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The Horn in June: Mandates, Sieges, and Shifting Alignments

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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 June 2026, 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 policy making.

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Executive Director & Editor-in-Chief,
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The Horn in June: Mandates, Sieges, and Shifting Alignments

Executive Summary

June was a month of formal political mandates sitting uneasily alongside deepening structural crises across the Horn.

Ethiopia held its seventh general election on June 1, with the Prosperity Party winning a commanding 438 of 486 seats amid record turnout and broad international commendation. The result strengthened Abiy Ahmed's five-year mandate and fed into an ambitious diplomatic and economic agenda, including COP32 preparation and IMF-backed reforms. Yet the vote coincided with rising friction in Tigray, where the TPLF rejected federal authority and imposed a controversial security decree, prompting new US visa sanctions.

Eritrea deepened its strategic alignment with Egypt, most visibly through Isaias Afwerki's June visit and reported Egyptian plans to finance the Port of Assab, a partnership explicitly oriented around counterbalancing Ethiopia. Asmara's diplomatic rehabilitation (UN and ECOSOC roles) continued to outpace any domestic reform, with UN and PEN International reports reaffirming ongoing human rights abuses.

Djibouti consolidated its role as the region's logistics and diplomatic hub, securing additional World Bank financing for the Addis-Djibouti corridor, advancing Chinese industrial investment, and hosting Sudan-focused consultations, while reinforcing maritime security along Bab el-Mandeb.

Somalia saw a serious escalation in Mogadishu, with clashes between federal forces and opposition-aligned militias, sustained Al-Shabaab counterterrorism operations (including a record pace of US airstrikes), and rising Puntland-federal tension. The month's most consequential diplomatic rupture was Somaliland's opening of an embassy in Jerusalem following Israeli recognition, triggering sharp condemnation from Mogadishu, IGAD, and Al-Shabaab alike, alongside reports of Israeli security engagement in Somaliland.

Sudan experienced one of its most alarming months of the war, as the RSF's siege of El Obeid produced a death toll and infrastructure collapse widely compared to El Fasher's fall. The US imposed dual-track sanctions on procurement networks tied to both belligerents, the currency broke past 5,000 to the dollar, and a controversy over AU-mediated political talks in Addis Ababa raised questions about the neutrality of the mediation architecture itself.

South Sudan set a December 22 election date, its fifth rescheduling, despite unmet constitutional, census, and security-unification prerequisites, and amid the continued detention of Riek Machar and a minister's public suggestion he would die in prison. A severe displacement and hunger crisis unfolded in Jonglei and Akobo, compounding chronic humanitarian underfunding.

Section One: Elections, Sieges, and the Contest for Regional Order

1.1 Ethiopia: Political Consolidation, Regional Diplomacy, Security Dynamics, and Economic Transformation

The central political milestone of June 2026 was the successful execution of Ethiopia's seventh general election, an event that served as the anchor around which the nation's domestic policy, economic goals, and diplomatic engagements converged. Polling stations opened across the majority of the country on June 1, drawing a massive turnout from the more than 54 million registered citizens in what federal authorities characterized as the largest electoral exercise in the nation's history. Despite localized logistical and weather-related obstacles, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) reported that the process proceeded peacefully, deploying hundreds of thousands of election workers across constituencies nationwide to oversee active polling. Following the close of voting, the National Election Board methodically verified the results. Special voting arrangements were successfully executed on June 9, enabling nearly 29,000 internally displaced persons and more than 126,000 military personnel to cast their ballots. This orderly process drew immediate international acknowledgments, including a joint statement issued on June 3 by the European Union delegation¹ and its partners welcomed the holding of the polls. Observers from the African Union and IGAD² also commended the high voter participation.

In the days following the vote, the Office of the Prime Minister explicitly highlighted that the registration and turnout of more than fifty-four million citizens reflected a profound, growing public confidence in constitutional institutions and democratic practice.³ Furthermore, the Prime Minister and federal communication articulated a comprehensive national vision of state legitimacy, stating that true authority is rooted fundamentally in tangible performance, internal democratic evolution, and structural resilience rather than external approval alone.

On June 21, NEBE Chairperson officially announced the final results, confirming that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's ruling Prosperity Party secured a commanding majority of 438⁴ out of the 486 contested seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives.⁵ While opposition groups and independent candidates, including the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA) and the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA), collectively won 48 seats to maintain legislative diversity, the decisive outcome granted the Prosperity Party a clear five-year mandate to advance its national agenda.⁶ This electoral conclusion drew swift

¹ European External Action Service. 2026. "Joint Local Statement on the 7th General Election Day in Ethiopia on 1 June 2026." June 3, 2026.

² *The Reporter Ethiopia*. "AU, IGAD Observers Publish Reports on Ethiopia's Vote." *The Reporter Ethiopia*, June 2026.

³ Ethiopian News Agency. "Prime Minister Abiy Praises Ethiopians' Extraordinary Commitment to Democracy." ENA, June 2026.

⁴ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "NEBE Discloses Final Legislative Seat Allocation Data for New Parliament." June 2026.

⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "National Election Board Officially Announces Final Results of 7th General Polls." June 21, 2026.

⁶ *The Reporter Ethiopia*. 2026. "Prosperity Party Secures Landslide Win in Delayed Regional and National Elections." June 2026.

international commendations from global leaders in China⁷, Russia, India, Pakistan,⁸ Qatar,⁹ and Malaysia,¹⁰ as well as institutional backing from the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which praised the high voter turnout and peaceful execution as key markers of growing democratic maturity.

This major democratic exercise directly paved the way for broader national reconciliation and governance initiatives aimed at cementing long-term stability. At the 62nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Ambassador Tsegab Kebebew presented these democratic milestones alongside the ongoing execution of the nation's Transitional Justice Policy and measures expanding civic space. Furthering this inclusive domestic agenda, the National Dialogue Commission announced eight broad thematic pillars for its upcoming national talks, which were formulated following extensive grassroots consultations involving over 200,000 participants.¹¹ These agenda items encompass critical issues such as nation-building, administrative systems, the governance of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, religious issues, the rule of law, economic matters affecting farmers and pastoralists, anti-corruption, and peacebuilding. This comprehensive internal evolution is intended to culminate in a landmark national conference scheduled for July 15, reinforcing the consensus that political disputes must be handled through constitutional channels.

However, the path toward full democratic consolidation was simultaneously challenged by persistent security vulnerabilities in several regional states. In Oromia, the lead-up to and aftermath of election day were marred by civilian casualties, injuries, and property damage in the Arsi Zone, specifically within localities like Asko, due to insurgent attacks carried out by OLA-Shene extremists who targeted civilians even within their places of worship. The Prime Minister extended deep condolences to the affected families and communities, condemning the violence as a deliberate attempt by radical actors to inflame ethnic and religious animosities, undermine public safety, and disrupt the electoral process.¹² The federal government firmly reasserted its commitment to upholding state authority, maintaining that armed insurgency remains fundamentally incompatible with the constitutional order and that public security must be aggressively defended against destabilizing forces.

Sustained federal attention was also required in the north, where factions of the Tigray People's Liberation Front continued to challenge the stabilization gains achieved under the

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2026. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on Ethiopia's Successful Election General Process." June 4, 2026.

⁸ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia Strengthens South-South Alliances Through Dynamic Diplomatic Engagements." June 25, 2026.

⁹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Bilateral Review Committee Furthers Regional Trade Infrastructure Cooperation Frameworks." June 2026.

¹⁰ Bernama. 2026. "Malaysia Congratulates Ethiopia on Peaceful Conduct of National Polls." June 2026.

¹¹ Borkena Ethiopian News. 2026. "Ethiopia's National Dialogue Commission Announces Eight Agenda Areas for Upcoming Talks." June 24, 2026.

¹² Ethiopian News Agency. "Statement from the Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia on Recent Issues" Ethiopian News Agency, June 2026.

Pretoria Agreement.¹³ Reports around June 6 indicated security operations near Sheraro targeting armed elements linked to TPLF networks amid concerns over attempts to re-establish pre-war administrative structures and parallel authorities. During a military graduation ceremony on June 6, Field Marshal Birhanu Jula warned against the so-called Tsimdo Alliance, describing it as a destabilizing political and security project advanced by certain TPLF factions in cooperation with external actors that threatens national interests, territorial integrity, and regional stability.¹⁴ The constitutional crisis deepened exponentially because the TPLF completely rejected the federal government's legal framework extending General Tadesse Worede's tenure as Chief Administrator of the Tigray Interim Regional Administration.¹⁵ Instead, branding the federal extension as an illegal infringement on regional political autonomy, the TPLF Central Committee unilaterally reconstituted its pre-war 2020 regional legislative council. On June 26, the Tigray Regional Council ordered implementation of a controversial security decree involving compulsory military service, broad powers, imprisonment, and the death penalty for certain offenses, raising serious concerns over forced recruitment and consistency with the Pretoria Agreement.^{16 17}

The international community responded directly to these northern blockages when the United States government imposed targeted visa restrictions on June 18 on hardline TPLF elements and their families for actively undermining the Pretoria Peace Agreement through incomplete disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and diversion of recovery resources away from vulnerable civilian populations. Reports indicated these factions were acquiring arms and forming new alignments. While the TPLF leadership issued counter-statements criticizing the American sanctions as one-sided and reiterating their own grievances regarding the pace of the peace accord's implementation, the federal government maintained that preserving constitutional order and preventing a return to conflict remain paramount.¹⁸ US Ambassador Ervin J. Massinga canceled a planned trip to Tigray amid these sensitivities, with the US Embassy reaffirming support for Tigrayan people, full implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, political dialogue, and AU-led processes.

The complex regional dynamics underpinning this friction were underscored by East African Affairs Advisor Getachew Reda, who publicly noted that the neighboring Eritrean regime continues to pursue a strategy aimed at weakening Ethiopia as part of its own survival calculus, a reality that necessitates heightened strategic foresight and a clear distinction between the political ambitions of TPLF hardliners and the humanitarian needs of the

¹³ Meskerem. "Drone Strikes in Tigray Kill Several amid Fears of Renewed Conflict." *Meskerem*, June 6, 2026.

¹⁴ The Reporter Ethiopia. "Tensions Rise over Parallel Civil and Military Developments in Tigray." June 2026.

¹⁵ Meskerem. "Drone Strikes in Tigray Kill Several amid Fears of Renewed Conflict." *Meskerem*, June 6, 2026.

¹⁶ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). 2026. "TPLF's Move to Fully Control Tigray Poses a Growing and Expanding Threat in the Horn of Africa." ACLED Regional Report, June 2026.

¹⁷ Borkena Ethiopian News. 2026. "Ethiopia: Tigray Regional Council Orders Implementation of Controversial Security Decree." June 26, 2026.

¹⁸ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Prime Minister Meets with High-Level Strategic Advisors on Regional Maritime Security Core Strategy." June 2026.

broader Tigrayan population.¹⁹ Despite these localized friction points, Ethiopia continued to leverage its capital as a primary diplomatic hub to project stability and foster regional peace, particularly regarding the protracted conflict in Sudan. Throughout the month, Addis Ababa served as the host convener for Sudanese-led political dialogue initiatives, drawing participation from various factions, including the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid Al Nur, despite internal procedural divisions within the Sudanese Democratic Bloc.²⁰

This active regional leadership was further articulated on the global stage when Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos delivered a comprehensive foreign policy address at Chatham House in London.²¹ The Minister framed Ethiopia's ongoing pursuit of reliable maritime access not as a geopolitical confrontation, but as a structural economic necessity for regional trade, logistics, and shared prosperity across the Horn of Africa. He additionally reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to the equitable and cooperative utilization of shared water resources regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, urging a departure from outdated monopolistic frameworks while highlighting the dam as a catalyst for regional energy integration.²² Foreign Minister Gedion also emphasized full implementation of the Pretoria Agreement for post-conflict recovery, expressing concern over hardliner TPLF elements not fully committing to disarmament while the federal government supports humanitarian and rebuilding efforts.

Minister Gedion's extensive diplomatic tour throughout June also yielded significant bilateral advancements with both European and African partners. Around early June, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Miao Deyu met Ethiopia's ambassador to reaffirm the all-weather strategic partnership and expand cooperation in trade, infrastructure, and FOCAC.²³ He engaged in high-level talks with European Union Commissioner Hadja Lahbib to secure continued EU funding for vital health infrastructure, epidemic response, and crisis preparedness, while simultaneously hosting the second Ethiopia-EU roundtable on foreign ministry reform to modernize and build capacity within the domestic diplomatic corps.^{24,25}

Simultaneously, Ethiopia and the EU convened the second roundtable on foreign ministry reform to modernize and build capacity within the domestic diplomatic corps. On the continental front, the Foreign Minister held pivotal bilateral talks with Nigeria's Minister of

¹⁹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED). "TPLF's Move to Fully Control Tigray Poses Growing and Expanding Threat to the Horn of Africa." *ACLED*, June 2026.

²⁰ Radio Dabanga. "Democratic Bloc Split over Addis Ababa Dialogue as SLM-Abdelwahid Joins Talks." *Radio Dabanga*, June 2026.

²¹ AllAfrica. 2026. "Ethiopia: Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos Arrives in London for Structural Foreign Policy Address." June 4, 2026.

²² Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia Reaffirms Commitment to Peaceful Resolution of the GERD Issue." *Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)*, June 2026.

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2026. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on Ethiopia's Successful Election General Process." June 4, 2026.

²⁴ Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia Advances Diplomatic Engagements to Promote Regional Peace and Economic Cooperation." *Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)*, June 2026.

²⁵ African Union Commission. "AUC Chairperson Received the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia." *African Union*, June 9, 2026.

State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, finalizing a landmark Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons to deepen justice-sector collaboration. He additionally consulted with African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf regarding AU institutional reforms and the critical parameters of sustainable financing for the Union.

These engagements were mirrored by executive diplomatic activities in Addis Ababa, where President Taye Atske Selassie received credentials from eleven newly appointed ambassadors including representatives²⁶ from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Portugal and hosted Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud²⁷ on an official working visit to enhance cross-border security and bilateral commerce. In parallel, President Taye bid farewell to the outgoing ambassadors of Luxembourg and the United Arab Emirates, commending progress in economic cooperation and green financing opportunities supported by Ethiopia's homegrown reform agenda.²⁸ Concurrently, international travel ties were strengthened on June 12 when Switzerland officially lifted previous visa restrictions on Ethiopian travelers and officials to foster enhanced business and tourism exchanges.²⁹ On 7 June, Oman's Foreign Minister received Ethiopia's ambassador to discuss strengthening economic relations, logistics, investment, and preparations for a joint business forum.

Looking toward the latter half of the year, Ethiopia actively utilized multilateral platforms to prepare for an expanded global role, driven by its upcoming COP32 leadership responsibilities. Minister Gedion briefed African ambassadors during the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa sessions to unify continental positions on climate funding and green energy prior to the official commencement of Ethiopia's presidency. This diplomatic outreach extended into the BRICS bloc, where Ethiopian representatives participated in the 11th BRICS Foreign Policy Dialogue in New Delhi to champion South-South cooperation and digital transformation.³⁰ This was later supported by high-level technical meetings in Bengaluru, where Ethiopia advocated for enhanced BRICS space science collaboration, offering the capabilities of its own Entoto Observatory as a foundational asset for regional satellite and atmospheric research.³¹ Ethiopia also resumed high-level engagements with Finland focusing on trade, education, and climate collaboration.

These far-reaching global and regional diplomatic efforts were structurally underpinned by

²⁶ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "President Taye Atske Selassie Receives Credentials from Incoming Ambassadors." June 2026.

²⁷ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "President Holds Cross-Border Security Briefing with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud." June 2026.

²⁸ Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia Reaffirms Commitment to African Peace, Integration." *Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)*, June 2026.

²⁹ Federal Council of Switzerland. "Federal Council Adopts Dispatch on Agreement with Ethiopia for Avoidance of Double Taxation." *The Federal Council (Swiss Confederation)*, June 2026.

³⁰ Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia, Oman Discuss Ways to Enhance Bilateral Relations." *Ethiopian News Agency*, June 2026.

³¹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia Advocates for Enhanced BRICS Space Science Collaboration in Bengaluru." June 2026

robust domestic macroeconomic and financial reforms, which continued to yield positive economic indicators. Finance Minister Ahmed Shide highlighted average annual growth of 6.8 percent in recent years, accelerating to 9.2 percent in 2024/25 and projected at 10.2 percent, with inflation declining from 34.5 percent in 2021 to 9.4 percent, supported by export earnings reaching USD 8.7 billion in the first ten months toward an annual target of USD 10.5 billion.³² At the "Ethiopia Delivers" Summit, held under the theme "From Reform to Lasting Change," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed detailed the tangible successes of the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda.³³ Concurrently, headline inflation declined significantly from over 30 percent down to a single-digit rate of 9.4 percent. These gains were driven primarily by the strategic discontinuation of central bank deficit financing, increased agricultural productivity, and foreign reserve accumulation. Furthermore, export earnings reached USD 8.7 billion during the first ten months of the fiscal year and remain on track to achieve the annual target of USD 10.5 billion, while negotiations with external creditors, including Eurobond holders, continue to advance as part of broader debt restructuring efforts.

The state's progressive fiscal restructuring was showcased to global financiers at the UK-Ethiopia Trade and Investment Forum in London, where delegations led by Minister Gedion, State Minister Tesfahun Gobeze, and Press Secretary Billene Seyoum emphasized expanding market opportunities in agribusiness and the digital economy.

This investment push achieved a historical milestone when the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority granted an investment banking license to United Capital Financial Services, a subsidiary of Nigeria's United Capital Group, making it the first foreign investment bank authorized to operate in the country and expanding the total number of licensed investment banks to seven.³⁴ The international financial system provided further validation for these reforms when the International Monetary Fund reached a staff-level agreement on the fifth review of Ethiopia's Extended Credit Facility, a milestone poised to unlock approximately 468 million USD in immediate financing and bring total IMF program support to nearly 2.65 billion USD.³⁵ To codify these economic gains, the Council of Ministers approved a draft federal budget exceeding 2.3 trillion Birr for the upcoming fiscal year, tailored to fund capital development projects, support regional state administrations, and meet the medium-term macroeconomic framework. This fiscal planning was accompanied by legislative ratifications in the House of People's Representatives, which passed a comprehensive critical infrastructure cybersecurity proclamation to shield state sovereignty against emerging digital threats, alongside a revised customs proclamation engineered to aggressively suppress

³² Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia Continues Expanding International Diplomatic and Economic Cooperation." *Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)*, June 2026.

³³ Government Communication Service (GCS). 2026. "Opening Remarks by PM Abiy Ahmed at the 'Ethiopia Delivers' Summit: From Reform to Lasting Change." June 24, 2026.

³⁴ Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia, African Union Reaffirm Commitment to Strengthening Strategic Partnership." *Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)*, June 2026.

³⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Foreign Minister Concludes Bilateral Infrastructure Reform Roundtables." June 2026.

contraband trade and protect domestic manufacturing investments.

The month concluded with the execution of long-term development operations and massive infrastructure projects designed to support sustainable economic growth.³⁶ During its 57th regular session, the Council of Ministers approved three substantial loan agreements with the International Development Association dedicated to supporting sustainable development policy operations,³⁷ community-based land management, and climate-resilient irrigation projects, while also advancing a draft proclamation for the nation's formal accession to the New Development Bank. These legislative policies are being physically manifested across the country through large-scale urban and aviation developments, such as the ongoing Entoto–Kechene Medhanealem Riverside Development under the Sheger urban renewal initiative,³⁸ and the massive Bishoftu Mega International Airport project. ³⁹Visited and inspected by the Prime Minister, the airport site is utilizing advanced digital monitoring systems to coordinate thousands of workers as it aims to accommodate over 60 million passengers annually in its first phase, altogether illustrating Ethiopia's highly integrated approach to democratic consolidation, economic modernization, and sovereign state-building throughout the month. Further security advancements were highlighted on June 28 by National Intelligence and Security Service Director General Ambassador Redwan Hussein, detailing modernization through data-driven intelligence, AI, cyber sovereignty, and coordination to counter terrorism and trafficking. Ethiopian Airlines Cargo Service also earned the 2026 AFLAS Award for best cargo service in Africa on June 28.⁴⁰

1.2 Eritrea: Egypt Alignment, Domestic Repression, and Regional Uncertainty

June was marked by an acceleration in Eritrea's diplomatic engagement and its growing utility to external actors seeking to shape the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. President Isaias Afwerki's visit to Egypt and subsequent reports of Egyptian plans to finance and modernise the Port of Assab highlighted the consolidation of a strategic partnership that is increasingly oriented toward counterbalancing Ethiopia's regional ambitions. For Cairo, deeper ties with Eritrea provide an opportunity to strengthen its position along Ethiopia's periphery and preserve leverage amid the continuing dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the broader erosion of the regional order that historically afforded Egypt a privileged position along the Nile.

³⁶ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Foreign Ministry Concludes Capacity Building Modernization Programs." June 2026.

³⁷ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Council of Ministers Endorses Landmark Loan Agreements in 57th Regular Session." June 2026.

³⁸ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "PM Abiy on Newly Inaugurated Riverside Dev't Project in Capital City." June 2, 2026.

³⁹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Prime Minister Inspects Strategic Construction Sites of Bishoftu Mega International Airport Project." June 24, 2026.

⁴⁰ Borkena Ethiopian News. 2026. "Ethiopian Airlines Cargo Service Wins 2026 AFLAS Award for Logistics Excellence." June 28, 2026.

These diplomatic gains unfolded alongside renewed scrutiny of Eritrea's regional conduct. Public exchanges between Ethiopian and Eritrean officials put into light Asmara's links with armed and political actors opposed to the Ethiopian government, while reports of Eritrean involvement with armed groups in Sudan reinforced perceptions of Eritrea as a state that frequently employs informal security relationships to shape neighbouring theatres. The country's growing strategic importance has increasingly encouraged external engagement despite the persistence of these concerns and despite the absence of meaningful domestic reform.

Yet the expansion of Eritrea's international engagement coincided with fresh reminders of the country's unresolved structural problems. The United Nations Special Rapporteur reiterated concerns that crimes against humanity may still be occurring in Eritrea, while PEN International renewed its campaign regarding the fate of journalists and writers detained since 2001. The tightening of migration routes through Libya and Sudan further underscored the pressures facing Eritreans seeking to leave the country. June therefore illustrated the central paradox of Eritrea's contemporary trajectory, namely a state that is steadily improving its diplomatic standing and strategic utility abroad while exhibiting little evidence of political liberalisation or institutional opening at home.

The Consolidation Of The Egypt-Eritrea Partnership And The Politics Of Counterbalance

President Isaias Afwerki's visit to Egypt between 7 and 11 June represented another step in the consolidation of one of the Horn of Africa's most consequential strategic partnerships.⁴¹ Although official discussions centred on economic cooperation, maritime transport and infrastructure development, the broader significance of the visit lay in the increasingly explicit geopolitical alignment between Cairo and Asmara.

The partnership is fundamentally shaped by shared antagonism regarding Ethiopia's growing regional influence and its increasingly assertive posture on questions of Red Sea access and regional issues. For Egypt, deeper engagement with Eritrea forms part of a wider effort to build strategic relationships along Ethiopia's periphery and retain leverage in the long-running dispute over the Nile waters and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The relationship therefore carries a significance that extends well beyond bilateral cooperation and is increasingly embedded within a broader competition over regional order in the Horn of Africa.

Reports that Egypt may finance and modernise the Port of Assab through state-linked companies, potentially in exchange for naval access, should also be understood within this context.⁴² The development would provide Cairo with a more direct strategic presence near one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints while simultaneously strengthening

⁴¹ Shabait, "President Isaias Afwerki Departs for Egypt," June 7, 2026.

⁴² Africa Intelligence, "Assab Port Draws Egyptian Firms," June 15, 2026.

a partner that has consistently opposed Ethiopia's maritime ambitions. The prospective investment is therefore better understood as an instrument of geopolitical positioning than solely an initiative aimed at enhancing Red Sea security.

For Eritrea, the partnership provides the resources for it to pressure Ethiopia and enable its proxy strategy against its larger neighbour. For Egypt, it offers a valuable pressure point in a wider regional contest whose central axis remains the question of Ethiopia's emergence as a major regional power and the accompanying redistribution of influence in the Nile Basin and the Red Sea.

Diplomatic Reintegration And Expanding International Engagement

June provided further evidence that Eritrea's diplomatic rehabilitation continues to gather momentum. The country's election as one of the Vice-Presidents of the eighty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly and its successful bid for a seat on the United Nations Economic and Social Council reflected a growing willingness among states to engage Eritrea despite longstanding concerns over governance and human rights.⁴³

These developments point to an important recalibration in international approaches toward Eritrea. Strategic considerations, regional security concerns and the country's geographical importance along the Red Sea increasingly shape external engagement. The normative agenda that once dominated international engagement with Eritrea has steadily receded in importance.

The month also saw continued expansion of Eritrea's engagement with multilateral institutions and Asian partners. The visit by the World Health Organization's Regional Director for Africa and his positive assessment of aspects of Eritrea's healthcare system pointed to deepening technical cooperation in specific sectors.⁴⁴ Similarly, Japan's efforts to strengthen bilateral relations and the approval of a new environmental restoration initiative supported by the United Nations Development Programme demonstrated that engagement with Eritrea⁴⁵ is broadening across multiple policy domains.

The scale of these initiatives remains modest, yet collectively they point toward a gradual reintegration of Eritrea into international networks of diplomacy and development cooperation. The process remains carefully managed by the Eritrean state and has thus far occurred without corresponding domestic political opening.

Regional Tensions And The Contradictions Of Eritrea's Non-Interference Doctrine

Relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia continued to deteriorate during June, with both

⁴³ Eritrea at the UN (@Eritrea_UN), “#Eritrea has been elected by the General Assembly to serve as a member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (#ECOSOC) for the term 2027–2029...,” X post, June 4, 2026.

⁴⁴ Embassy of the State of Eritrea in Addis Ababa, Facebook post, June 17, 2026.

⁴⁵ United Nations Development Programme, “New US\$77.6 Million GEF Investment Unlocks Finance to Scale High-Impact Environmental Solutions,” June 3, 2026.

governments increasingly taking their competing narratives into the public domain. Ethiopian officials repeatedly highlighted Eritrea practice of cultivating relationships with hardline factions within the TPLF and Fano and of seeking to obstruct the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement and Ethiopia's post-war stabilisation efforts.⁴⁶

Eritrean officials rejected these assertions and instead argued that Ethiopia's maritime policies and regional ambitions constitute the principal source of current tensions.⁴⁷ Yet the proxy politics and Eritrea's relationships with armed and political actors in neighbouring states have persisted for years and have periodically resurfaced across multiple regional theatres. Similar reports that came out during June regarding Eritrean support for tribal militias associated with the Sudanese Armed Forces.⁴⁸

The persistence of informal security relationships in Eritrea's regional policy sit in tension with Asmara's consistent emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference. Eritrea's regional conduct is therefore frequently characterised by a duality in which official rhetoric emphasises state sovereignty while practical policies appear aimed at shaping political and security outcomes beyond its borders.

The month also revealed growing convergence between sections of the Eritrean opposition and Ethiopian narratives concerning the sources of instability in the Horn of Africa. Statements by the Green Revolution movement framed political transformation in Eritrea as a prerequisite for regional peace and advocated future economic integration with Ethiopia, highlighting the increasingly regional dimensions of Eritrea's domestic political question.⁴⁹

Liberation Legitimacy And The Persistence Of The National Security State

The observance of Martyrs' Day once again highlighted the enduring centrality of the liberation struggle to Eritrea's political identity.⁵⁰ State ceremonies, public commemorations and the reburial of liberation fighters reinforced narratives of sacrifice, unity and revolutionary legitimacy that have long underpinned the state's ideological foundations.

The continued prominence of liberation-era symbolism reflects more than commemorative practice. It remains a key mechanism through which the government reproduces political legitimacy and justifies its emphasis on national security, self-reliance and societal mobilisation. Historical memory continues to serve as an organising principle of governance and as a means of legitimising the continuation of exceptional political arrangements.

The significance of this legacy was also evident in external assessments during the month. Human Rights Watch's warning that the TPLF's new mobilisation system bears strong

⁴⁶ Getachew Reda and Redwan Hussein, "Ethiopia Must Not Be Dragged Back into War," Al Jazeera, June 11, 2026.

⁴⁷ Ali Ibrahim Ahmed, "Ethiopia Is Not Being 'Dragged into War,'" Al Jazeera, June 25, 2026.

⁴⁸ "Burhan's SAF Accused of Backing Tribal Militias Trained in Eritrea," The Sudan Times, June 15, 2026.

⁴⁹ "Eritrean Regime Major Threat to Regional Security: Opposition Green Revolution Movement," Ethiopian News Agency, June 27, 2026.

⁵⁰ Shabait, "Eritrea's Martyrs Day Commemorated with Patriotic Zeal," June 20, 2026.

similarities to Eritrea's national service model underscored the extent to which Eritrea's system of indefinite mobilisation has become an influential reference point for the TPLF, with whom Asmara is in an increasing alignment with.⁵¹

Enduring Human Rights Concerns And The Closure Of Exit Routes

International human rights mechanisms continued to highlight Eritrea as a state characterised by systemic and unresolved abuses. In his final report to the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur concluded that there remain reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity continue to occur in the country, citing allegations of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and persecution of political and religious groups.⁵²

PEN International's renewed campaign on behalf of journalists and writers detained since 2001 reinforced the enduring salience of one of Eritrea's most emblematic human rights cases.⁵³ Nearly a quarter of a century after their disappearance, the absence of information regarding their fate continues to symbolise the opacity of Eritrea's political system and the severe constraints placed upon freedom of expression.

The regional environment has also become increasingly difficult for Eritreans seeking to leave the country. The closure of one of the principal migration routes through Sudan as a result of civil war, followed by the decision of eastern Libyan authorities to prohibit the entry of Eritrean nationals⁵⁴, has further constrained avenues of escape. These developments may redirect migration flows toward more dangerous routes while increasing the vulnerability of those seeking refuge abroad.

Conclusion

June demonstrated that Eritrea's diplomatic rehabilitation continues to gather momentum. The deepening relationship with Egypt, growing engagement with multilateral institutions and expanding ties with external partners reflect the country's increasing strategic relevance. Yet much of this renewed attention is driven less by changes within Eritrea itself than by its utility to other actors pursuing wider geopolitical objectives, particularly the emerging competition over the future balance of power in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea.

At the same time, there remains little evidence that this diplomatic opening has been accompanied by meaningful changes in Eritrea's domestic political order. International human rights mechanisms continue to document allegations of serious abuses, political prisoners remain unaccounted for, and the structural features that have driven emigration and political repression for decades remain largely intact. The country's expanding external partnerships therefore coexist with an internal landscape characterised by continuity rather

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Tigray Authorities Should Withdraw Abusive Law," news, June 23, 2026.

⁵² "UN's Eritrea Expert Warns of Crimes Against Humanity," Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), June 20.

⁵³ PEN International, "25 Years Disappeared: Proof of Life Now," n.d.

⁵⁴ Ayodeji Adegboyege, "Africa's Key Gateway to Europe Bars Citizens of Four Nations as Migration Pressures Grow," June 24, 2026.

than reform.

This tension between diplomatic reintegration and enduring authoritarianism has become the defining feature of Eritrea's contemporary trajectory. The country's strategic importance is rising and its international isolation is gradually receding, yet the fundamental questions surrounding governance, accountability and political openness remain unresolved and continue to cast a long shadow over Eritrea's evolving place in the region and the wider international system.

1.3 Djibouti: Diplomacy, Connectivity, and Strategic Consolidation

Throughout June 2026, Djibouti strengthened its position as one of the Horn of Africa's principal diplomatic, logistical, and security actors by reinforcing its strategic partnership with Ethiopia, expanding international economic cooperation, and advancing regional mediation initiatives. At the beginning of the month, Djiboutian diplomatic officials worked closely with African Union and IGAD observer missions during Ethiopia's parliamentary elections⁵⁵ to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the Ethiopia–Djibouti trade corridor, underscoring the shared importance both governments place on safeguarding the region's most critical commercial artery. Djibouti also intensified diplomatic engagement on regional peace efforts by hosting consultations with international envoys on the Sudan crisis,⁵⁶ positioning itself as a potential venue for future multi-party peace negotiations. Later in the month, President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh congratulated Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed following the Prosperity Party's electoral victory,⁵⁷ reaffirming the close political understanding between Addis Ababa and Djibouti City and expressing confidence that continued cooperation would accelerate development along the Ethiopia–Djibouti economic corridor. At the regional level, IGAD, operating from its headquarters in Djibouti, reaffirmed its commitment to Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity⁵⁸ while continuing to consolidate Djibouti's role as the diplomatic center of the Horn of Africa.⁵⁹ Bilateral diplomacy also expanded beyond the region as Swedish Ambassador Magnus Lennartsson presented his credentials to President Guelleh⁶⁰ and held discussions on strengthening cooperation in trade, security, and development.

Economically, June was marked by significant efforts to consolidate Djibouti's role as the region's premier logistics, trade, and industrial hub. The World Bank approved an additional US\$45 million for the modernization of the Djibouti–Addis Ababa economic corridor,

⁵⁵ Lucas Tusiime, "IGAD Election Observation Mission," Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), June 3, 2026

⁵⁶ "Djibouti Demands a Ceasefire in Sudan to Protect Regional Security," *The Sudan Times*, June 13, 2026

⁵⁷ Shire Abdi, "Djibouti President Congratulates Ethiopia's Abiy After Election Win," *Dawan Africa*, June 23,

⁵⁸ Mohamed Djama, "IGAD Calls for Restraint and Respect for Somalia's Sovereignty Amid Emerging Developments," Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

⁵⁹ Shire Abdi, "IGAD Calls for Restraint and Respect for Somalia's Sovereignty," *Dawan Africa*, June 18, 2026

⁶⁰ Sweden in Ethiopia & AU (@SweinEthiopia), "Today, Amb. Magnus Lennartsson presented his Letters of Credence to President @IsmaïlOguelleh of Djibouti," X, June 18, 2026

increasing total financing for the project to US\$205 million.⁶¹ The investment supports the expansion and climate resilience of National Road 1,⁶² further strengthening the principal gateway through which the overwhelming majority of Ethiopia's international trade moves⁶³. Complementing this initiative, Economy and Finance Minister Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh launched an ambitious industrial cooperation roadmap in Beijing aimed at attracting Chinese investment into green industrial parks, light manufacturing, seafood processing, and value-added salt industries as part of Djibouti's long-term economic transformation strategy.⁶⁴ The government also advanced strategic cooperation with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation by operationalizing a US\$750 million financing framework to strengthen energy imports, strategic food reserves, and health-sector logistics.⁶⁵ Parallel discussions with Horizon Djibouti Terminals Limited⁶⁶ of the United Arab Emirates focused on expanding fuel storage and hydrocarbon infrastructure, reinforcing Djibouti's ambition to become the Horn of Africa's leading regional energy and logistics platform while supporting growing regional trade demand.⁶⁷

Security developments throughout the month reflected Djibouti's continued commitment to protecting regional stability and securing one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors. The Djiboutian Coast Guard, working alongside international naval partners stationed at Camp Lemonnier and the Chinese naval facility, increased maritime patrols across the Bab el-Mandeb Strait in response to heightened Red Sea security alerts.⁶⁸ Further president Hassan sheik Mohamud and president Ismail Omar Ghuelleh agreed to boost efforts towards improving peace and stability in the region in a way that is compatible with political and security circumstances in the region.⁶⁹ Djibouti further concluded an IGAD-sponsored regional training programme that enhanced judicial and security cooperation against cross-border wildlife trafficking, reinforcing institutional capacity to combat organized crime.⁷⁰ Diplomatically, Djibouti and Egypt reaffirmed their commitment to preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states in the Horn of Africa and safeguarding security across the Red Sea corridor.⁷¹ Domestically, the country celebrated the 49th anniversary of its independence with ceremonies highlighting Vision 2035, national

⁶¹ Shire Abdi, "World Bank Approves \$45 Million Grant for Djibouti Corridor Project," June 20, 2026

⁶² World Bank Group, "Additional Financing to Strengthen Djibouti's Regional Economic Corridor," June 18.

⁶³ "Addis-Djibouti Corridor to get Major Upgrade with Cost of 730 Million USD," Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), July 21, 2023

⁶⁴ Asha Elmi, "Djibouti Unveils Industrial Cooperation Roadmap With China," Dawan Africa, June 23, 2026

⁶⁵ "International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) Signs US\$750 Million Framework Agreement with Djibouti to Finance Strategic Trade in the Horn of Africa," Africa Newsroom, June 19, 2026

⁶⁶ "Djibouti Turns to Horizon Terminal Expansion as Ethiopia's Interest in Damerjog Port Project Declines," Ethiopian Business View (EBV), June 24, 2026

⁶⁷ "Djibouti, Emirati Oil Group Discuss Expansion of Fuel Infrastructure Serving Ethiopian Market," Addis Standard, June 23, 2026

⁶⁸ "Regional Maritime Exercise to Strengthen Information Sharing and Coordinated Responses in the Western Indian Ocean," Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), May 26, 2026

⁶⁹ "Somalia, Djibouti Leaders Discuss 'Strengthening Cooperation'," Somali Guardian, June 20, 2024

⁷⁰ Mohamed Djama, "IGAD Strengthens Regional Cooperation to Combat Cross-Border Wildlife Trafficking," Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), June 4, 2026

⁷¹ "Egypt, Djibouti Foreign Ministers Reject Unilateral Actions in Horn of Africa During Talks," Daily News Egypt, June 14, 2026

unity, and Djibouti's emergence as a regional logistics and maritime hub.⁷² The month concluded with renewed emphasis on strengthening governance, accelerating public-sector modernization, promoting sustainable economic development, and preserving the strategic partnership with Ethiopia that continues to underpin regional integration, economic connectivity, and long-term stability across the Horn of Africa.

1.4 Somalia and Somaliland

The Federal Republic of Somalia: Security Operations against Al-Shabaab, Electoral Disputes and Federal Tensions

Security and Counterterrorism Operations

The month of June saw an escalation of armed violence in Mogadishu beginning on June 3 when federal government forces launched an assault on the residence of former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire. Government statements accused former Prime Minister Khaire of organizing an armed militia that attacked the Howlwadaag Police Station in the Banadir region describing the assailants as armed men with covered faces using heavy weapons and vowing not to tolerate any attempt to undermine the capital's security. Legal action and an official investigation were announced. Fighting spread from Dabka Junction and Howlwadaag district to densely populated neighbourhoods including Cabdicasiis, Hodan, Wardhiigley and parts of Kaaraan with heavy gunfire, explosions and mortar fire reported prompting civilians to flee their homes.⁷³

Clashes persisted through June 4 with government forces deploying heavy artillery across the capital for a second consecutive day. The government characterized its actions as neutralizing disguised opposition militias attacking police facilities while opposition accounts maintained that government forces had attacked a consultative meeting.⁷⁴ By June 5 the Somali Information Ministry declared that security forces had restored calm in affected districts principally Howlwadaag, Abdiiaziz and surrounding areas including Hodan. Residents reported reduced violence but noted lingering tension and visible armoured patrols.⁷⁵

On June 6 Somali security forces and intelligence operatives launched a sweeping counter weapons operation across the affluent opposition hold of Abdiiaziz district conducting house to house searches. Police Commander Mahdi Omar Mumin stated that the objective was to

⁷² Cassidy Rush, "Djibouti Independence Day 2026: History and Celebrations," Remitly, May 15, 2026

⁷³ Al Jazeera Staff and AFP. 2026. "Gunfire Erupts in Mogadishu before Protests against Somali President's Rule." Al Jazeera, June 3, 2026

⁷⁴ Washington Post. 2026. "Clashes Erupt in Somalia's Capital ahead of a Planned Anti-Government Rally." Washington Post, June 4, 2026.

⁷⁵ Al Jazeera. 2026. "Somalia Declares Order Restored after Two Days of Fighting in Mogadishu." Al Jazeera, June 5, 2026.

recover illegal weapons hidden by militias. The operation created a tense military standoff with remaining opposition aligned troops including that loyal to former army chief Odowa Yusuf Rageh raising fears of renewed confrontation. Reports also indicated looting in the district and challenges for displaced residents attempting to return home.⁷⁶

Renewed clashes erupted on the night of June 6–7 near El Macaan village on the route linking Mogadishu to Middle Shabelle between federal government forces including Turkish trained units and opposition aligned Ma'awisley militias. The confrontation involved a convoy of opposition linked militias associated with figures including Abdullahi Mohamed Nur reportedly attempting to move out of the capital. Ambushes and gun battles were reported with disputed outcomes including claims that militias reached Adale or that vehicles were seized. This followed earlier disarmament operations and clashes in districts including Abdiiaziz.⁷⁷

Fighting between federal government forces and opposition aligned militias erupted again on the northern outskirts of Mogadishu. The Puntland administration condemned what it described as attacks targeting former federal leaders in Mogadishu. Following a cabinet meeting chaired by Vice President Ilyas Osman Lugator, Puntland accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of being responsible for attacks reportedly carried out overnight on the residences of former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairi. The statement explicitly held President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud responsible for the attacks and any resulting damage. Opposition groups rejected the president's extended mandate and vowed to continue pushing for consensus on elections, viewing government actions as aggressive. Planned anti government protests over the president's term extension were disrupted by the violence.⁷⁸

The capital Mogadishu narrowly avoided a return to open conflict on the night of June 11 when the city was pushed to the brink of a renewed armed confrontation after the federal government deployed heavily armed troops near an opposition controlled area raising immediate tensions before the situation was ultimately defused allowing the city to escape a night of bloodshed.⁷⁹

Counterterrorism Operations Against Al-Shabaab

Alongside political violence, Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency reported on going counterterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab. On or around June 3 the agency announced that 29 Al-Shabaab members including a bomb and explosives commander

⁷⁶ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Launches Sweeping Security Operation in Mogadishu Opposition Bastion." Somali Guardian, June 6, 2026.

⁷⁷ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Govt, Opposition Forces Clash Again near Mogadishu as Political Crisis Deepens." Somali Guardian, June 7, 2026

⁷⁸ Garowe Online. 2026. "Puntland Warns of 'Constitutional Vacuum' in Somalia after Raids on Ex-Leaders." June 4, 2026

⁷⁹ Critical Threats Project. 2026. "Shootout In Mogadishu; ... Somalia FGS-SFC ... June 11, 2026." June 11, 2026.

operating in the Hiran region were killed in planned operations in central Somalia.⁸⁰

Counterterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab continued across the Lower Shabelle region throughout the month. Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency announced an operational success around June 12 and 13 reporting the seizure of a large cache of explosive chemicals in the Jilib Marka area. The materials allegedly intended for the militant group were discovered buried underground after intelligence indicated that Al-Shabaab operatives had hidden them upon learning that security forces were tracking their movements.⁸¹

In a separate operation the Ministry of Defence announced that Somali security forces conducted a raid in the Kurtunwaarey district of Lower Shabelle on or around June 14. The operation resulted in the killing of fourteen Al-Shabaab fighters and reportedly targeted specific locations where commanders were present reflecting a continuing tempo of operations aimed at disrupting militant networks in rural areas.⁸²

The Somali National Army with the support of local forces conducted offensive operations targeting Al-Shabaab positions in the Middle Shabelle region over a three day period from June 24 to June 26, 2026. According to a statement issued by the Defence Ministry on June 26 at least 30 Al-Shabaab fighters were killed during coordinated strikes against group holds in Gayfo, Ruun Idiris and Cali Gaduud. Military officials reported that the targeted locations were being used by Al-Shabaab to store weapons, military equipment and operational supplies. The initial offensive began on June 24 with an attack on an Al-Shabaab facility in Gayfo followed by follow up operations on June 25 that struck three additional sites in Ruun Idiris and another gathering point for fighters in Cali Gaduud which military sources described as a staging area for planned attacks.⁸³

The United States reportedly resumed or continued training for Somali Danab commandos as part of efforts to build elite counterterrorism capabilities against Al-Shabaab. On June 19, the United States Africa Command in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia conducted an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab militants in the vicinity of Welmaro approximately 103 kilometers north of Kismayo. This precision strike is part of a sustained pattern of U.S. military operations conducted throughout 2026 in support of Somali-led efforts to degrade Al-Shabaab's operational capabilities.⁸⁴

United States Africa Command conducted a series of airstrikes against Al-Shabaab militants in southern Somalia on five separate days during the week ending June 27, 2026 marking the resumption of American military operations after a month long lull. According to statements

⁸⁰ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somalia Says Al-Shabaab Bomb Commander Among 29 Killed in Operations." Dawan Africa, June 3, 2026

⁸¹ Xinhua. 2026. "Somalia Security Forces Intercept Bomb-Making Chemicals." Xinhua, June 12, 2026.

⁸² Counter IED Report. 2026. "Somali Elite Forces Destroyed a Cache of Weapons, Explosive Materials in Lower Shabelle Province." Counter IED Report, June 15, 2026.

⁸³ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somali Army Says At Least 30 Al-Shabaab Fighters Killed in Middle Shabelle." Dawan Africa, June 28, 2026

⁸⁴ U.S. Africa Command. 2026. "U.S. Forces Conducts Strike Targeting al-Shabaab." AFRICOM Press Release, June 19, 2026

from AFRICOM the strikes occurred primarily in the vicinity of Kismayo where the Al-Qaida affiliate has maintained an operational presence for many years.⁸⁵ A specific strike was confirmed on June 23, 2026 in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia and the Somali Armed Forces targeting Al-Shabaab elements near Quumbi approximately 23 kilometers southeast of Afmadow in the Lower Juba region. The operations have placed the U.S. military's strike campaign in Somalia on a record-breaking pace for 2026 with the recent operations bringing the total count to 68 strikes for the year. AFRICOM officials clarified that the preceding month long pause was not related to an operational stand-down.⁸⁶

On another front, Turkish F-16 fighter jets in close coordination with the Somali National Armed Forces conducted a series of precision airstrikes on Al-Shabaab targets in the Godey area of the Lower Shabelle region. The operation targeted caves, bunkers, weapons caches, hideouts, and shelters used by the militants. According to Somalia's Ministry of Defence, the strikes resulted in approximately 35 Al-Shabaab fighters killed and more than 20 others wounded. Large secondary explosions were reported indicating the destruction of significant weapons stockpiles and explosive materials.⁸⁷

Clan Conflict and Regional Security Incidents

Fierce fighting between two clan militias continued for a third consecutive day on Saturday in the town of Jalalaqsi located in central Somalia. The clashes have raised serious concerns about civilian safety and the capacity of local authorities to maintain order. The violence scores the persistent challenges of clan based conflict and the security situation in parts of the country.⁸⁸

The politics have been further complicated by tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Puntland regional administration. As of June 21 the situation has edged closer to armed confrontation evidenced by the intensification of rival military deployments. Puntland has reinforced its troop presence in major cities and strengthened security points in locations including Bosaso, Garowe and Galkayo. Puntland leadership has publicly signalled a readiness to counter perceived federal interventions raising concerns about the potential for open conflict and the destabilizing impact on national unity and security.⁸⁹

Domestic and Political Developments

In the lead up to the vote in Baidoa, the Independent National Electoral and Boundaries Commission issued assurances regarding the integrity of the electoral process pledging to

⁸⁵ Stars and Stripes. 2026. "US Airstrikes in Somalia Return after Brief Pause." Stars and Stripes, June 22, 2026.

⁸⁶ U.S. Africa Command. 2026. "U.S. Forces Conduct Strike Targeting al-Shabaab" (Quumbi strike). AFRICOM Press Release, June 24, 2026.

⁸⁷ Somalia Says Turkish F-16 Airstrike Kills 35 Al-Shabab Fighters." 2026. Shabelle Media Network, June 30. Via allAfrica.com.

⁸⁸ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Deadly Inter-Clan Fighting Enters Third Day in Hiran, Central Somalia." Somali Guardian, June 20, 2026.

⁸⁹ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Govt, Puntland Edge Closer to Armed Conflict." Somali Guardian, June 21, 2026.

uphold security, political neutrality and the secrecy of the ballot. These commitments were made in direct response to formal complaints lodged by presidential candidates Sharif Sheikh Aden and Abdiiaziz Osman Jawari who had raised concerns about the fairness of the proceedings.⁹⁰ The vote was scheduled as part of federal efforts to transition toward more direct forms of election. As Election Day neared, police in Baidoa imposed a city wide curfew to address security concerns while regional lawmakers prepared to cast their ballots in what was an indirect parliamentary vote.⁹¹

On June 10 Adan Mohamed Nur Madobe the Speaker of Somalia's federal parliament was elected President of South West State in that parliamentary vote securing 88 votes. His rival Abdiasis Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari received a single vote. Madobe was officially sworn into office on June 11 during a formal handover ceremony. The result however was immediately met with fierce denunciation.⁹² Former South West State President Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan who had boycotted the process entirely dismissed the election as predetermined and lacking legitimacy. Rival candidate Abdiasis Jawari similarly condemned the process as rigged and not credible.⁹³

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud publicly defended the recent presidential election in the South West State which resulted in the victory of former Speaker Aden Mohamed Nur Madobe. During a farewell ceremony held in Mogadishu for the departing Madobe, President Mohamud articulated that the election reflects the sovereign will of the region's populace. He showed that political legitimacy is derived exclusively from the people's vote and the mandate of their elected representatives. The President emphasized that the South West State assembly which elected Madobe is itself a representative body of the region's residents, thereby validating the electoral outcome.⁹⁴

At the national level President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed the delays in announcing a comprehensive federal election timetable. He explained that the postponement was a deliberate decision to create space for further dialogue given the severe constitutional and electoral crisis facing the country. The President explicitly ruled out any return to the 2012 provisional constitution and defended the administration's push toward direct elections as the necessary path forward. He also signalled that the federal government remains open to initiating fresh talks with the political opposition represented by the Somali Future Council,

⁹⁰ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Parliament Speaker Adan Madobe Elected Southwest State President." Somali Guardian, June 10, 2026

⁹¹ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Police Impose Curfew in Baidoa Ahead of South West Presidential Vote." Dawan Africa, June 10, 2026

⁹² Hiiraan Online. 2026. "Somali Speaker Wins Southwest State Presidency Election after Rival Withdraws." Hiiraan Online, June 10, 2026.

⁹³ FTL Somalia. 2026. "Madobe Elected South West State President as Sharif Hassan Withdraws Citing Irregularities." FTL Somalia, June 12, 2026

⁹⁴ Dawan Africa. 2026. "President Mohamud Defends South West State Election Won by Madobe." Dawan Africa, June 21, 2026.

suggesting a potential avenue for de-escalation.⁹⁵

The opposition coalition engaged international partners on electoral reform. The Somali Future Council, a coalition of opposition parties critical of the Federal Government reportedly submitted a formal proposal for direct elections to key international partners. This submission followed a series of consultations with representatives from the European Union, the United Nations, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The meetings were convened to address Somalia's protracted political impasse and to seek a consensus on a viable electoral framework. According to sources the coalition has for the first time accepted a transition toward direct elections wherein citizens would vote for members of Parliament. The proposal outlines a phased electoral process to be conducted in four districts within each federal member state with administration to be managed jointly by a federal level electoral committee and a corresponding committee from the state where voting is occurring.⁹⁶

Somali opposition politician Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame leader of the Wadajir Party articulated the opposition's position regarding Turkey's mediation in Somalia's political dispute. In an interview with Dawan Media's Mizan Podcast on June 21, Abdishakur stated that the opposition expects Turkey's mediation to be inclusive and properly coordinated with other efforts led by Western countries and the United Nations. He confirmed that the Turkish delegation had engaged with the government, opposition figures and former President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo. However the opposition insisted that the process should engage with established political platforms and structures rather than individuals, conveying to the Turkish delegation that they constitute a strategy and a platform not just individual actors. Abdishakur acknowledged Turkey's influence over the current administration particularly President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud but noted that Turkey does not hold the same level of influence over the opposition and other political figures. He further observed that some opposition members perceive Turkey as leaning toward the government though he added that such a position would not necessarily be harmful if it generates constructive pressure toward a political settlement.⁹⁷

On June 20 the Federal Government appointed a tenth member to the country's Independent Human Rights Commission. The appointment intended to complete the statutory composition of the commission has drawn scrutiny from legal experts and civil society actors who question the procedural validity of the decision. Critics argue that the appointment may have circumvented established legal frameworks governing the commission's formation and may undermine the body's independence and credibility.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Return to 2012 Constitution 'Not an Option', Hassan Sheikh Says." Dawan Africa, June 12, 2026.

⁹⁶ Hiiraan Online. 2026. "Somali Opposition Coalition Submits Direct Election Proposal to International Partners." Hiiraan Online, June 20, 2026.

⁹⁷ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somali Opposition Says Turkey Mediation Should Be Coordinated with Western-Led Efforts." Dawan Africa, June 21, 2026

⁹⁸ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia's 10th Human Rights Commission Appointment Faces Legal Challenge." Somali Guardian, June 20, 2026.

A serious political controversy came up following remarks made by Defence Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi during his visit to Beledweyne, the capital of Hiran region. The Minister stated that opposition leaders were alive solely because President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud had chosen to spare them, a comment that immediately drew widespread condemnation. Clan militias from rival factions reportedly attempted to block the Minister's departure from the area. The situation escalated further when former intelligence chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali Sanbalolshe publicly responded to the Defence Minister's comments. Sanbalolshe accused the government of orchestrating a killing plot targeting him, former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire and dozens of clan elders. He framed Fiqi's remarks as confirmation of the alleged plot rather than a mere threat.⁹⁹

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud speaking during Somalia's Independence Day celebrations on the night of June 25 declared that his administration would undertake a comprehensive review of its policy toward Somaliland and the northern regions. The President emphasized that the policy reassessment aims to rebuild trust and identify approaches capable of addressing the concerns of communities in the northern areas. He reiterated the government's commitment to achieving national unity through dialogue and patience while acknowledging the challenges that have historically complicated efforts to resolve the political divide.¹⁰⁰

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud delivered a speech during the Independence Day anniversary period that contained references to the concept of Greater Somalia. The President referred to Ethiopia's Somali Region, Kenya's Northeastern Province and Djibouti as missing parts of a unified Somali nation, reviving pan-Somali nationalist sentiments that have historically been a source of regional tension. The rhetoric evokes memories of past conflicts, including the 1977-1978 Ogaden War.¹⁰¹

Somalia's international partners have issued a final notification to both the federal government and opposition groups urging them to engage in fresh talks aimed at resolving the prolonged political deadlock. The crisis centers on disagreements over the framework for upcoming elections and recent controversial constitutional amendments. Mediated discussions which recognize the Somali Future Council as the main opposition body are expected to begin in early July as a last ditch effort to prevent further instability and reach a consensus-based electoral roadmap.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Crisis: Defence Minister Fiqi Threatens Opposition as Ex-Spy Chief Sanbalolshe Alleges Killing Plot." Somali Guardian, June 28, 2026

¹⁰⁰ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somalia to Review Its Policy on Somaliland, President Hassan Sheikh Says." Dawan Africa, late June 2026

¹⁰¹ SONNA. 2026. "President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's Independence Day Address." SONNA, June 26, 2026.

¹⁰² "Somalia Election Crisis: International Partners Launch Final Bid for Government-Opposition Talks." 2026. Somali Guardian, June 30

International Engagements and Diplomacy

The international community actively engaged to de-escalate the crisis. On June 1, a joint statement from the international community including the United States, United Kingdom, European Union and United Nations partners expressed concern over the political situation and urged all Somali leaders to resume dialogue, reach consensus on an election roadmap and prioritize national interests to avoid escalation.¹⁰³

Following the outbreak of violence, the United Nations Secretary General expressed alarm over the hostilities urging restraint, civilian protection and the immediate resumption of dialogue on an election roadmap.¹⁰⁴ The UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia warned against repeating the crisis patterns of 2021.¹⁰⁵ The African Union Commission issued a statement on June 4 expressing serious concern over reports of armed clashes in civilian neighbourhoods in Mogadishu calling on all parties to immediately cease hostilities, exercise full restraint, prioritize civilian protection and resolve disputes through dialogue and established constitutional processes.¹⁰⁶ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development also condemned the violence on June 4 calling for immediate de-escalation, restraint, and inclusive dialogue to preserve stability and national unity while offering support for Somali-led talks.¹⁰⁷

The United States Embassy in Mogadishu issued a security alert on the fighting. Joint urgings from the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, and other partners emphasized dialogue and national interests. A broader coalition including multiple European nations alongside the UN and EU issued appeals for calm.¹⁰⁸ The United States reaffirmed its support for Somalia's territorial integrity issuing statements and a major new report to Congress that explicitly reaffirmed Washington's official recognition of Somaliland as part of Somalia providing a diplomatic boost to the Federal Government of Somalia amid ongoing debates over Somaliland's status.¹⁰⁹

Regional Diplomacy and Bilateral Meetings

Somalia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdisalam Ali, participated in meetings with South Korean President Lee Jae-myung alongside other African foreign ministers focusing on bilateral ties.¹¹⁰ On another front the Somali Ambassador to Saudi Arabia met with the

¹⁰³Hiiraan Online. 2026. "International Partners Urge Somali Leaders to Resume Election Talks." June 1, 2026.

¹⁰⁴United Nations. 2026. "Note to Correspondents: on Somalia." June 4, 2026.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS). 2026. "Joint Statement of the International Community on the Political Situation in Somalia." June 1, 2026.

¹⁰⁶ African Union Commission. 2026. "African Union Commission Calls for Restraint and Dialogue Amid Security Developments in Mogadishu." June 4, 2026.

¹⁰⁷ AllAfrica. 2026. "East Africa: IGAD Calls for Immediate De-Escalation As Political Tensions Rise in Somalia." June 4, 2026.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Embassy Mogadishu. 2026. "Security Alert: U.S. Embassy Mogadishu, Fighting Between Clan-Based Opposition Forces." June 4, 2026

¹⁰⁹ Somali Guardian. 2026. "US Hands Win to Somalia Affirming Sovereignty Over Somaliland." June 2, 2026.

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Somalia. 2026. "South Korea President Lee Jae-myung Receives African Foreign Ministers, Including Somalia's FM Abdisalam." June 2, 2026

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council to strengthen cooperation.¹¹¹

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Kenyan President William Ruto convened in Narok, Kenya, for a high level bilateral meeting focused on enhancing security and trade cooperation. The discussions centered on strengthening bilateral relations between Somalia and Kenya with a particular emphasis on border security and the facilitation of trade. The two leaders reviewed recent developments affecting the Horn of Africa region and the importance of their shared economic and security interests. President Mohamud upon arrival in Kenya highlighted the value of the existing relationship between the two nations. The meeting occurs on efforts by both governments to address security challenges along the Kenya-Somalia border which remain a critical issue affecting the movement of people, trade, and the safety of border communities.¹¹²

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud traveled to Djibouti on June 26 to participate in the country's Independence Day celebrations commemorating the 49th anniversary of Djibouti's independence from France. The President and his delegation were received at Djibouti's international airport by senior government officials. The visit also provided an opportunity for bilateral talks with President Ismail Guelleh, during which the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and regional cooperation.¹¹³

Somalia and Croatia formalized a Memorandum of Understanding on political consultations during a meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in June. The agreement was signed by Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister Abdisalam Ali and his Croatian counterpart Gordan Grlić Radman on the margins of the Dubrovnik Forum. The MoU establishes a framework for regular dialogue aimed at strengthening diplomatic relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries in areas including politics, diplomacy, international cooperation and government-to-government engagement.¹¹⁴

Somaliland-Israel Relations and Diplomatic Fallout

The diplomatic developments revolved around the fallout from Israel's recognition of Somaliland and the deepening bilateral relationship between Somaliland and Israel. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in interviews reported on June 13 offered his most forceful condemnation of the situation to date. He described the day of Israel's recognition in December 2025 as one of the darkest in Somalia's history characterizing the diplomatic move not as genuine support but as a strategic trap. The President accused Israel of cynically exploiting the dispute between Somalia and Somaliland to advance its own security interests particularly concerning the Red Sea corridor after failing to establish a working relationship

¹¹¹ GCC Secretariat. 2026. "HE the GCCSG Receives the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Somalia to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." June 7, 2026

¹¹² Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Holds Talks with Ruto During Kenya Visit." June 22, 2026.

¹¹³ Dawan Africa. 2026. "Somali President in Djibouti for Independence Day Celebrations and Talks." June 2026.

¹¹⁴ Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2026. "Somalia and Croatia Strengthen Bilateral Relations with Political Consultations Agreement." June 27, 2026.

with Mogadishu. He stressed that the ultimate defense against such foreign interference lies in building a strong and unified Somali state and expressed confidence that the recognition would not catalyze a wave of broader international acceptance for Somaliland.¹¹⁵

In a notable development, Al-Shabaab issued a strong statement on June 17 condemning the opening of the embassy by the Somaliland administration in Jerusalem. The militant group denounced Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi for what it termed abandoning the Islamic faith by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The statement urged residents of Somaliland to oppose the administration, framing the move as an affront to Islamic principles. This reaction from Al-Shabaab adds another layer to the political and security movements in the region as the group seeks to exploit the controversy to advance its own narrative and recruit supporters.¹¹⁶

The European Union announced new visa restrictions on Somali citizens, intensifying a growing dispute between Brussels and Mogadishu concerning the return of Somali nationals residing without legal status in European countries.¹¹⁷

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed the EU's decision to tighten visa procedures for Somali nationals reaffirming his government's readiness to receive Somali citizens who no longer have legal status in European countries. The President emphasized that Somalia has never refused to accept the return of its citizens but highlighted the primary challenge of verifying the identities of individuals being repatriated. He noted that some deportees returned to Somalia from Europe were later discovered not to be genuine Somali nationals raising serious concerns about the procedures used to establish nationality and complicating the verification process. The President distinguished between Somali migrants who had obtained legal status in Europe expressing gratitude to host countries for granting such opportunities, and those who had lost their legal status whom Somalia wishes to welcome back.¹¹⁸

On another development, The Ministry of Ports and Marine Transport announced on June 27 that Somalia has acceded to fifteen international maritime conventions, protocols, and legal instruments, presenting the country's largest maritime legal reform since independence. The move is intended to modernize Somalia's maritime legal framework and align national regulations with international rules on shipping safety, maritime security, seafarer standards, and protection of the marine environment. The Ministry noted that Somalia had previously joined only three international maritime agreements since 1960. The newly ratified instruments cover a comprehensive range of areas including search and rescue at sea, seafarer training and certification, collision prevention, ship tonnage measurement,

¹¹⁵ Middle East Monitor. 2026. "Somali President Accuses Israel of Taking Advantage of Dispute with Somaliland." Middle East Monitor, June 13, 2026.

¹¹⁶ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Al-Shabaab Issues Sharp Rebuke over Somaliland's New Jerusalem Embassy." Somali Guardian, June 17, 2026.

¹¹⁷ Council of the European Union. 2026. "Somalia: Council Restricts Visa Provision." June 25, 2026

¹¹⁸ Al Jazeera. 2026. "EU Targets Somalia with Visa Curbs as President Pushes Back on Returns." Al Jazeera, June 26, 2026.

facilitation of maritime traffic, and safety of life at sea.¹¹⁹

The Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement on June 23 welcoming the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran as a positive step toward de-escalation, dialogue, and regional stability. Somalia commended the diplomatic approach and expressed support for peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms.¹²⁰

In a development intersecting the security and diplomatic spheres, the Al-Qaeda linked militant group Al-Shabaab issued a public reaction on June 10 to the United States' decision to deny entry to Somali World Cup referee Omar Artan. The group's statement, a rare commentary on a seemingly non-political issue, is a further indication of its efforts to insert itself into any narrative with nationalist dimensions and exploit public grievances for propaganda purposes.¹²¹

Somaliland: International Recognition Efforts, Federal Resistance and Security Cooperation

Domestic and Political Movements

Somalia's Ambassador to the African Union and its Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mr. Abdullahi Mohamed Warfaa, stated in an interview with Aljazeera Arabic that the Somali Federal Government is committed to reasserting its power in all regions of Somalia emphasizing that Hargeisa and Berbera are integral parts of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The Ambassador revealed that the Federal Government is focused on rebuilding strong government institutions and strengthening the national army to enable the government to establish its presence in all regions of the country from the south to the north. When asked about the potential impact of political tensions in Mogadishu on the Somaliland dispute, the Ambassador stated that the Somali government will not allow internal issues to be exploited for foreign interests or plans to divide the country. He further noted that there are foreign entities who seek to take advantage of Somalia's problems to create chaos and division and that the government is actively working to resolve internal issues and prevent external influence. The Ambassador reiterated that the Federal Government considers Hargeisa, Berbera and other northern cities as Somali lands and assured that the federal government will have a presence and administration in all parts of the country. Ambassador Warfaa also specifically stated that Hargeisa and Berbera will be returned to the federal government's control.¹²²

¹¹⁹ PortNews. 2026. "Somalia Joins 15 Maritime Conventions." June 28, 2026.

¹²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Somalia. 2026. "Press Statement: Somalia Welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran." June 23, 2026.

¹²¹ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Al-Shabaab Reacts to U.S. Entry Denial of Somali World Cup Referee Omar Artan." Somali Guardian, June 10, 2026

¹²² Somaliland Standard. 2026. "Ambassador Warfaa: Hargeisa and Berbera Will Be Returned to the Federal Government's

In Somaliland, President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro returned to Hargeisa on June 25 to a jubilant public reception following a week long working visit to Israel. The welcome reflected public interest in the outcomes of what supporters describe as a major diplomatic breakthrough and a new chapter in Somaliland's international engagement. Across major roads and intersections in the capital, large government themed billboards showcasing key moments from the President's visit including meetings with senior Israeli leaders and the signing of cooperation agreements had been erected ahead of his arrival. The public displays which began appearing before the President's return celebrated what is regarded as one of the most significant diplomatic missions in Somaliland's modern history. One billboard featured President Irro alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the message The people of the Republic of Somaliland thank the Government and people of Israel for the recognition they have granted to their country. Another prominently displayed message described the visit as a victory for Somaliland's diplomacy.¹²³

Somaliland authorities ordered all undocumented foreign nationals to leave the territory within ten days, an act described as essential for strengthening national security and stability. State Minister for Interior Abdirashid Mohamed Ahmed instructed security agencies to enforce the order carefully, stating, "The security agencies are instructed to organize undocumented foreign nationals so that they can leave the country within 10 days. I am instructing the public to report anyone they suspect to the security agencies. We are protecting our security, it is everyone's responsibility." The Minister emphasized that Somaliland has received growing international attention and expects more foreign investment, making security and stability a priority. He urged the public not to take the law into their own hands, stressing that handling matters involving undocumented foreigners is the responsibility of the government and immigration authorities. Foreign nationals legally residing in Somaliland were assured they are safe and will not be affected by the order.¹²⁴

The National Electoral Commission of the Republic of Somaliland held a high level consultative meeting at its headquarters on June 22 with the National Political Parties Taskforce. During the meeting, NEC officials presented a preliminary voter registration plan, outlining the commission's overall vision, key objectives, guiding principles and preparations for the implementation of a comprehensive voter registration process across Somaliland.¹²⁵

Control." Somaliland Standard, June 6, 2026.

¹²³ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somaliland President Irro Returns to Hargeisa after Israel Visit." Somali Guardian, June 25–26, 2026.

¹²⁴ Somaliland Standard. 2026. "Somaliland Orders Illegal Foreigners to Leave the Country within 10 Days." Somaliland Standard, June 22, 2026.

¹²⁵ Somaliland Standard. 2026. "NEC Unveils New Voter Registration Roadmap in Landmark Meeting with Political Parties Taskforce." Somaliland Standard, June 22–29, 2026.

International Engagement and Diplomacy

A United States State Department report to Congress reported on June 2 explicitly reaffirmed Washington's recognition of Somalia's territorial integrity, classifying Somaliland as part of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The report balanced this official policy position with notes on practical engagement, security cooperation via the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and potential economic opportunities including Berbera port development for Ethiopia transit. This reaffirmation was viewed as a diplomatic setback for Somaliland's recognition push while allowing continued tactical cooperation between the United States and Somaliland authorities.¹²⁶

Following the release of the congressional report, a high level United States diplomatic visit to Hargeisa took place. President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro hosted Justin Davis, the United States Chargé d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission at the United States Embassy in Mogadishu, along with a United States delegation at the Presidential Palace in Hargeisa. Discussions covered a broad range of bilateral issues including regional security, Red Sea maritime security, intelligence sharing, defense cooperation, investment, trade and economic infrastructure, minerals, energy, and democratic governance. The meeting followed the recent United States State Department and congressional report outlining potential areas for improved engagement with Somaliland while still operating within a One Somalia framework. Both sides expressed interest in deepening practical cooperation based on shared strategic interests. President Irro highlighted Somaliland's stability and reliability, while Mr. Davis praised Somaliland's democratic record and importance.¹²⁷

Somaliland's partnership with Taiwan reached a new milestone with the official opening of a new Representative Office in Taipei on June 12. The event, which featured a ribbon cutting ceremony and celebratory proceedings was attended by Taiwan's Deputy Foreign Minister Francois Wu and Somaliland's representative to Taiwan, Mahmoud Adam Jama Galaal. Speaking to reporters at the inauguration, Galaal delivered a defense of Somaliland's sovereign right to conduct its foreign policy independently. He described Taiwan as a very important ally and declared that Somaliland has the prerogative to choose its own relationships. Addressing the coordinated pressure from Beijing and Mogadishu to sever ties with Taipei, Galaal stated that such pressure tactics have not succeeded in altering the friendship between the two partners. He emphasized that Somaliland's main political parties remain united in resisting external coercion and noted that his government has not had any recent communication with China.¹²⁸

In a parallel track, high level diplomatic engagement with Israel culminated in a state visit. On June 14, President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi arrived in Jerusalem for the first

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of State. 2026. Report to Congress on Potential Areas for Improved United States Engagement with Somaliland. June 2026.

¹²⁷ Horn Diplomat. 2026. "Somaliland President Meets U.S. Diplomat Amid Strategic Interest." June 4, 2026.

¹²⁸ Reuters. 2026. "Somaliland Says It Has a Right to Choose Its Relationships as It Opens New Taiwan Office." June 12, 2026.

ever state visit by a Somaliland president. He was formally welcomed by Israeli President Isaac Herzog with a series of high level meetings focused on fortifying bilateral cooperation across a range of sectors including security, trade, agriculture, technology, and health. The visit included the official opening of Somaliland's embassy in Israel, establishing a permanent diplomatic presence in Jerusalem, and a solemn tour of the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial. Both sides characterized the visit as the beginning of a new chapter in their relationship. President Abdullahi called the visit historic and noted that it represented the first full diplomatic welcome for Somaliland in thirty five years. In a powerful display of diplomatic recognition, the flags of Somaliland were displayed throughout Jerusalem during the visit.¹²⁹

On June 15, 2026, Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro officially inaugurated Somaliland's first ever embassy in Jerusalem in a ceremony attended by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar. President Irro described the visit as the first state visit ever by a Somaliland president in any country in the world and characterized the embassy opening as a milestone in bilateral relations between the two sides. Throughout the course of his visit, President Irro explored Israeli innovation in agriculture, water management, and energy by visiting leading institutions and research centers in Israel. These visits reported on June 20 built upon previously held business forums and broader economic discussions.¹³⁰

President Irro announced that direct flights between Hargeisa and Tel Aviv would begin soon. In an interview with i24NEWS, he framed this initiative as a means to ease international travel, reduce reliance on routes controlled by Somalia and boost business, investment, and partnerships. President Irro also indicated that the direct air link would support partnerships with Israel and other international actors including Taiwan. In an interview with Israeli broadcaster i24, President Irro stated that several countries are considering recognizing Somaliland following Israel's recognition but declined to identify them citing strategic reasons. He indicated that announcements could come soon, raising the possibility of a potential shift in the international stance toward Somaliland. The President also confirmed that Somaliland maintains diplomatic channels with the administration of United States President Donald Trump as well as with Ethiopia, Kenya, and the United Arab Emirates. When asked whether those countries were among Somaliland's diplomatic priorities, he affirmed that they are and stated that Somaliland maintains open channels with them.¹³¹

On June 16, the Somaliland government categorically rejected statements issued by the Federal Government of Somalia as hostile and misleading. The administration affirmed its sovereign right to independent diplomacy and rejected federal government claims regarding

¹²⁹ i24NEWS. 2026. "Somaliland President Arrives In Israel For Historic First State Visit." June 14, 2026.

¹³⁰ BBC. 2026. "Somaliland Opens Jerusalem Embassy after Israel's Recognition." June 16, 2026.

¹³¹ i24NEWS. 2026. "Somaliland President Says Direct Flights between Tel Aviv and Hargeisa to Come 'Very Soon'." June 17, 2026

Somaliland's constitutional and legal status.¹³²

Security Cooperation and Counterterrorism

Somaliland's Defence Minister Mohamed Yusuf Ali confirmed that Israel is providing police and military training to Somaliland forces. However, the Minister firmly denied any talks about establishing an Israeli military base or intelligence center in Somaliland, addressing rumors that had circulated during the visit. The training support is framed as part of Somaliland's efforts to strengthen its forces against threats including Al-Shabaab while maintaining its reputation for relative stability compared to southern Somalia. The visit and associated agreements have emphasized counterterrorism and maritime security cooperation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region.¹³³

Israel has established an intelligence base in Somaliland and is engaged in discussions with authorities in the region over the possible establishment of an Israeli military base, investigative outlet Drop Site reported on Saturday citing regional officials.¹³⁴ This development comes days after Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud warned that Israel's recognition of Somaliland was a trap and that a big problem was coming to Somalia, the signs of which he said were already becoming visible. Somaliland authorities and Israeli officials have consistently denied that any Israeli military base exists or is being planned.¹³⁵

Yemen's Houthi movement issued a strong warning against any Israeli military presence in Somaliland following reports alleging that Israel had deployed a small contingent of troops to Somaliland and discussions over the possible establishment of an Israeli military base. The threat highlights regional concerns regarding the growing security cooperation between Israel and Somaliland and the potential implications for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden maritime security environment.¹³⁶

The Federal Government of Somalia has consistently condemned the Somaliland administration's engagement with Israel viewing it as a violation of Somali sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement on June 16 expressing concern over Israeli engagement with what it terms the secessionist administration of Somaliland and reserved the right to take all necessary measures against Israel.¹³⁷ The Council of Ministers reinforced this position on June 18, describing the moves as a violation of Somalia's Constitution, international law and territorial integrity.¹³⁸ These statements have been accompanied by diplomatic engagement with regional and international

¹³² Somaliland government / official statements reported in: Somali Today. 2026. "Somalia Rejects Somaliland's Jerusalem 'Embassy', Israel Ties" .June 16, 2026.

¹³³ Addis Standard. 2026. "Somaliland Receiving Israeli Military Training but Not in Talks for Base, Minister Says." June 18, 2026

¹³⁴ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Israel Opens Somaliland Intelligence Base as Somalia Warns over Military Presence." June 14, 2026.

¹³⁶ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Houthis Threaten Strikes on Somaliland over Israeli Military Foothold." June 2026

¹³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Somalia. 2026. "Press Statement." June 16, 2026.

¹³⁸ Somali Guardian. 2026. "Somalia Threatens Action over Israel-Somaliland Ties." June 16, 2026.

partners to garner support for Somalia's position. Somalia urged Arab League members to avoid relations and investment with Somaliland and to refrain from allowing use of their territories, ports, or financial systems for facilitating ties with Somaliland, with Somalia considering Somaliland to be part of its territory. Somalia has previously described any engagement with the "secessionist administration of the northern region of Somalia" as "a violation of its sovereignty."

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development expressed concern over reports of Somaliland opening an embassy in Jerusalem warning against actions it said could undermine Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. IGAD reiterated its support for the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The regional body's statement reflects the prevailing view among East African states that Somaliland's international engagement should not come at the expense of Somali territorial integrity and signals potential regional diplomatic pressure on Somaliland over its actions.¹³⁹

1.5 Sudan: El Obeid Under Siege, Institutional Manipulation, and Accelerating Collapse

June 2026 marked one of the most consequential months of Sudan's war since the fall of El Fasher, as the Rapid Support Forces' methodical encirclement of El Obeid drew the most concentrated international alarm in months, the United States imposed dual-track sanctions against procurement networks sustaining both belligerents, a sharp dispute over chemical weapons allegations opened a new diplomatic front at the UN Security Council, and the Sudanese pound broke through 5,000 to the dollar. The month also exposed deeper institutional fractures in the international mediation architecture itself, as a controversy surrounding the African Union's conduct of political consultations in Addis Ababa raised serious questions about the impartiality of the body entrusted with facilitating Sudan's civilian political track.

The month opened with consultations in Addis Ababa facilitated by the Quintet mechanism comprising the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Arab League, and IGAD intended to advance a Sudanese-owned civilian political process. On June 5, a coalition including the Sumoud Alliance, the Democratic Bloc, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, the Popular Congress Party, and the National Umma Party announced agreement on a joint vision for a preparatory committee, framing the consensus as a step toward a comprehensive peaceful settlement grounded in equal citizenship.¹⁴⁰ UN Special Envoy Pekka Haavisto, visiting Khartoum in the following days, urged Sovereign Council

¹³⁹ Hiraan Online. 2026. "IGAD Supports Somalia's Sovereignty after Somaliland Opens Embassy in Jerusalem." June 18.

¹⁴⁰ Sudan Tribune, "Sudanese Political Forces Reach Rare Consensus on Peace Roadmap in Addis Talks," June 5, 2026.

Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to support the consultations as a Sudanese-owned process.¹⁴¹

However, according to Horn Review sources, the underlying consultations had broken down before the joint statement was signed. Sumoud representatives described the collapse as triggered by a unilateral African Union decision to grant sixteen additional seats to a formation led by Mohamed Ahmed Sir Al-Khatim (Al-Jakoumi), widely regarded as a firm supporter of the SAF, outside the seat-allocation framework previously negotiated among all parties at an earlier IGAD-convened meeting in Djibouti. Sources close to the civilian blocs further noted that the conduct of the process under AUC Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf whose diplomatic career was shaped substantially within Djibouti's foreign policy approach and Cairo has, in their assessment, tilted the architecture of the process toward outcomes favorable to Egypt and the SAF.¹⁴² The most anticipated bilateral encounter of the period, a direct meeting between Sumoud and the RSF-aligned Tasis coalition, failed to materialize; Tasis spokesperson Ahmed Tugod Lisan dismissed the Democratic Bloc's refusal to engage as rendering any exclusionary political process a public relations exercise without bearing on ground realities, while the SPLM-N Revolutionary Democratic Current and the Sudan Liberation Army both withheld their signatures from the preparatory committee document, citing the absence of binding commitments and explicit language barring the former ruling party and Islamist movement from future arrangements.

On the battlefield, fighting in Blue Nile State remained intense throughout the month. The SAF announced it had repelled a large-scale RSF-SPLM-N assault on the town of Al-Barka in early June, even as RSF-aligned platforms broadcast footage appearing to show their forces inside an army base in the contested area, while the strategic town of Amouri withstood its fourth attack in under a month on June 13 as the RSF-SPLM-N alliance pressed toward Geissan.¹⁴³ The SAF's mid-month battlefield summary claimed the destruction of 141 RSF combat vehicles across three fronts, concentrated in Kordofan and Blue Nile, while army strikes in Darfur targeted ammunition depots, equipment warehouses, and a major fuel depot in Nyala. Burhan, visiting Ailafoun east of Khartoum, pledged to recapture all Sudanese territory, attributing the war to foreign actors. In parallel, the RSF continued consolidating parallel state structures: commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo personally launched parallel high school examinations across RSF-controlled areas of South Darfur and Kordofan for the first time, while a decree establishing a Transitional Currency Council under former Central Bank governor Hussein Yahya Jangoul triggered warnings of a deepening de facto monetary split.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Sudan Tribune. "UN Envoy Urges Sudan's Army Chief to Support Five-Party Political Talks." June 7, 2026.

¹⁴² Horn Review original reporting and interviews with Sumoud Alliance representatives and observers close to Sudanese civilian blocs, Addis Ababa, June 2026.

¹⁴³ Sudan Tribune. "Sudanese Army Repels Fresh Attack by RSF and SPLA-N in Blue Nile," Sudan Tribune, June 13, 2026.

¹⁴⁴ RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, launch of parallel high school examinations in RSF-controlled territory, June 2026; decree establishing a Transitional Currency Council under former Central Bank governor Hussein Yahya Jangoul, June

The month's defining military and humanitarian development was the RSF's escalating siege of El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan and home to roughly 500,000 people. What began as a five-day RSF drone campaign against fuel infrastructure in the city in early-to-mid June destroying approximately five fuel stations and killing at least four civilians in a UN-confirmed strike,¹⁴⁵ escalated by mid-month into a sustained assault exceeding ten consecutive days of drone strikes, killing at least 50 civilians and knocking out the city's main power station, cutting water supply to thousands of homes and halting hospital operations. RSF forces reportedly circulated video warnings urging residents to stay clear of military installations, a pattern that preceded the final assault on El Fasher in October 2025. By the final week of June, strikes had expanded to hit a power substation, additional fuel stations, a dialysis center, a girls' school, and a funeral gathering, with the RSF maintaining substantial troop concentrations around a city under siege-like conditions for eighteen months — drawing direct comparisons to El Fasher's fall and the atrocities that followed it.

The deteriorating situation in El Obeid drew an escalating sequence of international warnings that nonetheless produced no enforceable outcome. A coalition of 29 states delivered a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on June 18 documenting the civilian toll,¹⁴⁶ the same day that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned explicitly that an imminent ground offensive risked the commission of serious international crimes, a warning echoed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who noted that clear warnings throughout the conflict had repeatedly failed to trigger concerted action.¹⁴⁷ On June 20, the UN Security Council issued a statement demanding an immediate halt to the RSF assault, reaffirming Sudan's territorial integrity, rejecting any parallel governing authority in RSF-held areas, and referencing Resolution 2791 and the Jeddah Declaration commitments that both parties have continued to violate without consequence.¹⁴⁸ The foreign ministers of France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom issued a joint warning of an impending ground offensive,¹⁴⁹ while Human Rights Watch called on the Human Rights Council to convene an urgent debate or special session, explicitly naming the United Arab Emirates as an external actor whose support for the RSF should be unequivocally condemned.¹⁵⁰ The RSF denied responsibility for ethnically targeted killings and stated that those responsible for abuses would be held to account, even as Burhan articulated an uncompromising posture, describing the army's approach as operating with the

2026.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, "UN Officials Call for Urgent Action in Yemen to Push Peace, Reduce Hunger," *United Nations News*, June 16, 2026; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Statement: IFRC Appalled by the Killing of Sudanese Red Crescent Volunteer in North Kordofan," *ReliefWeb*, June 13, 2026.

¹⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, "Dozens of Countries Warn of Atrocities Amid Escalation in Sudan's El-Obeid," Al Jazeera, June 18, 2026.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, "'Stop This Madness': Rights Chief Warns of Impending Atrocities as Militia Closes in on El Obeid, Sudan," *UN News*, June 18, 2026.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Press Statement on Sudan (SC/16392)," United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, June 20, 2026.

¹⁴⁹ United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, "UK and Allies Joint Statement on the Situation in El Obeid," June 23, 2026.

¹⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Urgently Address the Situation in and Around El Obeid, Take Bold Steps Towards Atrocity Prevention and Accountability," *Human Rights Watch*, June 26, 2026.

precision of 'digging with a needle' until the RSF is entirely dismantled; a formulation that forecloses any truce not conditioned on RSF disarmament and dissolution.

Accountability questions intensified on multiple fronts during the month. Sudan submitted a letter to the UN Security Council on June 12 alleging that the RSF is operating a transnational criminal network inside its Darfur detention facilities, claiming that nearly 20,000 people are held at Daghri Prison in Nyala under conditions of torture and cholera outbreak, with allegations that are not independently verified — that foreign medical personnel from Colombia and Serbia are harvesting organs from detainees, alongside separate claims that approximately 300 wounded detainees at Shala Prison in El Fasher died over two months from absence of medical care.¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch separately urged the SAF to ensure that RSF commanders who defected to the army including Major General Al-Nour Al-Qubba and commander Ali Rizq Allah ('Al-Safana'), both documented as present during unlawful killings and sexual violence at El Fasher are held accountable for their prior conduct rather than absorbed under Burhan's standing amnesty offer, exposing a structural tension between the SAF's tactical interest in incentivizing defections and the principle that command responsibility is non-transferable.¹⁵² The accountability landscape was further complicated in the final week of June when US Senior Advisor Massad Boulos announced a second round of US sanctions over the SAF's alleged use of chemical agents, characterizing it as a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention; Sudan's UN envoy Al-Harith Idriss rejected the allegations, stating that a year of bilateral US-Sudan technical investigations, including soil sampling from four separate areas, had produced no verified evidence, and that the matter belonged before the OPCW, where Sudan holds a seat on the executive board.¹⁵³

Washington's engagement with Sudan deepened across both legislative and enforcement channels. The US House Foreign Affairs Committee voted on June 9 to advance H.R. 1939, the US Engagement in Sudanese Peace Act, after removing a provision that would have urged the UN General Assembly to strip Sudan of its international representation; an amendment the Sudanese embassy welcomed while maintaining objection to any framework equating the SAF and RSF alongside a separate bipartisan sanctions bill introduced in the Senate.¹⁵⁴ Boulos held parallel calls with the UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty on the political track, underscoring Cairo's continued centrality to externally mediated efforts. The month's most direct US enforcement action came on June 26, when the Treasury designated procurement networks on both sides of the conflict: three associates of Talent Bridge SA, a Panama-registered front company recruiting former Colombian military personnel for the RSF, alongside Target Multiactivity Company for importing Indian-manufactured explosives for SAF aerial bombs, SBL Energy for over

¹⁵¹ Sudan Horizon, "Sudan Calls for Urgent International Intervention to Secure Release of Thousands of Detainees in Nyala and El Fasher," June 13, 2026.

¹⁵² Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Hold Defecting Armed Group Commanders to Account," June 10, 2026.

¹⁵³ Sudan Tribune, "US and Sudan Clash at UN over Rejected Humanitarian Truce Claims," *Sudan Tribune*, June 27, 2026.

¹⁵⁴ Anadolu Agency, "US Senators Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Sanction Perpetrators of Sudan War," *Anadolu Agency*, June 11, 2026.

200 shipments of explosives-related materiel since 2024, and the state-owned Ports Engineering Company for importing military uniforms and ammunition components from UAE and Turkish suppliers.¹⁵⁵ The same Security Council session that produced the chemical weapons exchange also saw Boulos accuse both warring factions of dragging out a war of attrition at civilian expense and state that the SAF had rejected a US-proposed nationwide humanitarian truce that morning — a characterization Idriss flatly denied, asserting that Khartoum had sent Boulos a formal response including a revised military withdrawal schedule before the session began.

Sudan's economy deteriorated sharply and continuously across the month. The pound hit an unprecedented low of 4,700 to the dollar in early June before recovering partially to 4,400 after the government assumed direct control of petroleum procurement, removing the private sector from fuel imports, as the al-Jaili refinery formerly supplying roughly 70 percent of domestic consumption remained offline.¹⁵⁶ The recovery proved temporary: by June 28, the pound had broken through 5,000 and reached 5,100 in parallel market trading, prompting new Central Bank directives requiring unified exchange rates for import financing and continued foreign currency injections at a rate of 1,220 pounds per UAE dirham.¹⁵⁷

Sudan's monetary fragmentation deepened in step: Central Bank officials confirmed that transactions in RSF-controlled border areas are now conducted in Chadian francs, South Sudanese pounds, and US dollars, with cancelled high-denomination notes carrying no legal tender status in government territory, while Africa Intelligence reported that RSF commander Hemedti is actively challenging Port Sudan's monetary authority through an increasingly institutionalized parallel currency and banking infrastructure, including a Future Bank and Currency Council designed to bypass government control.¹⁵⁸ Khartoum's teachers launched a phased strike beginning June 17, the third state after Kassala and Al-Jazirah to face educator industrial action during the month, tracing the arc of public-sector collapse under wartime conditions. Amid this deterioration, China signed a debt cancellation agreement on June 28, forgiving four interest-free loans totaling approximately 344 million yuan or roughly \$50 million against Sudan's total external debt of \$66.8 billion,¹⁵⁹ while Port Sudan received large-capacity container ships for the first time since the resumption of transshipment operations on June 16, including a Transmar-Atlantic vessel carrying approximately 900 containers and a Sharaf shipping line vessel exceeding 1,500 containers, signaling a modest recovery in maritime confidence.

The humanitarian situation remained acute throughout June. UNHCR reported that Sudan remains the world's largest displacement crisis, with approximately nine million internally

¹⁵⁵ United States Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Networks Fueling Sudan's Civil War and Worsening Humanitarian Crisis," June 26, 2026

¹⁵⁶ Dabanga "Sudan: 'Monetary and Admin Measures Will Not Halt Sudanese Pound Decline' " *AllAfrica*, June 28, 2026.

¹⁵⁷ Sudan Tribune, "Sudan Central Bank Issues New Import Rules as Pound Weakens," June 28, 2026.

¹⁵⁸ Africa Intelligence, "Hemeti Challenges Port Sudan's Currency Stranglehold," *Africa Intelligence*, June 29, 2026.

¹⁵⁹ Ecofin Agency, "Sudan, China Sign Protocol to Cancel \$50 Million in Interest-Free Loans," *Ecofin Agency*, June 30, 2026.

displaced and 4.5 million who have fled to neighboring countries, citing a 72 percent funding gap as the primary constraint on its capacity to respond to new displacement waves in Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile.¹⁶⁰

Eastern Sudan saw its own escalation of communal tension during the month, as prominent leaders in Kassala warned of dangerous tribal polarization following remarks by the Nazir of the Hadendowa tribes that broad local communities interpreted as an assault on their identity. The Bani Amer leadership publicly demanded that Burhan hold the Interior Minister accountable for his silence during the episode, while Abla Karrar of the Sudanese Congress Party, cited in Sudan Tribune reporting, warned that a single bullet fired in eastern Sudan could trigger a war of all against all amid unprecedented regional weapons proliferation.¹⁶¹

Toward the close of the month, modest diplomatic openings emerged alongside the broader pattern of escalation. Sudan's Foreign Minister welcomed a prisoner exchange initiative proposed by UN Personal Envoy Haavisto, described as the first international effort specifically targeting a swap since the war began, against the backdrop of Sudan's earlier claim to the Security Council that 20,000 people remain held in RSF detention facilities in Darfur.¹⁶² In a separate bilateral development, Burhan received South Sudan's National Security Service Director General Akec Tong Aleu in Khartoum on June 25 for talks on border security and bilateral coordination, underscoring the continued relevance of cross-border security management even as the broader conflict intensified.

Overall, June 2026 crystallized the structural failure of the international response to Sudan's war. El Obeid reproduced, almost exactly, the sequence that preceded El Fasher's fall. The dual-track US sanctions of June 27 represented the month's most concrete enforcement measure, designating procurement networks on both sides for the first time in a single action, yet designation without disruption of the underlying supply chains leaves the practical gap between sanction and enforcement as wide as ever. The Addis Ababa controversy, meanwhile, suggests that the institutional architecture intended to mediate Sudan's civilian political track is becoming a contested terrain of external influence rather than a neutral venue, a development that carry implications extending well beyond Sudan's borders. Sudan ends June with its currency past 5,100 to the dollar, its second-largest western city under sustained siege, its detention facilities the subject of unverified but credible atrocity allegations, and its two belligerents no closer to any framework that places civilian protection above strategic calculation.

¹⁶⁰ Sudan Tribune, "Sudan Remains World's Largest Displacement Crisis Amid 72% Funding Gap, UNHCR Official Says," June 22, 2026

¹⁶¹ The Sudan Times, "Former Kassala Governor Accuses Burhan Regime of Tribal Chaos," June 21, 2026.

¹⁶² Middle East Online, "Khartoum Welcomes UN Proposal for Prisoner Exchange with RSF," *Middle East Online*, June 2026.

1.6 South Sudan: An Election Date Without Preconditions and a Detained Opposition Without a Path Back

June 2026 was defined by a widening gap between South Sudan's formal political calendar and the deteriorating realities confronting much of its population. UNHCR warned on June 5 of a grave protection crisis in eastern Jonglei State, describing it as one of the most severe conflict-related displacement emergencies in recent years: approximately 140,000 people have been displaced in Akobo County alone, more than 300,000 across Jonglei and neighboring states since December 2025, and roughly 100,000 have crossed into Ethiopia in search of safety amid fluid and pendular population movements.¹⁶³ This compounds an already severe national displacement picture of nearly two million internally displaced people and over 1.3 million arrivals from Sudan since April 2023.

The World Bank has identified the South Sudanese pound as the weakest currency in Africa, with annual food inflation reaching 234 percent over the past fiscal year.¹⁶⁴ That architecture is itself under severe strain: South Sudan lost a substantial share of humanitarian support following the shutdown of USAID, and a WFP funding shortfall of \$355 million for 2026 threatens to reduce coverage by 1.5 million people, with as many as nine million people at risk of losing assistance entirely should conflict continue.¹⁶⁵

The scale of institutional collapse in Akobo became starkly documented by mid-month. Screening data showed 36 percent of children aged six to fifty-nine months presenting with malnutrition, including 15 percent with severe acute malnutrition. The water infrastructure collapse is equally acute: of the seventeen water towers and thirty-five boreholes that supplied Akobo before the fighting, only eight hand pumps remain functional, serving around 5,000 of a population now exceeding 100,000, with the majority relying on untreated river water and widespread open defecation creating extreme cholera and waterborne disease risk as the rainy season intensifies.

Protection Crisis

Protection indicators deteriorated in parallel with the humanitarian emergency. UNFPA reported that child marriage is rising among both refugees and host communities in Upper Nile State, where over half a million refugees and returnees from Sudan have sought shelter in Renk County alone; approximately 210,900 girls in South Sudan are married before the age of 15, and escalating violence during 2026 is pushing growing numbers of adolescent girls through transit centers as child brides and young mothers. The United Nations recorded that over 100 women and girls are displaced within the country every hour, with an estimated

¹⁶³ United Nations, "World News in Brief: Millions Displaced in South Sudan, ...," *UN News*, June 2026.

¹⁶⁴ World Food Programme, "WFP South Sudan Weekly Market Monitor: 8–14 June 2026," *ReliefWeb*, June 2026

¹⁶⁵ World Food Programme, "New FAO-WFP Report Warns Worsening Hunger Puts 13 Hotspots at Significant Risk," June 17, 2026.

2.8 million people requiring support to prevent and address gender-based violence.¹⁶⁶ Cross-border abuse compounded these protection failures: reporting carried by The New Humanitarian documented the continued expulsion of South Sudanese nationals from Sudan, with humanitarian workers tracking nearly 12,000 cases over the past year, far exceeding the 2,853 cases cited by Sudanese officials. Deportees described armed raids, forced departure without belongings, family separations, and racial abuse, with the Renk transit camp in Upper Nile sheltering 8,000 people in facilities built for 2,000. Juba pledged in April to monitor the situation closely, but diplomatic intervention at a commensurate scale with the reported numbers has not followed.¹⁶⁷

Political Repression and the Detention of Riek Machar

The month's most politically consequential statement came not from a peace process communiqué but from a cabinet minister speaking to community leaders in rural Upper Nile State on June 14. Minister of Public Service Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth told the audience that detained First Vice President Riek Machar would die in prison, stating explicitly: 'Riek is in jail, and we are in Juba. If you ever see Riek Machar again, do not believe anything I say... We will not kill him. We will not take his soul, but he will die in jail,' comparing Machar to a figure from Nuer oral tradition who died in a colonial-era prison.¹⁶⁸ Gatkuoth, a former senior SPLM-IO figure and close Machar ally who defected to the government in 2016, has since emerged as one of the Kiir administration's most vocal voices.

The SPLM-IO National Youth League condemned the remarks as reckless, provocative, and dangerous, and formally requested that President Kiir take disciplinary action against the minister.¹⁶⁹ The statement came amid simultaneous visits to Juba by an African Union delegation led by former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, assessing peace agreement implementation and December 2026 election preparations,¹⁷⁰ and by IGAD Special Envoy Moussa Djama Ali, who met President Kiir on June 17 to call for strict adherence to the Revitalized Agreement.¹⁷¹

Elections Announced Amid Unmet Preconditions

South Sudan's National Elections Commission announced on June 22 that the country's first general election since independence will be held on December 22, 2026, formally triggering the six-month countdown mandated by the National Elections Act. The announcement, delivered by NEC Chairperson Professor Abednego Akok Kacuol in Juba, represents the

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Population Fund, "Child Marriage Rising Among Refugees & Host Communities in South Sudan," May 28, 2026

¹⁶⁷ The New Humanitarian, "Sudanese Authorities Carry Out Deportations and Abuse of South Sudanese," May 14, 2026

¹⁶⁸ Sudans Post, "South Sudan Minister Says Opposition Leader Riek Machar Will Die in Jail," June 19, 2026.

¹⁶⁹ Sudans Post, "Kiir Urged to Discipline Gatkuoth over Threats against Machar," June 21, 2026.

¹⁷⁰ Office of the President of the Republic of South Sudan, "AU Envoy Kikwete Commends South Sudan's Election Preparations, Peace Implementation Progress," June 22, 2026.

¹⁷¹ Intergovernmental Authority on Development, "IGAD Reaffirms Support for South Sudan's Peace Process, Democratic Transition, and Election Preparations During High-Level Meeting with President Salva Kiir," *IGAD*, June 17, 2026.

fifth rescheduling of a vote originally due in 2015; the Commission acknowledged openly that it faces severe funding shortfalls and unresolved legal gaps, and called on the government to urgently amend existing frameworks and provide basic operational resources within a short timeframe.¹⁷² The core problem the announcement left unaddressed is that the Revitalized Agreement requires three prerequisites to be completed before elections can credibly proceed: a permanent constitution, a national population census, and institutional reforms including the unification of armed forces. None has been finished. The SPLM-IO was excluded from the political consultations that reaffirmed the December date, despite being a principal signatory to the peace agreement, while Machar himself remains on trial in Juba on treason charges his faction describes as politically motivated.

A February United Nations inquiry has separately found that South Sudan's leadership is systematically dismantling the peace agreement the election is nominally meant to complete.¹⁷³ The NEC chairperson closed his announcement with a call to democratic ownership, telling citizens that voting is the only constitutional route to political power; a formulation accurate as far as it went, though the gap between that framing and the unresolved structural prerequisites underscores how contested the date's credibility remains.

Extraterritorial Repression and International Accountability

Two developments during the month illuminated, from opposite directions, the architecture through which South Sudan's state and its associated networks have historically operated beyond formal accountability. In the early hours of June 10, armed and masked men abducted Athorbey Al-Gaddhaffy-Dit, a 51-year-old South Sudanese businessman and corruption whistleblower who also holds Kenyan citizenship, seizing him outside a casino on the outskirts of Nairobi. Amnesty International Kenya described the incident as bearing the hallmarks of an enforced disappearance and demanded immediate disclosure of his whereabouts.¹⁷⁴ By June 12, Amnesty had received credible information that Al-Gaddhaffy-Dit had been transported by road to the Nadapal border crossing, handed to South Sudanese security personnel, and transferred to a Military Intelligence detention facility at the Giyada military complex in Juba.¹⁷⁵ Community representatives seeking access were told by the head of Military Intelligence that access would be considered only after receiving an internal report explaining the circumstances of his arrest. Al-Gaddhaffy-Dit had repeatedly warned that his life was in danger due to his efforts to expose corruption linked to the South Sudanese ruling elite; his case fits a documented pattern of extraterritorial abductions of dissidents from Kenya to their countries of origin that has drawn repeated condemnation without producing accountability.

¹⁷² Radio Tamazuj, "NEC Cites Legal Gaps as It Announces Election Date," June 22, 2026.

¹⁷³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "UN Inquiry Finds South Sudan's Political and Military Leaders Are Driving the Country Towards a Full-Scale War and Mass Atrocity Crimes," February 27, 2026.

¹⁷⁴ Amnesty International Kenya, "Amnesty International Kenya Demands Immediate Disclosure of Whereabouts of Abducted Athorbey Al-Gaddhaffy-Dit," June 10, 2026.

¹⁷⁵ Citizen Digital, "South Sudan Abductee from Kenya Held in Military Facility in Juba: Amnesty," June 13, 2026.

Separately, Southwark Crown Court delivered verdicts on June 11 in one of the most significant arms trafficking prosecutions in recent British legal history. David Greenhalgh, a British businessman, and Christos Farmakis, a Greek national, were convicted on multiple counts of illegal arms brokering under the Export Control Order 2008 following a nine-week trial. Between 2009 and 2016, the two operated a network sourcing weapons from former Soviet states for embargoed destinations including South Sudan, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, and Iran, with materiel including Mi-24 combat helicopter gunships, battle tanks, surface-to-air missile systems, fighter jets, and tens of thousands of AK-47 assault rifles; prosecutors recovered emails showing the men discussing forged end-user certificates and routing through third countries to obscure destinations. Greenhalgh operated through a group registered across the UK, Greece, North Macedonia, Hong Kong, and South Sudan, with both defendants facing sentencing on July 22.¹⁷⁶ The conviction matters not only as a record of past conduct but as a documented reminder that the arms flows which shaped South Sudan's most destructive years were enabled by international supply networks operating at the deliberate intersection of legal ambiguity and commercial opportunism.

Economic Pressures and Governance Measures

South Sudan's Economic Cluster, chaired by Vice President James Wani Igga, resolved on June 26 to lift the withdrawal limits that commercial banks have imposed on customers. For months, citizens queuing outside banks had been limited to withdrawing between SSP 50,000 and SSP 100,000 per visit regardless of account balances, a cap originally introduced by the Bank of South Sudan in September 2024 at a ceiling of SSP 10 million that had progressively tightened as the physical cash crisis deepened. The cluster directed the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank to implement the decision and develop strategies addressing the underlying financial challenges, and approved the formation of an Inter-Agency Economic Reform Task Force.¹⁷⁷ The announcement brought symbolic relief but limited immediate prospect of resolution, since the withdrawal limits were a symptom rather than a cause of the liquidity crisis: the South Sudanese pound remains among the weakest currencies on the continent, oil export disruptions have constrained dollar inflows, and the parallel cash economy operating in foreign currency has grown in proportion to the collapse of public trust in the formal banking system. Against this backdrop, South Sudan and the United States signed a \$146 million health sector agreement during the same week, a notable commitment at a moment when US development financing across the region has otherwise been contracting.¹⁷⁸ The juxtaposition with President Kiir's continued inspection of progress on a \$300 million presidential palace in Juba, scheduled for completion in 2027, requires little elaboration beyond noting the priority ordering it reflects relative to the population the state governs.

¹⁷⁶BBC News, "Two Men Convicted in UK of Trying to Send Weapons to Conflict Zones," June 12, 2026.

¹⁷⁷ Radio Tamazuj, "Economic Cluster Ends Bank Cash Withdrawal Limits," June 26, 2026.

¹⁷⁸ United States Department of State, "Implementing the Trump Administration's America First Global Health Strategy in South Sudan," June 25, 2026.

Regional Diplomacy and Strategic Positioning

On border security, South Sudan's National Security Service Director General Akec Tong Aleu travelled to Khartoum on June 25 and met Sovereign Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, with discussions focused on bilateral relations and joint measures to secure the shared border; the meeting was also attended by Sudan's General Intelligence Service Director Ahmed Ibrahim Mufaddal, building on an earlier visit by Sovereign Council Deputy Chairman Malik Agar to Juba in January and indicating a sustained security-track channel between the two governments even as Sudan's internal conflict continues to generate displacement flows directly affecting Upper Nile State.¹⁷⁹ In a separate and symbolically notable development, President Kiir awarded an honorary general's rank in the South Sudan People's Defense Forces to 91-year-old Israeli veteran David Uri Ben-Uziel, known during the liberation period by the nom de guerre General John, in a ceremony at the State House in Juba. Ben-Uziel, a former Mossad operative, led a clandestine mission supporting the Anyanya One rebel movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s under the command of Joseph Lagu during the first Sudanese civil war, including constructing a makeshift airstrip inside a forest to parachute in supplies from Kenya.¹⁸⁰ Kiir described the honor as recognition of bonds formed during the liberation struggle; the ceremony coincided with a meeting between South Sudan's Foreign Minister and his Israeli counterpart on expanding ties and aid, a calibrated public signal as Juba navigates an increasingly fragmented regional environment.

Institutional fractures within Sudan's Islamist movement also spilled into South Sudan during the month. A leadership rift within the Islamic Dawa Organization, a pan-Islamic charity headquartered in Khartoum, widened publicly when newly elected Secretary-General Yahya Adam Osman announced he would run operations from South Sudan, citing administrative restrictions imposed on him in Sudan that prevented him from exercising executive authority following a court dispute over the removal of the organization's Qatari board chairman.¹⁸¹ Osman stated that his administration controls over 95 percent of the organization's foreign missions and operational capabilities, with only the Khartoum headquarters outside his jurisdiction; the rival faction is reportedly backed by Ali Karti, secretary-general of Sudan's Islamic Movement. The relocation of even a temporary secretariat to South Sudan, with Juba and potential fallback offices in Uganda and Niger named, illustrates how Sudan's institutional fractures are now dispersing into the region in ways that carry their own governance implications. Separately, UNESCO convened a three-day national press freedom conference in Juba, co-organized with South Sudan's Ministry of Information and supported by JICA, focused on journalist safety ahead of the December 2026 elections; Information Minister Ateny Wek Ateny called for responsible journalism, describing December as South

¹⁷⁹ Sudan Tribune, "Sudan Head of State Meets South Sudan Intelligence Chief over Border Security," June 25, 2026.

¹⁸⁰ Office of the President of the Republic of South Sudan, "President Kiir Confers Honorary SSPDF Rank on Israel Veteran David Ben-Uziel," June 2026.

¹⁸¹ Sudan Tribune, "Internal Split Deepens within Sudan-Based Islamic Dawa Organization," June 7, 2026.

Sudan's first vote as an independent nation.¹⁸² UNHCR's Gambella sub-office in Ethiopia continued reporting ongoing arrivals of South Sudanese fleeing across the border, with the emergency response under severe strain across protection, education, and shelter, while CARE documented acute need amid limited humanitarian access among mothers and families displaced from Jonglei.¹⁸³ Over 120 SPLM-IO members defected to the government-aligned SPLM-IG in Koch County, Unity State, during the month, citing positive leadership by local commanders — a development the government framed as evidence of political consolidation but which the opposition described as coercion under conditions of active conflict.¹⁸⁴

Overall Assessment

June 2026 brought South Sudan's two governing registers — the official register of regional engagement, election preparation, and pledges of commitment to the peace agreement, and the factual register of a political opposition leader told he will die in prison, a city of over 100,000 returnees with eight functioning water pumps, and a \$300 million presidential palace under construction — into their sharpest visible contradiction yet. The announcement of a December 22 election date creates international legitimacy pressure and a procedural timeline, but it does not create a permanent constitution, unify a divided command structure, or return the principal opposition leader to political participation; the SPLM-IO's exclusion from the consultations that produced the date means any election held under current conditions would proceed without the faction the peace agreement itself designates as the primary opposition. The Athorbey abduction and the Southwark arms trafficking conviction, read together, frame a state whose coercive apparatus continues to operate with effective impunity both domestically and across borders, while the external actors most capable of conditioning that behavior have shown little inclination to do so. Meanwhile, the humanitarian collapse in Akobo and across Jonglei — IPC Phase 5 conditions, a 30-bed hospital absorbing a full pre-war week's caseload daily, and a water system reduced to eight functioning hand pumps for over 100,000 people — proceeds on a trajectory entirely disconnected from the diplomatic calendar being built around it. South Sudan ends June having set the most consequential date in its fifteen-year post-independence history, under conditions that make that date's credibility a live and deeply contested question.

¹⁸² UNESCO, “Shaping Future Peace: Press Freedom Conference in South Sudan Explores Media Security Cooperation,” June 2026.

¹⁸³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “UNHCR Ethiopia: South Sudan Emergency Gambella Sub-Office Factsheet, May 2026,” *ReliefWeb*, May 31, 2026.

¹⁸⁴ Sudans Post, “Over 120 SPLM-IO Members Join SPLM-IG in Koch, Cites Positive Leadership by Manytuil,” June 2026.

1.7 Kenya: Between Regional Ambition and Domestic Constraints

Kenya's June 2026 political story was fundamentally geopolitical. While domestic events such as protest commemorations, police response, court rulings, and online mobilisation dominated public debate, the deeper pattern was Kenya's effort to act as a regional middle power at a moment of global competition. Nairobi tried to position itself as a gateway to East Africa, an African diplomatic convener, a partner for Western investment, a continuing infrastructure partner for China, and a security actor in the Horn of Africa. This balancing strategy gave Kenya international relevance, but it also made domestic legitimacy more important. A state that wants to be trusted as a regional anchor must also convince its own citizens that foreign linked decisions are transparent and constitutional.

The clearest example of Kenya's African geopolitical ambition was President Ruto's visit to South Africa in early June. Kenya and South Africa signed six agreements covering trade, maritime cooperation, vocational training, gender equality, arts, heritage, and sport. More important than the agreements themselves was the language used by Ruto and President Cyril Ramaphosa. Both leaders framed the relationship as part of a broader effort to strengthen Africa's voice in a changing world order. This matters because Kenya was not simply pursuing bilateral trade¹⁸⁵. It was trying to build an African middle power axis with South Africa, linking commerce to continental influence and multilateral reform.

Kenya's European diplomacy followed the same logic. Ruto's June tour of Belgium, Norway, and Finland focused on trade, jobs, investment, maritime cooperation, sovereign wealth management, artificial intelligence, and innovation. The European Union also announced a deeper partnership with Kenya around trade, digital transformation, sustainable investment, clean transport, and connectivity for public institutions. This gave Kenya a way to present itself as both an economic gateway and a digital governance partner. The EU relationship¹⁸⁶ is especially important because Kenya wants market access, infrastructure support, and investment without appearing dependent on a single external power.

The United States relationship was more complicated. On one hand, Ruto said Kenya and the U.S. were close to a critical minerals deal that would require more processing inside Kenya. This is significant because critical minerals are now central to global competition over clean energy, defense technology, and supply chain security. Kenya's position was not simply to export raw materials, but to demand domestic value addition. Ruto also framed the future of the U.S. relationship around investment rather than aid, which fits a wider African argument that partnerships should be commercial and strategic, not paternalistic¹⁸⁷.

On the other hand, the U.S. backed Ebola quarantine facility in Laikipia became one of the most politically sensitive issues of the month. The proposed facility was reportedly

¹⁸⁵ Office of the President of Kenya, June 2026; European Commission, June 2026; Reuters, June 17 and June 24.

¹⁸⁶ Reuters, June 2 and June 23; Associated Press reporting on the Laikipia Ebola facility dispute, June 2026.

¹⁸⁷ Our Ocean Conference, Mombasa 2026; Kenya Ministry of Defence, June 2026; Associated Press, June 2026.

connected to Ebola preparedness for Americans exposed in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo or Uganda. Kenyan courts extended the suspension of the project, ordered disclosure of the agreement with Washington, and later the government halted construction after legal pressure¹⁸⁸. This controversy exposed a major weakness in Kenya's foreign policy process: even a health security project can look like foreign imposition if citizens believe it was negotiated secretly or imposed on local communities without consent.

China remained central to Kenya's infrastructure strategy. In late June, Kenya signed a roughly \$1.2 billion airport expansion deal with China Road and Bridge Corporation to expand Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The project is not only an airport story. It is part of Kenya's competition with Ethiopia, Rwanda, and other regional aviation hubs¹⁸⁹. By expanding JKIA, Kenya is trying to defend Nairobi's role as a transport and logistics center for East Africa. The deal also shows that, despite closer engagement with the U.S. and EU, China remains deeply embedded in Kenya's strategic infrastructure.

The China relationship also appeared in a more diplomatic form during the Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa. Taiwan said its delegates were barred from attending, and Kenya's foreign affairs officials defended the decision by referring to Kenya's recognition of the One China policy. This incident showed how China related sensitivities can shape even non military international gatherings. It also revealed the cost of Kenya's balancing strategy: working closely with China can produce diplomatic restrictions that affect other partners and international participants.

Kenya also used June to build influence through issue based diplomacy. Hosting the Our Ocean Conference from June 16 to 18¹⁹⁰ allowed Kenya to present itself as a leader in blue economy, maritime governance, climate diplomacy, and ocean protection. This was important because African states often argue that global environmental rules are written without enough African influence. Kenya used the conference to show that African coastal states can be agenda setters, not just recipients of climate policy. Similarly, Kenya's selection to host the Responsible AI in the Military Domain summit in 2027 showed that Nairobi wants to participate in rule making on emerging technologies and security. This is a newer form of geopolitics: influence does not come only from armies or trade, but also from hosting global conversations about future rules.¹⁹¹

In the Horn of Africa, Kenya's security role remained important, especially through Somalia. Kenyan Defence Forces continued operating under the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, particularly in the Jubaland and Kismayo theater. Kenya's long term objective remains to secure its northeastern frontier, contain al Shabaab threats,

¹⁸⁸ Reuters, June 25, 2026; Amnesty Kenya, June 2026; U.S. Embassy Kenya and UK Foreign Travel Advice.

¹⁸⁹ Reuters, "Kenya, China Road and Bridge Corporation Sign \$1.2 Billion Airport Expansion Deal," June 24.

¹⁹⁰ Our Ocean Conference official page, Mombasa 2026; Associated Press reporting on the Our Ocean Conference in Kenya, June 2026.

¹⁹¹ Kenya Ministry of Defence, "Kenya to Host Global Military AI Summit in 2027, a First for Africa," June 2026.

and maintain influence in southern Somalia. However, June also brought diplomatic friction when Kenya deported Somalia's second deputy prime minister over alleged passport fraud. This showed that Kenya Somalia relations remain a mix of security cooperation and political distrust¹⁹².

Regional health security also became geopolitical because of the Ebola outbreak in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo¹⁹³. Kenya intensified border screening, trained health workers, prepared rapid response teams, and coordinated with international health institutions. This was not only a public health matter. In East Africa, disease movement follows trade routes, borders, labor migration, and security networks. Kenya's response was therefore part of regional governance. But the Laikipia controversy showed that health security becomes politically dangerous when citizens suspect external pressure or secrecy.

Domestic politics placed serious pressure on Kenya's international image. Ruto's government announced a KSh 2 billion compensation framework for victims of protest related human rights abuses from 2017 to 2025. This was an attempt to acknowledge the legacy of state violence and repair public trust. But the June 25¹⁹⁴ memorial processions for victims of the 2024 protests showed that the issue remains unresolved. Police used force, roads were blocked, and hundreds were arrested during commemorations. Foreign governments, including the United States and the United Kingdom, issued security advisories around the protests. This damaged Kenya's image as a stable democratic partner and showed that domestic unrest can quickly become a geopolitical risk.

The judiciary emerged as an important check on the executive. Courts intervened in the Ebola facility dispute and required disclosure of the agreement with the United States. In another case, police fired tear gas and arrested protesters, including former Chief Justice David Maraga, during demonstrations against construction plans affecting Nairobi National Park¹⁹⁵. These events matter geopolitically because Kenya often markets itself internationally as a constitutional democracy with independent institutions. When courts check the executive, that strengthens the rule of law image.

The online political arena was one of the most important forces shaping June. Kenya's political conversation is now deeply platform driven. WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube, and X are not just spaces where people comment on politics; they are spaces where politics is organised. Ahead of the June 25 memorials, activists urged people to record police conduct, livestream events, and use hidden cameras. This shows how digital tools are used both for

¹⁹² Kenya Ministry of Defence reporting on KDF and AUSSOM activity in Somalia, June 2026; Reuters, "Kenya Deports Somalia's Second Deputy Prime Minister over Alleged Passport Fraud," June 26, 2026.

¹⁹³ World Health Organization, Ebola outbreak situation updates for DRC and Uganda, June 2026; Kenya Ministry of Health, June 2026 Ebola preparedness updates; WHO Africa regional bulletin, June 2026.

¹⁹⁴ Office of the President of Kenya, "Government Sets Aside KSh 2 Billion for Victims of Protest Related Rights Abuses," June 15, 2026.

¹⁹⁵ Reuters reporting on Nairobi National Park protest and arrest of former Chief Justice David Maraga, June 8, 2026; Reuters and AP reporting on court action over the Laikipia Ebola facility, June 2026.

mobilisation and protection. In Kenya's protest culture, the phone camera has become a political instrument¹⁹⁶.

The state also appeared to understand the power of online mobilisation. Amnesty Kenya condemned the arrest of activist Bob Njagi¹⁹⁷ after a social media video linked to protest mobilisation circulated. A separate petition challenged the blocking of Kenyans from official government social media accounts. These developments suggest that the struggle over public participation is moving into digital spaces. Official social media accounts are no longer just communication channels; they are becoming contested public forums where access, blocking, muting, and visibility carry constitutional meaning.

Kenya's wider cyber environment added another layer of risk. The Communications Authority of Kenya recorded more than 3.3 billion cyber threat events in the January to March 2026 quarter. Although not all of these were political, they show that Kenya's digital public sphere operates in a high threat environment¹⁹⁸. As politics becomes more dependent on digital platforms, cyber insecurity becomes a democratic and geopolitical issue, not only a technical one.

Overall, Kenya's June 2026 story was a story of ambition under pressure. Internationally, Kenya tried to act as a flexible, strategic, and influential state. It strengthened ties with South Africa, deepened cooperation with the EU, negotiated with the U.S. over critical minerals, continued infrastructure cooperation with China, asserted its One China position, hosted major ocean diplomacy, prepared for military AI rule making, and remained active in Somalia and regional health security. Domestically, however, the government faced protests, court constraints, public mistrust, online mobilisation, and misinformation.

The core conclusion is that Kenya's geopolitical strength depends on domestic legitimacy. Nairobi can attract attention from Washington, Brussels, Beijing, Pretoria, and multilateral institutions because it is strategically located, economically important, and diplomatically active. But if foreign linked projects are seen as secretive, if protest policing damages democratic credibility, and if online politics becomes dominated by fear and misinformation, Kenya's ability to act as a trusted regional anchor will weaken. June 2026 therefore revealed both Kenya's opportunity and its vulnerability: it is one of Africa's most important diplomatic hubs, but its external influence will only be sustainable if its internal politics remain constitutional, transparent, and publicly trusted.

¹⁹⁶ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, "Digital News Report 2026: Kenya"; Citizen Digital, "Activists Insist June 25 Protest to Go Ahead Despite Police Warning," June 2026.

¹⁹⁷ Amnesty Kenya, "Arrest of Bob Njagi Is an Attack on the Constitutional Right to Peaceful Assembly," June 2026; Citizen Digital, "Petition Filed to Stop Government from Blocking Kenyans on Official Social Media Accounts," June 2026.

¹⁹⁸ Communications Authority of Kenya, "Cyber Security Report Q3 2025 to 2026," published April 2026; Citizen Digital reporting on Kenya's cyber threat environment, June 2026.

Section Two: MENA Region, Gulf, and Global Engagement

2.1 Egypt: Diplomatic Strategy Amid Regional Crises and Domestic Constraints

June found Egypt inserted into nearly every active crisis in its neighborhood: Gaza, Lebanon, the Gulf, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa, while simultaneously running a parallel circuit of engagements with Seoul, Brussels, Beijing, and Moscow. This was a coherent strategy: with limited fiscal capacity to project power through capital, Cairo has instead made itself procedurally indispensable, positioning as convener, guarantor, or interlocutor in disputes it cannot resolve outright. Egypt's geography, spanning the Suez Canal, the Red Sea's western shore, the Sinai land bridge, and the Nile's lower basin, gives nearly every regional crisis a point of contact with Cairo, and June's diplomacy systematically exploited that overlap.

The file that could least afford neglect was Gaza, where Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty kept ceasefire talks alive throughout the month.¹⁹⁹ Two aligned motives drove this persistence: preventing a humanitarian collapse that could push displacement into Sinai, and protecting Egypt's position as the file's principal broker against rival mediators gaining ground with Washington or Gulf states. Holding this pen remains one of Egypt's few low-cost sources of leverage, which is exactly why Cairo guarded it even as regional attention increasingly pulled toward Iran.

On that front, Egypt pushed early for a swift U.S.-Iran agreement and positioned itself as venue rather than principal. Abdelatty hosted a recurring "R-4" quadrilateral track with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan, including a session that drew in an American adviser,²⁰⁰ followed by a summit aimed at building a synchronized Gaza-Iran crisis framework. When substantive negotiations shifted to Bürgenstock, Switzerland, producing a 60-day roadmap with de-escalation measures on maritime passage, Egypt's parallel Cairo-based track continued regardless, later welcoming the interim "Islamabad agreement" truce.²⁰¹ Washington and Tehran had stood down from a brief flare-up and resumed technical talks. Egypt needed no seat at Bürgenstock to benefit: a stabilized Gulf directly protects the Suez Canal transit revenue that Cairo's currency-starved economy cannot afford to lose.

That same revenue exposure carried over into Egypt's posture on the Lebanese border, where Cairo again worked the margins of a negotiation it did not lead. A new Washington round, the highest-level exchange since April, produced a framework for phased Israeli withdrawal, Lebanese Armed Forces deployment, and monitoring, backed by \$100 million in U.S. humanitarian aid and \$30 million in military support.²⁰² The deal exposed real division inside the U.S. administration, with Vice President Vance urging restraint even as Secretary of State Rubio defended the Israeli campaign before unveiling the framework himself.

¹⁹⁹ "Egypt Keeps Ceasefire Talks Alive in Gaza," SANA, June 2026.

²⁰⁰ "Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, US Hold Quadrilateral Talks on Regional Issues," SIS.gov.eg, June 2026.

²⁰¹ "US-Iran Talks: Islamabad MOU, 60-Day Roadmap from Bürgenstock, Switzerland," India Today, June 22, 2026.

²⁰² "Israel, Lebanon Sign US-Backed Framework Deal to End Hezbollah War," The Arab Weekly, June 2026.

On the ground it frayed almost immediately: Hezbollah's Naim Qassem rejected the arrangement as surrender, strikes hit towns outside the agreed zones the day it was signed, and Israeli forces destroyed a tunnel near Majdal Zoun on June 28 in an operation Hezbollah called a ceasefire breach of its own. Egypt was not brokering this file, but it weighed in publicly, backing the framework and invoking UN Resolution 1701, because a Lebanese front that reignites threatens the same shipping lanes and Suez revenues that every other crisis ultimately implicated.²⁰³

Sudan presented a more direct threat with far less international bandwidth devoted to it. Egypt pressed the UN Security Council over Rapid Support Forces advances into North Kordofan and the deteriorating situation around El Obeid, coordinating with American, Saudi, and Turkish counterparts,²⁰⁴ while Abdelatty met Sudan's foreign minister to work through consular arrangements for Sudanese nationals sheltering in Egypt.²⁰⁵ The stakes here were concrete rather than abstract: refugee flows the Egyptian economy cannot readily absorb, a Nile Basin water-rights position that depends on a functioning government in Khartoum, and a Red Sea corridor that a collapsed Sudanese state could leave open to armed groups.

Further south, that same Nile anxiety shaped a more assertive design against Ethiopia, one built on geography rather than negotiation. Egypt reaffirmed support for Somali sovereignty and built parallel outreach to Eritrea and Djibouti along the Red Sea littoral,²⁰⁶ less routine neighborliness than a deliberate perimeter. Unable to compel concessions from upstream Addis Ababa directly, Cairo has instead built leverage along Ethiopia's periphery, pursuing Nile policy by other means.

Egypt's western flank received a lighter but still deliberate touch: Sisi hosted his Algerian and Tunisian counterparts to align positions on Libya, joined condemnation of incursions at Al-Aqsa, and pressed incoming Arab League chief Nabil Fahmy for a more assertive League,²⁰⁷ all serving the same underlying purpose of guarding against instability while reasserting a claim to Arab leadership that Gulf capitals increasingly contest.

This same logic extended into Egypt's diplomacy with the major powers. A strategic dialogue with South Korea and contacts with Ghana and Togo opened channels for Asian investment. At the G7 in Évian, Sisi pressed for faster implementation of the American Gaza plan,²⁰⁸ drew explicit affirmation from EU Council President António Costa of Egypt's role as regional anchor,²⁰⁹ and met Trump.²¹⁰ Days later in Luxembourg, the EU-Egypt

²⁰³ "Egypt Weighs in on Lebanon Framework Deal," Arab News, June 2026.

²⁰⁴ "Egypt Pushes for Sudan Peace Talks as RSF Advances," The Sudan Times, June 2026.

²⁰⁵ "Egypt, Sudan Foreign Ministers Meet on Consular Issues," Sudan Tribune, June 2026.

²⁰⁶ "Egypt Reaffirms State Sovereignty, Rejects Parallel Entities in Horn of Africa," Egypt Today, June 2026.

²⁰⁷ "Egypt, Seven Arab and Islamic Nations Condemn Al-Aqsa Incursions," Ahram Online, June 2026.

²⁰⁸ "At G7, Sisi Calls on Israel to Abandon Plan to Control 70% of Gaza," The Arab Weekly, June 2026.

²⁰⁹ "Statement on Egypt's Regional Role," Consilium.europa.eu, June 16, 2026.

²¹⁰ "President El-Sisi Meets US President Trump on Sidelines of the G7 Summit in Évian, France," SIS.gov.eg, June 2026.

Association Council reaffirmed a strategic partnership on security, migration, and investment.²¹¹ Cairo balanced this Western engagement with outreach in the other direction, promoting an energy trade vision at the St. Petersburg forum even as Russian S-300VM air-defense systems completed a billion-dollar contract delivery in Alexandria,²¹² and hosting talks with China's Wang Yi marking seventy years of bilateral ties, with pledges toward deeper BRICS integration.²¹³ None of this diversification substitutes for Western and Gulf financing, but it gives Egypt a credible outside option and a hedge against any future interruption in American assistance.

All of this activity rested on a domestic economic base more fragile than the month's diplomatic momentum suggested. Cairo announced plans to ease investment bureaucracy and list up to four state-owned enterprises, cleared \$6.1 billion in arrears to foreign oil and gas firms, and posted record wheat procurement.²¹⁴ Inflation eased in May, though analysts expect the relief is temporary, and the debt-vulnerability language G7 leaders applied to developing economies in Évian applies with particular force to Egypt itself. A government that cannot finance its regional weight through its own balance sheet has instead financed it diplomatically.

Two realities sit beneath everything Egypt did this month, and neither can be understood without the other. The first is genuine anxiety over the Nile, the animating logic behind Cairo's outreach to Mogadishu, Asmara, and Djibouti: Egypt views Ethiopia's upstream water management as a slow-moving existential threat and has responded by building a security architecture around Ethiopia's edges rather than resolving the dispute at its center, since encirclement is the only leverage available to a downstream state that cannot compel its upstream neighbor directly. That anxiety is real, but it sits alongside an Ethiopian position that is not illegitimate on its own terms, and a strategy built on containment risks entrenching the very zero-sum dynamic Egypt says it fears.

The second reality is that this same month of hyperactive mediation across Gaza, Lebanon, the Gulf, and Sudan cannot be separated from that Nile anxiety or the economic fragility beneath it. Egypt lacks the fiscal weight to buy the influence its geography suggests it deserves, so it manufactures that influence procedurally instead, becoming the indispensable venue, voice, or channel in every crisis it can plausibly reach. The Horn containment strategy and the global diplomatic circuit are not separate files running in parallel; they are the same strategy, aimed in different directions, by a state that has concluded that being permanently necessary is worth more than any single dispute it might actually resolve.

²¹¹ "EU-Egypt Association Council, June 2026," Consilium.europa.eu, June 15, 2026.

²¹² "Russia Begins Delivering S-300VM Missiles to Egypt," DefenceWeb, June 2026.

²¹³ "Wang Yi in New Delhi: BRICS Should Take the Lead in Speaking Out for Justice," Socialist China, June 30, 2026.

²¹⁴ "Egypt Clears \$6.1 Billion in Arrears to Foreign Oil and Gas Firms," Business Front, June 2026.

2.2 Yemen: Negotiations, Economic Deterioration, and Entrenched Fragmentation

The Houthi Front As An Instrument Of Regional Deterrence

June demonstrated the extent to which the Houthis increasingly view the Yemeni theatre through a regional rather than purely domestic lens. Throughout the month, the movement repeatedly linked its military posture to the conflicts involving Israel, Iran, Gaza and Lebanon, portraying itself as an integral component of a broader axis of resistance while simultaneously signalling a willingness to calibrate its actions according to regional developments.

Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's declaration that the group was prepared for "any level of escalating conflict" was followed by the announcement of a renewed ban on Israeli shipping through the Red Sea and claims of missile attacks against Israel.²¹⁵ These statements coincided with heightened tensions arising from the Israel-Iran confrontation and reinforced the movement's effort to maintain the Yemen front as an active source of pressure against Israel and its partners. The practical impact of the shipping ban remained uncertain, yet even limited enforcement actions carry significant implications for maritime traffic and insurance costs along the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb corridor.

The group's messaging also displayed a notable expansion of its strategic horizons. Houthi threats to target any Israeli presence in Somaliland effectively extended the movement's declared security perimeter beyond Yemen itself and into the Horn of Africa.²¹⁶ By framing Israeli engagement in Somaliland as an attempt to project influence over the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, the Houthis demonstrated an increasingly sophisticated understanding of regional geopolitics and sought to establish themselves as stakeholders in the wider security order of the Red Sea basin.

Israeli reports that the military had updated operational plans for Yemen and was preparing for possible strikes against the Houthi leadership further underscored the enduring strategic significance of the Yemen front.²¹⁷ Yet despite its rhetoric and continued military signalling, the movement displayed considerable restraint during the month. The Houthis appear to be managing escalation carefully, preserving the capacity to threaten maritime and Israeli targets while avoiding actions that could trigger a full-scale regional confrontation. Their public statements therefore served multiple purposes simultaneously by reinforcing deterrence, maintaining solidarity with Iran and Palestine, and preserving their relevance within the broader regional contest without exhausting their military leverage.

²¹⁵ Diana Roy, "Another Hormuz? The Red Sea's Threat to the Global Economy," Council on Foreign Relations, June 24, 2026.

²¹⁶ Mohammed Sameai, "Yemen's Houthi Group Vows to Target Any Israeli Presence in Breakaway Somaliland," Anadolu Ajansı, June 26, 2026.

²¹⁷ "Israel Prepares to Resume Fighting on Yemen Front, Updates Plans Against Houthis," Middle East Monitor, June 25, 2026.

Political Stalemate And The Deepening Humanitarian Emergency

The month reinforced the paradox that has characterised Yemen since the 2022 truce. Large-scale fighting remains substantially below the levels witnessed during earlier phases of the conflict, yet the underlying drivers of instability continue to intensify.

United Nations officials warned that Yemen's humanitarian situation is deteriorating despite the relative containment of hostilities.²¹⁸ Nearly half of the population in government-controlled areas faces crisis-level food insecurity or worse, with approximately five million people already affected and conditions expected to worsen as humanitarian funding declines. The combination of economic collapse, weakened public services and reductions in international assistance is steadily eroding the coping capacity of vulnerable communities.

At the political level, the peace process remains effectively frozen. Assessments published during June suggested that negotiations have been reduced to crisis management measures and narrow confidence-building initiatives, while more substantive questions regarding governance, security arrangements and the future political order remain unresolved. Yemeni officials themselves reportedly acknowledged the absence of a functioning negotiating framework, highlighting the degree to which domestic diplomacy has been overtaken by wider regional developments.²¹⁹

The persistence of fragmentation was also evident in southern Yemen. Large demonstrations organised by supporters of the Southern Transitional Council in Aden, Mukalla and Seiyun reaffirmed demands for southern self-determination and an independent southern state.²²⁰ The rallies illustrated the movement's enduring mobilisational capacity and highlighted the significant constitutional and territorial questions that continue to complicate prospects for a national settlement. Any future political agreement will need to accommodate profoundly different visions regarding Yemen's state structure and territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, the continued detention of UN personnel and humanitarian workers by the Houthis underscores the operational challenges facing aid agencies and further constrains international efforts to address worsening humanitarian conditions.²²¹ The relative absence of major combat has therefore failed to produce meaningful political progress or economic recovery. Instead, Yemen appears increasingly trapped in a condition of suspended conflict characterised by chronic humanitarian deterioration and unresolved political fragmentation.

The Red Sea, Transnational Networks, And Yemen's Expanding Strategic Geography

June also highlighted the growing interconnection between Yemen's conflict and broader regional security dynamics extending across the Red Sea and into the Horn of Africa.

²¹⁸ Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, "Briefing by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, to the Security Council (16 June 2026)," June 16, 2026.

²¹⁹ The Arab Weekly, "UN Battles to Revive Peace Process amid Deepening Yemeni Fragmentation," June 10, 2026.

²²⁰ Agencies, "Amid Protests, Alliances Reshape the Crisis in Southern Yemen," Citizen Digital, June 12, 2026.

²²¹ Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Houthis Should Free UN, Civil Society Staff," news release, June 7, 2026.

Reports of cooperation between the Houthis and Somalia's al-Shabaab drew attention to the increasingly transnational character of militant networks operating around the Gulf of Aden and Bab el-Mandeb.²²² While assessments of expanding ties remain analytical interpretations rather than established findings, concerns regarding cooperation in smuggling, maritime logistics and drone capabilities reflect a wider recognition that the security challenges of Yemen and the Horn of Africa are becoming progressively intertwined.

The heavy clashes between government forces and Houthi fighters in Hodeidah further illustrated the fragility of Yemen's military equilibrium.²²³ Despite the relative durability of the truce, frontline violence remains capable of escalating rapidly, particularly when local dynamics intersect with broader regional tensions. Similarly, the reported missile launch toward Saudi Arabia served as a reminder that Yemen continues to possess the capacity to become a more active theatre in regional confrontations.

Diplomatic developments during the month also reflected the widening regional significance of Yemen. Talks between Yemen's internationally recognised government and Ethiopia underscored the strategic importance both sides attach to the security of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea corridor. For Ethiopia, developments in Yemen increasingly affect maritime security and regional stability on the African side of the Red Sea. For the Presidential Leadership Council, maintaining relations with neighbouring states has become an essential component of navigating an increasingly internationalised conflict environment.

Collectively, these developments indicate that Yemen is becoming progressively embedded within a broader geopolitical system that stretches from the Levant and the Gulf to the Horn of Africa. The country's internal conflict remains unresolved, yet its strategic significance increasingly derives from its location at the intersection of competing regional security architectures, maritime routes and transnational networks. Within this environment, the Houthis have demonstrated a growing capacity to operate as deliberate regional actors, carefully managing escalation while leveraging Yemen's geography to preserve and expand their strategic influence.

2.3 Israel-Iran war

June traced an arc from open, multi-front warfare toward a negotiated but incomplete settlement, and the month's defining feature was the persistent gap between diplomatic announcements and conditions on the ground. The war began the month still expanding geographically. Iranian drones struck Kuwait's main airport in the first week, killing one person and injuring dozens,²²⁴ a strike that pulled Gulf infrastructure and civilians directly

²²² Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Expanding Al Shabaab–Houthi Ties Escalate Security Threats to Red Sea Region," May 28, 2025.

²²³ Mohammed Sameai, "Heavy Fighting Erupts Between Yemeni Government Forces, Houthis in Hodeidah," Anadolu Agency, June 9, 2026.

²²⁴ Rania Abushamala, "Kuwait International Airport Hit by Iranian Drones, Causing Injuries, 'Significant' Damage," Anadolu Agency, June 3, 2026.

into a conflict that had previously centered on direct Israeli-Iranian exchanges and the Lebanese front. That widening was accompanied by a sharp rise in oil prices and increased American military activity near the Strait of Hormuz, establishing energy security as one of the conflict's central stakes rather than a secondary consequence of it. By the close of the first week, direct Israeli strikes on targets in western and central Iran followed Iranian missile fire, a missile launch from Yemen²²⁵ extended the conflict's footprint further, and oil prices moved above ninety-six dollars a barrel.

The Lebanon front functioned throughout the month as the mechanism through which the wider war kept reigniting even as broader diplomacy advanced. Israel continued striking southern Lebanon in the first week despite a request from Donald Trump that it avoid hitting Beirut, illustrating the limits of American restraint when weighed against Israeli deterrence calculations shaped by continued Hezbollah fire. A Lebanon ceasefire attempt collapsed early when Hezbollah rejected its terms and Israel declined to commit to troop withdrawal,²²⁶ a structural weakness that persisted for the remainder of the month. Even after Israel struck Hezbollah targets in Beirut's southern suburbs and Iran's negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf warned that American bases and Israeli assets could become legitimate targets,²²⁷ the pattern held, in which military pressure in Lebanon repeatedly threatened to unravel diplomatic progress achieved elsewhere.

Diplomacy nonetheless advanced, moving through recognizable stages across the month. An IAEA report, the agency's first since February, found limited overall change and left unresolved questions about access to bombed sites and the accounting of enriched uranium stockpiles, a gap that made the nuclear file more politically fraught rather than settled by military action. Washington subsequently pushed a draft IAEA resolution demanding Iranian transparency, while frozen assets and sanctions relief became bargaining chips in their own right, with Trump declining to unfreeze funds ahead of a final deal and Iran rejecting proposals to use its frozen assets to compensate American allies.²²⁸ These financial disputes culminated by mid-month in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran, extending the ceasefire and establishing a process toward a more durable settlement.²²⁹ The agreement carried immediate economic content, including a waiver permitting Iran to resume oil sales and a commitment to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, both designed to stabilize global energy markets that had been rattled by the preceding weeks of conflict.

The durability of that agreement was tested almost immediately. Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz again after renewed Israeli strikes in Lebanon, causing shipping traffic through the

²²⁵ "The Latest: Israel Launches Airstrikes on Central and Western Iran After Iranian Missiles Fired," 13News Now, June 7, 2026.

²²⁶ "Hezbollah Rejects US-Brokered Israel-Lebanon Deal," RTÉ, June 27, 2026.

²²⁷ "Iran's Top Negotiator Threatens U.S. Targets Over Lebanon Escalation," The Hindu, June 8, 2026.

²²⁸ "IAEA board passes resolution demanding Iran report uranium stocks," Arab News, June 11, 2026

²²⁹ "US-Iran War: Text of the Memorandum of Understanding," CNN, June 17, 2026.

waterway to fall sharply, before both governments agreed on June 28 to halt offensive strikes and resume technical talks on securing the passage. Mediators in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, where Iranian negotiators met alongside Vice President JD Vance, produced a sixty-day roadmap and a communications mechanism intended to keep maritime traffic moving even amid continued tension elsewhere.²³⁰ The sequence across the month showed diplomacy consistently arriving just behind military escalation rather than preventing it outright.

Domestic politics in both countries shaped the pace and credibility of the settlement. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed he would seek reelection in the vote due by October,²³¹ a decision that raised the stakes attached to every subsequent military and diplomatic choice. The interim deal with Iran drew criticism across the Israeli political spectrum, treated by figures on the left, right and center as a setback for national security rather than a diplomatic achievement, and that backlash fed into broader public scrutiny of Netanyahu's wartime leadership and his handling of the relationship with Washington.

Netanyahu responded by insisting Israel would continue operating against Iran's nuclear program regardless of any agreement,²³² a position reinforced when Israel published a map expanding its military control zone in southern Lebanon and pursued talks with Washington over maintaining a security strip roughly ten kilometers deep. Defense Minister Israel Katz went further, ordering troops to prepare for an extended presence and stating they retained authority to act against any perceived threat,²³³ a posture that placed operational discretion above the letter of the ceasefire.

Inside Iran, the war left the leadership managing a population strained by economic damage and rising expectations for relief. President Masoud Pezeshkian framed restoring access to frozen assets as the immediate priority, presenting the agreement as a foundation for economic recovery rather than a concession,²³⁴ while hardliners pressed for rearmament on the grounds that a pause in fighting should not be mistaken for lasting security. Reporting throughout the month suggested that any economic relief would flow first toward reconstruction and bank liquidity, with a portion of restored funds expected to strengthen Hezbollah's finances, a development that complicated Israel's calculations in Lebanon even as it eased pressure on Tehran.

International responses reflected similar ambivalence. European foreign ministers failed to agree on sanctions against Itamar Ben-Gvir²³⁵ despite pressure from several capitals, exposing continued difficulty translating criticism of Israeli conduct into collective action, while divisions surfaced within the American administration itself, with Vice President Vance urging restraint from the United Arab Emirates even as Secretary of State Marco

²³⁰ "US, Iran Agree on Roadmap Towards Final Deal in Switzerland Talks," Al Jazeera, June 22, 2026.

²³¹ "Netanyahu Plans Broad National Govt After Israel Vote, Lebanon Agreement," The Hindu, 2026.

²³² "Netanyahu: With or Without an Agreement, Iran Will Not Have a Nuclear Weapon," i24NEWS, 2026.

²³³ "Israeli Army Prepares for Extended Stay in Southern Lebanon: Defense Minister," Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²³⁴ Xinhua, "Iran's President Says 6-Bln-USD Frozen Funds in Qatar to Be Released," Xinhua, June 29, 2026.

²³⁵ "EU Fails to Agree on Sanctions for Far-Right Israeli Minister Ben-Gvir," Al Jazeera, June 15, 2026.

Rubio defended Israel's campaign from Switzerland before unveiling a formal withdrawal framework in Washington.²³⁶

That framework, built around a phased Israeli pullback, Lebanese Army deployment through designated pilot zones, and a military coordination group, drew immediate rejection from Hezbollah's Naim Qassem, who characterized it as surrender, and from Amal Speaker Nabih Berri, while Israeli strikes on Markaba and Nabatieh al-Fawqa and the destruction of a two-hundred-meter tunnel in Majdal Zoun days after the framework's signing demonstrated how readily military action continued to outpace diplomatic text.²³⁷ By month's end, the longest lull in the Lebanon conflict was holding in broad terms, but the underlying structure, in which each side treated restraint as conditional and reversible, left the settlement exposed to renewed disruption in the weeks ahead.

2.4 Türkiye: Balancing Regional Opportunity and Domestic Pressure

Turkey spent June positioning itself as an indispensable node across simultaneous crises while managing acute pressure at home, and the month's central tension lay between Ankara's expanding external influence and the narrowing space for domestic dissent, particularly as preparations intensified for the NATO summit it is set to host. Erdoğan's framing of attacks on Syria and Lebanon as threats to Turkish security itself²³⁸ signaled an effort to widen Ankara's strategic perimeter, embedding Turkey more deeply into the Israel-Iran-Lebanon crisis even as it sought to shape the summit as a venue for demonstrating alliance unity, with Donald Trump's planned attendance underscoring its significance.

Economic exposure to the regional conflict shaped monetary policy throughout the month. The central bank held its policy rate at 37 percent for a third consecutive meeting,²³⁹ a decision reflecting elevated energy prices and inflation that remained above 32 percent in May. That caution illustrated Turkey's vulnerability as a major energy importer, where external conflict quickly becomes a domestic monetary problem, interrupting an anticipated easing cycle and forcing policymakers into a defensive posture pending clearer signals about how far the regional energy shock would extend.

Domestic political turbulence deepened in parallel. The main opposition CHP faced an intensifying leadership crisis after a court annulled its 2023 congress and reinstated Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, prompting rival leader Özgür Özel's team to resign from the party assembly and force an extraordinary vote.²⁴⁰ That organizational struggle unfolded at a moment when Ankara faced simultaneous regional shocks, a combination that tends to favor the governing party by leaving the opposition without a coherent alternative voice.

²³⁶ Gram Slattery, "Vance, Rubio Strike Different Tone on Iran and Israel," Reuters, June 26, 2026.

²³⁷ "Powerful Blast Heard Across Northern Israel as IDF Destroys Hezbollah's 'Drone Fortress' in Lebanon," Ynetnews, June 28, 2026.

²³⁸ "Turkish President: Israeli Attacks on Syria and Lebanon Pose Direct Threat to Türkiye," QNA, June 10, 2026.

²³⁹ Elias Al Helou, "Türkiye Central Bank Keeps Interest Rate at 37 Percent for Third Straight Meeting as Inflation Pressures Persist," Economy Middle East, June 11, 2026.

²⁴⁰ "Ousted Turkish Opposition Leader's Team Resigns to Trigger Chairman Vote," Reuters, June 11, 2026.

Turkey pursued economic diversification alongside these pressures. Exploratory free-trade talks launched with Canada placed energy cooperation, including renewable and nuclear technology, near the center of discussion, reflecting an effort to build external buffers against regional instability.²⁴¹ Ankara's proposal, as host of the upcoming COP31 summit, for a voluntary target of 35 percent global electricity demand by 2035 carried similar strategic logic, positioning electrification as a hedge against volatile fossil fuel markets while burnishing Turkey's credentials as a convening power on energy transition.

Turkey's regional diplomacy extended along several tracks at once. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan warned Russia's Sergei Lavrov against steps threatening Black Sea security,²⁴² a caution given added weight when a drone attack struck a Panama-flagged vessel in the Black Sea days later, killing one crew member. Ankara simultaneously pressed Iraq over the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline arrangement, using the agreement's approaching expiry as leverage amid wider concern about Hormuz-linked supply risk.²⁴³ Fidan also joined Egyptian and Saudi counterparts, along with US adviser Massad Boulos, in Cairo talks on Libya and regional security, producing a four-way statement with Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that welcomed the US-Iran memorandum of understanding,²⁴⁴ embedding Turkey within the same mediating architecture Cairo was assembling.

Relations with Washington showed signs of easing on several fronts. A US judge formally dismissed the long-running Halkbank prosecution following an agreement with the Trump administration, removing a persistent irritant tied to Iran sanctions without any admission of wrongdoing.²⁴⁵ The disclosed sale of General Electric jet engines for Turkey's indigenous KAAAN fighter program,²⁴⁶ alongside Trump's stated plan to visit Turkey later in 2026, reinforced a more cooperative bilateral tone ahead of the Ankara summit, even as Turkey's defense export ambitions advanced through Italy's conditional approval of the Leonardo-Baykar drone joint venture, linking Turkish unmanned systems production more closely to European defense industry.

These external gains sat uneasily alongside developments that drew international criticism over civil liberties. Security forces detained 209 people in a sweeping anti-terror operation ahead of the NATO summit and imposed a thirteen-day ban on public gatherings near the venue, measures authorities described as necessary but which opposition figures characterized as pretextual.

Financial credibility concerns added a further complication. MSCI issued a formal warning about transparency and coordinated trading practices in Turkish equity markets, cautioning

²⁴¹ "Turkey, Canada Agree to Launch Exploratory Talks on Free Trade, Statement Says," Yahoo Finance (Canada), June 9, 2026.

²⁴² "Turkey Told Russia to Avoid Steps Threatening Security, Interests in Black Sea," Reuters, June 16, 2026.

²⁴³ "Turkey Opposes Iraq Pipeline Deal Extension Under Current Conditions, Official Says," Reuters, June 16, 2026.

²⁴⁴ "Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey FMs and US Adviser Discuss Iran Deal, Regional Crises," Ahram Online, June 21, 2026.

²⁴⁵ "Judge to Weigh US Deal to End Halkbank Prosecution," Reuters, June 17, 2026.

²⁴⁶ "Trump's Turkey Arms Sale Proposal Sparks Congressional Questions Before NATO Summit," Fox News, 2026.

that continued failure to implement credible reforms could trigger a formal review and possible reclassification by November 2026,²⁴⁷ a warning that carries direct consequences for foreign capital inflows Ankara is counting on to support its broader economic diversification. Separately, the European Union criticized Turkey's exclusion of the Republic of Cyprus from preparatory meetings for the COP31 climate conference in Antalya,²⁴⁸ a dispute rooted in Ankara's recognition of the northern Turkish Cypriot administration that risks complicating Turkey's broader climate leadership ambitions.

Taken together, June showed Turkey converting regional instability into diplomatic and industrial opportunity while facing mounting scrutiny over the domestic costs of that strategy, a pattern likely to persist as the NATO summit approaches and Ankara continues balancing its roles as alliance host, regional mediator and increasingly contested domestic political environment.

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

June 2026 was defined by an accelerating Gulf-wide effort to institutionalise de-escalation with Iran while simultaneously hedging against the possibility that the emerging regional order could prove fragile and reversible. The implementation of the understanding between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear programme and missile activities created an opening for diplomacy, but it also exposed persistent anxieties among Gulf states regarding the credibility of American security guarantees and the long-term balance of power in the region. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other GCC members increasingly pursued a dual-track approach that combined support for diplomacy with investments in autonomous security arrangements, diversified partnerships, and direct engagement with Tehran. Maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz emerged as the central strategic concern of the month, driving diplomatic coordination with the United States and shaping regional responses to renewed Iranian missile and drone attacks against Bahrain and Kuwait. At the same time, Gulf states continued advancing broader economic and geopolitical ambitions through new connectivity initiatives and an expanding strategic presence in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa, underscoring a growing determination to shape regional affairs through diplomacy, infrastructure, and economic statecraft rather than through confrontation alone.

Gulf-Iran De-escalation and the Search for a New Regional Order

Throughout June, Gulf states demonstrated a strong preference for preserving and institutionalising the de-escalatory momentum that has increasingly characterised regional politics since the Saudi-Iran rapprochement of 2023. Saudi Arabia welcomed the final stages of negotiations between the United States and Iran²⁴⁹ and repeatedly framed dialogue as the

²⁴⁷ "MSCI Sets November Test for Istanbul Stock Exchange Reforms," *Türkiye Today*, 2026.

²⁴⁸ "Why Is the EU Warning Turkey Over Cyprus Before COP31?," *Modern Diplomacy*, June 26, 2026.

²⁴⁹ Saudi Press Agency, "Saudi Arabia Welcomes Agreement Between United States and Iran to End Military Operations," press release, June 15, 2026.

most effective means of preserving regional stability. Riyadh's diplomatic activity culminated in discussions surrounding a proposed summit that would bring together Gulf states, Iran, and other regional actors to discuss post-war reconciliation and mechanisms for enhanced regional cooperation.²⁵⁰

The initiative reflects a broader Saudi effort to position itself as a convening power capable of mediating between rival regional blocs while reducing the likelihood of renewed confrontation in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia's bilateral dialogue with Tehran also remained active, with Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan maintaining direct contact with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi to discuss both the U.S.-Iran negotiations and the broader regional environment.²⁵¹

The UAE similarly demonstrated its preference for engagement and dialogue. Reports that Abu Dhabi had agreed to release frozen Iranian assets²⁵² as part of a broader de-escalation arrangement were categorically denied by Emirati authorities. Nevertheless, the episode highlighted the extent to which Gulf capitals have become active participants in efforts to stabilise relations with Tehran. The direct conversation between Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed and Abbas Araghchi²⁵³ represented one of the highest-level public contacts between the two states since the recent conflict and reinforced the UAE's preference for pragmatic engagement with Iran despite persistent security concerns.²⁵⁴

Yet the pursuit of de-escalation has unfolded alongside growing unease that Iran may have emerged from recent tensions in a stronger strategic position than many Gulf governments anticipated. Regional diplomats and analysts increasingly questioned the durability of American security guarantees²⁵⁵ and expressed concern that a U.S.-Iran accommodation could fail to adequately address Iran's missile capabilities and regional networks of influence.²⁵⁶ These concerns have encouraged Gulf states to maintain dialogue with Tehran while simultaneously pursuing greater strategic autonomy.

Maritime Security and the Strait of Hormuz

The security of the Strait of Hormuz emerged as the principal strategic issue confronting Gulf states during June. The prospect of renewed disruption to one of the world's most important energy and trade corridors generated significant diplomatic activity and reinforced

²⁵⁰ 8AM Media, "New Gulf Clashes: Saudi Arabia Calls for De-escalation of Tensions," June 11, 2026.

²⁵¹ Rania Abushamala, "Iranian, Saudi Foreign Ministers Discuss US Negotiations, Regional Developments," Anadolu Agency, June 24, 2026.

²⁵² Al Jazeera Staff and Reuters, "UAE to Unlock Frozen Iranian Funds amid US Ceasefire Push: Sources," Al Jazeera, June 12, 2026.

²⁵³ Rania Abushamala, "UAE Foreign Minister Holds 1st Publicly Announced Call with Iranian Counterpart Since Outbreak of War," Anadolu Agency, June 26, 2026.

²⁵⁴ "Sheikh Abdullah Receives Call from Iran's Foreign Minister," The National, June 26, 2026.

²⁵⁵ Samia Nakhoul, "US-Iran Deal Redraws the Middle East: Iran Gains, Rivals Alarmed," Reuters, June 18, 2026, updated June 19, 2026.

²⁵⁶ Politics Today, "Gulf States Reassess Security Strategy as US-Iran Agreement Raises Regional Concerns," Politics Today, June 26, 2026.

longstanding concerns regarding the vulnerability of Gulf economies to regional instability.

The joint GCC-United States ministerial meeting in Bahrain²⁵⁷ became an important forum for addressing these concerns. Discussions focused heavily on freedom of navigation, the implementation of understandings with Iran, and mechanisms to prevent escalation in the Gulf. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's subsequent engagements with Gulf partners were similarly designed to reassure regional governments that any accommodation with Tehran would not come at the expense of Gulf security interests.²⁵⁸

For the UAE, whose economy is deeply integrated into global trade, logistics, ports, and energy markets, the security of maritime routes carries particularly acute importance. Renewed tensions surrounding Hormuz generated concerns over shipping costs, insurance premiums, and investor confidence.²⁵⁹ Abu Dhabi therefore attached considerable importance to direct communication with Tehran and to preserving a stable maritime environment.²⁶⁰

Saudi Arabia also emphasised the centrality of maritime security to regional stability. Discussions between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and French President Emmanuel Macron²⁶¹ focused heavily on securing freedom of navigation and supporting diplomatic initiatives to reduce tensions in the Gulf.²⁶² Riyadh's repeated calls for dialogue and de-escalation reflected an appreciation that sustained instability in Hormuz would directly threaten the economic foundations of Vision 2030 and the kingdom's broader diversification agenda.

The renewed Iranian missile and drone attacks against Bahrain and Kuwait²⁶³ toward the end of the month underscored the fragility of the regional security environment. Both Saudi Arabia²⁶⁴ and the UAE issued strong condemnations and warned against actions that could undermine the ceasefire framework and destabilise the Gulf.²⁶⁵ The incidents served as a reminder that despite the current emphasis on diplomacy, the structural drivers of insecurity in the region remain unresolved.

Strategic Autonomy and the Recalibration of External Partnerships

June also highlighted an increasingly important feature of Gulf politics, namely the pursuit of strategic autonomy within a still predominantly American-led security order.

²⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, "Minister Participates in Meeting between GCC and U.S.," June 25, 2026.

²⁵⁸ Agence France-Presse (AFP), "US Promises to Protect Gulf States' Interests in Iran Talks," June 24, 2026.

²⁵⁹ Doron Peskin, "UAE Reopens Trade with Iran While Racing to Bypass Hormuz," CTech by Calcalist, June 23.

²⁶⁰ Muflih Hidayat, "Strait of Hormuz Reopening Following the 2026 US-Iran Peace Deal," Discover Alert, June 15, 2026.

²⁶¹ Al Arabiya English, "MBS, Macron Discuss US-Iran Memorandum, Regional Security," June 28, 2026.

²⁶² Arab News, "Saudi Crown Prince, Macron Emphasize Importance of Freedom of Navigation During Call," June 28, 2026.

²⁶³ Associated Press and Inzamam Rashid, "Renewed Iranian Attacks Following U.S. Strikes Threaten to Halt Talks," MS NOW, June 28, 2026.

²⁶⁴ Iran International, "Saudi Arabia Condemns Iranian Attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain," June 28, 2026.

²⁶⁵ Elizabeth Melimopoulos, "Iran War Day 121: Iran Attacks Bahrain, Kuwait as U.S. Strikes Near Hormuz," Al Jazeera, June 28, 2026.

While Gulf governments continue to regard the United States as an indispensable security partner, confidence in Washington's willingness and ability to guarantee regional security has become increasingly conditional.²⁶⁶ This uncertainty has encouraged Gulf states to pursue more diversified diplomatic and security relationships while avoiding excessive dependence on any single external actor.

The UAE's foreign policy illustrates this trend particularly clearly. Abu Dhabi has preserved its relationship with Israel under the Abraham Accords while reducing its public profile amid regional sensitivities surrounding Gaza.²⁶⁷ Simultaneously, it has maintained channels with Iran, strengthened defence cooperation with South Korea,²⁶⁸ India, and France, and expanded its role as a mediator in conflicts ranging from Ukraine to Sudan.

Saudi Arabia has pursued a similarly diversified approach. Negotiations with Washington over a defence treaty and civilian nuclear cooperation remain important, yet Riyadh has simultaneously deepened engagement with China,²⁶⁹ expanded dialogue with Iran, and strengthened regional diplomatic initiatives independent of American mediation.

Qatar also continued to leverage its unique diplomatic position through mediation efforts involving Hamas, the Taliban,²⁷⁰ and Ukraine while maintaining strong security relations with the United States through Al-Udeid Air Base.²⁷¹ Doha's diplomacy reflects a broader Gulf trend in which regional states increasingly seek influence through mediation, dialogue, and diplomatic flexibility rather than rigid alliance structures.

Collectively, these developments suggest that Gulf states increasingly perceive regional stability as requiring a more pluralistic security architecture in which regional actors assume greater responsibility for managing crises and balancing external powers.

Connectivity and the Gulf's Expanding Red Sea Strategy

The month also highlighted the growing interconnection between Gulf security and the wider Red Sea and Horn of Africa region. Increasingly, Gulf government's view developments along the Red Sea corridor as integral to their own economic and strategic interests.

The railway agreement signed between Saudi Arabia and Turkey,²⁷² with plans for eventual extension toward Oman, illustrates this emerging strategic logic. The project is intended to provide an alternative trade route that reduces dependence on vulnerable maritime

²⁶⁶ Trinidad Deiros Bronte and Ignacio Fariza, "Iran War Strains the Gulf States' Strategic Relationship with the United States," *El País*, June 27, 2026.

²⁶⁷ Nava Freiberg, "Iran War Fallout Puts UAE on Tightrope between Jerusalem and Tehran," *The Times of Israel*, June 28, 2026.

²⁶⁸ Jeremy Binnie, "Third M-SAM II Reportedly Arrives in UAE," *Janes*, June 12, 2026.

²⁶⁹ WION, "Saudi Rebalances Strategic Partnerships Beyond US," YouTube video, June 27, 2026.

²⁷⁰ Afghanistan International, "Qatar Hosts UN-Taliban Talks on Afghanistan's International Engagement," June 23, 2026.

²⁷¹ Aya Batrawy, "Trump Says the U.S. and Iran Will Meet in Qatar After Weekend Attacks," *NPR*, June 29, 2026, updated June 29, 2026.

²⁷² *Turkish Minute*, "Turkey, Saudi Arabia Sign Logistics and Railway Cooperation Agreements," June 9, 2026.

chokepoints while deepening regional economic integration. It also reflects a wider regional search for resilient connectivity networks amid persistent concerns regarding disruptions in the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE continued to expand their influence in the Horn of Africa through a combination of investment, humanitarian engagement, mediation, and security cooperation. Saudi engagement remained heavily focused on Sudan, maritime security, and agricultural investments designed to support long-term food security. The UAE similarly expanded its strategic footprint through maritime facilities, mediation efforts, and economic partnerships, including its deepening relationship with Ethiopia.

Qatar maintained a more humanitarian and mediation-oriented approach, sustaining assistance to Sudanese refugees and drought-affected communities while exploring opportunities to revive dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland.

These activities reflect an increasingly sophisticated Gulf approach toward the Red Sea basin in which economic investment, logistics networks, and diplomatic engagement are employed to shape the regional environment and secure critical trade corridors. The Gulf's strategic horizon now extends well beyond the Arabian Peninsula, encompassing a broader geopolitical space linking the Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Horn of Africa.

Conclusion

June demonstrated that Gulf states increasingly favour a regional order built on managed competition, de-escalation, and strategic diversification. Yet this preference coexists with deep uncertainty regarding the future trajectory of Iran's regional role and the reliability of external security guarantees.

The defining characteristic of the month was therefore a growing effort to build regional resilience in an environment where confrontation remains possible but increasingly undesirable. Gulf states are seeking to reduce their exposure to regional shocks through diplomacy, economic integration, and diversified partnerships while simultaneously preparing for the possibility that the current period of de-escalation may prove temporary.

Section Three: Regional and International Organizations

June 2026 was a month of heightened diplomatic activity and deepening concern across the Horn of Africa, with Somalia's political and security trajectory dominating the agenda of multiple multilateral bodies. Across all organizations, the month underscored persistent challenges of mission financing, institutional capacity constraints, and the complex interplay of political, security, and humanitarian crises in the region

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations engaged intensively on Somalia throughout June, with the Security Council convening a closed-door meeting on the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia.²⁷³ The session featured briefings from Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative for Somalia and Officer in Charge of the UN Transition Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), and Ambassador El-Hadji Ibrahima Diene, Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia and Head of AUSSOM. The meeting was preceded by procedural tensions when Somalia raised objections to including a UNTMIS briefer, arguing that discussions should focus exclusively on AUSSOM and its operational challenges, particularly persistent funding shortfalls and support from the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). Somalia's position was supported by fellow A3 members, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. Colombia, holding the Council presidency, retained Zenenga as a briefer, citing precedents and the necessity of presenting the Secretary-General's report submitted under resolution 2809.

The Secretary-General's report painted a sobering assessment of the transition process, warning that UNTMIS's transition is taking place amid growing political divisions in Somalia and severe funding constraints. UNSOS is confronting a substantial shortfall of \$130 million, which has already compelled cost-cutting measures including the reduction of aviation assets, delays in helicopter deployments, and limitations on infrastructure repairs to only essential needs. The report cautioned that without additional funding, some activities may need to be scaled back or terminated entirely. Ambassador Diene briefed on AUSSOM's operational activities, noting that the mission maintains deployments across 49 locations and continues to support Somali-led operations against Al-Shabaab. However, a joint assessment indicated that Al-Shabaab still retains the capacity to carry out asymmetric attacks, and the report called for accelerated force generation, a benchmark-based framework for transferring security responsibilities to Somali forces, and the establishment of a joint monitoring mechanism.

AUSSOM's long-term financing emerged as the central concern during the Council's deliberations. For the current year, the mission faces a funding gap of approximately \$38.5

²⁷³ Security Council Report. "Somalia: Private Meeting on AUSSOM." June 2026.

million out of a total budget of \$154.7 million.²⁷⁴ Council members remain deeply divided on how to address this structural problem. The United States firmly opposes the use of UN-assessed contributions under resolution 2719, while Somalia and several other members support such a mechanism.²⁷⁵ The European Union called for broader burden-sharing, and China urged traditional donors to increase their contributions. Several Council members warned that without a clear and sustainable financing arrangement, AUSSOM's effectiveness could be undermined, potentially creating a security vacuum and reversing hard-won gains against Al-Shabaab. The discussions also touched on Somalia's escalating political divisions over constitutional amendments and extended mandates, which have fueled armed clashes in Mogadishu. Council members were expected to urge all parties to return to dialogue and agree on an electoral roadmap. The meeting concluded with a shared recognition that AUSSOM is stretched thin, cash-strapped, and operating in an increasingly volatile political environment, and that without a sustainable financing plan, the fragile stability Somalia has fought to build could begin to unravel.

The UN continued to monitor developments in Somalia closely throughout the month, including political tensions and clashes reported in Mogadishu, while supporting dialogue, humanitarian efforts, and AUSSOM coordination.²⁷⁶ The broader partnership between the UN, AU, and AUSSOM remained active, with ongoing collaboration on security transition benchmarks and logistical support to advance Somalia's stabilization efforts.

Beyond Somalia, the Security Council expressed alarm over developments in Sudan, specifically warning of the risk of mass atrocities in El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state.²⁷⁷ The Council cited reports of substantial military reinforcements by the Rapid Support Forces around the city and demanded an immediate halt to the assault, warning that a potential ground offensive could lead to mass atrocities. Council members voiced deep concern over continued violence across Sudan, where the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF have been at war since mid-April 2023, and pointed to escalating fighting in the Kordofan states that risks worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. The Council called on all parties to comply with their obligations under international law and the Jeddah Declaration, which upholds commitments to facilitate safe humanitarian aid delivery and protect civilians. Members also raised concern over reports of RSF drone strikes in El Obeid and an increase in drone attacks across Sudan, calling for all abuses and violations to be investigated and for those responsible to be held accountable. The Council urged all UN Member States to refrain from external interference that could fuel conflict and instability, reaffirmed its commitment to Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reiterated its rejection of any parallel governing authority in areas controlled by the RSF.

²⁷⁴ UN Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*. UN Doc. S/2026/[insert document number], June 2026.

²⁷⁵ Security Council Report. "Somalia: Private Meeting on AUSSOM.", June 2026.

²⁷⁶ United Nations. "Title of Press Release or Article." *UN News*, June 2026.

²⁷⁷ United Nations. "Security Council Warns of Mass Atrocity Risk in Sudan's El Obeid." *UN News*, June 2026.

In a notable appointment, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Mohamed Yahya of Somalia as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).²⁷⁸ Mr. Yahya succeeded Joyce Msuya of Tanzania, who was thanked for her dedicated service to the humanitarian cause. He brings over two decades of experience in development, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding across Africa and South Asia, gained at headquarters, regional, and field levels. At the time of his appointment, he was serving as UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, where he led one of the largest UN presences in Asia and the Pacific and coordinated the UN's response to the 2025 floods. Prior to his assignment in Pakistan, he served as UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria, leading one of UNDP's largest country offices, and previously coordinated UNDP's Africa Regional Programme, working with the African Union on conflict prevention and stabilization across the continent. His earlier roles included work in West Africa and Afghanistan with the UN and International Alert. Mr. Yahya holds degrees from SOAS University of London and speaks Swahili, English, and Somali, reflecting his Somali heritage and upbringing in Kenya.

African Union (AU)

The African Union's engagement in June was shaped by urgent security concerns in Somalia, the observation of Ethiopia's elections, institutional reform priorities, and continued collaboration with regional and international partners.

The African Union Commission expressed deep concern early in the month from its headquarters in Addis Ababa over recent security developments in Mogadishu, including armed clashes in civilian areas.²⁷⁹ The Commission called on all parties to immediately stop the fighting, exercise maximum restraint, protect civilians, and refrain from actions that could further escalate tensions. This appeal followed rising political friction in Somalia marked by armed confrontations in the national capital, and the AU urged all Somali stakeholders to resolve their differences through dialogue and established constitutional processes rather than through force. The Commission further encouraged the continuation of efforts by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and other political actors to promote national dialogue, reconciliation, and consensus-building to ensure long-term stability, while stating that it would continue to monitor the situation on the ground closely. The AU reiterated the readiness of its Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia to continue to render full support towards the restoration of peace and security in the Horn of Africa nation.²⁸⁰

The AU collaborated with IGAD on election observation in Ethiopia, issuing a joint media

²⁷⁸ United Nations. "Secretary-General Appoints Mohamed Yahya of Somalia as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator." Press Release, 26 June 2026.

²⁷⁹ African Union Commission. "The African Union Commission Expresses Deep Concern over Security Developments in Mogadishu." Press Release, 4 June 2026.

²⁸⁰ African Union Commission. "The African Union Commission Expresses Deep Concern over Security Developments in Mogadishu." Press Release, 4 June 2026.

advisory inviting representatives of the media to a press conference on their preliminary statements regarding the general elections.²⁸¹ The press conference was held in Addis Ababa, where H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, former President of Kenya and Head of the African Union Election Observation Mission, and H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, former Vice President of Uganda and Head of the IGAD Election Observation Mission, briefed the press on the preliminary findings of their respective missions. The reports noted some differences in voter registration figures and participation details but broadly supported the conduct of the elections amid ongoing regional challenges.

On the diplomatic front, AUC Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf received Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Gedion Timothewos, for bilateral discussions focused on ongoing AU institutional reforms, with particular attention to securing sustainable financing for the Union.²⁸² The Chairperson thanked Kenyan President H.E. William Ruto for his leadership as AU Reform Champion and briefed the Minister on progress achieved thus far. Both leaders emphasized that predictable and sustainable financing is essential for an independent, effective, and sovereign African Union, and reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with all Member States to advance this critical agenda.

The AU also engaged with European partners on Somalia. The Special Representative of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of AUSSOM, Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima Diene, met with a delegation from the European External Action Service in Nairobi as part of the 2026 Strategic Review of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy engagement in Somalia.²⁸³ The discussions centered on the implementation of AUSSOM's mandate, the progress being made in transitioning security responsibilities to Somali forces, and broader perspectives on how the EU can continue supporting Somalia's long-term stability, resilience, and strategic objectives. Ambassador Diene underscored the critical need for joint efforts, complementarity, and strong coordination among all partners, while reiterating that all support must remain firmly Somali-led to ensure lasting peace and security. The meeting reflected the continued partnership between the African Union and the European Union in advancing Somalia's stabilization process.

The 8th AU-RECs Mid-Year Coordination Meeting convened in El Alamein, Egypt, under the theme "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063."²⁸⁴ The meeting brought together the African Union, Regional Economic Communities including IGAD, and Regional Mechanisms to advance the continent's development blueprint while also addressing institutional reforms, resource

²⁸¹ African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "Joint Media Advisory: Press Conference on Preliminary Statements on Ethiopia's General Elections." Media Advisory, 2 June 2026.

²⁸² African Union Commission. "Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf Receives Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs." Press Release, 9 June 2026.

²⁸³ African Union Commission. "AUSSOM and EU Discuss Strategic Review of Somalia Engagement." Press Release, 25 June 2026.

²⁸⁴ African Union. "8th AU-RECs Mid-Year Coordination Meeting Convenes in El Alamein, Egypt." Press Release, 27 June 2026.

mobilization, and closer coordination on integration, peace, security, and sustainable development. The discussions took place against a challenging backdrop, as Chairperson Youssouf had earlier noted that the AU currently operates with only 30 percent of its required staffing levels and approximately 25 percent of its global budget, underscoring the urgent need for fiscal discipline and renewed commitment from member states. The meeting served as a critical platform for aligning efforts between the AU and regional bodies, reinforcing the collective resolve to tackle shared challenges and move the continent closer to its long-term strategic goals.

The Chairperson also addressed the closing session of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee, where he expressed deep appreciation to the Permanent Representatives for their dedication and constructive spirit, which resulted in significant progress on key matters before the Committee.²⁸⁵ He commended the PRC Chair, Ambassador Willy Nyamitwe, for his able leadership. The Chairperson briefed the PRC on his recent consultations with heads of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, underscoring the importance of strengthened coordination and enhanced complementarity in advancing Africa's integration, peace, security, and development agenda. On peace and security, he acknowledged that the continent continues to face complex and evolving challenges but expressed confidence in the AU's collective capacity to address them, noting the sustained commitment and political will demonstrated by Member States in support of African-led solutions. He also updated the Committee on the recent virtual High-Level Summit on the Ebola outbreak, chaired by Burundi's President Évariste Ndayishimiye as AU Champion, which successfully mobilized political support and resources to strengthen the continental response. Addressing global developments, the Chairperson observed that the disruption of maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz had significant economic repercussions for African economies, particularly through its impact on global energy markets and supply chains, though he expressed hope that the recently announced ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran would contribute to easing regional tensions and restoring stability. In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson thanked the Permanent Representatives for their seriousness and commitment, encouraging them to sustain their efforts in advancing the Union's institutional reform agenda, including measures aimed at strengthening the AU's financial sustainability and enhancing the effectiveness of the Commission in delivering on its mandate.

Throughout the month, AUSSOM continued its operational activities in Somalia. Uganda People's Defense Forces troops serving under AUSSOM, alongside the United Nations Guard Unit 12, commemorated World Environment Day in Mogadishu with a tree-planting exercise and a beach cleanup along the Indian Ocean coastline, aligning with the year's

²⁸⁵ African Union Commission. "Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf Addresses Closing Session of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee." Press Release, 27 June 2026.

theme "Inspired by Nature, For Climate, For our Future."²⁸⁶ Colonel Francis Aragamoï Obita, the Uganda Contingent Deputy Commander, emphasized the importance of a healthy environment for military operations and urged troops to prioritize conservation, noting the visible greening of the area since their deployment in 2007. Djiboutian troops deployed under AUSSOM celebrated the 49th anniversary of the Djibouti Armed Forces Day, with commemorations held in both Djibouti and Beledweyne, Somalia, where the Djiboutian contingent is stationed as part of AUSSOM's Sector 4 operations.²⁸⁷ Djibouti remains a key contributor to the mission, with approximately 1,500 troops deployed to Somalia as part of its long-standing commitment to peacekeeping in the region.

European Union (EU)

The European Union's engagement in the Horn of Africa during June was most visible through its participation in the strategic review of its Common Security and Defence Policy engagement in Somalia. A delegation from the European External Action Service met with Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima Diene, Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia and Head of AUSSOM, in Nairobi as part of the 2026 Strategic Review.²⁸⁸ The discussions centered on the implementation of AUSSOM's mandate, the progress being made in transitioning security responsibilities to Somali forces, and how the EU can continue supporting Somalia's long-term stability, resilience, and strategic objectives. Ambassador Diene emphasized the critical need for joint efforts, complementarity, and strong coordination among all partners, while reiterating that all support must remain firmly Somali-led to ensure lasting peace and security in the country. The meeting reflected the continued partnership between the African Union and the European Union in advancing Somalia's stabilization process.

Within the UN Security Council deliberations on AUSSOM, the EU's position called for broader burden-sharing in financing the mission, reflecting the Union's continued concern about the sustainability of the current funding model for African-led peace support operations. The EU also remained a key supporter of the Horn of Africa Initiative, alongside the World Bank and Germany's BMZ through GIZ, providing support for the regional trade facilitation agenda.²⁸⁹ The upcoming HoAI Trade Ministers' Meeting is expected to see continued EU engagement on border management, customs cooperation, and digitalization of trade processes.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

²⁸⁶ African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia. "AUSSOM Commemorates World Environment Day in Mogadishu." News Release, 4 June 2026.

²⁸⁷ African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia. "Djiboutian Troops Under AUSSOM Mark 49th Armed Forces Day." News Release, 6 June 2026.

²⁸⁸ African Union Commission. "AUSSOM and EU Discuss Strategic Review of Somalia Engagement." Press Release, 25 June 2026.

²⁸⁹ Horn of Africa Initiative. "HoAI Regional Trade Facilitation Roadmap Consultations Progress." June 2026.

IGAD's activities in June spanned election observation, political engagement on Somalia, climate resilience programming, cybersecurity cooperation, and institutional development.

IGAD deployed its Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia for the 7th General Election, headed by H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, former Vice President of Uganda.²⁹⁰ The Mission observed that the election represented a significant milestone in the country's democratic evolution, characterized as an Election of Many Firsts due to major institutional and technological reforms. A total of over 54 million voters were registered across 501 of 547 constituencies, with elections not held in Tigray and in eight constituencies in the Amhara Region due to security concerns. The Mission commended the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia for innovations including the "Mirchaye" digital voter registration system, GIS-based polling station mapping, and special voting frameworks for internally displaced persons and defense forces personnel. However, concerns remained regarding the underrepresentation of women among candidates and polling station managers. On election day, observers visited 208 polling stations and reported that polling opened on time, voting proceeded smoothly with no incidents, and security personnel maintained a professional and non-intrusive presence. High voter turnout was observed throughout the day, though inconsistencies were noted in the implementation of a six-hour voting extension due to communication challenges between NEBE headquarters and local polling stations.

In its preliminary assessment, the Mission concluded that election officials, security personnel, political actors, and citizens largely discharged their responsibilities with professionalism, enabling voters to freely express their democratic rights despite long polling hours. The Mission offered recommendations including reducing the maximum number of voters per polling station to 1,000, enhancing cybersecurity, strengthening voter education in remote areas, and encouraging political parties to introduce policies to boost women's candidacy. Security agencies were advised to maintain neutrality and strengthen community engagement, while civil society organizations were urged to enhance domestic observation and peacebuilding initiatives. The government was called upon to provide adequate institutional and logistical support to NEBE while ensuring equitable access to digital reforms across all regions. The IGAD EOM commended the Ethiopian people for their commitment to a peaceful electoral process and reaffirmed IGAD's support for democracy, good governance, and credible elections in Ethiopia.²⁹¹

On the political situation in Somalia, IGAD issued a statement from its headquarters in Djibouti expressing deep concern over reports of violence in Mogadishu amid heightened political tensions. The organization condemned all acts of violence and called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, de-escalate tensions, and resolve their differences through

²⁹⁰ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD Deploys Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia's 7th General Election." Press Release, June 2026.

²⁹¹ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "Preliminary Statement of the IGAD Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia's 7th General Election." Statement, 3 June 2026.

peaceful, inclusive, and constructive dialogue. ²⁹²Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu stated that at this critical moment, preserving peace, stability, national unity, and the gains made in Somalia's state-building efforts is of paramount importance, and urged all stakeholders to place the interests of the Somali people first and to pursue peaceful solutions through dialogue and consensus. The statement further noted that as a founding member state of IGAD, Somalia remains central to the region's peace, security, and development, and IGAD reaffirmed its solidarity with Somalia while standing ready to support efforts that advance dialogue, national cohesion, and lasting stability.

IGAD also issued a statement responding to reports of a Somaliland embassy opening in Jerusalem. ²⁹³The Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to Somalia's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity under the IGAD Treaty, the AU Constitutive Act, and the UN Charter. IGAD expressed concern that such actions risk heightening tensions and undermining regional peace and stability, calling for restraint and full respect for Somalia's territorial integrity.

On climate and food security, IGAD continued to prioritize climate resilience and regional preparedness following the 73rd Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum held in Addis Ababa the previous month. ²⁹⁴The forum's technical forecast warned of a high likelihood of below-normal rainfall for the June to September season across much of the northern Greater Horn of Africa, with elevated risks expected in parts of Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, and western and coastal Kenya. IGAD and its Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) urged early action, focusing on food security, livestock mobility, disaster risk reduction, and conflict-sensitive climate adaptation, all while building on existing peace and resilience initiatives across the region.

In a significant institutional development, IGAD, with support from the World Bank, held the inaugural meeting of its Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub in Nairobi, bringing together member states, technical partners, and researchers to officially establish the Hub's governance and technical structures. ²⁹⁵Speaking at the event, Kenya's Dr. Caroline Kundu emphasized that the Hub marks a decisive step toward tackling soil fertility challenges and strengthening food security, while IGAD's Dr. Senait Regassa reminded participants that healthy soils are the foundation of livelihoods and economies across the region. During the meeting, participants reviewed committee roles, agreed on priority actions for the Hub's first work plan, and visited the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization's research center, where they explored practical innovations including soil testing, mapping,

²⁹² Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD Statement on the Security Situation in Mogadishu, Somalia." Press Statement, 4 June 2026.

²⁹³ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD Statement on Reports of a Somaliland Embassy Opening in Jerusalem." Press Statement, 18 June 2026.

²⁹⁴ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD and ICPAC Urge Early Action Following GHACOF 73 Climate Forecast." Press Release, June 2026.

²⁹⁵ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD Launches Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub to Boost Food Security." Press Release, 25 June 2026.

and a long-term fertilizer experiment running since 1976. The visit offered real-world scalable solutions that member states can adopt. As the Hub moves forward, IGAD called on all stakeholders to turn commitments into concrete action, improving soil health, boosting agricultural productivity, and building a more food-secure and resilient future for the region.

IGAD, in partnership with Ethiopia's Information Network Security Administration (INSA), hosted the Regional Cyber Drill 2026 at INSA headquarters in Addis Ababa.²⁹⁶ The five-day exercise brought together cybersecurity experts, law enforcement agencies, and operators of critical infrastructure from seven IGAD member states: Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti. The drill was designed as a practical, hands-on exercise where participants faced simulated real-world cyber incidents, including attacks on telecommunications and financial institutions, ransomware campaigns, and disinformation scenarios, allowing countries to test their defense mechanisms, identify gaps, and improve incident response capabilities in a controlled environment. Beyond the technical training, the program included policy dialogue sessions aimed at building a common understanding of cybersecurity strategies across the region. Officially opening the event, IGAD Head of Mission to Ethiopia, Abebaw Belachew, reminded participants that cyber threats do not recognize borders and that a breach in one country can quickly ripple across the entire region, making collective preparedness non-negotiable. He emphasized that the networks and trust built during this exercise are just as valuable as the technical skills being sharpened. INSA Director-General Tigist Hamid reaffirmed that cybersecurity is now a strategic priority for national security and economic development, stressing that no single country can effectively tackle these evolving threats alone, and she reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to regional cooperation and information sharing as central pillars of its cybersecurity approach. The drill is expected to significantly boost regional cyber resilience, enhance coordination among member states, and lay a strong foundation for a secure and reliable digital ecosystem across East Africa.

Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI)

The Horn of Africa Initiative advanced its regional trade facilitation agenda during June. High-level consultations were held in Addis Ababa, where a delegation from the HoAI Secretariat, GIZ, and national advisors from Somalia and Djibouti met with Ethiopia's Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide and State Minister Tazer Gebregziabher.²⁹⁷ The meetings focused on revising the HoAI Regional Trade Facilitation Roadmap and preparing for the Trade Ministers' Meeting scheduled for September.

Under Somalia's chairmanship and with strong technical leadership from Germany, national trade consultations were successfully concluded during the month in Somalia, Djibouti, and

²⁹⁶ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD and INSA Host Regional Cyber Drill 2026 in Addis Ababa." Press Release, 26 June 2026.

²⁹⁷ Horn of Africa Initiative. "HoAI Secretariat Holds High-Level Trade Facilitation Consultations in Addis Ababa." News Update, 17 June 2026.

Ethiopia. These consultations brought together government institutions, border authorities, and private sector representatives to validate priorities, identify practical solutions for trade flows, and propose the establishment of a Regional Trade Facilitation Committee. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of moving from policy dialogue to concrete implementation in areas such as border management, customs cooperation, and digitalization of trade processes. The European Union, World Bank, and Germany's BMZ through GIZ continued to provide key support. Upcoming consultations in South Sudan and Kenya, followed by a regional workshop, are expected to finalize the updated roadmap for endorsement at the HoAI Trade Ministers' Meeting in Addis Ababa.



HORN **REVIEW**

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas



Connections



Synergy