enhancing bilateral cooperation, underscore the UAE's continued strategic interest in South Yemen and its commitment to supporting the Aden-based Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). The significance lies in the reinforcement of the anti-Houthi political bloc and the prioritization of stability and development in the south. A stronger, UAE-backed government in Aden could serve as a more effective counterweight to Houthi influence and their growing ties with Somali terror groups, thereby bolstering regional maritime security.[171] The pattern demonstrates a dual-track approach to the Yemen crisis: military deterrence of the Houthis and political/developmental support for the PLC.

This underlying military tension, however, erupted once more when the Houthis' claim of a cruise missile attack on the Dutch-flagged cargo ship Minervagracht in the Gulf of Aden was announced.[172] This critical development signals a dangerous expansion of their operational range and a renewed threat to international shipping. Unlike previous attacks concentrated primarily in the Red Sea, this assault, further out in the Gulf of Aden, proves the Houthis' capability to strike vessels at greater distances, complicating defensive strategies for international naval forces. This pattern of escalation, following a brief ceasefire, reaffirms the Houthis' role as a non-state actor capable of inflicting substantial disruption on global trade. The broader implication is that the conflict's maritime dimension is not contained and remains inextricably linked to the trajectory of the Gaza war, posing a persistent systemic risk to global supply chains and potentially prompting greater international military and political intervention.

Directly responding to this attack, the Netherlands' formal call for the European Union to designate the Houthis as a terrorist group marks a significant diplomatic and potential policy shift following the incident involving the Dutch-flagged Minervagracht.[173] The move aligns with the US, Israel, and other nations and, if adopted by the EU, would implement economic sanctions and freeze Houthi assets and funds. The significance of an EU designation would be profound: it would formally recognize the group's actions as beyond the scope of a mere civil conflict, constraining their financial and diplomatic maneuverability. The pattern suggests that the Houthis' recent expansion of maritime attacks is eroding international tolerance, pushing a major global power bloc (the EU) toward a more confrontational policy stance. The implication is an increasing international legal and financial isolation of the Houthi leadership, further entrenching the polarization of the conflict.

[170] Arab News. “UAE President, Yemeni PM Discuss Ways to Enhance Bilateral Ties.” Arab News, October 4, 2025
[171] Johnsen, Gregory D. "The UAE’s Three Strategic Interests in Yemen." AGSI, February 24, 2022.
[172] Arab News. “Yemen’s Houthis Claim Missile Attack on Dutch-Flagged Ship in the Gulf of Aden.” Arab News, October 1, 2025.
[173] Safety4Sea. "The Netherlands Asks EU to Recognize Houthis as Terrorists." Last modified October 31, 2023.

Meanwhile, domestic security threats beyond the Houthi conflict persisted, as forces loyal to the internationally recognized government in Aden repelled a large-scale attack by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the southern Abyan province.[174] The attack, involving car bombs and suicide bombers, demonstrates that despite the focus on the Houthi conflict, terrorist and militia groups remain a potent and operational force in Yemen. The significance lies in the fact that the internationally recognized government continues to fight a two-front security war: against the Iran-backed Houthis and against Sunni extremist groups like AQAP.[175] The pattern indicates that any comprehensive peace agreement will need to address both the Houthi-government conflict and the enduring threat of transnational terrorism, an implication that complicates the peace process and strains the limited resources of the Aden-based government.

Adding to the nation's ongoing humanitarian burden, the announcement that Saudi Arabia's Project Masam dismantled 1,319 explosive devices in the first week of October, bringing the total cleared since 2014 to over 517,000, underscores the immense humanitarian and developmental impact of explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Yemen.[176] While the report is a metric of de-mining success, it simultaneously illuminates the scale of the ongoing devastation caused by the widespread use of landmines and IEDs by the Houthis and other militant groups. The clearance of these devices is essential for humanitarian aid delivery, safe civilian movement, and the eventual return of internally displaced persons. The pattern suggests that even if a ceasefire were to hold, the physical, deadly residue of the conflict, the widespread contamination of land, will continue to threaten the civilian population and inhibit economic recovery for decades, a profound and often underappreciated implication of the conflict.

Further complicating the humanitarian situation, the detention of over two dozen UN employees, including 15 international staff, and the subsequent confiscation of communications equipment in Sanaa, marks a critical escalation in the Houthis' movement's long-running harassment campaign against international organizations.[177] This action signifies a deliberate and calculated challenge to the international aid system operating within Houthi-controlled territory. The significance is the direct threat this poses to the humanitarian operating space in Yemen, a country dependent on the UN for aid. The pattern demonstrates a Houthi tactic of pressuring and manipulating the international community, using detained aid workers as a political advantage. This action risks a further drawdown of UN and NGO personnel, which would have catastrophic humanitarian implications for the millions relying on aid.

[174] Arab News. “9 Dead as Yemen Repels Deadly Al-Qaeda Attack.” Arab News, October 21 2025.
[175] GOV.UK. "Country Policy and Information Note: Security Situation, Yemen, March 2025 (Accessible Version)." March 31, 2025.
[176] Arab News. “Saudi project clears 1,191 explosive devices in Yemen.” Arab News, October 19, 2025.
[177] Arab News. “Yemen’s Houthis Detain 20 UN Employees and Confiscate Equipment.” Arab News, October 19,

Given the increasing regional instability and the threats to shipping, the meeting between the Coast Guard commanders of Djibouti, Yemen, and Somaliland in Djibouti to enhance coordination on maritime security is a notable, localized diplomatic effort to manage the increasing volatility of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.[178] The talks, aimed at strengthening joint patrols, intelligence-sharing, and combating piracy/smuggling, signal a recognition among riparian states of the shared and immediate threat to their maritime sovereignty. The significance is the emergence of a sub-regional security cooperation framework attempting to decouple security from the major geopolitical fault lines. The primary implication is the proactive attempt by regional actors to mitigate the disruption caused by the Houthis' actions and the adjacent issue of resurgent Somali piracy.

Adding a new dimension to the conflict's internal power dynamics, the Houthis' confirmation of the death of their military chief of staff, Mohammed al-Ghamari, from wounds sustained in a late August Israeli air strike, represents a significant decapitation strike against the movement's military command structure.[179] His death demonstrates Israel has extended operational reach and its willingness to execute high-value target strikes deep within Houthi-controlled Yemen in retaliation for attacks on its territory. The significance lies in the deterrent message sent to the "Axis of Resistance" and the temporary disruption of the Houthis' military planning. This is a clear illustration of the direct line of conflict now established between Israel and the Houthis. The implication is an escalation of the shadow war between Iran's regional proxies and Israel, further destabilizing the already volatile Arabian Peninsula.

This instability is being leveraged by malign non-state actors, as reports of growing ties between Yemen's Houthis and Somali terror groups, Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia (ISSOM), involving arms smuggling, training, and logistical support via Iranian-linked networks, signify a critical shift in the regional security landscape.[180] This 'black market' contractor model provides Somali militants with advanced weaponry. The key implication is the geographical expansion of the Iranian proxy model into the Horn of Africa, turning the Gulf of Aden from a mere transit point into an integrated conflict zone. This increased flow of high-tech weaponry to Al-Shabaab and ISSOM is a direct threat to the internal stability of Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Furthermore, the collaboration leverages Al-Shabaab's coastal intelligence and piracy experience, strengthening the Houthis' capacity to disrupt maritime traffic. This pattern creates a wider arc of instability, posing a long-term, systemic challenge to regional and international actors.

In response to the growing range of Houthi activities, the satellite confirmation of a newly constructed 2,000-meter airstrip on Yemen's Zuqar Island constitutes a significant

[178] Horn diplomat. "Somaliland, Yemen, and Djibouti Coast Guards Meet in Djibouti to Bolster Red Sea Security." Horn diplomat, October 2025.
[179] BBC News. "Yemen's Houthis Say Military Chief of Staff Mohammed al-Ghamari Killed." BBC News, October 16, 2025.
[180] ADF Magazine. "Ongoing Houthi Support of Somali Terror Groups Threatens Regional Stability." ADF Magazine, October 2025.

infrastructural development in the Red Sea's strategic security architecture.[181] Located only 90 kilometers from the Houthi-held port of Hodeida, and with clear logistical ties to UAE-based firms and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), this asset is a direct, yet undeclared, counter-Houthi measure. The Zuqar facility completes a strategic "island chain" network, including Mayun and Abd al-Kuri, that enhances the ability of anti-Houthi forces to project air power and conduct persistent aerial surveillance over the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden. The primary geopolitical significance is the consolidation of a containment strategy aimed at interdicting Houthi weapons smuggling and monitoring their maritime attacks. Domestically, the base further institutionalizes territorial fragmentation, empowering the STC's independent military capabilities.

2.3 Israel: Diplomatic Maneuvers, Security Dilemmas, and Operational Choices

October closed as a test of competing pressures on Israel: a U.S.-brokered, phased ceasefire with Hamas that opened a narrow humanitarian window while leaving the risk of renewed fighting alive; intensive Washington-led diplomacy to protect that pause and to link reconstruction to security guarantees; a series of naval interceptions and cross-border operations that produced widespread diplomatic, legal and popular fallout; and discrete moves on energy, defense commerce and domestic policy that together shaped Israel's international standing and operational choices.

Early October's ceasefire aimed to pause major combat, enable phased hostage returns, and allow a significant scale-up of humanitarian deliveries into Gaza. The pause was treated by agencies as a decisive opportunity to push supplies into an enclave that has suffered catastrophic losses. United Nations bodies and the World Food Program moved to scale up assistance once crossings opened, setting targets to reach roughly 2.1 million people with food and to expand medical and shelter deliveries.[182] In practice, the flow remained constrained by clearance processes, closed northern crossings, and logistical limits. WFP and OCHA warned that daily tonnage and crossing numbers were well below what is needed to end acute food insecurity in the hardest-hit areas. Independent aid groups also reported that many NGO requests to deliver aid were rejected or delayed, adding to the gap between agreed windows on paper and what actually reached civilians.[183]

The slow and partial returns of bodies and the protracted negotiations over living hostages sustained intense domestic political pressure throughout the month. Each update on returns or withheld remains under intensified public scrutiny of ministers, and narrowed room for concessions. These dynamics constrained Israeli strategy and shaped the government's willingness to trade security guarantees for broader relief or governance arrangements in Gaza. Against this backdrop, the government approved a formal renaming of the Gaza

[181] Euronews. "New Airstrip Built on Island Off Yemen to Counter Houthi Activities in Red Sea." Euronews, October 20, 2025
[182] Ward, Jasper. "UN Aims to Surge Aid, Medical Supplies into Gaza Once Ceasefire Starts." *Reuters*, October 9, 2025.
[183] Al Jazeera English. "WFP Says Food Supplies to Gaza Below Targets, Urges More Crossings to Open." *Al Jazeera English*, October 21, 2025.

campaign, a symbolic move that drew criticism from some hostages' families and opposition figures who accused the cabinet of politicizing the conflict's branding.[184]

Washington invested heavy diplomatic capital in preserving the pause and anchoring a reconstruction-for-disarmament framework. Vice-President J.D. Vance visited Israel from October 21 to 23 to shore up implementation, press for hostage returns, and push partners to align on monitoring and stabilization mechanisms.[185] Secretary of State Marco Rubio toured the new U.S.-led civil-military coordination center in Kiryat Gat on October 24 and urged partners to lock in practical arrangements while warning against unilateral steps that could derail progress.[186] U.S. statements on specific incidents also shaped allied messaging; at least one publicly announced U.S. assessment concluded that an Israeli strike did not violate the ceasefire, a judgment that influenced how partners framed compliance. Western partners translated diplomatic pressure into operational support on the ground when British officers joined a U.S.-led Gaza taskforce, deploying liaison officers and planners to assist with aid corridors, monitoring, and stabilization planning.[187]

President Joseph Aoun of Lebanon met with U.S. Middle East envoy Morgan Ortagus on 28 October in Beirut and called for an immediate end to the near-daily Israeli strikes on Lebanese territory.[188] He urged the activation of the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Committee, jointly overseen by the United States and France, to halt what he described as ongoing Israeli violations of last year's truce and to enable the return of southern residents home in time for winter.

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance affirmed on 28 October that the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip is "holding," despite Israeli air strikes on the enclave. He warned that "little skirmishes here and there" remain to be expected, but said the broader deal brokered by the U.S. remains intact, signaling that Washington continues to view the pause as viable even amid renewed incidents.[189]

Late October underscored the fragility of Israel's truce with Hamas. On October 28, after an Israeli soldier was wounded in Rafah, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered immediate strikes on Gaza, briefly suspending the U.S.-brokered ceasefire before declaring it restored.[190] Reports in Israeli media suggested Netanyahu had earlier sought authorization for

[184] Sokol, Sam, Lazar Berman, and Ariela Karmel. "'War of Revival': Cabinet Approves Netanyahu's Controversial Renaming of Gaza War." *The Times of Israel*, October 19, 2025.
[185] Frantzman, Seth J. "US Vice President JD Vance Comes to Israel to Ramp up Gaza's Stabilization Efforts." *The Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 2025.
[186] Lee, Matthew, and Wafaa Shurafa. "Rubio Tours U.S.-Led Centre in Israel Overseeing the Gaza Ceasefire." *Associated Press*, October 24, 2025.
[187] Allison, George. "British Officers Join US-Led Gaza Taskforce." *UK Defence Journal*, October 28, 2025.
[188] Asharq Al-Awsat. "Lebanon President Calls for End to Israeli Attacks in Meeting with US Envoy." *Asharq Al-Awsat (English)*, October 28, 2025.
[189] Yilmaz, Asiye Latife. "US Vice President Says 'Ceasefire Is Holding' Despite Israeli Airstrikes on Gaza." *Anadolu Agency*, October 28 2025
[190] Cornwell, Alexander; Nidal Al-Mughrabi; and Jeff Mason. "Israel Says Ceasefire and Aid to Resume After Airstrikes Kill 26 in Gaza." *Reuters*, October 20, 2025.

limited strikes but delayed under U.S. pressure, revealing friction between Israel's military impulses and Washington's diplomatic caution.

That same week, testimony from freed hostage Yosef-Haim Ohana drew national attention. In his first public interview, Ohana described being held in tunnels under Gaza, enduring beatings and psychological abuse, and surviving by persuading his captors that his death would hinder future prisoner exchanges.[191] His account reinforced domestic anger toward Hamas and renewed debate over the pace and scope of negotiations for remaining hostages.

Earlier in the month, Israelis marked the second anniversary of the October 7, 2023, attacks with large-scale commemorations across the country. Ceremonies in southern communities and a major Tel Aviv rally called for the release of hostages still in captivity, while national media reflected on the enduring trauma and security lessons of the event that reshaped Israel's regional and political trajectory.[192]

Israel's government accused Hamas of breaching the ceasefire by returning the wrong remains of a hostage and engaging in an attack that wounded an Israeli soldier, prompting a wave of air strikes. Gaza officials reported at least 20 people were killed in these strikes, and a hostage's body-handover was delayed.[193] The incident highlighted the fragility of the October truce and the way the hostage issue remains deeply entangled with the risk of military escalation.

Naval interdictions became a focal point of international controversy. Israeli forces intercepted the Global Sumud flotilla and several subsequent aid convoys in October, detaining hundreds of activists and seizing vessels.[194] The operations took place in waters beyond the immediate blockade perimeter and prompted legal complaints from organizers, urgent statements from human-rights groups, and UN human-rights experts demanding transparent processing and humane treatment of detainees. The seizures triggered mass protests across Europe and Latin America, union-led strikes in countries such as Italy, and a wave of municipal and consumer actions that energized boycott, divestment, and labor campaigns.[195] Human-rights organizations filed litigation and complaints to international bodies, amplifying legal and reputational pressure on Israel and forcing many governments to weigh diplomatic responses.

Latin America delivered some of the strongest state-level reactions. Colombia led a marked

[191] ToI Staff. "In First Interview, Released Hostage Says He Convinced Hamas Captors Not to Kill Him." *The Times of Israel*, October 27, 2025.
[192] Christou, William. "Israelis Gather to Mark Two Years Since 7 October Hamas Attack That Killed 1,200." *The Guardian*, October 7, 2025.
[193] Bachner, Michael. "Oct. 28: PM Reportedly Sought to Strike Gaza Before Latest Attack on IDF Troops, but US Objected." *The Times of Israel*, October 28, 2025.
[194] Ruth Comerford. "Israel intercepts Gaza flotilla and detains activists including Greta Thunberg." *BBC News*, October 2, 2025.
[195] Jones, Sam. "Israel's Gaza Flotilla Interception Triggers Protests, Diplomatic Expulsions and Calls for Strikes." *The Guardian*, October 2, 2025.

diplomatic rupture after two Colombian nationals were detained on flotilla vessels.[196] Bogotá expelled Israeli diplomats and suspended certain trade ties in protest, reflecting a broader regional realignment in parts of Latin America and adding a diplomatic cost to the naval operations where nationals were involved. European capitals and multilateral bodies likewise demanded explanations and the safe return and treatment of their citizens.

Ankara's posture added another layer of diplomatic friction. Türkiye maintained broad trade restrictions and took other measures, which Israel claimed were 'hostile', while pressing for a larger humanitarian and political role in Gaza. Israeli officials publicly criticized what they described as diplomatic and economic sanctions and categorically rejected any Turkish armed presence in Gaza under the internationally discussed force.[197] Israeli ministers emphasized that Jerusalem would decide which foreign contingents it would accept.[198] Those positions fed a wider debate about the composition and mandate of a multinational force, with U.S. envoys stressing that Israel's comfort with contributing countries was essential to the plan and Turkish officials continuing to press for a role that would protect Ankara's stated interests.

Northern-border dynamics and wider regional strikes kept Lebanon and Syria central to Israel's security calculations. The IDF carried out strikes in southern Lebanon that killed combatants and at times struck sites dangerously close to UNIFIL patrols, drawing rebukes from the UN and heightening tensions.[199] Hezbollah continued intermittent rocket and drone attacks and recorded casualties in clashes, while both sides largely preserved a pattern of probing operations instead of full-scale escalation. Israeli officials also announced foiling weapons-smuggling attempts from Syria into Lebanon,[200] and regional reporting captured claims that UNIFIL peacekeepers shot down an Israeli reconnaissance drone in southern Lebanon, an episode that complicated operational de-confliction and raised the risk of miscalculation.[201] Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu added a public admonition that Israel required no external approval to strike in Lebanon if it judged such action necessary, underscoring Jerusalem's insistence on operational freedom even during the ceasefire window.

Legal and human-rights pressure intensified on multiple fronts. The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion in late October emphasizing obligations to facilitate UN and other humanitarian relief and warning against measures that could result in starvation[202].

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[196] Pannell, Alfie. "Colombia Expels Israeli Diplomats, Ends Trade Agreement Following Flotilla Detentions." *Latin America Reports*, October 2, 2025.
[197] Daily Sabah with Agencies. "Israel Complains about Diplomatic, Economic Sanctions by Türkiye." *Daily Sabah*, October 27, 2025.
[198] Steven Scheer ."Netanyahu Says Israel Will Determine Which International Forces Are Unacceptable." *Reuters*, October 26, 2025.
[199] News Agencies. "UN Slams Israel after Attack on Peacekeepers in Lebanon." *Al Jazeera*. October 27, 2025..
[200] Enab Baladi. "Israel Announces Foiling of Weapons Smuggling from Syria to Lebanon." *Enab Baladi*, October 24, 2025.
[201] Abushamala, Rania R.a. "Israel Accuses UN Peacekeepers of Shooting Down Reconnaissance Drone in Southern Lebanon." *Anadolu Agency*. October 27, 2025.
[202] "Advisory Opinion – Obligations of Israel in Relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations and Other

Although advisory opinions are non-binding, the ruling widened political and legal pressure on Israel and reinforced international calls to restore UN relief channels. Human-rights groups lodged a series of complaints and briefs with international bodies contesting naval interdictions and aid denials, while UN human-rights experts demanded transparent and humane treatment of detainees.

Cyber incidents and information operations added a further layer of complexity. Israeli authorities reported a number of cyberattacks against hospitals and other systems that were publicly attributed to Iran-linked actors, and hacker groups circulated alleged data and footage claiming access to Israeli systems.[203] Officials described operational disruption as limited, but the incidents underscored vulnerabilities to civilian and defense infrastructure and drew attention to the information-war dimension of the conflict.

The West Bank and domestic legislation remained flashpoints. The Knesset renewed consideration of bills that would apply Israeli law to parts of the West Bank and advanced far-right private-member measures through preliminary votes late in the month.[204] Those moves provoked international criticism and explicit warnings from U.S. envoys that unilateral annexation-style steps would threaten diplomatic progress on Gaza. Under international and allied pressure, the prime minister ordered a temporary pause in the legislative process pending consultations. Meanwhile, October saw a sharp spike in settler violence during the olive-harvest season, with documented attacks on Palestinian farmers, arson, and tree-cutting that produced immediate humanitarian and political consequences.[205]

Targeted strikes and rules of engagement posed a persistent dilemma for Israeli decision-makers during the pause. Security forces carried out precision strikes when they judged imminent threats existed.[206] Those actions produced periodic civilian casualties and adverse international reporting, and they forced a constant trade-off between rapid defensive responses that might undermine the pause and restraint that might leave perceived security risks unaddressed.

Maritime security in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden continued to affect global trade routes. Houthi attacks on merchant vessels sustained elevated war-risk premiums and routing caution among insurers and ship operators. Even as ceasefire hopes briefly reduced some directional pressures, underwriters and carriers kept premiums and rerouting options in place, warning that normalization of transits would require verified security guarantees. The combined effect raised shipping costs and complicated supply chains that matter to Israel's

International Organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Relations of Israel with the State of Palestine." International Court of Justice, October 22, 2025.

[203] JPost Staff. "Iran Behind Cyberattacks on Israeli Hospitals, Businesses, National Cyber Directorate Warns." *The Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 2025.

[204] Reuters. "Israel's Parliament Gives Initial Nod to Occupied West Bank Annexation." *Reuters*, October 22, 2025.

[205] Halabi, Einav. "Olive Harvest Season Sees Surge in West Bank Settler Violence against Palestinians." *Ynet News*, October 25, 2025.

[206] Isayev, Khagan. "Israeli Forces Conduct Targeted Strike in Gaza, Citing Terror Threat." *Caliber.Az*. October 26, 2025.

imports and energy security.[207]

At the same time, Israel's commercial and energy diplomacy made technical progress. An Israeli military supplier established its first branch in the United Arab Emirates, reflecting growing defense and industrial engagement with Gulf partners since normalization agreements.[208] Regulators and industry players also took steps to allocate capacity for the planned Nitzana gas pipeline and to advance Leviathan export capacity, signaling renewed commercial momentum for exports to Egypt and deeper regional energy integration despite ongoing security risks.[209]

Transport and tourism reflected the month's mixed picture. Several major international carriers announced plans to resume or expand flights to Tel Aviv in the coming months, while others kept routes paused or limited for operational reasons.[210] Local carriers adjusted services to meet pent-up demand, and the partial resumption of flights signaled a tentative return of connectivity, even as travel patterns remained sensitive to security incidents.

Taken together, the principal constraints on the outlook are clear. First, whether the ceasefire can be made durable as aid scales up and logistical obstacles are addressed. Second, whether U.S. diplomacy can anchor practical monitoring, hostage arrangements, and a reconstruction pipeline that links security guarantees to international funding. Third, whether naval interdictions, cross-border strikes, and northern-border incidents will prompt further punitive diplomatic steps or legal actions that erode Israel's partnerships. Fourth, whether domestic legislative moves and settlement-related violence will widen diplomatic fissures with key partners and complicate reconstruction politics. Each trajectory will shape Israel's operational choices and its international standing in the coming weeks.

2.4 Türkiye: Multi-Vector Diplomacy and Strategic Engagement

October 2025 underscored Turkey's deepening commitment to its multi-vector foreign policy, positioning Ankara as a pivotal, non-traditional middle power across Africa and the Middle East. The month's key trend was the effective coordination of soft power and strategic economic diplomacy to secure long-term geopolitical interests. Key turning points included the formal institutionalization of economic ties with Ethiopia via the WTO market access deal, the high-level reaffirmation of the strategic alliance with Qatar, and an assertive diplomatic re-engagement in the Sudan conflict following the fall of Al Fasher. These actions highlight Ankara's strategy to build a conflict-resilient network of trade, security, and institutional partnerships, particularly along the strategically vital Red Sea littoral.

[207] Geopolits Research Desk. "From 0.3% to 0.7%: The New Red Sea Insurance Math for Shippers." *Geopolits*. October 21, 2025.
[208] "Israeli military company establishes first branch in UAE – Report." Middle East Monitor, October 27, 2025.
[209] Onyango, Daniel. "Energean Signs 15-Year Deal for New Israel-Egypt Gas Pipeline." *Pipeline Technology Journal*, October 27, 2025.
[210] Wrobel, Sharon. "As Foreign Airlines Return to Israel, Sky-High Airfares Show Signs of Descent." *The Times of Israel*, October 21, 2025.

The start of the month saw Turkey and the State of Qatar conclude their annual Supreme Strategic Committee meetings in Doha[211]. These high-level, institutional discussions cemented their deep strategic alliance, moving beyond simple defense ties to coordinating political positions on key regional flashpoints, particularly concerning the Horn of Africa. The two nations explicitly set a clear goal to significantly boost their already strong trade volumes, reinforcing the Ankara-Doha partnership as a major strategic and financial force balancing various influences across the Middle East.

Shifting to crisis diplomacy, the Turkish Ambassador met with General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Port Sudan to reaffirm commitment to strengthening cooperation despite the active civil war[212]. The talks were a powerful signal of Ankara's long-term faith in the Sudanese government, translating into tangible plans for economic re-engagement, including the resumption of Turkish development work through TIKA, the opening of a Turkish bank branch, and the planned return of Turkish Airlines. This approach demonstrates Ankara's ability to conduct resilient diplomacy, securing a strong position on the critical Red Sea coast even amidst the ongoing conflict.

In a key soft power move in the Horn of Africa, Turkey donated high-tech media equipment to Somalia's national broadcasting institutions[213]. This strategic gift goes beyond traditional aid, directly bolstering the Somali government's ability to control its own narrative and communicate effectively across the nation, thus enhancing its state-building efforts. By solidifying the Ankara-Mogadishu relationship, this capacity-building diplomacy ensures Turkey maintains a strong strategic ally along the Red Sea, subtly countering the influence of other regional rivals in the process.

The same period required assertive diplomacy regarding the fighting in Sudan. Following the reported fall of Al Fasher, Turkey's Foreign Ministry issued a strong condemnation, urgently calling for an immediate stop to the violence and demanding unimpeded humanitarian access to the besieged city[214]. This principled position aligns Ankara with international humanitarian calls, affirming its role as a responsible voice committed to upholding Sudan's sovereignty and seeking to safeguard civilian lives. This move is part of Ankara's wider strategy to remain a central diplomatic player in managing the Sudan crisis and protecting its investments in the region.

Turkey also made a significant step toward economic integration in Africa when it concluded

[211] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. "Joint Statement on the 11th Meeting of the High Strategic Committee between the Republic of Türkiye and the State of Qatar." October 22, 2025.
[212] Horn Pulse. "Sudan and Turkey Strengthen Strategic Cooperation," October 26, 2025.
[213] "Türkiye Donates High-Tech Media Equipment to Somalia." *Daily Sabah*, October 27, 2025.
[214] Esra Karataş Alpay. "Türkiye Urges Immediate Halt to Fighting in Sudan's Al Fasher." *TRT World*, October 28, 2025.

a Bilateral Market Access Agreement with Ethiopia[215]. This formal deal satisfies a critical requirement for Ethiopia's accession to the World Trade Organization, underscoring the powerful and growing strategic economic alignment between the two capitals. By sponsoring Ethiopia's move toward global trade, Turkey gains a key entry point into a large, reforming African market, signaling its confidence in Ethiopia's future and simultaneously accelerating Addis Ababa's push for global economic diversification.

Finally, President Erdogan concluded the Turkey-Africa Business and Economic Forum, affirming that bilateral trade had surged to nearly forty billion dollars[216]. In his closing remarks, he emphasized that Turkey and Africa will continue walking toward a common future, reinforcing Ankara's commitment to an equitable, long-term partnership. The event cemented Turkey's position as a top-tier partner through infrastructure projects and trade, all of which are essential components of Ankara's long-term strategy to establish itself as a central hub in a new, multipolar world order.

2.5 Gulf States: Diplomacy and Security Engagement in the Horn and Beyond

The geopolitical landscape of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East in the lead-up to and during October 2025 was dominated by the competing engagements of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The UAE pursued a highly transactional strategy aimed at securing strategic maritime and resource access. This involved port influence such as Berbera, Somaliland, and high-level economic diplomacy Africa Tourism Summit. However, this was severely undermined by mounting international scrutiny and intelligence reports linking the UAE to supporting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan to prolong the conflict.

In contrast, Qatar employed a "soft power" strategy centered on mediation, humanitarian aid, and political support in Somalia. It provided substantial development aid to Djibouti ($80M+) and aligned with the Federal Government of Somalia, directly competing with the UAE's influence. Globally, Qatar solidified its role as a critical mediator for the Gaza ceasefire and global talks, such as Ukraine and the Taliban. Crucially, Qatar secured an executive order from the U.S. treating attacks on its territory as a U.S. security threat, leveraging its status as a host of the Al Udeid base.

Finally, Saudi Arabia prioritized economic engagement and collective Red Sea security through the Red Sea Council (RSC). Riyadh led diplomatic de-escalation efforts, such as the Jeddah talks on Sudan, and used significant financial investments to build alliances. It reinforced Red Sea access through naval cooperation, particularly with Eritrea.

[215] Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. "Ethiopia, Turkey Sign Market Access Deal for WTO Entry." October 17, 2025.
[216] TRT Afrika. "Türkiye and Africa Will Continue Walking Toward a Common Future: President Erdogan." October 17, 2025.

UAE: Security-Driven Mediation from Bilateral De-escalation to Regional Coordination

The UAE's engagement in the Horn of Africa centered on deepening strategic ties with Ethiopia through significant investment, trade, and security cooperation, and port development projects like Berbera in Somaliland. The UAE's involvement aims to secure influence over critical maritime routes in the Red Sea corridor while balancing complex regional rivalries with neighboring states like Somalia and Djibouti. It also engaged in diplomatic efforts with the African Union and hosted high-level diplomatic visits to enhance cooperation on peace, security, and development in the region.[217] However, the UAE faced scrutiny over alleged arms transfers fueling conflicts in Sudan and Somalia.

From the UAE, a key moment came during the annual joint meeting of the EU Political and Security Committee and the African Union Peace and Security Council. The discussions emphasized the fragile state of affairs in Somalia and Sudan, calling on external actors, including the UAE, to support ceasefires rather than back proxy militias. The communiqué implicitly criticized the UAE's port projects in Berbera and plans for Djibouti, pointing out how these expansions complicate efforts to stabilize the Red Sea corridor.[218] This critique comments given earlier at the UN General Assembly, where Horn leaders demanded greater accountability from foreign powers interfering in regional affairs.[219]

Somalia, preparing to chair the UN Security Council in early 2026, found itself at the center of this regional dynamic[220]. The country faces pressure to take a firm stance on a resolution condemning the UAE's role in supplying arms to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The controversial security agreement Somalia made with the UAE in 2022, which grants the UAE military immunity in Somali ports, has been criticized for enabling weapons shipments to the RSF through Bosaso. Many are calling on Somali leaders to actively support sanctions.[221]

Security concerns deepened as reports emerged linking the UAE to efforts to prolong the Sudanese conflict through support for the RSF. Intelligence leaks and UN documents suggest that Abu Dhabi has been arming the RSF with weapons sourced from the UK and backing mercenaries from Colombia to maintain controlled instability.[222] This strategy appears aimed at securing lucrative assets like gold mines, large swaths of farmland, and access to Port Sudan. The United Nations received further reports of war crimes committed by RSF fighters allegedly armed by the UAE, leading to calls for International Criminal Court

[217] United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UAE and The African Union Commission Hold Round of Political Consultations, October 13, 2025
[218] Michael W. Wilson, Ports, Power and Proxy Wars: GCC Engagement in the horn of Africa, Gulf Research Center, October 6, 2025
[219] UN, General Assembly Conclude General Debate EWith Calls fOr Accountability, Inclusion, Placing Unite Nations At Heart of Strong Multilateral System, October 29, 20225.
[220] UNSOM, United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, October 13, 2025
[221] Horn Africa Intelligence, The UAE's Key Hub for Supplying arms to sudan, october 2, 2025
[222] Press Tv, UAE Supplied Sudan's RDF Military with UK -made Weapons, October 29, 2025

investigations and tighter arms embargo enforcement.[223] These security risks tie directly to the UAE's ambitions to control key maritime hubs. The expansion of Berbera port, alongside plans to revive port activities in Djibouti, attracted widespread concern over militarization and the potential to sour already fragile peace processes.

Federal Somali authorities also faced local criticism for accepting UAE "aid" like firefighting trucks while allegations of arms smuggling linked to the 2022 pact remain unaddressed[224]. The competition for influence in the Horn has intensified, featuring the UAE as a rising "sub-imperial" player vying with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.

While proposals for alliances involving Western powers, the UAE, Somaliland, and Israel to confront Al-Shabaab have been floated, many question the wisdom of working closely with an actor whose footprint may be blamed for regional instability. Meanwhile, tensions heightened between Egypt and the UAE over Sudanese border conflicts, with Cairo viewing advances by the RSF as a serious threat to its national security.[225]

A major high-level engagement was the UAE-Africa Tourism Investment Summit held in Dubai, which brought together tourism ministers, government leaders, and investors from 53 African nations, including those from the Horn, to strengthen economic ties and explore investment in tourism, infrastructure, and hospitality, reflecting the UAE's strategy to diversify engagement beyond security.[226] Concurrently, the UAE's ambition for Red Sea port access and commercial dominance was solidified with the launch of a new direct strategic shipping service connecting Jebel Ali Port with DP World's expanded Berbera Port in Somaliland further linking the UAE to key regional markets and providing landlocked Ethiopia an alternative trade route, a move viewed critically by federal Somalia and the African Union as complicating Red Sea corridor stability. Even though the UAE does not have natural gold, it is getting illicit gold smuggled from the Tigray region along the route of Sudan to its final destination capital of Abu Dhabi.[227]

In sum, the UAE's role in the Horn remains deeply controversial; its diplomatic engagement provides a veneer of cooperation, yet behind the scenes, its pursuit of strategic ports, resource control, and proxy leverage contributes to ongoing fragmentation and insecurity. Outside of the Horn of Africa, there was significant diplomatic and security activity across the Middle East and North Africa. A major focus was the volatile situation in the Levant, with the fragile Gaza ceasefire dominating the United Nations Security Council's agenda amidst humanitarian crises, and renewed tensions between Israel and Hamas leading to

[223] Center For International Policy, Enforce UN embargo on Sudan war, hold UAE Accountable for arming, RSF, october 29, 20225
[224] All Afruica, Sudan: UN Accuses UAE of Funneling British -made arms to militants in sudan, so alia and libya, october 29, 2025
[225] Aljazeera, Could a US and Saudi backed proposal least o peace in sudan, october 27, 2025
[226] United Arab Emirates Tourism Minister, UAE-Africa Tourism Investment Summit to be held on 27 October in Dubai, charting new frontiers for boosting UAE-Africa investment flows in various tourism sectors, October 15, 2025
[227] XCEPT, Illicit gold is exacerbating Ethiopia's conflicts, october 2024

reciprocal strikes and accusations of truce violations.[228]

Simultaneously, the long-standing conflict in the Western Sahara witnessed major geopolitical shifts, as a piece of analysis noted the diplomatic decline of the Polisario Front following increased international recognition and proactive development and security diplomacy by Morocco, a development poised to reshape the North and West African geopolitical landscape. Further west, in the Maghreb, US diplomatic efforts reportedly encouraged Algeria and Morocco to reopen dialogue after years of tension, while the ongoing civil conflict in Sudan (which borders the Horn but is distinct from the primary conflicts there) escalated with reports of mass killings in El Fasher as the Rapid Support Forces advanced, raising fears of wider regional instability.[229]

Qatar: Quiet Mediation, Humanitarian Leverage, and Anti-Fragmentation Diplomacy

Qatar's engagement in the Horn of Africa was marked by diplomatic efforts and regional cooperation. Qatar reinforced its bilateral ties with Somalia through financial aid and political backing. It also expanded diplomatic relations with Djibouti, signing agreements to enhance economic and political cooperation and emphasizing regional stability. Qatar participated in the 11th session of the Supreme Strategic Committee with Turkey, reaffirming commitments to peace and stability in the Horn, and mediated regional conflicts, including efforts to promote dialogue and mutual respect among neighboring states.[230] Qatar's commitment to using soft diplomacy to influence Red Sea shipping lanes aligns with Qatar’s broader emphasis on peaceful dispute resolution and ensuring maritime safety.[231]

Complementing these efforts, Qatar’s engagement with the European Union included high-level meetings to synchronize humanitarian strategies, particularly focused on establishing coordinated corridors to deliver aid in Sudan and Somalia, regions heavily affected by conflict and displacement. Qatar also invested in capacity-building initiatives, exemplified by its hosting of the International Labour Organization’s training on fair recruitment practices. Delegates from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti attended to address labor migration challenges, particularly combating trafficking networks that threaten regional security and development. Qatar provides 100 million for renewable energy development initiatives with Ethiopia.[232] This initiative reflects Qatar’s humanitarian vision, fostering collaboration and improving governance around complex transnational issues affecting the Horn.

On the development front, Qatar has prioritized Djibouti as a focal point for investment and cooperation. High-level discussions with Djibouti’s economy ministry surfaced plans for

[228] UN News, Security Council LIVE: Gaza ceasefire, aid crisis dominates agenda as ambassadors meet on the Middle East, October 23, 2025
[229] Hafed Al Ghwell etal, North Africa Weekly: October 29, 2025
[230] ECOFIN Agency, Djibouti, qatar sign to strength mou bilateral cooperation, october 2025
[231] The Guardian, Mediator in chief: how people of Qatar will be central to Gaza ceasefire holding, October 16, 2025
[232] Africa one, Ethiopia and qatar forge bold investment Alliance, october 20, 2025

sustainable development projects totaling upwards of $80 million, targeting port infrastructure enhancements and support for refugee populations.[233] Subsequent bilateral agreements reinforced these commitments, encompassing economic cooperation and mediation training designed to bolster Djibouti's role as a stable and strategic hub in the region.

These tensions reflect the broader contest for influence in Somalia, where Qatar's backing of federal cohesion contrasts sharply with other external players' strategies and local political dynamics. In matters of security, Qatar's role has been more indirect, nonetheless impactful. The country's funding of advanced radar systems in Djibouti's ports and support for counterterrorism operations from the Al-Udeid base underscore its commitment to disrupting violent networks, including efforts to cut off Al-Shabaab's financing through illicit labor migration routes. Training programs and humanitarian aid packages aimed at refugee camps and demining initiatives in Eritrea further illustrate Qatar's emphasis on merging security with humanitarian objectives.

Qatar's broader strategic positioning resonates in its efforts to build alliances and counterbalance rival influences, particularly those of the UAE and Turkey.[234] Its growing partnership with Djibouti provides a valuable gateway to the Red Sea, while emerging trilateral security and development frameworks hint at expanding cooperation with Israel and the United States. This reflects a nuanced calculus aiming to leverage the Abraham Accords and broader Gulf diplomacy to strengthen regional stability. Competition with the UAE manifests notably in Somalia, where Qatar champions a "unity" narrative aligned with Mogadishu's federal government, countering UAE-aligned secessionist sentiments.

The evolving Turkey-Qatar axis, marked by a series of Gulf investment agreements, bolsters this diplomatic front, enhancing Qatar's economic footprint and political influence in the Horn. At the same time, Qatar's policy discussions emphasize resource access and a hedging strategy against Iranian regional ambitions, highlighting the Horn as a strategic arena for long-term geopolitical positioning. Nonetheless, not all responses to Qatar's involvement have been favorable. Somaliland political circles continue to view Qatar's stance on secession as antagonistic, linking it to wider Gulf Cooperation Council rivalries that play out in Horn politics.

Qatar's diplomatic, geopolitical, and security engagements beyond the Horn of Africa in 2025 center on multi-alignment mediation, energy-driven partnerships, and diversified security amid regional crises; it co-brokered the January Gaza ceasefire, advanced Ukraine-Russia prisoner swaps, hosts US-Taliban talks, and convened a September Arab-Islamic summit after Israeli strikes on Doha, while deepening LNG and investment ties with Europe via EU-GCC forums, Asia like Turkey strategic committee, $45B in India and China and the

[233] The peninsula, MOU, strengthen bilateral relations with Djibouti, October 28, 2025
[234] Absu Guked, in the horn of Africa a contest for the sea, the capital, October 26, 2025

US Trump's executive order treating attacks on Qatar as US threats,[235] tied to Al Udeid base and $45B investments, all while pushing GCC defense autonomy post-Iranian missile strikes on Al Udeid.

Saudi Arabia: Advancing Peace, Security, and Geopolitical Stability

Saudi Arabia advanced its Horn of Africa strategy through mediation, security cooperation, and economic leverage, it hosted Jeddah talks to extend Sudan's ceasefire with $500M in aid, offered to mediate Ethiopia-Somalia tensions over Somaliland, and quietly pushed Eritrea-Djibouti normalization in terms of security efforts included Red Sea naval drills, $200M for Somali counterterrorism, and drone tech to Ethiopia; geopolitically, Riyadh signed a $1.2B green energy deal with Ethiopia, explored Berbera port access, and launched a $3B Africa fund at the Arab League-AU summit, consolidating influence amid UAE rivalry and Red Sea risks.

Saudi Arabia's engagement has reflected an emphasis on strengthening Red Sea security, mediating conflicts, particularly in Sudan, and countering rival regional influences amidst its Vision 2030 ambitions.[236] Saudi Arabia continued mediation in the Sudan war, hosting virtual consultations via the Jeddah platform for the Sudan dialogue. Saudi Arabia provided 100 million in humanitarian aid through the KS relief for the Sudanese people.[237] While the kingdom's approach contrasts with more interventionist actors like the UAE, it has deployed considerable economic and diplomatic resources to assert its presence, especially through the Red Sea Council (RSC). With pledges exceeding $120 million for stability and development projects, Saudi Arabia has focused on building alliances across Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, prioritizing economic leverage and multilateral frameworks rather than direct military intervention. The relationship with Eritrea remains central to Saudi strategy, positioning Asmara as a key partner in securing the southern Red Sea. Saudi Arabia advances a 2-billion-dollar port modernization deal for Assab, with feasibility studies completed, this is to counter the UAE planned project in Berbera, Somaliland, and secures Saudi southern Red Sea flank.[238]

High-level meetings reaffirmed commitments to joint patrols against Houthi threats, with significant investments earmarked for upgrading the port of Massawa.[239] These efforts extend Saudi Arabia's maritime security influence while positioning Eritrea as a regional bulwark, particularly amid ongoing tensions involving Ethiopia. Joint naval exercises have further enhanced Saudi-Chinese cooperation, focusing on anti-piracy operations and signaling

[235] Simon Lewis and Trevor Hunnicutt, Trump order pledges that US will defend Qatar in event of attack, Reuters, October 1, 2025
[236] Aljazerra, Sudan warring sides resume peace talks in Saudi Arabia, October 29, 2025
[237] International Crisis Group, Sudan's War is the Shape of Things to come, October 2, 2025
[238] Foreign Affairs Forum. Saudi Arabia's Strategic Investment in Eritrea Port of Assab Amis Rising Regional Tensions, october 2025
[239] Jamie A. Williamson, Maritime Security and Safeguarding Global Supply Chains, October 25, 2025.

Riyadh's intent to maintain strategic dominance in the area.[240] Saudi Arabia contributed 500 troops to the African Transition Mission in Somalia, focusing on Al-Shabaab, which is operating primarily in Puntland.

On the diplomatic front, Saudi Arabia has actively promoted de-escalation in Sudan, engaging through IGAD-led dialogues and linking humanitarian aid to ceasefire progress. While Riyadh pledged considerable funds to support stability and reconstruction in Sudan, the kingdom's role has drawn scrutiny for perceived alignment with Egyptian interests and alleged indirect support to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), fueling debates within the UN over arms embargo enforcement.

Addis Ababa expressed concerns about the Red Sea Council's perceived tilt toward Egyptian and Saudi dominance, particularly regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and maritime disputes. Bilateral discussions appeared aimed at securing reassurances on Riyadh's neutrality and maintaining balanced relations amidst the broader power contests shaping the Horn. Saudi Arabia's presence in Djibouti reflects a continuation of its investment in securing key maritime chokepoints.[241]

This alliance functions as an economic-diplomatic vehicle aligned with Vision 2030's goals, underpinning food and energy security strategies that depend heavily on secure maritime routes and resource access. Eritrea's role as a strategic gateway counters rival influences, particularly from the UAE's expanding footprint in Somaliland and Somalia. The kingdom's rivalry with the UAE and Turkey remains a defining feature of the geopolitical activity in the Horn.

While Riyadh's overarching goal is to maintain Red Sea dominance through a combination of economic investments, port control, and strategic maritime security, critics within the Horn caution against Gulf overreach. Calls for renewed enforcement of arms embargoes and transparency in the Red Sea Council's activities have grown, with warnings that proxy support in Sudan and elsewhere risks further destabilization rather than peace. Saudi Arabia's activities in the Horn of Africa have leaned toward cautious diplomatic engagement supported by significant economic investments. In this case, Iran also has arms in Eritrea, and this shows that the Middle East proxy wars are coming to the Horn region. A direct consequence of the Red Sea's centrality to global and regional security transforms the Horn's littoral states into an essential flank for Gulf powers.

For Iran, an association with Eritrea potentially including naval access to ports like Assab provides strategic depth near the vital Bab el-Mandeb Strait, enabling Tehran to project asymmetric power and logistical support to its allies (like the Houthis in Yemen), thereby challenging the interests of its rivals, primarily Israel and the Saudi and UAE Eritrea, for its part, views this as a transactional maneuver to break isolation and gain leverage against

[240] Arab News, Saudi, Chinese naval exercise concludes in Jubail, strengthens maritime readiness, October 26, 2025
[241] Ethiopia Insight, GERD at Dawn: Ethiopia's Triumph and the Nile's Uncertainty, October 7, 2025

perceived regional threats. Consequently, these dynamics fuel the broader militarization of the Red Sea, turning the region into a complex geopolitical proxy where local conflicts risk being amplified, such as in Sudan, and prolonged by external rivalries, directly impacting the economic and security interests of landlocked nations.

Section Three: International Organizations and Global Powers Engagement

October 2025 was a pivotal month for the Horn of Africa's external relations, marked by intensified engagement from global powers and multilateral institutions amid deepening regional instability. As Sudan's conflict worsened and internal fragilities persisted, major actors, including Russia, China, and the EU, sought to reassert influence through high-level forums, funding pledges, and strategic positioning. These efforts unfolded across three intersecting dynamics: restructuring outreach by global powers, heightened coordination among the UN, AU, and EU, and a growing debate over Africa's strategic autonomy in a shifting multipolar order. Yet, the region's governance crises and humanitarian pressures continued to expose the limits of external stabilization.

Multilateral diplomacy surged, with Addis Ababa hosting joint UN–AU meetings, the 13th Tana High-Level Forum, and commemorations for the UN's 80th anniversary, reinforcing Ethiopia's role as a continental diplomatic hub. Russia advanced preparations for the 2026 Russia–Africa Summit, with Ambassador Teryokhin praising Addis Ababa's symbolic and logistical significance. China deepened ties with Somalia through bilateral pledges,[242] while the EU recalibrated its Africa strategy via parliamentary resolutions emphasizing transparency, democratic values, and predictable support for AU-led peace operations.[243] These moves reflect a competitive landscape where influence is pursued through both cooperation and ideological contrast.

The month's developments reflect the Horn's strategic centrality and vulnerability. Ethiopia's bid to host the Russia–Africa Summit signals its growing assertiveness in convening Africa–Eurasia dialogue, while Somalia's alignment with China highlights Beijing's expanding footprint. Meanwhile, the EU's repositioning aims to counter what it views as coercive influence from rivals. Despite diplomatic visibility, persistent security challenges from Sudan's civil war to Somalia's underfunded peace mission continue to test the effectiveness of international commitments, revealing the tension between global agendas and local realities.

Security and Conflict Dynamics

Regional insecurity continued to dominate October's agenda. The 16th AU–EU Joint Consultative Meeting on Peace and Security, held in Brussels, centered on crises in Somalia,

[242] Xinhua, Somalia Vows to Build Stronger Ties with China, Xinhua Africa, October 1 2025
[243] The European parliament, European parliament resolution of 23 October 2025 on renewing the eu- Africa partnership: building common priorities ahead of Angola summit, October 27, 2025

Sudan, and the broader Horn.[244] Somalia's AU Transition Mission (AUSSOM) faces severe funding shortfalls, threatening the sustainability of operations beyond 2025. The AU contributed $20 million from its Peace Fund, while the UK pledged £16.5 million, but the gap of close to $200 million annually remains critical. The EU, which has historically funded AU missions in Somalia, is under pressure to renew its commitment. This case shows the persistent dependency of African peace operations on external financing and the slow progress toward Darfur's sustainable AU-led security autonomy.

Sudan's conflict continued to escalate. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured El-Fasher after an 18-month siege, deepening fears of de facto partition between Darfur and the rest of Sudan.[245] UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that foreign weapons supplies were undermining prospects for peace. Reports confirmed the RSF's acquisition of Chinese-made FB-10A missile systems, originally sold to Chad, further implicating regional arms flows in Sudan's war. The UN Human Rights Council extended its fact-finding mission on Sudan by another year, emphasizing accountability amid widespread violations. The ICC conviction of former Janjaweed commander Ali Kushayb for war crimes in Darfur reinforced international legal pressure on Sudanese actors and highlighted the persistence of international judicial involvement in the region's accountability frameworks.

Djibouti remained a relative island of stability amid regional chaos. A constitutional amendment allowing President Ismail Omar Guelleh to seek a sixth term sparked renewed debate over governance longevity. It framed Guelleh's continued rule as both a risk to democratic consolidation and a safeguard against regional instability. Djibouti's strategic role as host to U.S., Chinese, French, and Japanese military bases makes its political continuity central to Red Sea and Horn security calculations.

Diplomatic Engagements and Multilateral Coordination

The European Union and Ethiopia signed a €90 million financing agreement under the EU's 2025 Annual Action Plan, marking a new phase in their 50-year partnership. Implemented through the Team Europe approach, the agreement aligns with Ethiopia's Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda and the EU's Global Gateway Strategy. Funding will support land governance, biodiversity protection, climate resilience, reintegration of returnees, and women's economic empowerment areas directly tied to Ethiopia's post-conflict recovery and sustainable growth priorities.

The signing was followed by a Public–Private Dialogue between European businesses and Ethiopian officials addressing investment challenges such as customs, taxation, and legal predictability. Both sides framed the agreement as a practical step toward deepening economic cooperation and improving Ethiopia's business environment. The EU ambassador described it as a "clear demonstration" of Europe's commitment to Ethiopia's stability and

[244] Amani Africa, 16th annual joint consultative meeting between EUPSC and AUPSC, October 8, 2025
[245] Khalid Abdelaziz and Nafisa Eltahir, Sudanese forces capture of Darfur city could entrench country split, October 28, 2025.

reform process, while Ethiopian officials emphasized its value for reconstruction and inclusive development.[246]

The AU–EU consultative frameworks reaffirmed their shared agenda on peace and security in the Horn, even as both sides grappled with competing global pressures. Discussions over Sudan highlighted divisions among international mediators. The AU, EU, France, Germany, and the UK jointly rejected the establishment of parallel governments by Sudan's rival factions, calling instead for a Sudanese-led transition. However, despite overlapping initiatives from the U.S.–Saudi, Egypt, and UAE "Quad" to AU–IGAD coordination, fragmentation persists across mediation tracks, undermining prospects for a unified peace process.

At the global level, both AU and EU actors acknowledged the emergence of a multipolar world order as a key contextual challenge shaping African security and development policy. Despite ongoing friction, such as over the Ukrainian language in joint communiqués, October 2025 marked renewed optimism for AU–EU coherence in addressing shared geopolitical and governance challenges.

The Horn of Africa remains at the intersection of competing global interests.

- Russia is expanding its diplomatic visibility through summit diplomacy and military-industrial outreach. Among them, Ethiopia's bid to host the Russia–Africa Summit signals its growing assertiveness in convening Africa–Eurasia dialogue, while Somalia's alignment with China highlights Beijing's expanding footprint.[247]
- China continues to consolidate its influence via infrastructure, diplomacy, and arms trade.
- The EU is repositioning as a counterweight by promoting governance, rule of law, and transparency-based aid conditionality.
- The UN and AU remain central but underfunded pillars of multilateral response, increasingly reliant on ad-hoc pledging and fragmented diplomacy.

In this environment, Ethiopia and Djibouti emerge as pivotal anchors: Ethiopia as a geopolitical convening center and Djibouti as a logistical and military hub. Yet the underlying fragility visible in Sudan's fragmentation, Somalia's funding constraints, and Ethiopia's internal unrest continues to expose the limits of both African and external stabilization efforts.

United Nations 80th Anniversary Commemoration in Addis Ababa

The United Nations commemorated its 80th anniversary at the Economic Commission for

[246] Addis Standard, European Union and Ethiopia Signed,90 million Financing Agreement for Annual Action Plan 2025, October 2025.
[247] Kester Kenn Klomegah, Ethiopia Readiness to Host Third Russia-Africa Summit.

Africa's Africa Hall in Addis Ababa, a symbolic venue historically tied to Africa's multilateral diplomacy. The event gathered senior UN officials, representatives from the Ethiopian government, the African Union Commission, and the diplomatic corps, including the Cuban ambassadors to Ethiopia and the AU.

AU Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf emphasized the need for "dynamic and committed multilateral organizations" to defend freedom and democracy, reaffirming Africa's commitment to Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Ethiopia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhanu Tsegaye, highlighted the country's longstanding support for multilateralism and the UN's central role in global governance.[248]

A message from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, delivered by ECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete, reaffirmed the UN's enduring partnership with Ethiopia and Africa more broadly. The event reflected Addis Ababa's status as a diplomatic hub where African and global institutions intersect, reinforcing Ethiopia's identity as the anchor of multilateral diplomacy in the Horn of Africa.[249]

[248] H.E. Mr. Guang Cong, the UN Special Envoy for the horn of Africa, paid a courtesy call on AUC Chairperson, October 16, 2025

[249] Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the United Nations Held in Addis Ababa." Mission of the Republic of Cuba to Ethiopia (CubaMINREX), October 24, 2025.

HORN REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

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