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The Horn in August: Regionalization of Conflict and the Contest for Strategic Space

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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 August 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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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....

Section One: Political Transitions, Conflict Spillover, and Strategic Realignment 1

1.1 Ethiopia: Dialogue, Sovereignty, and Strategic Consolidation 1

1.2 Eritrea: External Engagement, Regional Maneuvering, Opposition Consolidation 6

1.3 Djibouti: Maritime Security, Partnerships, and Ethiopian Dependence 13

1.4 Somalia and Somaliland 17

The Federal Republic of Somalia: AUSSOM Uncertainty, Al Shabaab Offensives, Piracy Resurgence and Puntland-Federal Clashes..... 17

Somaliland: Presidential Diplomatic Offensive, Maritime Security Cooperation, and Sovereignty Assertions..... 30

1.5 Sudan: Mixed Battlefield Fortunes, Deepening Regionalization, and a Contested Dialogue..... 34

1.6 South Sudan: Elections Without Prerequisites, a State Under Legal and Financial Siege, and Compounding Insecurity 40

1.7 Kenya: Political Consolidation and Strategic Diversification..... 46

Section Two: MENA Region, Gulf, and Global Engagement..... 50

2.1 Egypt: Perimeter Defense and Strategic Hedging..... 50

2.2 Yemen: Houthi Escalation, Saudi Pressure, Red Sea Volatility 53

2.3 Israel-Iran war 57

2.4 Türkiye: Architecting an Independent Regional Pillar 60

Section Three: Global Powers, Regional, and International Organizations 69

The Horn in August: Regionalization of Conflict and the Contest for Strategic Space

Executive Summary

August 2026 underscored a central feature of the Greater Horn's current trajectory: national conflicts and political crises are increasingly producing regional consequences. From Sudan's expanding war and South Sudan's uncertain transition to Somalia's federal tensions and Ethiopia's evolving security environment, domestic political developments are becoming increasingly intertwined with cross-border security and competition over strategic corridors.

Sudan remained the Horn's most consequential source of instability. Fighting continued across Kordofan and Blue Nile, while cross-border incidents involving Chad and heightened tensions along Sudan's borders with Ethiopia and South Sudan demonstrated the conflict's expanding regional dimension. The RSF and its allies' capture of Geisan contrasted with SAF gains in Kordofan and accelerating RSF defections elsewhere, underscoring uneven battlefield momentum. A broad civilian coalition meeting in Addis Ababa rejected Burhan's proposed national dialogue, highlighting the unresolved contest between military-led consolidation and a civilian political process.

At the same time, security concerns involving Tigrayan actors and reported armed-group coordination persisted. Its relationship with Egypt and reported contacts involving TPLF elements added uncertainty to the Ethiopia-Eritrea relationship, while its growing regional strategic relevance contrasted with continued domestic political closure.

Somalia faced intensifying federal-regional tensions, particularly involving Puntland and Southwest State. The AU's authorization for AUSSOM to participate in operations against forces aligned with former Southwest President Laftagareen raised questions about the mission's role in Somalia's internal political disputes. Persistent Al-Shabaab activity and renewed piracy also connected Somalia's internal security challenges to wider insecurity across the Gulf of Aden and western Indian Ocean.

Djibouti and Somaliland highlighted the growing strategic importance of the Horn's maritime geography. Kenya remained comparatively stable but accelerated preparations for its 2027 election while diversifying external partnerships and managing regional spillovers.

Taken together, August demonstrated that the Greater Horn is increasingly shaped by the interaction of national crises. Sudan's war, Somalia's political fragmentation, Ethiopia's security calculations, and the strategic importance of Red Sea access are increasingly interconnected. The month's central trend was therefore the regionalization of security and political competition, as states sought to consolidate domestic authority, secure strategic corridors, diversify partnerships, and contain conflicts whose consequences increasingly transcend national borders.

Section One: Political Transitions, Conflict Spillover, and Strategic Realignment

1.1 Ethiopia: Dialogue, Sovereignty, and Strategic Consolidation

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission reached a defining institutional milestone in August 2026 as working groups achieved consensus across all eight thematic pillars of its mandate. Following earlier agreements on peacebuilding, religious affairs, corruption and good governance, and government structure, delegates finalized consensus on nation-building, federal city administration, institutional reform, the rule of law and human rights, and socio-economic frameworks.¹ This progress established a solid foundation for the next stages of national cohesion and a shared vision. The formal conclusion of the month-long National Dialogue Conference took place in Addis Ababa on August 22. Over nearly 40 days of deliberations, approximately 4,000 delegates representing political parties, civil society organizations, former combatants, regional administrations, and the diaspora produced roughly 400 policy recommendations aimed at addressing historical grievances, strengthening governance, and advancing peaceful constitutional dialogue.² At the closing ceremony, Deputy Chief Commissioner Hirut Gebre Selassie, President Taye Atske Selassie, and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed affirmed the process as a consultative cornerstone for unity. Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and African Union High Representative Olusegun Obasanjo praised the initiative as an exemplary African-led framework for lasting peace and stability.³

These domestic efforts to build consensus through dialogue advanced alongside measures to reinforce national security capabilities and institutional integrity. On August 14, Field Marshal Birhanu Jula described the Special Operations Command as a model force prepared for rapid response and preemptive action against threats.⁴ During a performance review, he highlighted its advanced readiness in armaments and personnel and stressed the defense forces' dual responsibility to protect against external adversaries while securing internal peace. Ethiopia further demonstrated its commitment to collective regional security by participating in the 36th Ordinary Meeting of the Eastern Africa Standby Force Policy Organs in Kampala. A senior delegation led by Major General Teshome Gemechu and Ambassador Etsegenet Yimenu joined discussions focused on operational readiness, governance structures, resource mobilization, and the regional security situation under the theme of building a more secure Eastern Africa through partnership and innovation.⁵

¹ Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission. 2026. "National Dialogue Conference Concludes Successfully." *Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission*, August 22, 2026.

² Duale, Mohamed. 2026. "Ethiopia Concludes Landmark 40-Day National Dialogue." *AllAfrica*, August 24.

³ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopian National Dialogue Exemplary for Africa, Says AU High Representative Obasanjo." *ENA*, August 22.

⁴ Brlie, Mesafint. 2026. "ENDF Chief of Staff Sees Special Operations Command as Ethiopia's Strategic Edge Against Emerging Threats." *Fana Media Corporation*, August 15, 2026.

⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopian Delegation Participates in Eastern Africa Standby Force Policy Organs Meeting."

In parallel, the federal government maintained a firm stance on the contested implementation of the 2022 Pretoria Agreement. On August 1, hardline Tigray People's Liberation Front elements operating under the command of Army 70 launched a cross-border operation from Sudanese territory near Sherarina into federal space. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces quickly and effectively repelled the thrust. The operation's strategic importance lay in its organized planning, use of heavy weapons and mechanized units and indications of coordination involving elements of external actors.⁶ The political architecture of the Pretoria Agreement has divided the TPLF into factions that accept federal authority and hardline rejectionists who continue militarized rhetoric, forcible conscription, and efforts aimed at destabilization. The federal government pursued a policy of deliberate restraint to preserve legitimacy and sustain international support while strengthening border defenses, intelligence capabilities, and coordination with neighboring states.

On August 19, explosions in Mekelle's Hawelti Sub-City and Kuha area resulted in 13 casualties regional analyses linked ongoing volatility in Tigray to actions by local hardline leadership that sought to bypass established national frameworks.⁷ Regional developments were further complicated by reports of a "Seven Fronts" alliance involving armed groups seeking to challenge the federal government. The continued fragmentation of the TPLF between factions willing to operate within the Pretoria Agreement and hardline elements pursuing militarized rhetoric and destabilizing activities has remained a significant concern. Against this backdrop, the federal government maintained a policy of restraint and constitutional engagement while strengthening national security, intelligence capabilities, and regional cooperation to safeguard peace and stability.⁸

In recent interviews with the Oromia Broadcasting Network and Amhara Media Corporation,⁹ Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed underscored that Ethiopia's diversity is a source of national strength and that progress depends on moving beyond historical grievances toward constructive, inclusive participation under the principle of Medemer. He explained that the Oromo struggle targeted unjust administrative systems rather than the nation itself, guided by pillars of economic justice in land ownership, identity preservation including moral values such as Safuu, and democratic governance rooted in the Gadaa system, while highlighting the Amhara people's pivotal contributions to the country's major transformations and the deep historical integration between the Amhara and Oromo communities through intermarriage, cultural exchange, and shared efforts such as the Battle of Adwa. He criticized the TPLF for clinging to outdated political thinking, violating the

ENA, August 14.

⁶ Ethiopia Observer. 2026. "Heavy Fighting Erupts Near Sudan Border as Army and TPLF Exchange Fire." Ethiopia Observer, August 1.

⁷ Addis Standard. 2026. "Drone Strikes in Two Locations in Mekelle, 13 Casualties Received at Ayder Hospital." Addis Standard, August 20.

⁸ Addis Standard. 2026. "Ethiopia: Fano Leader Says Armed Groups Have Formed Coalition to Work Toward 'Fall of Abiy Ahmed.'" Addis Standard, August 18, 2026.

⁹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "PM Abiy Stresses Unity, Shared Prosperity as Ethiopia's Only Path to Survival." ENA, July 31.

Pretoria Agreement, and serving external interests, reaffirmed that the government's door remains open to non-violent engagement, and stressed that post-reform Ethiopia has rendered authoritarian approaches obsolete by enabling diverse ideological participation, with lasting peace achievable only through dialogue, the integration of former fighters into civilian life, and positive contributions to the National Dialogue process.

Complementing these political and security measures, the government advanced institutional integrity through a comprehensive campaign against corruption and economic sabotage. Government Communication Service Minister Enatalem Melese reported that authorities sealed over 7,000 illegal businesses, froze accounts linked to illicit financial networks, and detained 169 individuals involved in hawala and black-market transactions along with 36 suspects in bank account fraud. Additional legal actions targeted 183 individuals in gold smuggling, 38 fuel sector officials, four electric power executives, and 91 revenue authority personnel, underscoring the resolve to protect homegrown economic reforms through modern procedures and accountable leadership.¹⁰

Federal authorities simultaneously expanded strategic partnerships with key global and regional partners. On August 15, Ambassador Binalf Andualem met U.S.¹¹ Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Frank Garcia in Washington to reaffirm commitment to stronger political, economic, and security ties, including opportunities in Ethiopia's critical mining sector. Defense cooperation deepened on August 20 when a high-level delegation led by Major General Teshome Gemechu concluded consultations at the Pentagon with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of War Brian J. Ellis, establishing a comprehensive strategic defense partnership focused on institutional cooperation, mutual trust, and joint efforts for long-term Horn of Africa stability.¹² At the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Jaipur, the Ethiopian delegation called for stronger cooperation among emerging economies to address debt, borrowing costs, climate shocks, and financial fragmentation while advancing greater representation in international institutions and closer alignment with the New Development Bank.¹³ During the 7th BRICS ICT Working Group meeting in Pune on August 20, officials presented the Digital Ethiopia 2030 Architecture, showcasing tools such as the Fayda Digital ID and the MESOB platform to build resilient digital infrastructure and modernize public services.

Bilateral engagement continued across multiple fronts. Benin's Minister of Digital Transformation and Innovation, Mahuna Akplogan, arrived in Addis Ababa for a five-day official working visit focused on deepening cooperation in digital transformation, public

¹⁰ FDRE Government Communication Service. 2026. "Government Takes Decisive Action to Tackle Corruption and Illegality." Government Communication Service, August 6.

¹¹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia, U.S. Reaffirm Commitment to Stronger Strategic, Economic Partnership." ENA, August 15.

¹² Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia, US Agree to Establish Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation in Defense, Security." ENA, August 21.

¹³ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia Calls for Stronger BRICS Cooperation to Address Global Economic Challenge." ENA, August 13.

sector modernization, e-government services, and innovation ecosystems, highlighting growing continental collaboration for technology-driven development.¹⁴ Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos met African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf to review Horn of Africa peace and security while prioritizing preparations for hosting the 2027 UN Climate Change Conference (COP32), reinforcing Addis Ababa's role as a primary diplomatic hub. Members of the House of People's Representatives Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee met a Saudi tour operators delegation on August 11 to advance tourism cooperation, infrastructure improvements, and joint promotion of historical heritage.¹⁵ On August 12, Ethiopia was selected to host the African Mayoral Leadership Initiative Leadership Forum in Addis Ababa and Bishoftu in October, building on progress in urban digitalization and revenue mobilization.¹⁶ Director General Tigist Hamid of the Information Network Security Administration opened the fifth National Cyber Talent Summer Camp the same day, training youth in cybersecurity, software, artificial intelligence, and related fields to support digital transformation.¹⁷

At an IGAD dialogue in Addis Ababa on August 19, Senior Advisor Zena Habtewold urged investment-driven action to advance the Kampala Agricultural Framework, while IGAD representative Sylvia Henga stressed reducing post-harvest losses, strengthening food safety, and leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area. A high-level parliamentary event on August 21 reinforced the need for political allocations and policy reforms, with Standing Committee Chairman Solomon Lale and IGAD representative Omar Djama framing resilient agri-food systems as foundational for poverty reduction and national stability. On August 26, the European Investment Bank Global and the World Food Programme launched a four-million-euro parametric microinsurance initiative to safeguard 210,000 smallholder farmers against climate-related crop failures, integrating protection with rural credit systems. Federal authorities expanded multi-sectoral infrastructure and economic growth frameworks across regional states on August 27, prioritizing sustainable land management, modern transportation links, and trade facilitation. State financial institutions announced enhanced digital finance platforms on August 28 to streamline cross-border transactions and integrate small and medium enterprises into formal banking networks.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated a modern terminal at Bahir Dar Dejazmach Belay Zeleke International Airport,¹⁸ Ethiopia's second-largest airport facility, symbolizing regional recovery, tourism potential, and economic growth while underscoring the importance of expanded municipal revenues and regional peace. Looking ahead, he outlined the Prosperity Party's five-year agenda centered on citizens' well-being, food sovereignty,

¹⁴ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia: Benin's Digital Transformation Minister Begins Official Five-Day Visit to Ethiopia." AllAfrica, August 4.

¹⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia Discuss about Ways of Enhancing Tourism." ENA, August 11.

¹⁶ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia Selected to Host African Mayoral Leadership Initiative Forum." ENA, August 12.

¹⁷ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "INSA Pledges Stronger Push to Strengthen Ethiopia's Cybersecurity Workforce." ENA, August 11.

¹⁸ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia: PM Abiy Inaugurates New Terminal At Bahir Dar Int'l Airport." Ethiopian News Agency, August 6.

and modern public services, including expanded agricultural irrigation, natural gas and nuclear energy development, construction of Bishoftu International Airport, and nationwide scaling of urban corridor modernization, with the National Dialogue remaining crucial for resolving generational challenges.

Ethiopian delegates joined regional maritime security talks in Nairobi facilitated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, working with Somalia, Djibouti, and Yemen to address Red Sea threats including piracy, illicit trafficking, and illegal fishing, while advancing information-sharing and national maritime monitoring capacity in support of reliable sea access and Horn of Africa stability.¹⁹ President Taye Atske Selassie bid farewell to outgoing South Korean Ambassador Jung Kang on August 26, reaffirming partnership in trade, investment, technology, education, and development rooted in historic ties.²⁰ The same day, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hadera Abera met UK Minister of State for International Development Kirsty McNeill to deepen cooperation in trade, investment, development assistance, economic reform, migration, regional peace and security, climate action, and multilateral affairs.²¹ On August 28, Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos and Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Sihasak Phuangkitkeow signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing regular political consultations to transform strong political ties into robust economic cooperation, with Thailand confirming plans for a resident embassy in Addis Ababa.²² Health Minister Dr. Mekdes Daba Feyssa was elected Chairperson of the 76th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa on August 25, positioning healthcare sovereignty, universal health coverage, pandemic preparedness, and emergency responses at the center of the agenda for 47 member nations. On August 30, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed extended condolences to the Norwegian royal family, government, and people on the passing of King Harald V, underscoring Norway's role as a steadfast partner.²³

The developments of August 2026 illustrate the close interplay between Ethiopia's internal institutional reforms and its regional and global engagements. The successful conclusion of the National Dialogue Conference and consensus across its thematic pillars demonstrate a sustained commitment to resolving historic challenges through formal, inclusive constitutional mechanisms. At the same time, decisive responses to cross-border security threats, strengthened defense capabilities, and a dual approach of political engagement under the Pretoria framework combined with enhanced deterrence have safeguarded national sovereignty. Ethiopia's foreign policy balanced immediate security needs with broader strategic objectives by deepening defense partnerships with the United States, advancing

¹⁹ Addis Standard. 2026. "Ethiopia Joins Regional Maritime Security Talks in Nairobi Amid Growing Red Sea Threats, UN Says." Addis Standard, August 28.

²⁰ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia-South Korea Set to Deepen Ties as President Taye Bids Farewell to Ambassador Kang." ENA, August 26.

²¹ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia, UK Move to Deepen Strategic Partnership." ENA, August 26.

²² Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "Ethiopia, Thailand Move to Strengthen Trade, Investment and Diplomatic Ties." ENA, August 28.

²³ Ethiopian News Agency. 2026. "PM Abiy Extends Condolences on Passing of His Majesty King Harald." ENA, August 30.

Eastern Africa Standby Force cooperation, engaging Red Sea maritime initiatives, participating actively in BRICS forums, and expanding bilateral ties across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Concurrent progress in agricultural resilience, digital infrastructure, financial modernization, urban development, and public health leadership continues to build structural foundations for long-term growth. Ethiopia's trajectory toward sustained stability and regional leadership rests on the continued alignment of these internal reforms with external security and diplomatic strategies, ensuring that economic and institutional advances are underpinned by a secure and cohesive national environment.

1.2 Eritrea: External Engagement, Regional Maneuvering, Opposition Consolidation

August saw a widening of the Eritrean regime's external engagement and strategic relevance across the Red Sea and Horn of Africa, without corresponding evidence of political opening inside the country. Saudi Arabia's proposed multinational maritime security framework reportedly includes Eritrea alongside Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Jordan and Yemen, potentially giving the regime another avenue for diplomatic and security engagement with regional governments. Eritrean officials also retained access to multilateral institutions, including through the appointment of Habtom Zerai Ghirmai as Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council's 2026 Social Forum and an August 27 meeting between the African Union Commission Chairperson and Eritrea's permanent representative. These developments demonstrate that the regime continues to secure diplomatic access despite the persistence of international scrutiny over its domestic record.

The more consequential development concerns Eritrea's changing relationship with actors in Tigray. Reports of contacts between senior PFDJ and TPLF figures, Eritrean military activity around and inside Tigray, and the solidification of the Tsimdo alignment suggest that the relationship between former adversaries is acquiring a security dimension. There have been reports of meetings amongst military leadership, most notably an August 3 PFDJ-TPLF meeting in Zalambessa. The broader pattern is consistent with a significant deterioration in Eritrea's relationship with the Ethiopian federal government and a developing rapprochement with elements of the TPLF. The growing security coordination mark an important shift in the regional balance because it could provide the Eritrean regime with strategic depth against Addis Ababa while giving Tigrayan actors an external partner in their confrontation with the federal government.

Eritrea also appears increasingly relevant to logistical networks surrounding the Sudan war. Open-source flight tracking identified repeated Belarusian Il-76 movements connecting Minsk with Massawa, alongside Turkish and Egyptian military-linked movements involving East Qwainat and Port Sudan. The evidence does not establish the contents of individual flights or demonstrate direct Eritrean arms transfers to the Sudanese Armed Forces, but the recurrence of the movements warrants continued monitoring of Massawa as a possible transit

point within wider regional military logistics. A separate assessment by the Century Foundation raised allegations concerning Iranian and Houthi logistical activity involving Eritrea, although the evidence was uneven and did not substantiate all of the alleged routes or sites. These indicators are significant primarily because they place Eritrean territory and waters within an increasingly interconnected Red Sea security environment, rather than because they establish a particular Eritrean role in any one network.

These external developments remain sharply at odds with conditions inside Eritrea. Chronic water shortages in Asmara highlight persistent weaknesses in basic infrastructure and urban service delivery, while the regime continues to maintain an exceptionally restricted political environment. At the same time, the Eritrean opposition has shown signs of greater organizational consolidation. Israel's Brigade Nhamedu move toward the Eritrean Blue Revolution Front (EBRF) represents an effort to consolidate disparate opposition forces around a common political structure and provides the movement with a more coherent organizational identity than its earlier, predominantly mobilizational form. The development does not currently pose a direct threat to PFDJ rule, but it merits greater attention as an attempt to construct an organized alternative political force rather than simply another episode of diaspora activism.

Expanded Diplomatic Engagement and Regional Maritime Security

Saudi Arabia's proposed regional maritime security framework²⁴ represents the clearest indication during August that the Eritrean regime is being drawn into emerging discussions over Red Sea security. The reported participation of Eritrea alongside Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Jordan and Yemen would bring together states with divergent political interests but shared exposure to instability around the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden. The initiative follows a July 30 meeting involving military representatives from 43 countries and an EU delegation and reportedly envisages intelligence sharing, joint exercises and coordinated maritime operations. For the Eritrean regime, participation would provide another avenue through which its coastline and geographic position could be converted into diplomatic and strategic utility.

The significance of the initiative extends beyond Eritrea itself. Saudi Arabia appears to be pursuing greater regional coordination around maritime security at a time when attacks and disruptions in the Red Sea have increased the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb. Egypt has similarly strong interests in the security of the Red Sea and maritime approaches to the Suez Canal. Eritrea's reported inclusion therefore places the regime within a wider regional security conversation in which maritime security increasingly intersects with the political and strategic competition surrounding Ethiopia. Participation could increase Asmara's room for manoeuvre, although inclusion in a regional framework should not itself

²⁴ Solomon Ekanem, "Saudi Arabia forms Red Sea security bloc with five African countries amid rising maritime tensions," *Business Insider Africa*, August 1, 2026.

be interpreted as evidence that Eritrea has adopted a cooperative or predictable regional posture.

The same distinction applies to Eritrea's multilateral diplomatic activity. Habtom Zerai Ghirmai's appointment as Chair-Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council's 2026 Social Forum demonstrates that Eritrean representatives retain access to international institutional processes.²⁵ The appointment followed African Group procedures and does not constitute an endorsement of the regime's domestic record. Its significance instead lies in the coexistence of institutional participation with continuing international scrutiny. The Human Rights Council's renewal of the Special Rapporteur's mandate only weeks earlier underscores this contradiction. The August 27 AU Commission meeting with Eritrea's permanent representative similarly indicates continued institutional engagement without demonstrating a substantive change in the AU's assessment of Eritrea.

US Engagement, Egypt and Eritrea's Strategic Utility

US engagement with Eritrea during August formed part of a broader effort by Washington to manage competing interests among Asmara, Addis Ababa and Cairo. On August 5, US envoy Massad Boulos stated that Washington was engaging Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia in pursuit of peace and stability and rejected claims that the United States was negotiating a secret arrangement involving Eritrea against another regional partner.²⁶ The statement confirms active American engagement with Asmara while also indicating that Washington does not publicly characterize this engagement as an effort to construct an anti-Ethiopian alignment.

The strategic significance of the outreach lies partly in Eritrea's geographic position and its increasingly difficult relationship with Ethiopia. Michael Rubin argued on July 31 that greater US engagement with Asmara could undermine American interests, emphasizing Eritrea's relationship with Iran and its growing ties with Egypt. This is an analytical argument rather than evidence of established US policy.²⁷ It nevertheless illustrates the strategic dilemma surrounding engagement with the Eritrean regime: the same geographic position that makes Asmara useful to outside powers also makes its alignment with regional actors consequential for Ethiopia, Sudan and Red Sea security.

Egypt's engagement with Eritrea should similarly be assessed within the context of Cairo's broader strategic competition with Ethiopia over the Nile and Red Sea. Egypt has maintained close relations with Asmara, while tensions between Cairo and Addis Ababa have remained substantial. From this perspective, Eritrea's geographic position, its control of Red Sea territory and its adversarial relationship with the Ethiopian federal government give the

²⁵ "UN Watch Strongly Condemns Eritrea's Involvement in UN Human Rights Social Forum," Pulse of Africa, August 7, 2026.

²⁶ U.S. Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs, "The Trump Administration continues to pursue regional peace through diplomatic engagements with Egypt, Eritrea, and Ethiopia," X, August 5, 2026.

²⁷ Michael Rubin, "Any U.S. Bet on Eritrea Is a Losing Move," Middle East Forum Observer, July 31, 2026.

regime considerable potential utility within Egypt's regional posture.

Tigray and the Emerging Security Dimension of the PFDJ-TPLF Relationship

Developments involving Tigray represented the most consequential area of uncertainty surrounding Eritrea during August. A leaked intelligence report alleged that senior PFDJ and TPLF representatives met in Zalambessa on August 3, while subsequent reporting described Eritrean military equipment moving toward the Raya-Alamata-Kobo axis.²⁸ However, other reporting has independently pointed to a broader deterioration in Ethiopia-Eritrea relations and increasing contact between Eritrean authorities and Tigrayan actors. The Soufan Center,²⁹ for example, reported the August 3 movement of Eritrean military personnel into Zalambessa and subsequent deployment of heavy weaponry associated with the reported Tsimdo alignment, although these claims should still be treated with appropriate caution.

The significance extends beyond a tactical alignment between former adversaries. The Eritrean regime could gain strategic depth by maintaining a hostile or autonomous political-military actor between Eritrean territory and Ethiopian federal forces. For elements of the TPLF, meanwhile, cooperation with Asmara could provide an external counterweight to Addis Ababa at a time when relations with the federal government remain deeply strained. Earlier reporting has already documented contacts between Eritrean authorities and TPLF figures and the reopening of an Eritrea-Tigray border crossing, suggesting that the rapprochement did not begin in August.

Tsimdo is therefore potentially more important than any individual reported meeting. If it develops into a durable political or security arrangement, it could transform the strategic relationship between Asmara and TPLF from limited coordination into a more structured alignment. Such an arrangement would carry risks for both sides because their historical relationship remains deeply antagonistic and their interests are not identical. The fact that the PFDJ and TPLF were recently direct military adversaries makes any sustained rapprochement particularly significant and warrants separating demonstrable coordination from the more expansive claims surrounding the emerging alignment.

The political dimension is also visible in renewed emphasis on shared Eritrean-Tigrayan historical and cultural ties. Following the cancellation of the main Ashenda celebration in Mekelle amid security concerns, festivities reportedly continued in communities along the Eritrean border, including Gulomakeda and Zalambessa.³⁰ The prominence of cross-border identity narratives provides a social and political context in which a rapprochement between Eritrean and TPLF actors can be framed as legitimate by its proponents.

²⁸ Horn Review Editorial, "Intelligence Report Warns False-Flag Operations in Ethiopia's Tigray," Horn Review, August 4, 2026.

²⁹ The Soufan Center, "Renewed Tensions Between Ethiopia and Tigray Threaten to Draw in the Wider Region," IntelBrief, August 21, 2026.

³⁰ Addis Standard, "Ashenda celebrations continue in various parts of Tigray, including Eritrean border, as Mekelle festival canceled over drone fears," X, August 23, 2026.

This developing relationship also exposes a contradiction in the Eritrean regime's external messaging. On August 17 and 18, the Eritrean Embassy in Washington and Ministry of Foreign Affairs respectively portrayed Ethiopia as pursuing an expansionist agenda and presented Eritrea as the defender of inherited borders and territorial sovereignty.³¹ Yet reports of Eritrean military personnel or equipment operating inside Tigray, sit uneasily alongside that sovereignty-based narrative. The contradiction is analytically important because it illustrates the difference between the regime's stated principles and its potential use of political and military influence beyond Eritrea's internationally recognized borders.

Massawa, Sudan and Eritrea's Regional Logistics Role

Eritrea's geographic position also appears increasingly relevant to the logistics surrounding Sudan's war. OSINT tracking identified 27 suspected cargo flights between July 3 and August 8 linking Belarus, Turkey, Egypt, Port Sudan and Massawa, including repeated Belarusian Il-76 movements to Massawa. Satellite imagery reportedly placed aircraft associated with these movements at the Eritrean port, while Turkish A400M flights from Baykar's facility in Tekirdag travelled to East Qwainat airbase in southwestern Egypt.³²

Massawa's importance therefore lies in its position within a supply network feeding the Sudanese civil war. Its location provides an additional Red Sea access point connecting the Horn with Sudan and complements routes involving Port Sudan and Egyptian facilities. An August 25 tracking of another Rubystar-operated Il-76TD flight from Minsk toward East Africa, with Massawa or Port Sudan identified as possible destinations, adds to the pattern. The evidence remains circumstantial, but repeated movements involving Eritrean territory make the port increasingly relevant to assessments of regional military logistics.

The Iranian dimension adds another layer to this picture. The Century Foundation assessment identified claims that Iran and the Houthis were attempting to restore logistical links through Eritrea and that Eritrean territory or waters may have been used for transfers of Iranian arms toward Yemen.³³ The report explicitly cautioned that evidence for the Eritrean component was weak in places, including limited activity at some alleged smuggling locations. These allegations therefore warrant monitoring, but their significance should not be dismissed. If Eritrean ports or waters are accessible to multiple external actors, Massawa could become useful to overlapping networks connecting Iran, Yemen, Sudan and the wider Red Sea, increasing the regime's strategic relevance while simultaneously complicating attribution and maritime security.

³¹ Shabait, "Eritrea's Sovereignty Is Not Negotiable: Neither Is the Sovereignty of Any Other African Nation," August 17, 2026.

³² Rich Tedd (@AfriMEOSINT), "Since the RSF struck Port Sudan in mid-2025, activity at Massawa Airport in Eritrea has increased sharply," X, August 13, 2026.

³³ Peter Salisbury, Nadwa Al-Dawsari, and Jay Bahadur, "From Spoke to Hub: The Houthis in Africa," Century International, August 24, 2026.

The Sibu 1 incident illustrates the difficulty of attribution in this environment.³⁴ The tanker was reportedly flying an Eritrean flag when hijacked off Yemen on August 20, and Reuters and The New York Times linked it to Iranian petroleum networks. Eritrea subsequently disputed the registration, with its London embassy stating that the vessel had no ownership or registration connection to Eritrea and that its flag was false. Given the conflicting evidence, the vessel cannot be used as proof of Eritrean involvement in Iranian sanctions evasion or the hijacking. The episode is nevertheless indicative of the increasingly opaque maritime environment connecting Yemen, Somalia, Iran and the Red Sea, where disputed registrations and overlapping networks complicate efforts to determine responsibility.

Domestic Constraints and the Consolidation of Eritrean Opposition

The external expansion of Eritrea's strategic relevance contrasts with continuing weaknesses in domestic governance and basic service provision. An AFP report published July 31 documented chronic water shortages in Asmara, with residents reporting disrupted supplies, reliance on private tankers and rainwater collection.³⁵ Research cited by AFP associated the problem with population growth, climate pressures, ageing infrastructure and weak water management, while the government did not respond to requests for comment. The precise scale of the crisis is difficult to establish because independent reporting inside Eritrea remains severely restricted, yet the consistency of reported experiences indicates a significant urban infrastructure vulnerability.

The political environment further limits the ability to assess domestic conditions independently. Residents interviewed about water shortages requested anonymity because of the risks associated with criticizing the government, while Eritrean official communications during the month continued to reject international criticism of the country's human rights record as politically motivated. This political closure matters analytically because increased diplomatic engagement can expand the regime's external legitimacy and strategic utility without producing greater institutional accountability internally. Eritrea's external opening and domestic political conditions therefore remain fundamentally distinct.

The consolidation of the Eritrean opposition represents a significant counter-development. Brigade Nhamedu in Israel's August congress formally endorsed its transition into the Eritrean Blue Revolution Front, following an earlier vote in which 84.6 percent supported the unified structure.³⁶ The development represents an effort to overcome longstanding fragmentation within Eritrean opposition politics and establish a more coherent political organization capable of sustaining political activity beyond episodic mobilization. Its significance lies in the attempt to provide Eritrean opposition forces with a more durable

³⁴ Pranav Baskar and Hussein Mohamed, "2 Hijackings in 4 Days: Somali Piracy Rises," The New York Times, August 20, 2026.

³⁵ Agence France-Presse, "Water shortages hit daily life in Eritrea's capital," July 31, 2026.

³⁶ Martin Plaut, "Successful Conclusion of the 3rd Congress of the Blue Revolution Movement (Brigade Nhamedu) – Israel Region," August 10, 2026.

institutional and political framework rather than simply another platform for diaspora activism.

The EBRF's growing visibility in Ethiopia and its increasingly organized political activity give the movement greater relevance within the broader Eritrean political contest. Its consolidation can potentially improve coordination among opposition actors, provide a clearer organizational vehicle for mobilization and give Eritrean dissidents a more recognizable political structure through which to challenge the PFDJ's monopoly over national representation. The organization nevertheless faces substantial constraints, including its lack of territorial control inside Eritrea, the fragmentation that has historically characterized the opposition and the difficulty of translating diaspora-based organization into sustained political influence within the country. These limitations do not negate the significance of the August consolidation, which marks a meaningful step toward a more structured alternative to PFDJ rule.

The regional dimension of the EBRF also deserves attention. Its activities in Ethiopia place it within the same geopolitical environment in which the PFDJ is cultivating relationships with actors opposed to Addis Ababa. This creates a reciprocal dynamic: the Eritrean regime can portray the presence of Eritrean opposition forces in Ethiopia as evidence of an Ethiopian threat, while the opposition can use Eritrea's regional activities to argue that the PFDJ itself has become a source of instability. The result is an increasingly interconnected political contest in which Eritrean domestic opposition and Horn of Africa geopolitics reinforce one another.

Conclusion

August reinforced a pattern in which Eritrea is becoming increasingly difficult for regional and international actors to ignore. Its reported inclusion in emerging Red Sea security arrangements, continuing access to multilateral institutions, engagement with Washington, relationship with Egypt and potential role in regional logistics networks all increase the PFDJ's diplomatic room for manoeuvre. The developing relationship with Tigrayan actors could further enhance the regime's strategic leverage if political contacts translate into sustained security cooperation. None of these developments establishes a fundamental realignment of Eritrea's foreign policy, but collectively they indicate a substantial increase in the regime's external strategic utility.

That external momentum exists alongside persistent structural conditions inside Eritrea. Political competition remains closed, independent reporting is severely constrained, basic infrastructure faces significant pressures, and international human rights scrutiny continues despite the regime's greater diplomatic access. The same contradiction extends to the regional level, where Asmara presents itself as an uncompromising defender of sovereignty and non-interference while reports continue to raise questions about Eritrean military positioning, political coordination and logistical activity beyond its borders. The potential

PFDJ-TPLF rapprochement is particularly significant in this regard because it could demonstrate that the regime's operational calculations are more flexible than its public sovereignty narrative suggests.

At the same time, the consolidation of the EBRF indicates that Eritrean opposition politics is developing greater organizational coherence. The movement does not presently possess the capacity to displace the PFDJ, but its transition from a more fragmented opposition structure toward a unified political organization gives Eritrean opponents a potentially more durable platform for challenging the regime's political monopoly. This creates an emerging dual trajectory: the PFDJ is exploiting Eritrea's strategic geography and regional rivalries to expand its external room for manoeuvre, while opposition forces are attempting to build an organizational alternative to its rule.

The central trajectory is therefore one of external strategic reconnection without corresponding domestic political opening. Eritrea's growing usefulness to regional and international actors is increasing the PFDJ's leverage, but it has not altered the governance conditions that produced sustained international concern. At the same time, the regime's expanding regional activity, particularly its reported engagement with Tigrayan actors and the growing relevance of Massawa to regional logistics, may give it greater influence while exposing contradictions between its public doctrine and its operational behaviour. August consequently points toward an Eritrea with greater external leverage, a more fluid regional strategy, and an increasingly organized opposition, rather than an Eritrea undergoing substantive political rehabilitation.

1.3 Djibouti: Maritime Security, Strategic Partnerships, Ethiopian Dependence

Djibouti's August developments reinforced its position at the intersection of Ethiopia's trade system and the increasingly complex security environment surrounding the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Ethiopia's dependence on Djibouti remained pronounced, with 96.71 percent of its seaborne cargo passing through Djiboutian terminals during the 2025/26 fiscal year, while the revival of a dedicated heavy-vehicle parking terminal in Mojo and continued investment at Doraleh pointed to incremental efforts to improve the infrastructure supporting this relationship. At the same time, renewed attention to the security of the Bab el-Mandeb placed greater emphasis on Djibouti's position as a littoral state and host to multiple foreign military facilities.

Djibouti became increasingly involved in efforts to organize maritime security through regional and international mechanisms. Its rejection of unilateral transit fees in the Bab el-Mandeb, consultations with Yemen and Egypt, support for a proposed Combined Djibouti Code of Conduct Task Force, and calls for greater international burden sharing reflected concern over the cumulative risks posed by Houthi attacks, piracy and vulnerabilities affecting maritime infrastructure. These developments occurred alongside continued military

activity by the United States and Japan from Djibouti, underscoring the country's continuing importance to external powers operating across the Horn and western Indian Ocean.

The month also highlighted the limits of Djibouti's strategic advantages. Its ports remain indispensable to Ethiopia, its territory continues to host major foreign military operations, and its location places it directly within efforts to manage insecurity around the Bab el-Mandeb. Yet Djibouti remains exposed to instability beyond its territorial waters and to climatic pressures within the Horn. UN projections that more than 256,000 people could face Crisis-level food insecurity or worse between July and December underscore a domestic vulnerability that exists alongside the country's considerable geopolitical importance.

I. Ethiopia–Djibouti Interdependence Deepens Through Logistics and Port Infrastructure

The Ethiopia–Djibouti relationship continued to rest on a highly concentrated but mutually consequential logistics system. Ethiopia's transfer of land in Mojo for a Djiboutian heavy-vehicle parking terminal addresses a practical bottleneck along the existing corridor and could improve freight turnaround and reduce congestion.³⁷ The significance lies less in creating a new strategic route than in making the established one more efficient. The project illustrates the incremental infrastructure cooperation through which the two countries continue to manage their deep economic interdependence.

The scale of that interdependence became clearer with Ethiopia's reported trade figures. Djibouti handled 96.71 percent of Ethiopia's seaborne cargo during the 2025/26 fiscal year, while Berbera and the Mombasa-Moyale corridor accounted for relatively small shares.³⁸ Doraleh's reception of the CMA CGM Benjamin Franklin, alongside improvements to cranes, storage and tug capacity, further strengthens Djibouti's ability to service large-scale maritime traffic.³⁹ For Ethiopia, these figures underline the unfinished nature of port diversification. For Djibouti, they confirm the continuing economic and strategic value of remaining the principal maritime gateway for its larger neighbour.

This dependence also gives the bilateral relationship a wider strategic dimension. Ethiopia's efforts to develop alternative corridors and secure a greater role in Red Sea affairs are occurring alongside continued reliance on Djibouti, creating an unusual combination of economic dependence and strategic diversification. Djibouti benefits from the traffic generated by Ethiopia's dependence while facing the longer-term prospect of Ethiopia reducing that dependence. The August infrastructure developments therefore point toward continued cooperation within an existing relationship whose underlying asymmetry remains strategically important to both sides.

³⁷ "Ethiopia, Djibouti unlock 25-year logistics bottleneck with Mojo land transfer," Capital News, August 2, 2026.

³⁸ Vue sur Djibouti, "DJIBOUTI | Djiboutian ports are crushing the competition on the Ethiopian corridor," X, August 28, 2026.

³⁹ Vue sur Djibouti, "FLASH INFO | Djibouti breaks its maritime record," X, August 26, 2026.

Djibouti Positions Itself Within an Emerging Bab el-Mandeb Security Framework

Security developments during August increasingly connected Djibouti to efforts to establish a more durable framework for protecting maritime traffic. Djibouti rejected the prospect of unilateral transit fees in the Bab el-Mandeb and emphasized international navigation rights, while its foreign minister held consultations with Yemen over maritime security and coordination among littoral states.⁴⁰ The proposed Combined Djibouti Code of Conduct Task Force adds another layer to this emerging architecture, with signatories considering a mechanism for coordinating regional maritime operations alongside existing international deployments.⁴¹

Djibouti subsequently called for greater international burden sharing at the UN Security Council, arguing that the security of the Bab el-Mandeb requires contributions from littoral states, maritime powers and other users of the route.⁴² This position reflects the country's exposure to threats originating outside its territorial waters despite its extensive security partnerships and military infrastructure. Djibouti's emphasis on shared responsibility also has implications for Ethiopia, whose trade is heavily exposed to disruptions along the same maritime corridor. It could provide Addis Ababa with a channel for greater participation in maritime-security coordination without immediately requiring a sovereign naval presence.

The emerging architecture is therefore developing around several overlapping mechanisms rather than a single security arrangement. Saudi Arabia is seeking greater coordination among Red Sea littoral states, while the Djibouti Code of Conduct framework provides a regional mechanism for maritime cooperation and existing foreign naval deployments remain active. Djibouti's participation across these mechanisms reflects the practical importance of the Bab el-Mandeb to its economy and security. It also places the country at a point where regional, international and commercial interests in maritime security increasingly intersect.

Foreign Military Presence Remains Central to Djibouti's Security Position

Djibouti's foreign military presence remained operationally significant throughout the month. A US military aircraft crash near Chabelley Airfield on August 9 was investigated without initial indications of external interference⁴³, while Japan deployed a Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft to replace a P-3C in its long-running anti-piracy operation.⁴⁴ Both developments underline the continued use of Djibouti as a platform for surveillance and maritime-security operations across the Gulf of Aden, Somalia and the wider Horn. The Japanese deployment retains its formal anti-piracy purpose, while the continued operation of US facilities remains closely connected to the security environment in Yemen and Somalia.

⁴⁰ Muluken Yewondwossen, "Djibouti rejects unilateral taxation proposal for Bab el Mandeb Strait," Capital, August 8, 2026.

⁴¹ International Maritime Organization, "Djibouti Code of Conduct states to form anti-piracy task force for Western Indian Ocean," Container Management, press release, n.d.

⁴² Ilyas M. Dawaleh, "Bab-el-Mandeb Should Not Wait for a Catastrophe," Addis Fortune, August 14, 2026.

⁴³ Vladislav V., "U.S. MQ-9 Reaper Crashes in Djibouti," Militarnyi, August 9, 2026.

⁴⁴ Roman Pryhodko, "Japan Deploys P-1 Patrol Aircraft to Djibouti for Anti-Piracy Operations," Militarnyi, August 10, 2026.

The concentration of external military actors also raises questions about the future configuration of Djibouti's strategic role. Commentary in the United States during August raised the possibility of greater basing redundancy in response to the Houthi threat and China's military presence in Djibouti, with Somaliland discussed as a potential complementary position. The available reporting does not indicate an imminent US withdrawal from Djibouti. Rather, the discussion points to a broader consideration of how Washington might distribute its regional military infrastructure while retaining access to the Bab el-Mandeb. For Djibouti, the issue is therefore less the immediate loss of a foreign military presence than the evolving requirements attached to remaining a principal operating platform for external powers.

Djibouti's military relevance also extends beyond the Red Sea itself. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's August 5 meeting with Djibouti's armed forces commander occurred during an AUSSOM command conference and focused on security coordination and operational interoperability.⁴⁵ Djibouti remains a significant troop contributor to the mission, giving it a direct operational stake in Somalia's security transition. Its simultaneous role in AUSSOM and in maritime-security arrangements demonstrates how Djibouti's geographic position connects the Gulf of Aden, Somalia and the Bab el-Mandeb within a single regional security environment.

Egypt's Engagement with Djibouti Gains Significance Within the Ethiopia Question

Djibouti also became increasingly relevant to Egypt's regional engagement with Ethiopia. On August 4, Gypto Pharma City and Bacha Group signed an agreement envisaging expanded Egyptian pharmaceutical exports to Djibouti and possible localization of manufacturing,⁴⁶ while Djibouti's foreign minister subsequently consulted Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty on bilateral relations and Red Sea security.⁴⁷ Viewed individually, these developments are commercial and diplomatic exchanges. Taken alongside Cairo's contemporaneous engagement with Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan, however, they form part of a broader Egyptian effort to deepen relationships across Ethiopia's surrounding strategic environment. Djibouti is particularly consequential within this pattern because Ethiopia continues to rely overwhelmingly on Djibouti for maritime trade, giving Cairo's relationship with Djibouti potential relevance to the wider competition over Ethiopia's Red Sea position and access.

The emerging pattern should therefore be understood within Egypt's broader effort to strengthen its position around Ethiopia as the Nile dispute increasingly intersects with Red Sea security and Ethiopia's pursuit of maritime access. This does not establish that Djibouti

⁴⁵ Shabelle Media Network, "Somalia's president meets Djibouti army chief ahead of AUSSOM commanders' conference," August 5, 2026.

⁴⁶ Daily News Egypt, "Gypto Pharma, Djibouti's Bacha Group sign MoU to expand Egyptian pharmaceutical exports to East Africa," August 4, 2026.

⁴⁷ Addis Standard, "Egypt's Badr Abdelatty discusses Horn security with Djibouti counterpart, fourth such talks in a month," August 24, 2026.

is participating in an Egyptian strategy against Ethiopia, and the August engagement does not indicate a shift in Djibouti's relationship with Addis Ababa. Djibouti retains strong economic interests in preserving its extensive trade relationship with Ethiopia, including the infrastructure and port revenues generated by Ethiopian dependence. The significance lies instead in Cairo's effort to cultivate relationships with states that occupy positions of direct strategic relevance to Ethiopia, with Djibouti particularly important because of its control over the principal maritime outlet through which Ethiopian trade reaches global markets.

The wider pattern of external engagement reinforces this point. Italy's agreement with Djibouti on critical infrastructure, subsea telecommunications, energy connectivity and strategic dialogue, together with continuing Qatari diplomatic engagement, demonstrates that Djibouti is attracting partnerships across commercial, infrastructural and diplomatic domains. These relationships should be distinguished from one another rather than treated as components of a single alignment. Their cumulative effect, however, is to increase the number of external actors with interests in Djibouti's infrastructure, maritime position and regional relationships.

Djibouti's August position was therefore defined by the interaction of several established roles rather than by a single strategic shift. Its ports remain indispensable to Ethiopia, its territory continues to host major foreign military operations, and its location places it directly within efforts to manage insecurity around the Bab el-Mandeb. Its calls for wider burden sharing suggest an effort to embed these roles within broader regional and international mechanisms, while infrastructure investment and diplomatic diversification continue to support its position as a logistics and security hub. At the same time, the resurgence of maritime threats and worsening drought conditions demonstrate that strategic importance does not insulate Djibouti from external disruption or domestic vulnerability.

1.4 Somalia and Somaliland

The Federal Republic of Somalia: AUSSOM Uncertainty, Al Shabaab Offensives, Piracy Resurgence and Puntland-Federal Clashes

Domestic Politics and Governance

Puntland security forces conducted a coordinated campaign across the region seizing three military bases aligned with the federal government. The operation began on August 5 when Puntland forces overran a federal aligned base near Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed Airport in northern Galkayo following heavy fighting involving mortars, heavy weapons and machine gun fire that continued for over an hour. Puntland authorities announced they had taken full control of the facility, arrested more than one hundred individuals including the local Puntland Security Force commander and taken custody of approximately sixty wounded fighters. The operation resulted in the seizure of weapons, vehicles, ammunition, police uniforms, and other equipment. Puntland officials alleged that some recovered materiel

included arms recently donated by China to the Somali Police Force as well as items marked with Somalia's Ministry of Defence insignia asserting that such equipment had been diverted to forces operating against regional interests rather than employed in counterterrorism efforts.⁴⁸

On August 6, Puntland security forces took control of the former Puntland Security Force headquarters and associated facilities in Bosaso without resistance as troops inside reportedly surrendered or joined Puntland forces following dialogue facilitated by local elders. This operation formed part of a broader assertion of exclusive regional authority over armed groups operating within Puntland territory.⁴⁹

On August 8, Puntland forces seized a third federal aligned military base in Carmo, Bari region, approximately one hundred kilometres from Bosaso, after federal aligned troops withdrew overnight following the expiration of a deadline and unsuccessful negotiations. Puntland police characterised the seizure as an effort to strengthen regional authority, dismantle parallel structures or militias perceived as threatening stability and ensure all armed groups operate under Puntland institutions. Federal-aligned troops were reported relocating toward other areas of Bari and Karkaar with subsequent deployments and local elder mediation efforts underway. The federal government had not issued a detailed public response to the seizures by the conclusion of the period.⁵⁰

Puntland security forces seized the Barda Dheere camp in the Mudug region on August 22 after a brief exchange of gunfire with local opponents who resisted the deployment. No casualties were reported. The facility had previously been occupied by personnel described as federal government aligned. The takeover continued a pattern of Puntland consolidating control over security sites previously linked to federal or federal aligned units following earlier actions in Galkayo and elsewhere. Neither side issued a detailed official statement immediately.⁵¹

Puntland state authorities announced the integration of surrendered federal government aligned forces into state security structures following recent Puntland seizures of federal bases in Galkayo and elsewhere. In a related development, General Jimale Takar, commander of the Somali National Army's 54th Division rejoined Puntland's security forces and agreed to integrate Danab units under Puntland command representing a blow to Mogadishu's authority.⁵²

Fierce fighting erupted between Somali National Army federal forces and elements aligned with former South West President Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen in Baidoa, the interim capital of South West State. The clashes began before dawn on August 17 when

⁴⁸ Al Jazeera. "Puntland Forces Seize Government-Held Camp in Somalia's Galkayo." August 5, 2026.

⁴⁹ Somali Guardian. "Somalia: Puntland Seizes Second Federal Camp, Alleges China-Donated Arms Diverted." August 6, 2026.

⁵⁰ Somali Guardian. "Somalia: Puntland Seizes Third Federal Base." August 8, 2026.

⁵¹ Baidoa Online. "Puntland Forces Take Control of Barda Dheere Military Camp in Mudug." August 21, 2026.

⁵² Somali Guardian. "Somalia: Gen. Jimale Takar Rejoins Puntland Forces in Major Blow to Mogadishu." August 15, 2026.

federal positions came under attack involving vehicle borne explosives. The Federal Ministry of Defence stated that the attackers included Al-Shabaab militants mixed with militias loyal to Laftagareen. Federal forces reported that they repelled the assault after hours of heavy fighting, killing nearly thirty attackers, capturing several others and seizing weapons and vehicles. Clearance operations continued in the aftermath.⁵³

Laftagareen's side claimed temporary control of parts of the city centre though this assertion was later disputed. Residents and hospital sources reported civilian casualties with at least two to five civilians killed by stray fire in early accounts. Later reports indicated more wounded including dozens at Bay Regional Hospital. The fighting was described as the fiercest since federal forces took the city in March 2026. Baidoa hosts large numbers of displaced people facing malnutrition, exacerbating the humanitarian impact of the clashes.⁵⁴

Late on August 19, more than ten suspected mortar explosions were heard across the city reportedly targeting the South West State presidential compound and surrounding areas. No confirmed deaths, injuries, or property damage were reported at the time. Heavily armed forces believed aligned with Laftagareen were seen near the Manyafuulka and Barwaaqo neighbourhoods and some residents began fleeing amid fears of renewed fighting. Baidoa remained under heavy federal security presence following the August 17 clashes. No group immediately claimed the mortars and no confirmed link to Al-Shabaab was established.⁵⁵

Forces aligned with Laftagareen vowed via spokesman Ugaas Hassan Mohamed to continue operations until federal troops are driven from Baidoa and the city is liberated. They accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of imposing a political agenda and warned Turkey against involvement claiming Turkish support for a massacre without providing evidence. No independent confirmation of Turkish aircraft in the August 17 fighting was available. Residents in multiple neighbourhoods, including Towfiiq/Warshada Hasey/Bakiin, Al-Faras, Soddonka Street, Hanano-Idow Dhagaal, Boonkay, and Barwaaqo fled amid reports of heavily armed fighters on the outskirts, citing fears of renewed clashes after the August 17 fighting and subsequent mortar reports. No new large scale combat or official casualty figures were confirmed for August 20.⁵⁶

Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed placed sole responsibility for the deadly fighting in Baidoa on the federal government, blaming it for the bloodshed that left thirty dead. Former Foreign Affairs Minister Abdisaied Muse Ali accused Turkey of carrying out a massacre of Somali nationals in connection with the Baidoa events though these allegations remained unsubstantiated.⁵⁷

The relationship between Somalia's federal government and Southwest State reached a

⁵³ Al Jazeera. "Somali Army Clashes with Rebel Forces for Control of Key City Baidoa." August 17, 2026.

⁵⁴ Reuters (via The Citizen). "Somali Troops Push Militiamen Out of Baidoa after Fierce Fighting." August 17,

⁵⁵ Baidoa Online. "Mortar Fire Targets Baidoa Presidential Compound as Residents Flee Amid Troop Movements." August 19.

⁵⁶ Baidoa Online. "Laftagareen Forces Vow to Drive Federal Troops From Baidoa, Warn Turkey." August 20, 2026.

⁵⁷ Somali Guardian. "Somalia Ex-President Blames Govt for Baidoa Bloodshed That Left 30 Dead." August 19, 2026.

critical point following the African Union Commission's authorization of AUSSOM forces to participate in combat operations against Darawish forces loyal to former Southwest State President Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen. In a letter dated August 21 and publicly detailed on August 29, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf formally authorized the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia to conduct joint military operations with the Federal Government of Somalia against Al Shabaab and what it described as affiliated militias and armed entities in Southwest State.⁵⁸

In a formal statement issued on August 27, Laftagareen's office strongly denied the federal allegations describing the Darawish units as legitimate state security forces mandated to protect civilians and state institutions. The statement warned that unsubstantiated claims of Al-Shabaab affiliation endanger civilian populations and undermine AUSSOM's credibility as a neutral peacekeeping force. Laftagareen's office specifically called for political neutrality by the African Union mission and urged the resolution of federal member state disputes through dialogue rather than military confrontation.⁵⁹

Political tensions regarding Somalia's electoral framework continued to occupy federal-level political discourse during this period. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud convened a meeting with international partners on August 4 in Mogadishu as part of diplomatic efforts to ease political tensions over the electoral process and encourage dialogue between the federal government and opposition. The president presented the government's agenda focused on nationwide direct elections on a one person, one vote basis for future parliament members, replacing the indirect model.⁶⁰

On August 11, the Somali Parliament elected a new Speaker widely regarded as the foremost Turkish asset in Mogadishu, a development that has drawn objections from opposition factions. Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and other opposition leaders have voiced strong opposition to the outcome, setting the stage for potential political confrontation. Turkish officials have reportedly warned that Ankara will move to arrest and exile opposition leaders including former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, should they persist in their defiance, according to statements attributed to a veteran Turkish diplomat.⁶¹

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre delivered a public rebuke of international partners on August 11, accusing them of maintaining a cultural problem in their engagement with Somalia. The Prime Minister charged that donors and partners continue to treat Somalia as if it remains in a transitional period without laws, constitution, or meaningful governance structures. He argued that international actors still seek to dictate policy and must adapt to Somalia's established institutions and National Transition Plan criticising operations managed from Nairobi and asserting that Somalia outperforms many East African countries

⁵⁸ Somali Guardian. "AU Clears Peacekeepers to Join Somalia Fight against Southwest Darwish Forces." August 29, 2026.

⁵⁹ Garowe Online. "Somalia: AUSSOM Faces Neutrality Test as Baidoa Political Crisis Turns Military." August 28, 2026.

⁶⁰ Somali Guardian. "Somalia President, International Partners Hold Electoral Talks." August 4, 2026.

⁶¹ Somali Guardian. "Turkey's Ally Wins Somalia Speaker Vote, Opposition Objects." August 11, 2026.

across multiple indicators.⁶²

The country's electoral commission announced on August 26 that it has formally accepted the Supreme Court ruling ordering a rerun of the Galmudug municipal and regional elections. The acceptance marks a step in resolving the electoral dispute that has plagued the Galmudug administration and its relationship with the federal government. Local political stakeholders in Galmudug have expressed cautious optimism regarding the rerun while also raising concerns about security conditions and the potential for political violence during the electoral process.⁶³

Federal security forces conducted a violent midnight raid in Mogadishu on August 24 resulting in the deaths of at least five individuals and injuries to more than ten others, according to local media reports. The operation, which involved gunfire and heavy equipment including bulldozers reportedly emptied a portion of the area in the capital. The precise circumstances of the raid remain unclear, with federal authorities yet to provide a detailed official account of the operation's objectives and outcomes.⁶⁴

Heavy fighting erupted between two local clan militias in Galkayo's Bulabacley neighbourhood, also reported in connection with Horumar. Residents reported sustained gunfire and use of heavy weapons in a populated area. Initial accounts cited at least five people killed and many more injured. Exact figures were not independently confirmed at the time, and no immediate ceasefire was announced.⁶⁵

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud continued his Galmudug tour arriving in and operating from the southern, Galmudug administered half of the divided city of Galkayo on August 18. He was welcomed at Abdullahi Issa Football Stadium and called for unity, reconciliation, and support for state institutions. The President visited the Prof. Addow Technical School, praising vocational training for youth employment in fields such as electrical work, construction, computers, and mechanics. The tour also included stops such as Bandiiradley. The visit occurred despite prior public warnings from Puntland authorities, who viewed it as a potential security threat.⁶⁶

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud declared on August 17 that Somalia no longer needs foreign peacekeepers to guarantee its own security, telling African partners that Somalia was prepared to assume full responsibility for its security. This statement came after growing concerns over sustainable funding for AUSSOM and the transition of security responsibilities to Somali forces.⁶⁷

⁶² Hiiraan Online. "Somali PM Urges UN Agencies, Donors to Change Approach to Working with Somalia." August 11, 2026.

⁶³ Somali Guardian. "Somalia Electoral Commission Accepts Galmudug Election Rerun." August 26, 2026.

⁶⁴ Somali Guardian. "Gunfire, Bulldozers and F-16 Jets: Inside Somalia's Bloody Midnight Raid That Emptied a Mogadishu Slum." August 24, 2026

⁶⁵ Baidoa Online. "Heavy Clan Fighting Erupts in Galkayo's Bulabacley Neighborhood." August 22, 2026.

⁶⁶ Hiiraan Online. "President Mohamud Arrives in Galkayo, Calls for Unity and Reconciliation." August 18, 2026.

⁶⁷ Somali Guardian. "Somalia President Calls for AU Peacekeepers to Leave." August 17, 2026.

Public sentiment in Somalia's Southwest State turned visibly against Turkish involvement in the country following airstrikes near Baidoa. Videos circulating on social media showed residents burning the Turkish flag while displaying regional banners with protesters accusing Turkey of conducting strikes that caused civilian casualties, livestock losses, and property damage in rural areas linked to forces loyal to ousted Southwest President Abdiiaziz Laftagareen. The demonstrations reflect growing resentment over Turkey's deeper involvement in Somalia's internal political disputes.⁶⁸

Security Sector Developments

The Somali National Army achieved a milestone on August 16 with the graduation of 3,000 newly trained soldiers at the Xananbuure Training Centre in Galgaduud, presenting the largest single graduation class since the collapse of the central government in 1991. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud serving as Commander in Chief attended the ceremony alongside Galmudug President Ahmed Abdi Qoorqoor, Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi and other senior officials. The recruits drawn from across the country, completed nearly a year of basic training encompassing military skills, discipline, legal instruction, and combat tactics. The training was conducted under a Saudi funded program stemming from a February defence agreement under which the Kingdom committed to training approximately 5,000 Somali soldiers with this graduation representing the majority of that pledge delivered in a single cohort. Foreign instructors from Romania, Ukraine, and Sudan participated in the program, with Saudi officials monitoring progress throughout the training cycle.⁶⁹

Ethiopian troops serving under the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia formally transferred the Buurhakaba Forward Operating Base to the Somali National Army's 60th Division in early August with reporting and related withdrawal activity highlighted on August 10. The base had been held by Ethiopian forces since 2014. Buurhakaba located in the Bay region along the key Baidoa Mogadishu road, is largely surrounded by Al-Shabaab controlled or contested areas, raising concerns about the Somali National Army's capacity to hold the position independently.⁷⁰

An emergency summit convened in Kampala specifically to address the future of Somalia's African Union peacekeeping mission concluded without securing a clear path forward for the AUSSOM mission. Reporting on August 9 highlighted that the summit instead confirmed how unresolved the mission's future remains, with troop-contributing countries urging inclusive political dialogue between the federal government and other actors to create conditions for transferring security responsibilities from AUSSOM to Somali forces. Contributing countries linked political stability to the mission's future success amid

⁶⁸ Somali Guardian. "Somalis Burn Turkish Flag as Resentment Grows over Ankara Airstrikes." August 16, 2026.

⁶⁹ Somalia Army Graduates 3,000 Troops, Largest Since 1991." Somali Guardian, August 16, 2026.

⁷⁰ Ethiopia withdraws troops from militant-encircled Burhakaba in Somalia as AUSSOM faces mounting crisis." Somali Guardian, August 10, 2026.

uncertainty over funding and logistics, as United Nations Support Office in Somalia support is scheduled to end by late 2026. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has opposed folding internal political disputes into AUSSOM security discussions, asserting they are domestic matters not subject to international mediation.⁷¹

Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces General Muhoozi Kainerugaba announced on August 29 that the Uganda People's Defence Force will completely withdraw from Somalia by August 1, 2027. The announcement which carries weight given Uganda's status as one of the longest serving and largest contributors to peacekeeping operations in Somalia, marks the end of nearly two decades of continuous Ugandan military presence in the country. General Kainerugaba's statement explicitly declared that there will be no Ugandan troops in Somalia after that date, signaling a definitive end to Kampala's participation in both AUSSOM and bilateral security arrangements.⁷²

President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda made an intervention stating that Uganda's nearly two decade military deployment in Somalia was driven primarily by solidarity with Ethiopia rather than by direct support for Somalia itself. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission, Ugandan Defence Minister Kiryowa Kiwanuka confirmed that Uganda would remain in Somalia with arrangements expected to evolve under a pre-existing bilateral agreement with Somalia in addition to African Union mission contributions. Other troop-contributing countries were also reported as exploring options for continued presence.⁷³

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia opened a public tender for licensed auctioneers to liquidate a sprawling inventory of mission assets reflecting the planned drawdown of support operations. The announcement followed indications that Washington has pulled support for sustaining AUSSOM operations raising questions about the continuity and effectiveness of international security support to Somalia during a critical transition period.⁷⁴

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia closed registration for licensed auctioneers to sell mission property including vehicles, generators, shipping containers, security watchtowers, medical equipment, and prefabricated accommodation. This followed an August 6 tender and reflected the United States decision to end funding support for the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission logistics by the end of 2026, accelerating drawdown planning for the approximately

⁷¹ "Kampala summit fails to secure Somalia's AUSSOM future." Somali Guardian, August 9, 2026.

⁷² Uganda to withdraw all UPDF troops from Somalia by August 1, 2027, army chief Says – AUSSOM faces major test." Somali Guardian, August 29, 2026.

⁷³ Museveni says Uganda's Somalia mission was solidarity with Ethiopia, not Somalia." Somali Guardian, August 14, 2026.

⁷⁴ U.N. opens tender to sell vehicles and equipment in Somalia as AU mission faces uncertainty." Hiiraan Online, August 9, 2026.

12,000-troop mission.⁷⁵

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia initiated a process of layoffs and asset auctions during the period signalling deepening problems for AUSSOM linked to U.S. funding cuts and the potential termination of international support after December 31, 2026. The UN began issuing layoff notices, including for ten civilian staff of the African Union-United Nations Information Support Team, with contracts ending by September 10. The asset auction process includes vehicles, information technology equipment, construction machinery, medical units, and other operational equipment.⁷⁶

The United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS) formally concluded its thirteen year rule of law assistance programme on or around August 25 marked by a ceremony in Mogadishu attended by Justice Minister Hassan Moalim Mohamud and international partners. The programme which provided training and capacity building support to Somalia's justice institutions and prison services, concluded as part of the phased transition and handover ahead of the mission's planned closure. The Somali government has assumed greater ownership of justice sector development though questions remain about the sustainability of progress achieved during the UN assistance period.⁷⁷

Counterterrorism and Security Operations

The United States Africa Command conducted an airstrike on August 7 in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia targeting Al-Shabaab near Jilib in southern Somalia approximately three hundred twenty two kilometres southwest of Mogadishu. AFRICOM released no further details regarding units, assets, casualties, or civilian harm assessments. The strike marked at least the seventy eighth United States airstrike in Somalia during 2026.⁷⁸

In an operation in the Tawakal area of Lower Shabelle, NISA reported killing seven Al Shabaab militants and wounding several senior commanders in a planned strike on a group facility. Key figures present or targeted included Yonis Moallim Abuukar, who had been linked to the Mushani area; Abuu Haji Fareey, identified as the Tawakal commander; Ayaatullaahi, associated with the Lower Shabelle front; and Abdifitaah Rooble, responsible for extortion activities in the Baladul Amin area. NISA framed the operation as part of sustained efforts to degrade leadership structures and attack planning sites. The claims could not be independently verified and Al-Shabaab did not immediately comment on the reported operation.⁷⁹

A separate operation in the Maxaas district of Hiiraan region targeted a house where senior

⁷⁵ UN Puts Somalia Mission Assets Up for Sale As U.S. Funding Cutoff Looms.” allAfrica (via Radio Dalsan), August 10/11.

⁷⁶ Somalia security crisis: UN layoffs, asset auctions signal AUSSOM’s endgame.” Somali Guardian, August 24, 2026.

⁷⁷ UN ends 13 years of support to Somalia’s justice institutions and prison services.” Hiiraan Online, August 26, 2026.

⁷⁸ U.S. Africa Command. “U.S. Forces Conduct Strike Targeting al-Shabaab.” August 7, 2026.

⁷⁹ Somali intelligence agency kills seven Al-Shabaab fighters in Lower Shabelle region.” Hiiraan Online, August 13, 2026.

Al-Shabaab figures were gathered. NISA again with international partner support conducted a planned strike resulting in the deaths of three commanders identified as Abdi Hafid who was responsible for the explosives unit; Daalibaan, who led a rapid response or reinforcement unit; and Omar Hussein, a front commander. Senior Hiiraan regional commander Mustaf Caato was reported to have been seriously wounded and evacuated to El Bur for treatment, with two additional commanders also reported wounded.⁸⁰

In the Tardo area of Hiiraan region, NISA reported killing three senior Al-Shabaab commanders and five of their guards in a targeted operation on August 23, with four other militants wounded. Those killed were identified as Said Huriye, said to oversee extortion collections in eastern Hiiraan; Hamza Bakool, commander of fighters in the region; and Osman, head of a unit known as Fursaan. Among the wounded was commander Khalid Iro, while Abdikarim Yusuf Ahmed, described as responsible for Tardo, reportedly escaped. Claims could not be independently verified, and Al-Shabaab did not immediately respond to the reported operation.⁸¹

The National Intelligence and Security Agency announced on August 30 that Abdullahi Hashi Labajir, also known as Ikhlās, the overall head of Al-Shabaab's intelligence wing since 2013, was killed in a planned joint operation with international partners. The airstrike occurred on August 23 in Jilib district, Middle Juba region, according to NISA's statement. Labajir was described by security officials as having played a senior role in intelligence gathering, surveillance operations, and attack planning for the militant group.⁸²

The National Intelligence and Security Agency announced on August 8 that it had arrested nine individuals accused of Al Shabaab membership and involvement in attack plots targeting Mogadishu and surrounding areas. According to NISA, the operation leading to the arrests was conducted in Garasbaaley, Kaxda, and parts of Ceelasha Biyaha following extended monitoring of the suspects' activities. The agency stated that the group was planning attacks that could have caused harm to Somali civilians and confirmed that security forces had succeeded in preventing the alleged plot before it could be executed.⁸³

Al-Shabaab demonstrated continued offensive capability during the period, recapturing the town of Teedaan in eastern Hiiraan region after approximately twenty four hours of fighting with Somali National Army forces and allied Macawisley clan militias. The operation involved a vehicle borne improvised explosive device and coordinated assaults on positions held by government forces and Hawadle clan militias resulting in the withdrawal of government forces and the seizure of weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Al-Shabaab claimed dozens of casualties among government forces though these figures remain unconfirmed. The federal government had not issued an immediate detailed response to the setback by the

⁸⁰ “Somalia: NISA Says Three Al-Shabaab Commanders Killed in Hiiraan Operation.” *allAfrica*, August 16, 2026.

⁸¹ *Somalia Today*. “Somalia Says 3 Al-Shabaab Commanders, 5 Guards Killed.” August 16, 2026.

⁸² *People Daily*. “Somalia Says Al-Shabaab Intelligence Chief Killed in Jilib Operation.” August 30, 2026.

⁸³ *Hiiraan Online*. “Somalia’s Intelligence Agency Arrests Nine Suspected al-Shabab Members in Mogadishu.” August 8, 2026.

conclusion of initial reporting.⁸⁴

Local media reported on August 25 that Al-Shabaab claimed it had thwarted an attack by Somali militia forces in Daynile District, Mogadishu. The reports indicated that three government or militia members were killed and nine wounded during the clashes or thwarted operation. The militia forces involved in the Daynile operation were reportedly affiliated with Somali government security structures, suggesting ongoing efforts to expand the security perimeter in the capital's outskirts.⁸⁵

Two young pastoralists killed senior Al-Shabaab commander Hassan Alasow Rage, also known as Hassan Husuley or Khusuley, approximately fifty years old, who oversaw transport operations and previously handled zakat collection in Ruunirgood district. They seized his AK-47 and ammunition. The Federal Ministry of Defence praised community action against the group and accused the commander of livestock confiscation and restricting movement.⁸⁶

Piracy and Maritime Security

Suspected Somali pirates seized the Eritrean-flagged oil products tanker M.T. Sibu 1, also known as Seamull in the Gulf of Aden on or around August 20 approximately 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla, Yemen. Six armed men boarded after the vessel reported an unauthorised approach and it was diverted toward Somalia's Puntland coast. The tanker carried approximately twenty crew, including sixteen Indian nationals plus Syrian, Sudanese, Iraqi and one unconfirmed nationality.⁸⁷

UKMTO confirmed the boarding and course change. India stated that the Indian crew members were safe and that it had engaged Somali authorities. This was the second major hijacking in days following the August 17 seizure of the Cameroon-flagged M/V Lutuf, which was carrying Turkish weapons and equipment bound for a Mogadishu training facility and had a crew including six Indians. Somali pirate groups were reported holding roughly six vessels and more than one hundred crew overall.⁸⁸

A drone strike near Garmaal on Puntland's Nugaal coast killed four suspected Somali pirates on August 18 a day after eight armed men hijacked the Cameroon flagged cargo vessel MV Lutuf on August 17 about four nautical miles south of Mareeyo/Marraya. The men had reportedly left the ship in a small boat to gather supplies ashore when struck. Attribution was unclear at the time of initial reports with no immediate claim by any government, coalition or contractor. Later accounts linked it to Turkish assets. The status of the vessel, remaining hijackers, and crew was not fully confirmed in early reporting.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Shabelle Media Network. "Somalia: Al-Shabaab Claims Capture of Strategic Village in Central Somalia." August 3, 2026

⁸⁵ Tracking Terrorism (TRAC). "Al-Shabaab Thwart Attack by Somali Militia Forces." August 25–26, 2026.

⁸⁶ The Eastleigh Voice. "Pastoralist Youths Kill Senior Al-Shabaab Leader in Middle Shabelle." August 18, 2026.

⁸⁷ Al Jazeera. "Gunmen Seize Tanker off Yemen amid Resurgence of Somali Piracy." August 20, 2026.

⁸⁸ CNBC-TV18. "22 Indian Seafarers Aboard Two Hijacked Ships off Yemen, Somalia Are Safe, India Says." August 21, 2026.

⁸⁹ Hiiraan Online. "Four Suspected Somali Pirates Buried after Reported Turkish Drone Strike." August 2026.

The federal government conducted a successful anti piracy operation that resulted in the liberation of the hijacked Cameroon-flagged cargo vessel MV LUTUF. The Ministry of Defence announced that Turkish Navy and Somali National Armed Forces freed the ship following a ten-day anti-piracy operation off the Jifle and Eyl area in the Nugaal region of Puntland. According to the ministry's statement, four pirate boats were destroyed, fourteen alleged pirates were killed and sustained pressure forced the remaining pirates to abandon the vessel, which subsequently resumed its voyage.⁹⁰

However, the federal government's account was immediately contested by Puntland's Ministry of Security, which rejected the military operation narrative entirely. Puntland authorities stated that the pirates released the vessel following a reported \$2.5 million ransom payment, which was allegedly facilitated with federal and Turkish involvement, and that no joint military rescue operation occurred. Puntland's statement condemned any ransom payment as emboldening pirate networks and also criticised earlier Turkish strikes that it said killed civilians and fishermen.⁹¹

Puntland's Ministry of Security issued a statement strongly condemning the airstrike near Garmaal that killed four people and wounded two others. It identified the victims as civilian fishermen, opposed strikes against civilians and property in coastal areas where hijacked vessels are held, and demanded an immediate explanation from the responsible government regarding operations reported around August 18–20. The statement did not name a specific country. Puntland warned that such incidents could undermine cooperation with international anti piracy partners.⁹²

State Minister of Defence Omar Ali Abdi publicly addressed the August 18 incident near Garmaal for the first time on August 23. He said the federal government had prior knowledge of the operation, defended it in the context of anti piracy efforts linked to the MV Lutuf hijacking, and questioned whether Puntland had evidence that the four killed and two wounded were civilian fishermen rather than pirates. Early reports had described the victims as suspected pirates from a small boat associated with the Lutuf, while Puntland and some local accounts later identified them as civilians and condemned the strikes. Turkey had not publicly claimed or commented on the operation. Abdi indicated a comprehensive report would follow.⁹³

An AFP analysis of IMO data released during the period shows that Somali piracy attacks have reached their highest level since 2013 with at least fifteen attacks reported in 2026 through the analysis period in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and western Indian Ocean within approximately two thousand kilometres of Somalia. This presents a sharp increase

⁹⁰ Al Jazeera. "Turkiye, Somalia Forces Free Cargo Vessel Hijacked by Pirates." August 30, 2026.

⁹¹ Somali Guardian. "MV LUTUF Freed off Somalia after Turkey Pays Ransom to Somali Pirates." August 29, 2026.

⁹² Somali Dispatch. "Puntland Demands Answers on Turkish Drone Strike and Shelling along the Nugal Coast." August 22, 2026.

⁹³ Somali Guardian. "Somalia Defends Turkish Drone Strike Puntland Says Killed Civilians

from the handful of attacks reported annually in prior years and from the five attacks recorded in 2025. The attacks are concentrated in the Gulf of Aden with eight attacks reported since May alone. The increase in piracy activity has been linked in reporting to disrupted shipping patterns stemming from broader regional conflicts. The largest incident involved approximately thirty armed pirates targeting the oil tanker Honour 25 near Eyl in Puntland on April 21.⁹⁴

International Engagements and Diplomacy

Somalia and Pakistan deepened bilateral defence cooperation during the period through a series of high level engagements in Islamabad. Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi, leading a high level delegation signed a memorandum of understanding with Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on August 4 covering cooperation on counterterrorism operations, military training programmes, exchange of military expertise and knowledge, defence capacity building, and broader security collaboration. Somalia's Ministry of Defence described the agreement as strengthening ties and supporting efforts against groups such as Al-Shabaab while rebuilding Somali institutions.⁹⁵

Somalia welcomed the joint defence agreement signed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan on August 7 describing the pact as an important step toward strengthening collective security and defence cooperation. The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, signed by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, stipulates that an armed attack against any one of the three countries will be considered an attack against all three. In a statement, Somalia's Defence Ministry congratulated the three countries on the agreement and expressed confidence that it would contribute to developing defence cooperation and establishing a partnership to address shared security challenges.⁹⁶

The United States military signed a new security agreement with Puntland expanding the United States military facility in Bosaso to support counterterrorism operations and maritime security in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni met with a United States AFRICOM and Special Operations delegation led by Major General Claude Tudor in Bosaso, where they agreed to expand the base to support operations against both Islamic State Somalia and Al-Shabaab. The agreement was described in regional reporting as bypassing the federal government in Mogadishu and reflecting a dual-track United States approach favouring cooperation with more stable federal member states amid frustration with Mogadishu's political dysfunction.⁹⁷

Jubaland regional President Ahmed Mohamed Islam known as Ahmed Madobe, held high

⁹⁴ Modern Ghana (AFP). "Piracy Attacks off Somalia Surge in 2026: AFP Analysis of IMO Data." August 27, 2026.

⁹⁵ Somali Guardian. "Somalia, Pakistan Sign Defence Cooperation Pact in Islamabad." August 4, 2026.

⁹⁶ Hiiraan Online. "Somalia Welcomes Saudi-Türkiye-Pakistan Defense Pact." August 8, 2026.

⁹⁷ Somali Guardian. "Somalia: US Signs Bosaso Base Deal with Puntland, Bypassing Mogadishu." August 3, 2026.

level discussions with Major General Claude Tudor and other AFRICOM senior officials during the period. The in depth discussions centred on ways to further strengthen the security partnership and accelerate ongoing operations against Al-Shabaab. The two sides held further talks focusing on efforts to liberate areas still under militant group control, showing the continued importance of federal member state-level engagement with international security partners.⁹⁸

Regional Diplomacy

Sudan's Ambassador met with Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Ali in Mogadishu to discuss regional political and security conditions, the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation on shared interests. Parallel Sudan-Egypt contacts occurred on similar themes, suggesting broader regional diplomatic coordination on the Sudan crisis.⁹⁹

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Somali counterpart Abdisalam Abdi Ali held discussions in a phone call referenced as August 18 and widely covered on August 19. Egypt rejected any unilateral measures threatening Somali territorial integrity or sovereignty, reaffirmed support for Somali state institutions, especially counterterrorism capacity, and stressed the need for sustainable funding for AUSSOM, in which Egypt participates, and the UN Support Office in Somalia to maintain security and unity. Somalia expressed appreciation for Egypt's stance.¹⁰⁰

At Villa Somalia, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud formally received Letters of Credence from ambassadors of Algeria, Brazil, India, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali presented the envoys. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral ties in politics, trade, investment, development, security, and social affairs. The Foreign Minister had received copies of credentials from four of them the previous day. The presentation of credentials from Pakistan's first woman ambassador to Somalia was noted as a diplomatic milestone.¹⁰¹

Nigeria's Ambassador Designate to Kenya with concurrent accreditation to Somalia, Danlami Ibrahim, presented copies of his Letters of Credence in Mogadishu during the period. Talks with Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali covered a broad range of potential areas of cooperation, including education, security, trade and investment, diaspora management, culture, and the creative economy. Both sides expressed commitment to strengthening bilateral ties, with particular emphasis on economic cooperation and diaspora

⁹⁸ Somaliland Standard. "Jubaland President and AFRICOM Officials Discuss Ways to Accelerate the War against Al-Shabaab." August 7, 2026

⁹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation of Somalia. "Somali FM Receives Sudanese Ambassador for Courtesy Call."

¹⁰⁰ Egypt Today. "Egypt's FM, Somali Counterpart Discuss Regional Developments and Strategic Partnership." August 19.

¹⁰¹ Hiiraan Online. "Somali President Receives Credentials from Seven New Ambassadors." August 19, 2026.

engagement.¹⁰²

China announced the deployment of its 49th naval escort fleet for the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters, with the guided missile destroyer Kunming, guided missile frigate Yueyang, and supply ship Luomahu scheduled for deployment in mid-August. The task group will relieve the 48th fleet, continuing anti-piracy and shipping protection operations under United Nations resolutions, a mission China has maintained since 2008.¹⁰³

A United States District Judge lifted a stay allowing the Trump administration to terminate Temporary Protected Status for Somalis following a June 2026 Supreme Court decision limiting judicial review of certain Temporary Protected Status terminations. The ruling, issued around August 14, affects approximately 1,100 or several thousand Somali nationals, depending on counting methodologies, including pending applications, who had held deportation protections and work authorization. Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had cited improved country conditions as the basis for termination, while challengers alleged bias. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services guidance confirmed the designation's termination effective around mid-August 2026, with employment authorization documents under the relevant categories no longer valid.¹⁰⁴

Somaliland: Presidential Diplomatic Offensive, Maritime Security Cooperation, and Sovereignty Assertions

International Engagements and Diplomacy

President Irro convened with ambassadors, heads of international organizations and development partners in Nairobi, Kenya, on August 8, 2026, delivering an appeal to Western and international diplomats urging them to fundamentally reconsider the basis of their engagement with his administration. He explicitly called for the international community to treat Somaliland as a sovereign, capable partner rather than as an extension or subordinate entity of Somalia. Central to this diplomatic offensive was the President's reference to the recent recognition of Somaliland by Israel, which he characterized as a diplomatic "breakthrough."¹⁰⁵

President Irro also used the Nairobi forum to address the stalled dialogue process with the Federal Government of Somalia. While reiterating Somaliland's willingness to engage in talks, he laid down a firm precondition that Somalia must first honor and implement previously agreed upon commitments before any new round of negotiations can commence. He explicitly accused the Mogadishu administration of failing to adhere to past agreements, pointing to the management of civil aviation and shared airspace as a prime example of

¹⁰² Nigerian Eye. "Nigerian Envoy, Danlami Ibrahim Presents Letters of Credence to Somalia President." August 26, 2026.

¹⁰³ Xinhua. "China to Send New Naval Escort Fleet to Gulf of Aden, Somali Waters." August 11, 2026.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. "Termination of Temporary Protected Status for Somalia. August 14, 2026

¹⁰⁵ Somali Guardian. "Irro Tells Foreign Diplomats in Nairobi: Engage Somaliland as Sovereign State, Not Extension of Somalia." August 8, 2026.

alleged non-compliance. He appealed directly to the international partners present, asking them not just to encourage dialogue but to actively pressure Somalia to uphold its side of existing accords, asserting that "dialogue requires mutual respect, implementation of commitments, and confidence that agreements will be honored." He further accused the federal government of interference in Somaliland's regional peace processes.¹⁰⁶

The diplomatic engagement between the State of Israel and the Republic of Somaliland saw a development with a meeting between Israel's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Yossi Shelley, and Somaliland's representative in the UAE, Mr. Masoud Abdi Ali. The discussion reported on August 12 with follow-up coverage, centred on capitalizing on the opportunities arising from the Israeli government's formal recognition of Somaliland.¹⁰⁷

Somaliland's representative to Kenya, Dr. Mohamed Abdilahi Omar received Israeli Ambassador Gideon Behar who is accredited to Kenya and also serves as Ambassador to UNEP and UN-Habitat, at the Somaliland Mission in Nairobi. Discussions between the two envoys covered Somaliland's political trajectory, historical context, and the evolving political and security situation of the Red Sea region. Dr. Omar described the exchange as a warm and productive dialogue focused on matters of shared interest between Somaliland and Israel.¹⁰⁸

During this period, the official Republic of Somaliland account issued a statement expressing solidarity with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece against what it described as aggression from Somalia and Turkey. The statement referenced Somali Parliament Speaker Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur's engagement, subsequently deleted, with the speaker of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), characterizing it as raising questions. Following that, Somaliland called on Greece and Cyprus to take a fresh look at the Republic of Somaliland, arguing that recognition would create new opportunities for diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation while strengthening a shared position against Somali and Turkish influence.¹⁰⁹

In a diplomatic move following a phone call between Somalia's parliamentary speaker and the leader of the Turkish backed administration in northern Cyprus, Somaliland called upon Cyprus and Greece to review their positions on its recognition bid. Hargeisa expressed support for Cyprus and Greece while voicing concern over deepening Somalia-Turkey strategic ties. Somaliland argued that recognition would open opportunities for diplomacy, trade, and security cooperation between the respective states.¹¹⁰

The Taiwan Representative Office officially launched a funded project in Hargeisa aimed at enhancing maritime security, maritime domain awareness, information sharing, and

¹⁰⁶ Hiiraan Online. "Somaliland President Calls for Implementation of Past Agreements with Federal Government." August 20.

¹⁰⁷ Hiiraan Online. "Israel, Somaliland Officials Discuss Ties after Recognition." August 14, 2026.

¹⁰⁸ Horn Diplomat. "Kenya: Somaliland, Israeli Envoys Discuss Red Sea Security in Nairobi." August 27–28, 2026.

¹⁰⁹ Somaliland Current. "Somaliland Calls on Cyprus and Greece to Recognize It." August 22, 2026.

¹¹⁰ Hiiraan Online. "Unrecognised Somaliland Calls on Cyprus, Greece to Recognise It." August 2026.

safeguarding freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Somaliland Interior Minister Abdalle Mohamed Arab, Presidency Minister Khadar Hussein Abdi, Coast Guard Commander Admiral Ahmed Hurre Hariye, and other senior officials, alongside Taiwan's representative Allen C. Lou. Taiwan described the initiative as building upon prior cooperation, including a 2025 Coast Guard agreement, and expressed the hope that it would encourage broader international participation in regional maritime security efforts based on shared interests.¹¹¹

Vice President and Acting President, Mr. Ali Aw Abdi, received the Danish Ambassador to Somalia, His Excellency Steen Sonne Andersen, at the Presidential Palace for high-level talks focused on strengthening and deepening the bilateral relationship between Somaliland and the Kingdom of Denmark. The discussions covered a wide range of areas of mutual interest, with a particular emphasis on security cooperation, the consolidation of stability, social development programming, and the enhancement of economic infrastructure. Agenda items pertaining to democratic governance and the conduct of elections featured prominently in the conversation.¹¹²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued an official press statement expressing the government's strong objection to a recent high level United Nations delegation visit to the city of Laascaanood, situated within the Sool region. In its statement, the Ministry said that the visit was conducted without prior coordination with the Somaliland authorities in Hargeisa and framed the government's objection in terms of a fundamental violation of Somaliland's sovereignty and established administrative protocols for international engagements within its territory.¹¹³

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a strong statement condemning the attack on two vessels affiliated with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The statement expressed the government's full solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and categorically rejected any acts that threaten the security and safety of international navigation or the freedom of maritime trade. Somaliland called for the strict respect of international law in order to preserve regional stability and security.¹¹⁴

Regional and Counterterrorism Cooperation

Somaliland's Defense Minister, Mr. Mohamed Yusuf Ali, led a high powered delegation on an official working visit to the United States Africa Command center in Stuttgart, Germany. The talks, held on or around August 6, 2026, focused on bilateral defense and maritime security cooperation. This engagement at the AFRICOM headquarters signifies a deepening

¹¹¹ Somaliland Post. "Taiwan Launches Red Sea Fusion Centre Project in Somaliland to Support Maritime Security." August 27–30, 2026.

¹¹² Somaliland Standard. "Somaliland, Denmark Discuss Strengthening Cooperation, Security, and Development." August 12.

¹¹³ Somaliland Standard. "Somaliland Criticizes the Visit of UN Delegation to Las Anod." August 17, 2026.

¹¹⁴ Arlaadi Media. "Somaliland Condemns UAE Ship Attacks, Calls for Safe and Open Maritime Routes." August 14, 2026.

of the security partnership between Somaliland and the United States.¹¹⁵

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, through its Maritime Security Coordination Office, launched a two day high level consultation in Hargeisa on the evolving security situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The consultation assessed emerging threats, regional developments, and their implications for Somaliland's maritime interests, trade, economic infrastructure, and national assets. Opening remarks were delivered by Ministry Director General Mohamed Abdirahman Hassan, who emphasized analysis of emerging threats and infrastructure resilience, and Maritime Security Coordination Office Director Mohamed Aden Sheikh (Tukaale), who called for practical recommendations on preparedness. A EUCAP representative also addressed the participants.¹¹⁶

Domestic Affairs and Political Dynamics

The Minister of Interior and National Security, Abdalle Mohamed Arab, also known as Abdalle Mohamed Carab or Sandheere, issued a series of public statements alleging that the prolonged tensions and intermittent conflict affecting the western regions of Awdal and Salal are not, contrary to some characterizations, primarily a manifestation of intra-clan disputes. Minister Arab definitively described the situation as external fitna, or discord, deliberately orchestrated from outside Somaliland's borders. In his remarks, the Minister specifically accused the Federal Government of Somalia of direct involvement in fomenting instability in the area. He further implicated the Republic of Djibouti in these efforts and expressed his government's deep suspicion that the Republic of Türkiye is actively working to undermine local peace initiatives and prevent a lasting resolution among the affected communities.¹¹⁷

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Irro welcomed four former lawmakers from the Northeastern Administration who have formally resigned their seats and declared their allegiance to Somaliland. The delegation, comprising Makhtal Said Mohamud, Ahmed Caabbi Hassan, Sidiq Jama Muse, and Ahmed Ali Mohamed, met with the President in discussions focused on peacemaking, social cohesion, community security, stability, and development in their areas of origin in the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn regions.¹¹⁸

Security Operations and Domestic Stability

Somaliland security forces conducted operations in the western regions of Awdal and Salel, successfully seizing combat vehicles and an assortment of weapons from clans engaged in recent inter clan hostilities. Military officials formally displayed the confiscated items to local media, issuing a clear warning that the civilian population will not be permitted to illegally retain military grade equipment or combat vehicles. The operation was initiated in

¹¹⁵ Horn Diplomat. "Somalia: Somaliland, U.S. Africom Hold Strategic Defense Talks in Germany." August 6–7, 2026

¹¹⁶ Somaliland Current. "Somaliland Charts Course Through Turbulent Waters as Red Sea Security Conference Gets Underway." August 23, 2026

¹¹⁷ Somaliland Post. "Somaliland Accuses Somalia, Djibouti and Türkiye of Interference in Western Regions." August 16, 2026.

¹¹⁸ Hiiraan Online. "Somaliland President Meets Former Northeastern MPs after Defection to Hargeisa." August 30, 2026.

response to reported violations of a recent peace agreement that had called for the upholding of the ceasefire and the avoidance of actions that could restart hostilities. Security forces have been specifically tasked with enforcing these measures with authorization to use force against individuals found in possession of prohibited weapons or those accused of instigating conflict.¹¹⁹

Regional Engagements and Economic Partnerships

Somaliland Ports Authority hosted a high-level delegation from Ukraine's RIDNE Consortium, accompanied by representatives of the Tony Blair Institute, at Berbera Port for strategic discussions related to the facility's development. Ports Authority Manager Ali Diiriye Ahmed received the delegation, which was interested in the port's strategic potential and infrastructure enhancements.¹²⁰

1.5 Sudan: Mixed Battlefield Fortunes, Deepening Regionalization, and a Contested Dialogue

August 2026 presented Sudan's war in its most regionally entangled form yet. The SAF consolidated tactical gains in Kordofan while the RSF-SPLM-N alliance reversed the momentum in Blue Nile with the capture of Geisan, producing a month of mixed battlefield fortunes across separate but interconnected theatres. RSF defections reached the largest scale of the war to date, with several hundred fighters and dozens of commanders surrendering within a matter of weeks.

More consequentially, the conflict's regional footprint expanded sharply: Chad formally accused Khartoum of conducting drone strikes on two separate occasions inside Chadian territory, satellite analysis by Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab identified a substantial military build-up at an Ethiopian base near Asosa that raised renewed alarm over the Blue Nile corridor, and Sudan continued to accuse Addis Ababa of allowing hostile drones to cross its airspace. The escalating cross-border dimension of the war prompted the United States to formally propose, at a UN Security Council briefing, expanding the two-decade-old Darfur arms embargo to cover the whole of Sudan. The Sudanese pound fell to a record low on the parallel market, the World Food Program continued to warn of ration cuts amid a severe funding shortfall in Darfur, and a broad civilian coalition formally rejected Burhan's national dialogue initiative at a meeting in Addis Ababa. None of August's developments produced a ceasefire, an enforceable humanitarian access arrangement, or a credible political pathway, only a sharper and more dangerous configuration of the same underlying stalemate.

The battlefield produced contradictory signals across separate theatres. In North Kordofan, Burhan convened the country's first Security Council meeting since the July territorial gains,

¹¹⁹ Somaliland Standard. "Somaliland Forces Have Seized Weapons and Combat Vehicles Held by Clans Fighting in Western Somaliland." August 25, 2026.

¹²⁰ Somaliland Current. "Somaliland Ports Authority Manager Hosts High-Level Delegation from Ukraine's RIDNE Consortium and Tony Blair Institute at Berbera Port." August 30, 2026

projecting confidence in the SAF's ability to consolidate its position following the recapture of Bara and the Omdurman–El Obeid corridor. RSF defections accelerated sharply through the month: government media announced that an RSF unit had surrendered with its full complement of military equipment,¹²¹ and by late August the army reported a group of roughly 270 fighters and 21 field commanders arriving from Kordofan and Khartoum, followed days later by a further 318 people, including four officers, who arrived in Northern State with about fifty combat vehicles before moving on to Omdurman.¹²² RSF senior commanders publicly vowed to return to Khartoum and continue military operations despite recent setbacks, signaling continued commitment to a military rather than negotiated outcome.¹²³

In Blue Nile, however, the picture reversed sharply. The RSF and its ally the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North under Abdelaziz al-Hilu captured the strategic town of Geisan after the SAF withdrew, while fighting continued around Kurmuk with both sides issuing competing claims regarding control and battlefield gains.¹²⁴ The loss of Geisan represents a significant setback for the SAF in a theatre that has become increasingly important as fighting in Blue Nile expanded earlier in the year. Its location near both the Ethiopian and South Sudanese borders also gives the contest a pronounced regional dimension, particularly as military operations and mutual accusations regarding cross-border support continue to shape relations between Khartoum and its neighbors. The SPLM-N alliance itself showed signs of internal strain during the month: renewed fighting broke out in and around Kauda, the movement's South Kordofan stronghold, between SPLM-N forces and the Otoro community over a long-running land-boundary dispute; a cessation of hostilities brokered in part through an intervention by RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo collapsed within a day, and some Otoro factions began openly calling for the removal of SPLM-N leader Abdelaziz al-Hilu from the movement's leadership.¹²⁵

Drone warfare continued to define the conflict's operational landscape throughout August, with civilian populations bearing the highest cost. Rights groups reported that an SAF drone strike on a customary court in North Darfur killed at least 35 civilians and injured dozens more, renewing concerns over the increasing use of long-range aerial strikes in densely populated areas and adding to the accountability record assembled during preceding months.¹²⁶ The RSF, for its part, launched its largest coordinated drone offensive in months, striking Khartoum, El Obeid, Atbara, and El-Damer over two consecutive days in mid-August in what the army described as a large-scale barrage engaged by its air defenses.¹²⁷

¹²¹ "Sudan army says RSF fighters surrender in Omdurman after field gains." Sudan Tribune, July 31, 2026.

¹²² "Is Sudan's battlefield shaping the terms of its next political phase?" Al Jazeera, August 26, 2026.

¹²³ "In Sudan, RSF Defections Embolden SAF." Africa Defense Forum, June 23, 2026.

¹²⁴ "RSF, allies seize parts of Geisan in Sudan's Blue Nile state." Sudan Tribune, August 11, 2026.

¹²⁵ "Sudan Nashra: Military Strikes RSF Convoy Inside Chadian Territory, Sparks Regional Concerns | Kauda Fighting Pushes Otoro Groups to Demand Hilu's Removal from SPLM-N Leadership." MadaMasr, August 27, 2026.

¹²⁶ "Sudan army drone attack on Darfur kills 35, rights group says." Al Jazeera, August 2, 2026.

¹²⁷ "Sudan's RSF launches widespread drone attacks on army-controlled cities." The Sun Malaysia, August 12, 2026.

Elsewhere in North Kordofan, the Sudan Doctors Network accused the RSF of killing five civilians and displacing more than 3,000 people from Al-Qaa and Al-Kawakiti, while the United Nations reported that more than 200,000 people had been newly displaced across the Kordofan region since late 2025.¹²⁸ The World Health Organization reported that 37 percent of Sudan's health facilities remain non-functional nationwide, with El Obeid continuing to face the combined effects of displacement, insecurity, and a deteriorating healthcare system.¹²⁹ On Sudan's northern desert frontier, a SAF-aligned Joint Force reported destroying 49 RSF vehicles, capturing 30 more, and detaining 70 fighters during clashes near the Libyan border, presenting the operation as an effort to disrupt RSF supply routes linking Libya with Darfur, though the claims could not be independently verified.¹³⁰

The most consequential development of August was the further regionalization of the conflict along Sudan's borders with both Chad and Ethiopia. Sudan's Defense Ministry repeatedly claimed to have intercepted hostile drones entering from Ethiopian territory near Kurmuk in Blue Nile, and Khartoum's foreign ministry later accused the international community of ignoring these cross-border attacks from Ethiopia even as it faced mounting criticism over the strikes in Chad.¹³¹ Chad, meanwhile, formally accused the Sudanese military of conducting drone strikes against a convoy inside Chadian territory in the Ennedi Est region, more than 100 kilometers from the Sudanese border; Chad's military said aircraft and drones pursued and bombed the convoy on August 20, and N'Djamena placed its military on high alert and deployed additional armored vehicles and electronic warfare equipment near the frontier, while Khartoum denied responsibility and called for an independent investigation.¹³² A second, distinct cross-border incident followed a week later: a drone strike attributed to the Sudanese army hit the Adikong fuel market on the Chad-Sudan border near El Geneina, killing at least 12 people, including Chadian nationals, and wounding dozens more, in what local officials described as the fifth strike on that market since the start of the year.¹³³ These incidents mark the most direct extension of the conflict across an international border since the war began.

Further compounding concerns about the Blue Nile corridor, satellite analysis by Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab identified approximately 100 newly present light military vehicles, roughly six times the number present five days earlier, along with vehicles consistent with armored personnel carriers at an Ethiopian military base near Asosa between August 23 and 28, with the assessment noting the concentration could support up to 1,000 personnel and warning it could increase the risk of an imminent assault on Ed Damazin.¹³⁴ Yale's assessment did not establish that Ethiopia was preparing an operation against Sudan,

¹²⁸ "Sudan doctors' group accuses RSF of killing 5 civilians in North Kordofan." Sudan Tribune, August 30, 2026.

¹²⁹ "37% of Health Facilities in Sudan Out of Service in 2026: WHO." Anadolu Agency, August 2026.

¹³⁰ "Sudan's Army-Aligned Force Says 49 RSF Vehicles Destroyed, 70 Fighters Captured." Anadolu Agency, August 2026.

¹³¹ "Sudan rejects US criticism over Chad strikes, points to drone attacks from Ethiopia." Sudan Tribune, August 27, 2026.

¹³² "Chad accuses Sudanese military of strike on convoy inside its territory." Sudan Tribune, August 23, 2026.

¹³³ "Drone Strike Kills 13 Civilians at Chadian Border." Darfur24, August 28, 2026.

¹³⁴ "Yale researchers warn of major military build-up at Ethiopian base near Sudan border." Radio Dabanga, August 31, 2026.

nor did it provide evidence of an Ethiopian decision to intervene in the conflict; the Ethiopian government has not publicly responded to the findings. Taken together, these developments: unverified Sudanese drone interception claims, two separate Chadian cross-border strike incidents, and the Yale satellite analysis, indicate that the Blue Nile and western frontier zones have become zones of acute regional sensitivity, regardless of whether any of the specific allegations are independently confirmed.

The escalating cross-border violence lent new urgency to a major diplomatic push at the United Nations. On 24 August, the United States formally proposed at a UN Security Council briefing on Sudan that the arms embargo on Darfur, in place since 2005 under Resolution 1591 and due for renewal or expiry around 12 September, be expanded to cover the entire territory of Sudan.¹³⁵ Massad Boulos, the US senior adviser for Arab and African affairs, outlined a four-part draft resolution: expanding the embargo's geographic scope from Darfur alone to all of Sudan; explicitly confirming that unmanned aerial vehicles, their systems, components, and related technologies fall under the embargo; increasing the number of experts on the 1591 Panel of Experts that monitors compliance; and directing greater cooperation between that panel and other regional UN sanctions and monitoring teams.¹³⁶ Sudan's ambassador to the UN rejected the proposal as an attack on the country's sovereignty, arguing it would wrongly equate state institutions with an armed rebel movement, while Russia and China signaled opposition, warning the measure could weaken the Sudanese army; the resolution's prospects for passage before the embargo's expiration remained uncertain at month's end.¹³⁷

El Obeid's humanitarian situation continued its trajectory of collapse during August. More than 15,000 families arrived in the city since mid-July, in addition to the more than 200,000 people who had already reached the city during the first half of the year, placing extraordinary and escalating pressure on water infrastructure that remains severely damaged, sanitation systems that remain inadequate, and food supply networks disrupted by the ongoing siege.¹³⁸ The situation in Darfur was further compounded by the World Food Program's continued reduction of food rations for at-risk and famine-threatened populations, a measure driven by the funding shortfalls that humanitarian agencies have been warning about for months and whose consequences are now materializing directly in the lives of the most vulnerable populations the WFP was serving.¹³⁹

The broader humanitarian picture remained catastrophic by any measure. The World Health Organization estimated that 33.7 million people require humanitarian assistance in 2026,

¹³⁵ "US proposes expanding UN Sudan arms embargo to entire country." France 24, August 24, 2026.

¹³⁶ "U.S. seeks Sudan-wide arms embargo, including drones." Radio Tamazuj, August 25, 2026.

¹³⁷ "Sudan: US Proposes Expanding UN Arms Embargo." allAfrica DW/AFP, August 25, 2026.

¹³⁸ "El Obeid displacement reporting." Sudan Tribune / local authorities and humanitarian organizations, August 2026.

¹³⁹ "WFP warns of more displacement in Sudan as fighting rages in Darfurs and Kordofans amidst shrinking resources." World Food Programme, 2026.

while 37 percent of health facilities remain out of service.¹⁴⁰ Approximately eight million children are out of school as a result of the war, a figure whose long-term consequences for Sudan's human capital will extend far beyond any eventual settlement. A \$22 million Education Cannot Wait program was announced targeting nearly 200,000 crisis-affected children and adolescents across West Darfur, South Kordofan, and Gedaref, a meaningful intervention that nonetheless addresses a fraction of the out-of-school population, illustrating the scale of the gap between humanitarian programming and the magnitude of the crisis.¹⁴¹ Environmental and economic pressures compounded the humanitarian emergency: reports of agricultural land lying barren due to low Nile water levels and rising production costs linked to global supply chain disruptions added further strain to a food system already fractured by conflict and displacement.

The political landscape was dominated by competing visions of Sudan's future presented simultaneously and incompatibly. Sovereign Council Chairman Burhan publicly outlined his terms for a national dialogue on 14 August, offering legal, political, and security guarantees for participants while ruling out the political return of RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo from any future political order. Prime Minister Kamil Idris indicated that dialogue would begin soon as part of a process leading toward reconciliation, elections, and a political transition.¹⁴² The civilian response was swift and definitive. A broad coalition including the Sudanese Declaration of Principles forces, the Popular Congress Party, the National Umma Party, and civil society, women's and youth networks convened in Addis Ababa on August 22–23 and formally rejected Burhan's initiative, arguing that a dialogue conducted while fighting continues and under the security structures of one belligerent would risk legitimizing the existing wartime order rather than replacing it. The coalition instead proposed a three-track process: an urgent humanitarian track, a permanent ceasefire and security track, and an exclusively civilian political track, with negotiations under an agreed international framework limiting the role of the two military factions primarily to ceasefire and humanitarian discussions. Former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who leads the Somoud coalition, reinforced the position, arguing that the war has no military solution and that civilian forces must overcome their divisions to create a credible alternative to continued armed confrontation.¹⁴³ Burhan simultaneously pursued military consolidation and political engagement, warning that Sudan could face additional sanctions while insisting the war would continue until the RSF was eliminated and announcing the integration of RSF defectors into SAF structures, a posture that underscores the extent to which the dialogue initiative is an instrument of military consolidation rather than a genuine ceasefire offer.

Khartoum witnessed limited but symbolically significant moves toward normalization.

¹⁴⁰ "37% of Health Facilities in Sudan Out of Service in 2026: WHO." Anadolu Agency, August 2026.

¹⁴¹ "New US\$22 Million Education Lifeline for Crisis-Affected Children in Sudan." Education Cannot Wait / UN News, August 24, 2026.

¹⁴² "Sudan's al-Burhan pledges immunity for dialogue, rules out Hemedti return." Al Jazeera, August 15, 2026.

¹⁴³ "Sudan war has no military solution, former prime minister says." Sudan Tribune, August 23, 2026.

Authorities lifted the two-year night-time curfew and state of emergency on 27 August, allowing residents to move and work around the clock, though military checkpoints and security restrictions remain, and new entry restrictions were imposed on foreign nationals entering Khartoum State.¹⁴⁴ The move reflects the government's broader effort to portray the capital as increasingly stabilized and to demonstrate the tangible benefits of SAF territorial consolidation, yet continued arrivals of displaced civilians from surrounding areas illustrate the uneven and precarious nature of that recovery. Against this backdrop, the Sudanese pound fell to a record parallel market low of roughly 6,400–6,500 to the US dollar after the central bank granted commercial banks greater latitude to set exchange rates, with domestic gold prices simultaneously reaching unprecedented levels as currency depreciation overwhelmed the effect of falling international gold prices.¹⁴⁵ The widening gap between official and parallel exchange rates, persistent dollar shortages, and structural inflation continue to erode household purchasing power and complicate any meaningful economic recovery.

The diplomatic environment remained active across multiple tracks without producing decisive progress. IGAD's Executive Secretary concluded a high-level mission to Sudan in late July, reaffirming the organization's commitment to a Sudanese-led pathway toward peace, recovery, and national reconstruction while emphasizing that dialogue remains the only viable route toward ending the conflict.¹⁴⁶ The African Union sent its first Peace and Security Council delegation to Khartoum since the 2021 coup on 16–17 August, with the Algeria-led delegation meeting Burhan, Prime Minister Kamil Idris, and other officials to discuss the political, security, humanitarian, and governance situation and prospects for inclusive national dialogue; the delegation separately reaffirmed the council's rejection of foreign interference and the establishment of parallel governing authorities in Sudan, underscoring its support for the country's unity and sovereignty.¹⁴⁷ Malik Agar, a senior Sudanese official with close familiarity with the Blue Nile region, pursued quiet efforts to ease tensions with Ethiopia, building on a May meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that helped reopen high-level bilateral channels, a particularly sensitive undertaking given the expanding military activity along the frontier and previous public accusations of Ethiopian cross-border support for armed groups.¹⁴⁸ Saudi Arabia moved decisively to deepen its role in Khartoum: on 17 August the two countries' foreign ministers signed an agreement in Riyadh establishing the Saudi-Sudanese Coordination Council, a comprehensive institutional platform covering ten strategic areas including reconstruction, agriculture and food security, gold and mining, the Red Sea and ports, energy, and finance a marked deepening of Gulf support for Burhan's government that goes well beyond the earlier

¹⁴⁴ "Sudan lifts two-year curfew in Khartoum amid ongoing war." Africanews, August 28, 2026.

¹⁴⁵ "Sudanese pound plunges to record low after central bank eases currency rules." Sudan Tribune, August 27, 2026.

¹⁴⁶ "IGAD Executive Secretary Concludes High-level Mission to Sudan, Reaffirms Commitment to a Sudanese-led Path to Peace and Recovery." IGAD, July 31, 2026.

¹⁴⁷ "African Union envoys hold first post-coup talks in Sudan." Sudan Tribune, August 16, 2026.

¹⁴⁸ "As the Horn of Africa Nears Boiling Point, Time for Urgent Diplomacy." International Crisis Group, July 17, 2026.

diplomatic gestures of previous months.¹⁴⁹ In Washington, the US Congress continued to weigh landmark legislation, the Preventing External Aggression and Conflict Escalation in Sudan Act and the US Engagement in Sudanese Peace Act designed to strengthen sanctions, enhance accountability mechanisms, and increase pressure on individuals responsible for atrocities, the most concrete legislative signal from Washington since the June dual-designation sanctions action.¹⁵⁰

August 2026 confirmed that Sudan's war is now simultaneously a domestic military contest, a regional security crisis, and a humanitarian catastrophe of the highest order, without any of these dimensions showing signs of resolution. The SAF's tactical gains in Kordofan have not produced strategic dominance; the RSF's capture of Geisan and its continued operational capacity across multiple fronts illustrate that military momentum remains reversible and geographically uneven. The two separate Chad border incidents and the Yale satellite analysis together mark August as the month in which the conflict's regionalization moved closest to generating direct interstate confrontation a threshold that, if crossed, would fundamentally alter the international calculus around Sudan, and one that has already prompted the United States to seek a nationwide arms embargo at the UN Security Council. The civilian coalition's rejection of Burhan's dialogue initiative has exposed the absence of a credible political framework acceptable to both armed and civilian actors, leaving Sudan's political future hostage to a military contest neither side has demonstrated the capacity to win decisively. The pound at a record low, 33.7 million people requiring assistance, continued WFP ration cuts, and eight million children out of school represent the cumulative cost of a war that is now entering its fourth year without an enforceable ceasefire, a functional humanitarian access regime, or a political process commanding the confidence of the major actors it must ultimately include.

1.6 South Sudan: Elections Without Prerequisites, a State Under Legal and Financial Siege, and Compounding Insecurity

The Electoral Framework: R-ARCSS Amendments and the RJMEC Warning

August 2026 was defined in South Sudan by a fundamental tension between the government's determination to proceed with its December 22 electoral deadline and a cascade of institutional, legal, security, and humanitarian pressures pointing in the opposite direction. The most consequential development of the month came when President Kiir signed amendments to the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan that removed the legal requirement tying elections to completion of a permanent constitution and a national census.¹⁵¹ The amendments cleared the path for the December poll by eliminating the preconditions the R-ARCSS itself had established as

¹⁴⁹ "One geography, two states: Saudi Arabia's security approach to Sudan." Al Jazeera, August 20, 2026.

¹⁵⁰ "US Congress Weighs Landmark Sudan Bills to Tighten Sanctions and Accountability." Radio Dabanga, July 31, 2026.

¹⁵¹ "South Sudan's Peace Sponsors Jittery as Juba Kicks Off Voter Drive." The East African, August 2, 2026.

prerequisites for a credible vote, a move that effectively redefined the terms of the peace agreement's implementation by executive action. Critics warned that institutions remain weak, insecurity persists, and civic education is lacking; holding a vote without these foundations, they argued, risks producing an outcome that deepens rather than resolves the country's political crisis.

The peace agreement's own watchdog delivered a damning assessment. RJMEC's latest quarterly report warned that political, legal, security, and humanitarian conditions necessary for a credible, peaceful, and inclusive vote remain largely absent, with fundamental prerequisites unmet less than six months before the scheduled date. The commission went further, flagging that the amendments were submitted to parliament without RJMEC's required consent, a procedural breach that weakens the oversight role of IGAD and the African Union as guarantors of the agreement.¹⁵² RJMEC also documented continued fighting in Upper Nile, Jonglei, Unity, and Equatoria, with the permanent ceasefire only partially implemented and force unification, disarmament, and security sector reform all stalled. The continued detention of First Vice President Riek Machar, held since March 2025 and now on trial with seven co-defendants on treason, murder, and crimes-against-humanity charges, and the dismissal of opposition lawmakers from parliament were cited as evidence that inclusive governance has been further weakened rather than advanced in the period preceding the vote.

The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan escalated these concerns on 20 August with a dedicated public advisory, *At the Brink: Preventing Atrocity Crimes and Safeguarding South Sudan's Transition*, warning that South Sudan could face renewed armed conflict and atrocity crimes if elections proceed without essential safeguards including a monitored ceasefire, unification of security forces under a non-partisan command, stronger electoral and judicial institutions, and genuine political dialogue that includes Machar's faction, civil society, women, and youth.¹⁵³ The Commission stated bluntly that South Sudan “does not lack peace agreements, frameworks or roadmaps; it lacks their implementation,” and cautioned that the window to prevent a return to the scale of atrocities and displacement the country endured between 2013 and 2018 is closing.

Despite these warnings, the government held its position. Cabinet Affairs Minister Martin Elia Lomuro said in mid-August that the Presidency had ruled out any extension of the transitional period beyond 22 December 2026, even as an Inter-Party Dialogue bringing together roughly 73 representatives of parties signatory to the 2018 agreement continued without a publicly announced completion date.¹⁵⁴ “There will be no extension, and we should go for elections in December 2026,” Lomuro told reporters, framing the parallel dialogue as

¹⁵² “South Sudan Inaugural Poll Credibility in Doubt, Kenyan-Led Peace Monitor Warns.” *The Star*, August 2, 2026.

¹⁵³ “South Sudan: UN Commission Warns Elections Without Essential Safeguards and Genuine Dialogue Could Fuel Renewed Conflict and Atrocity Crimes.” OHCHR, August 20, 2026.

¹⁵⁴ “South Sudan Vows No Transition Extension as Inter-Party Dialogue Continues.” *Radio Tamazuj*, August 18, 2026.

addressing outstanding political, constitutional, electoral, and security concerns rather than as a precondition for the vote itself.

Legal and Financial Threat

South Sudan's financial vulnerabilities acquired concrete international legal dimensions during August. A US federal court recognized and enforced a \$1.02 billion ICSID arbitration award in favor of Qatar National Bank, stemming from a 2018 debt-restructuring deal on which South Sudan subsequently defaulted.¹⁵⁵ A legal expert cited by Eye Radio noted that Juba's options are to voluntarily pay, negotiate a settlement, or risk QNB pursuing South Sudanese or central bank commercial assets abroad, since the award is binding under Article 53 of the ICSID Convention and not subject to appeal through national courts. The development lands on an economy already squeezed by falling oil revenue, persistent cash shortages, and inflation, compounding an existing vulnerability with a legally enforceable external demand that Juba has limited institutional capacity to contest or absorb. The dismissal of Central Bank Governor Johnny Ohisa, replaced by Addis Ababa Othow in a wider reshuffle that analysts read as part of a broader consolidation of power ahead of elections, added further uncertainty to the management of the country's already strained financial institutions.¹⁵⁶

Peacekeeper Killings, Communal Violence, and Aid Worker Casualties

Security conditions deteriorated sharply across multiple dimensions during August. In Jonglei State, two peacekeepers were killed and three others wounded when armed men ambushed a UNMISS patrol travelling toward Pajut; two South Sudanese police officers and two civilian UN staff were also wounded in the attack. UNMISS deployed a Quick Reaction Force to secure the area while the African Union condemned the incident.¹⁵⁷ The attack occurred against a backdrop in which more than 450 incidents involving violence against aid personnel and humanitarian assets were recorded between January and July 2026, more than twice the number during the same period in 2025, with at least 36 humanitarian workers and contractors killed in South Sudan since January, already exceeding the 31 deaths recorded during all of 2025.¹⁵⁸

Communal violence in Warrap State produced two separate mass casualty events during the month. An attack in early August reportedly killed more than 60 civilians and wounded 50 others in Tonj North County, drawing condemnation from UNMISS, which warned that the intercommunal violence was causing immense harm to already vulnerable communities.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ "U.S. Court Orders South Sudan to Pay Qatar National Bank \$1 Billion." Radio Tamazuj, July 29, 2026.

¹⁵⁶ "South Sudan's President Dismisses Central Bank Governor." Africanews, July 30, 2026.

¹⁵⁷ "Ambush in South Sudan Kills Peacekeeping Troops." Al Jazeera, August 24, 2026.

¹⁵⁸ "Deadly Attacks on Aid Workers and Contractors Surge in South Sudan as UN Urges Protection." Associated Press (ABC News), August 19, 2026.

¹⁵⁹ "South Sudan: UN Mission Decries Deadly Attacks, Works to Calm Tensions After 'Nothing but Devastation'." UN News, August 11, 2026.

Weeks later, an armed raid on the Machar-Pakuek cattle camp and Mading Juer Boma, also in Tonj North County, killed at least 49 people and wounded 33 others in an attack that began around 5:00 a.m. on 27 August; local authorities attributed the assault to what they described as an armed cross-border criminal network operating out of neighbouring Unity State.¹⁶⁰ The two Warrap incidents within weeks of each other reinforced concerns over a recurring cycle of cattle raids, competition over grazing land and water, and localized armed violence that persists independently of the national political confrontation and remains deeply rooted in unresolved communal and resource-based conflicts. The combination of peacekeeper killings, aid worker casualties, and mass communal violence illustrated the extent to which South Sudan's security crisis extends simultaneously across national, subnational, and localized registers compounded by renewed clashes between government and opposition-aligned forces reported in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity states, none of which is being systematically addressed by the transitional arrangements that the electoral calendar is supposed to culminate and resolve.¹⁶¹

Humanitarian Pressures and Funding Collapse

Humanitarian conditions remained deeply precarious throughout August. Approximately 10 million people are expected to require humanitarian assistance in South Sudan in 2026, including more than 7.5 million facing acute food insecurity, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for the country said, even as funding shortfalls threaten more than 600,000 refugees in South Sudan with severe reductions in life-saving support, placing food assistance and essential services at risk for populations that have no alternative safety net.¹⁶² UNHCR had secured only 28 percent of the \$286 million it needs this year to sustain core protection and assistance for refugees, internally displaced people, returnees, and host communities, while the World Food Program faced an immediate \$37 million funding gap for its refugee response alone.¹⁶³ The escalating insecurity affecting humanitarian operations has forced aid organizations to withdraw from some volatile areas, limiting access precisely where vulnerable communities face the greatest need. The country is simultaneously hosting large numbers of people displaced from neighboring Sudan while managing its own internal displacement pressures, a compounding dynamic that its fiscal and institutional capacity is structurally unable to sustain without robust international support that is itself under threat from global funding pressures.

These pressures reached into the diaspora as well. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services confirmed in late July that Temporary Protected Status work permits for South Sudanese nationals remained valid through August 6, 2026, under a federal court order, despite the DHS's earlier decision to terminate South Sudan's TPS designation.¹⁶⁴ That

¹⁶⁰ "Armed Raid on Cattle Camp Kills at Least 49 in South Sudan." Al Jazeera, August 28, 2026.

¹⁶¹ "South Sudan, August 2026 Monthly Forecast." Security Council Report, August 3, 2026.

¹⁶² "36 Aid Workers Killed in South Sudan in Eight Months — UN Report." Sudan's Post, August 19, 2026.

¹⁶³ "Refugees in South Sudan Face Extreme Hunger as Funds Run Out." UNHCR/WFP joint release, August 14, 2026.

¹⁶⁴ "Update on Termination of Temporary Protected Status for South Sudan (Release: July 30, 2026)." USCIS, July 30, 2026.

protection proved short-lived: on 7 August, a federal judge in Massachusetts rejected a final challenge from immigrant-rights advocates and cleared the way for the designation to be terminated, following the US Supreme Court's June ruling that curtailed lower courts' ability to block the Department of Homeland Security from ending TPS protections. The termination, affecting more than 232 South Sudanese TPS holders and at least 73 people with pending applications, took effect on 7 August 2026, illustrating the additional vulnerabilities facing South Sudanese communities in the diaspora just as the political and humanitarian situation at home deteriorated.¹⁶⁵

Political Fractures and the Diplomatic Calendar

The most politically significant domestic development of the month was a rare public rupture within South Sudan's transitional leadership. Vice President Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior, widow of the late SPLM leader Dr. John Garang de Mabior, used a funeral service in Juba on 21 August to criticize the country's political direction, question whether current leadership was receiving the same oversight and advice that surrounded Garang during the liberation struggle, and lament that she could sometimes go nearly two years without a one-on-one meeting with President Kiir. Kiir's office responded two days later, defending his role in the liberation struggle and stating that those who believe the government has failed should present their case to voters rather than to political elites.¹⁶⁶

The rupture drew in South Sudan's Western partners. After meeting Nyandeng on 25 August, the ambassadors of Germany, Japan, Norway, and the United States issued a joint statement calling for “urgent action,” including the start of authentic inter-party dialogue, an end to violence as a tool of political competition, and stronger accountability for public revenue. South Sudan's Foreign Ministry summoned all four envoys days later, with Foreign Minister James Pitia Morgan describing the statement as “inappropriate and divisive” and stressing the importance of national ownership and non-interference in the country's internal affairs, a rare public rebuke of key donor governments just months before the scheduled vote.¹⁶⁷

President Kiir sought to consolidate regional diplomatic backing for the electoral roadmap through a week-long visit to South Africa, holding high-level discussions with President Cyril Ramaphosa at his official residence in Tshwane on the electoral process, regional support for peaceful and credible elections, national dialogue, and democratic institutions,¹⁶⁸ before returning to Juba on August 30.¹⁶⁹ Pretoria has previously emphasized that South Sudan's elections should be inclusive, transparent, and fair and that the security environment must allow citizens to participate freely, conditions whose fulfillment the month's events called into serious question. The visit coincided with the arrival in Juba of an African Union

¹⁶⁵ “US Judge Allows Deportation Protections to End for South Sudanese.” *Detroit News* (Reuters), August 7, 2026.

¹⁶⁶ “Presidency Hits Back After VP Nyandeng Questions Who Watches Over Kiir.” *Radio Tamazuj*, August 23, 2026.

¹⁶⁷ “Four Envoys Summoned Over ‘Divisive’ Statement.” *Radio Tamazuj*, August 27, 2026.

¹⁶⁸ “Ramaphosa, Kiir Hold High-Level Talks at Presidential Residence in Gauteng.” *Eye Radio*, August 27, 2026.

¹⁶⁹ “President Kiir Returns to Juba After South Africa Visit.” *Eye Radio*, August 30, 2026.

Pre-Election and Needs Assessment Mission led by former Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister Geoffrey Onyeama, which met with Foreign Affairs Minister James Pitia Morgan and Cabinet Affairs Minister Martin Elia Lomuro to assess the country's preparedness for the December vote; Onyeama said discussions with officials had provided “positive indications” regarding preparations, even as the mission's findings are expected to feed into the parallel deployment of the African Union's High-Level Ad Hoc Committee (C5) on South Sudan.¹⁷⁰

Limited Institutional Progress

Against the dominant pattern of institutional weakening and security deterioration, two modest developments pointed to continued efforts at building foundational state capacity. The African Union moved forward with naming non-South Sudanese nominees for South Sudan's Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing a key component of the peace agreement intended to address the legacy of conflict and promote national reconciliation that has faced prolonged implementation delays; civil society organizations welcomed the progress while calling for the government to complete the appointment process without further delay.¹⁷¹ UNESCO separately supported South Sudan's Ministry of General Education and Instruction in developing the country's first education-sector monitoring system, following a four-day consultation in Juba designed to track implementation of the General Education Strategic Plan 2023–2027 and improve coordination between government and development partners.¹⁷² Both initiatives are modest relative to the country's structural challenges, but they represent continued institutional investment in the mechanisms that any durable stabilization will ultimately require.

Overall Assessment

August 2026 brought South Sudan to what may be its most consequential pre-electoral juncture since independence. The government's decision to sign R-ARCSS amendments removing the constitutional prerequisites for elections eliminated the formal legal architecture designed to ensure a credible vote, a decision that drew formal condemnation from RJMEC, the UN Human Rights Commission's At the Brink advisory, and civil society, while Machar remains on trial, security forces remain ununified only on paper, and a permanent constitution remains unfinished. The \$1.02 billion ICSID enforcement order, two mass casualty events in Warrap within weeks of each other, the killing of two UN peacekeepers in Jonglei, a record of 36 aid workers killed since January, a public rupture between Kiir and his own vice president, and the unusual step of summoning four Western ambassadors all occurred within the same month. The government's response to each of these pressures has been to accelerate toward the December deadline reaffirming that there will be no extension of the transition, seeking regional and continental endorsement through visits from South Africa's Ramaphosa and the African Union's pre-election assessment mission,

¹⁷⁰ “AU Mission Assesses South Sudan’s Readiness for December 2026 Election.” Sudan’s Post, August 24, 2026.

¹⁷¹ “AU Names Truth Commission Nominees as South Sudan Civil Society Demands Action.” Radio Tamazuj, August 11.

¹⁷² “UNESCO Supports South Sudan to Establish Its First Education Sector Monitoring System.” UNESCO, August 29, 2026.

while managing domestic fractures through personnel changes and executive action. Whether December 22 produces an election that stabilizes South Sudan or becomes another arena for political confrontation will depend on whether the conditions surrounding the vote including security guarantees, political inclusion, institutional capacity, and public confidence can be meaningfully improved in the final weeks that remain. On the evidence of August, that question has no assured answer.

1.7 Kenya: Political Consolidation and Strategic Diversification

August 2026 was defined by two parallel developments in Kenya: the acceleration of preparations for the 2027 general election and Nairobi's continuing effort to diversify its geopolitical and economic partnerships. Domestically, President William Ruto moved closer to formalising an electoral alliance between Kenya Kwanza and the Orange Democratic Movement, while opposition parties struggled to agree on a single challenger. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission also began formally positioning the country for the 2027 election cycle. At the same time, political violence, disputes over taxation and customs policy, and economic pressure continued to expose tensions between the government and sections of the public.

Internationally, Kenya spent August balancing several strategic relationships rather than aligning itself exclusively with one geopolitical bloc. Nairobi deepened engagement with Qatar, Türkiye, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, China, the United States and European security partners. Economic diplomacy focused heavily on financing, debt management, infrastructure and investment. Regional security remained equally important. Instability in Somalia, Al Shabaab activity along the Kenyan border, maritime insecurity in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, the war in Sudan and deteriorating regional trade conditions all affected Kenya's strategic calculations.

Domestic Politics and Internal Affairs

The most consequential domestic political development of August came on August 10, when President William Ruto publicly confirmed plans for Kenya Kwanza and the Orange Democratic Movement to build a joint coalition ahead of the 2027 general election. The announcement transformed what had increasingly become cooperation between government and ODM into an explicit electoral project. Discussions over a joint manifesto and power sharing indicated that the alliance was moving beyond parliamentary cooperation toward a broader attempt to consolidate the political centre before the election¹⁷³.

The emerging coalition, however, also created internal competition. ODM figures pressed for a larger share of government influence, including discussions surrounding the deputy presidency and distribution of senior state positions¹⁷⁴. These demands generated unease

¹⁷³Perpetua Etyang, "Ruto Confirms Kenya Kwanza ODM Coalition Plan Ahead of 2027 Polls," *The Star*, August 10, 2026.

¹⁷⁴Ndung'u Gachane, "Kenya Kwanza Allies Unsettled by ODM's Power Sharing Demands," *The Standard*, August 21, 2026.

among Kenya Kwanza politicians concerned that greater ODM influence could weaken their own position within the governing coalition. Deputy President Kithure Kindiki consequently entered August facing greater political pressure as the structure of the proposed alliance became clearer.

The opposition remained considerably less organised. On August 18, former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua called for opposition parties to support a single presidential candidate against Ruto in 2027. Negotiations involving Gachagua, Kalonzo Musyoka and other opposition leaders nevertheless remained unresolved¹⁷⁵. By the end of August, the government had therefore made greater progress toward constructing an electoral coalition than its opponents had made toward identifying a common candidate.

Kenya's electoral institutions also moved closer to the 2027 contest. On August 20, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission published a gazette notice marking an important stage in the electoral calendar and bringing relevant provisions of the Electoral Code of Conduct and Election Offences Act into operation. The commission also indicated that it was targeting a voter register of approximately 28.5 million people¹⁷⁶. The development effectively moved the general election from a distant political consideration into an active institutional process.

At the same time, the political environment showed signs of tension and violence. During political activity associated with the Linda Mwananchi movement in Homa Bay on August 16, several journalists were injured, equipment was destroyed or stolen and a media vehicle was burned. Media organisations and human rights groups criticised the violence and questioned the effectiveness of police protection during the confrontation¹⁷⁷. Such incidents raised early concerns about political intolerance as campaigning for 2027 began to intensify.

Economic policy also generated domestic confrontation. On August 28, police used tear gas against traders demonstrating in Nairobi against changes to customs valuation introduced by the Kenya Revenue Authority. The revised valuation raised the benchmark applied to some imported containers, increasing the taxes and clearing costs faced by traders. The government argued that the change was intended to address undervaluation and improve tax compliance, while small businesses complained that the measure would significantly increase operating costs¹⁷⁸. The protests reflected a broader political challenge for the government: raising revenue while avoiding further confrontation with citizens already facing high living and business costs.

Food security remained another concern. Poor rainfall in key agricultural areas continued to affect production, prompting the government during August to emphasise measures aimed at

¹⁷⁵ Mike Kihaki, "Gachagua Pushes for Single Opposition Candidate to Face Ruto in 2027," *The Standard*, August 18, 2026.

¹⁷⁶ Kenya News Agency, "IEBC Targets 28.5 Million Voters in Next Polls," August 28, 2026.

¹⁷⁷ Perpetua Etyang, "MCK Demands Action after Journalists Injured, Equipment Destroyed in Homa Bay," *The Star*, August 17, 2026; Amnesty International Kenya, statement concerning political violence in Homa Bay, August 16, 2026.

¹⁷⁸ Reuters, "Kenya Police Fire Tear Gas to Disperse Traders Protesting Import Duty Hike," August 28, 2026.

reducing the cost of agricultural inputs such as seed and fertiliser. This problem was connected to wider international developments because Kenya remains heavily dependent on imported fertiliser and fuel.⁹

The government also launched the Beyond Vision 2030 National Conversation on August 12. The initiative is intended to begin developing Kenya's long term national development framework after Vision 2030¹⁷⁹. Its launch came at a politically sensitive moment. While the government was attempting to establish development priorities that could stretch decades into the future, domestic political attention was increasingly shifting toward coalition formation, economic pressure and the 2027 election.

Overall, August demonstrated that Kenya had entered an early but increasingly consequential phase of electoral politics. Ruto's attempt to consolidate a broad governing coalition gave him an initial organisational advantage, but disputes over power sharing, public economic dissatisfaction and political violence could complicate the path toward 2027.

International and Geopolitical Affairs

Kenya's most immediate regional security challenge during August continued to originate from Somalia. On August 20, the government confirmed that it was working with Somali authorities to secure the release of five chiefs abducted from Mandera and held by Al Shabaab. Later in the month, suspected militants attacked a school and telecommunications infrastructure in Mandera, leaving several teachers missing¹⁸⁰. These attacks demonstrated that despite improvements in security cooperation, Al Shabaab retains the ability to operate close to Kenya's northeastern frontier.

The broader political situation in Somalia also remained important to Nairobi. Disagreements over Somalia's political transition and electoral arrangements raised concerns among neighbouring countries that internal divisions could weaken security cooperation and undermine the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia. Kenya has a direct interest in preventing such an outcome because renewed instability in Somalia would increase security risks along the border and could create additional pressure on regional trade and migration.

Kenya also strengthened maritime security cooperation during August. British naval vessels visited Mombasa while Kenyan officials continued security discussions with the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Separate consultations were also held with Japan and South Korea¹⁸¹. The increasing attention to maritime security reflected growing concern over piracy, instability in the Red Sea and threats to shipping routes connecting East Africa

¹⁷⁹ Kenya State Department for Economic Planning, "Conversation on Kenya's Future Beyond Vision 2030," August 12, 2026.

¹⁸⁰ NTV Kenya, "PS Omollo: State Actively Working to Secure Release of Abducted Chiefs," August 20, 2026; NTV Kenya, reporting on suspected Al Shabaab attacks and missing teachers in Mandera, August 29, 2026.

¹⁸¹ Anthony Kitimo, "Kenya Moves Close to Western Allies," *The EastAfrican*, August 22, 2026; Kenya Ministry of Defence, "Deepening Naval Cooperation," August 11, 2026.

to Europe, Asia and the Gulf.

The Red Sea and Middle East conflicts carried direct economic consequences for Kenya. Kenya imports much of its fuel and fertiliser through global routes influenced by developments around the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Disruptions in Middle Eastern supply chains contributed to greater concern about fuel and agricultural input costs during August. Kenya Airways also reported significant financial pressure from higher fuel expenses while seeking new investment partners¹⁸². These developments illustrate how conflicts far outside East Africa can quickly affect transport, agriculture and consumer prices inside Kenya.

Sudan remained another sensitive foreign policy issue. Kenyan authorities continued to face demands to investigate alleged crimes committed by members of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces following complaints submitted on behalf of Sudanese victims. At the same time, Kenyan political figures called for Sudan to restore imports of Kenyan tea, which had been affected by bilateral tensions¹⁸³. Sudan therefore remained important to Kenya simultaneously as a human rights, diplomatic and commercial issue.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, August saw greater involvement by Qatar and other external actors in ceasefire implementation. Ceasefire monitors were deployed in eastern Congo on August 24 under the Qatar mediated peace process¹⁸⁴. Kenya retained a broader interest in the stability of the Great Lakes region, but the development illustrated how mediation over Congo has increasingly involved actors outside the East African Community.

Economic diplomacy was particularly active throughout the month. Kenya continued discussions with the International Monetary Fund over a possible new programme while simultaneously exploring several alternative financing channels. The government considered issuing its first panda bond in China's domestic market, another Eurobond, Japanese Samurai financing and additional financing arrangements involving the United States and multilateral development institutions¹⁸⁵. This financing strategy demonstrated Nairobi's effort to avoid excessive dependence on any single international partner.

Kenya also expanded diplomatic engagement with several middle powers. On August 12, Kenya and Qatar agreed to institutionalise annual political consultations covering investment, aviation, labour mobility, food security and a proposed green investment initiative. Engagement with Türkiye later in the month focused on trade, investment, defence and regional security. Discussions with the United Arab Emirates concentrated on infrastructure, energy, water and investment, while talks with Japan included industrial

¹⁸² Reuters, "Kenya Airways Losses and Fuel Costs," August 26, 2026.

¹⁸³ Tadesse Simie Metekia and Moses Chrispus Okello, "Will Kenya Investigate and Prosecute Sudan's RSF?" *Institute for Security Studies*, August 12, 2026.

¹⁸⁴ Reuters, "Ceasefire Monitors Deploy in Eastern Congo under Qatari Peace Deal," August 24, 2026.

¹⁸⁵ Reuters, "Kenya's Planned Panda Bond and Other External Financing Options," August 14, 2026.

development, infrastructure, technology and the Dongo Kundu Special Economic Zone¹⁸⁶.

These engagements reflected the increasingly transactional character of Kenyan foreign policy. Rather than choosing between Western, Gulf or Asian partners, Nairobi is seeking investment, security assistance, market access and financing from all of them.

Regional economic integration nevertheless remained difficult. By August 31, East African Community monitoring had identified persistent trade barriers, particularly involving Tanzania. These restrictions continued to affect exports and highlighted the limited depth of intra EAC trade¹⁸⁷. For Kenya, this is a strategic problem. The country is attempting to expand regional markets precisely when external trade routes are becoming more vulnerable to geopolitical disruption.

August therefore left Kenya facing two connected tests. At home, the political system is increasingly being reorganised around the 2027 election, with Ruto attempting to build a broad governing coalition while the opposition remains fragmented. Abroad, Nairobi is seeking greater room to manoeuvre by spreading its diplomatic, financial and security relationships across Western, Gulf and Asian partners. This strategy gives Kenya options, but it does not remove the country's exposure to conflict in Somalia and Sudan, instability in the Red Sea, regional trade barriers, debt pressures and rising domestic economic frustration. Kenya entered the final months of 2026 with considerable diplomatic reach, but also with a growing need to convert that reach into greater economic and political stability at home.

Section Two: MENA Region, Gulf, and Global Engagement

2.1 Egypt: Perimeter Defense and Strategic Hedging

In August 2026, Egyptian strategic calculus prioritized mitigating maritime vulnerability following strikes at Damietta and substantial Suez Canal revenue losses. Cairo expanded Red Sea naval assets and deepened Horn of Africa alliances to counter Ethiopian regional expansion. Diplomatic outreach focused on establishing administrative influence over post-conflict Gaza, maintaining western land border security, and executing structural financial maneuvers to absorb external volatility.

The spillover of the U.S.–Iran confrontation into Egyptian maritime space through the drone strike on a U.S.-owned floating storage unit at Damietta Port¹⁸⁸ exposed Egypt's direct physical and financial exposure to regional escalation. Cairo responded with strict media management through the State Information Service while reassuring international energy markets through Prime Minister Madbouly's announcement of contained damages and

¹⁸⁶ Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Kenya UAE and Kenya Japan Consultations,” August 20 and 25, 2026.

¹⁸⁷ James Anyanzwa, “Tanzania Blamed for 39pc of EAC Trade Barriers as Deadline Lapses,” *The EastAfrican*, August 31, 2026.

¹⁸⁸ “Drone Hits US LNG Vessel at Damietta in First Attack on Egyptian Soil.” Euronews, July 30, 2026.

uninterrupted domestic gas distribution.¹⁸⁹ Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi's denial of responsibility reflected Tehran's intent to keep Cairo neutral.¹⁹⁰ However, with Suez Canal revenue losses surpassing eleven billion dollars,¹⁹¹ Cairo recognized that passive non-alignment proved inadequate to protect national security and fiscal stability.

Consequently, Egyptian naval deployments of frigates and corvettes to the Bab al-Mandeb¹⁹² alongside participation in a Saudi-led maritime initiative¹⁹³ served to defend critical shipping routes and SUMED pipeline operations. Crucially, Cairo integrated these maritime security measures into a comprehensive Horn of Africa containment strategy designed to isolate Ethiopia. Through high-level security consultations with Djibouti,¹⁹⁴ Cairo sought to build a littoral coalition to secure key sea lanes and counter Ethiopian maritime ambitions. Simultaneously, Egyptian diplomats aligned with Sudanese Foreign Minister Mohi El-Din Salem to assert that Red Sea navigation must remain exclusively under the management of littoral states, denying Ethiopia alternative maritime outlets. This strategy was further reinforced by security coordination with Chad along the Sahel frontier,¹⁹⁵ and Nile water management talks with Uganda,¹⁹⁶ all designed to secure downstream water rights against upstream Ethiopian dam projects and preserve Cairo's regional depth.

Cairo executed a parallel campaign of diplomatic arbitrage to preserve its mediator status while securing primary authority over post-conflict Gaza governance. Intelligence Chief Hassan Rashad conducted negotiations with Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya, U.S. envoy Jared Kushner, and Fatah representatives¹⁹⁷ to shape the enclave's post-war security architecture. The declaration by an Egyptian-backed Gaza administrative committee of readiness to assume municipal governance upon Hamas disarmament established a concrete mechanism for Egyptian institutional control over the neighboring territory. Foreign Minister Abdelatty¹⁹⁸ reinforced this diplomatic leverage by placing responsibility on Israel to fulfill ceasefire commitments during high-level meetings in El-Alamein with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

To preserve maximum geopolitical flexibility, Cairo abstained from joining the Saudi-Pakistan-Turkey Mecca Agreement defense pact,¹⁹⁹ choosing instead to maintain multi-vector relations across competing regional blocs. Cairo voiced formal diplomatic opposition to Israeli airstrikes in Syria²⁰⁰ and U.S.-Saudi operations in Iraq,²⁰¹ safeguarding its

¹⁸⁹ "Egypt Secures Alternatives to Cover Energy Demands after Attack on Gas Vessel, PM Says." Reuters, July 30, 2026.

¹⁹⁰ "Iran Warns of Israeli False Flag Operations after Drone Attack at Egypt's Damietta Port." Anadolu Agency, 2026.

¹⁹¹ "Egypt Incurs Losses of about \$10.5 Billion in Suez Canal Revenues Due to Regional Instability." Egypt Today, July 4.

¹⁹² "Egypt Ramps Red Sea Naval Presence amid Damietta Fallout." The New Arab, 2026.

¹⁹³ "Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Coalition: 14 Countries, a Big Bet on Maritime Security." Saudi Streets, August 16, 2026.

¹⁹⁴ "Egypt's Badr Abdelatty Discusses Horn Security with Djibouti Counterpart, Fourth Such Talks in a Month." Addis Standard, 2026.

¹⁹⁵ "Egypt, Chad Discuss Stronger Cooperation and Regional Security." State Information Service (Egypt), 2026.

¹⁹⁶ "Egypt, Uganda Discuss Trade, Nile Cooperation and Regional Security." Daily News Egypt, August 1, 2026.

¹⁹⁷ "Hamas Leader Heads to Cairo for Gaza Talks Ahead of Kushner Visit." Al Jazeera, August 16, 2026.

¹⁹⁸ "UPDATED: Egypt and Qatar Stress Israel Must Implement..." Ahram Online, 2026.

¹⁹⁹ "Why Egypt Staying Away from Saudi-Turkey-Pakistan Defence Pact Is India Reason." Firstpost, 2026.

²⁰⁰ "Egypt Condemns Israeli Airstrikes on Abu al-Duhur Military Airport." Egypt Today, 2026.

credibility as a neutral mediator across Middle Eastern files. Furthermore, President El-Sisi engaged French President Macron to embed Egyptian maritime interests within European defense tracks,²⁰² while the government finalized a major European Investment Bank financing package for national grid modernization to secure alternative capital and reduce vulnerability to volatile Gulf financing conditions.

Securing the land borders against regional fragmentation formed the third pillar of Egyptian strategy, driven by the imperative to protect internal stability and prevent safe havens for hostile actors. Foreign Minister Abdelatty designated Libyan territorial unity as an absolute sovereign red line,²⁰³ maintaining active engagement with eastern commander Khalifa Haftar and western Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah to advance energy interconnections and secure reconstruction contracts for Egyptian enterprises.

By convening the Tripartite Neighboring Countries Mechanism alongside Algeria and Tunisia, Cairo sought to dilute Turkish and external influence through a managed political process culminating in simultaneous Libyan elections. An identical strategic imperative guided Cairo's policy toward Sudan, where supporting Sudanese state sovereignty and institutional continuity serves to prevent refugee surges, secure the southern border, and maintain strategic alignment against Ethiopian hydrological maneuvers.[6] President El-Sisi's address to military commanders at Strategic Command headquarters affirmed that despite acute macroeconomic pressures, the Egyptian Armed Forces maintained full operational readiness across Libyan, Sudanese, and maritime approaches.

To absorb external geopolitical shocks and sustain domestic stability, Cairo implemented targeted macroeconomic interventions and industrial realignment policies. The Ministry of Investment launched the Egypt Exports program to expand the national export base and generate foreign currency inflows²⁰⁴ amid severe Suez Canal revenue shortfalls. To protect core industrial assets from Mediterranean flashpoints, joint ministerial initiatives accelerated infrastructure projects in Upper Egypt governorates, redistributing economic activity and managing internal social pressures.

Simultaneously, the government introduced a lease-to-own industrial land program to lower capital barriers for local manufacturing²⁰⁵ and evaluated transferring state holding company assets into specialized management vehicles to reduce sovereign debt metrics. When the U.S. Treasury proposed restrictions on Banque Misr's UAE branches over Iranian transfer allegations, the Central Bank clarified that measures applied strictly to offshore operations,²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ "Egypt Condemns Attacks on Arab States as US-Saudi Strikes Target Iran-Backed Groups in Iraq." Daily News Egypt, July 29, 2026.

²⁰² "France's Expanding Footprint in Egypt." ISPI, 2026.

²⁰³ "Egyptian Foreign Minister Says Libya's Partition Red Line for Cairo." Libya Observer, 2026.

²⁰⁴ "The Ministry of Investment Leads the Egypt Export Initiative with the Aim of Enhancing Exports and Supporting the Economy." Earths Guards, 2026.

²⁰⁵ "Ministry of Industry Launches Lease-to-Own System for Industrial Land to Ease Financial Burden on Investors." State Information Service (Egypt), 2026.

²⁰⁶ "Banque Misr, Egypt's Second Largest, Hit by US Sanctions: What to Know." Al Jazeera, August 30, 2026.

protecting domestic banking confidence. Trade consultations with India advanced toward a twelve-billion-dollar target²⁰⁷ to diversify agricultural and manufacturing imports,

Egypt's hosting of UNCCD COP18²⁰⁸ serves a strategic function by integrating downstream Nile water concerns into international environmental governance. By positioning downstream hydrological vulnerability within global desertification frameworks, Cairo seeks to reinforce allocation baselines derived from historical treaties, contrasting with the Cooperative Framework Agreement's emphasis on equitable resource sharing. This strategy leverages climate diplomacy to internationalize transboundary water disputes and constrain upstream infrastructure development. Consequently, Egypt uses multilateral venues to secure adaptation resources and international backing for supply guarantees, shifting focus from domestic water-use adjustments to transboundary flow security

The strategic maneuvers of August 2026 illustrate Cairo's commitment to maintaining strategic autonomy through defensive hedging and regional perimeter projection. Faced with escalating regional conflict and domestic financial strain, Egyptian statecraft successfully combined diplomatic mediation, multi-vector security partnerships, and targeted economic restructuring. By leveraging Horn of Africa alliances to counter Ethiopian hydrological and maritime ambitions, asserting institutional control over post-conflict Gaza, and redistributing internal economic assets away from exposed coastal frontiers, Cairo reinforced its position as an essential stabilizing power in the Middle East while insulating its sovereign core from external disruption.

2.2 Yemen: Houthi Escalation, Saudi Pressure, Red Sea Volatility

The Erosion of the Post-2022 Restraint

August marked a clear deterioration in the de facto truce that had contained large-scale fighting in Yemen since 2022. What began with the July dispute over Iranian flights to Sanaa and subsequent Saudi strikes on Sanaa airport developed through August into sustained Houthi attacks on Saudi territory, Saudi-linked shipping, government military concentrations and strategic infrastructure inside Yemen. The International Crisis Group assessed that the present trajectory differs from the 2015–22 war because long-range missiles, drones and maritime operations now provide the principal instruments of escalation, while warning that cumulative retaliation could generate a wider conflict even without an initial decision by either side to return to full-scale war.²⁰⁹ UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg similarly warned that Yemen faced its highest risk of renewed large-scale conflict since the 2022 truce.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ "Egypt-India Trade Target Set at USD 12 Billion over Five Years." Cairo Scene, 2026.

²⁰⁸ "Egypt's Selection to Host UNCCD COP18 Reflects Confidence in Its..." Egypt Today, 2026.

²⁰⁹ Ahmed Nagi, "Yemen's War is Returning," International Crisis Group, August 18, 2026.

²¹⁰ 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 (13 August 2026)," August 13, 2026.

The pattern of Houthi operations suggests a deliberate effort to increase the costs of the existing political and military equilibrium without committing immediately to a nationwide offensive. Between early and late August, attacks extended across Marib, Hadramawt, Taiz, Hodeidah, Al-Dhale and the western coast, while Saudi territory and maritime routes remained under pressure.²¹¹ The group claimed strikes against Najran airport, Saudi energy infrastructure and Saudi-linked naval assets, while government forces reported extensive counteroperations across multiple fronts.²¹² The resulting conflict environment is increasingly interconnected, with pressure on the Saudi border, government-held territory and Bab al-Mandab mutually reinforcing one another.

The anti-Houthi camp has meanwhile shown greater operational coordination. Government-aligned formations including the Joint Forces, Southern Giants Brigades, Nation's Shield and Emergency Forces increasingly operated through a joint command structure, with government forces reporting large numbers of operations across several governorates. Their expanding use of reconnaissance and strike drones could improve battlefield surveillance and enable more precise attacks against Houthi positions, although this capability remains far below the Houthis' established missile and long-range unmanned systems. The significance lies less in an emerging military parity than in the possibility that improved coordination and distributed drone capabilities could make sustained pressure on Houthi forces more feasible.

Saudi Arabia has consequently faced a difficult strategic calculation. Riyadh has reinforced Yemeni government forces and expanded regional security arrangements while reportedly preparing for possible naval and ground contingencies, yet it has continued to avoid the kind of direct, open-ended intervention that characterized the earlier war.²¹³ The August 7 defence agreement involving Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan added another layer to this strategy, suggesting that Riyadh is strengthening its broader security position while attempting to contain the Yemen escalation.²¹⁴ The balance between these measures and continued diplomatic caution indicates that Saudi Arabia is seeking greater deterrence without allowing the Houthis to dictate the terms of a renewed regional war.

Bab al-Mandeb as the Houthis' Principal Source of Leverage

The most consequential development during August was the transformation of maritime disruption into a central component of the Houthi campaign. Following the July 20 declaration of a blockade against Saudi-linked shipping, the group increasingly connected attacks on maritime traffic with strikes against Saudi territory and government-held positions. The reported decline in traffic through Bab al-Mandeb after the blockade announcement demonstrated the strategic effect available to the Houthis even before

²¹¹ Sherwan Hindreen Ali, "The Houthis ramp up activity in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, but avoid reigniting the civil war so far," Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, August 19, 2026.

²¹² Al Jazeera Staff, "Yemeni government escalates attacks against Houthis: What's next?," Al Jazeera, August 18, 2026.

²¹³ Patrick Wintour, "Saudi Arabia prepares sea and possible land offensive against Houthis," The Guardian, July 30, 2026.

²¹⁴ Mohammed Nail Abdulqader, "The Houthis could be first big test for Mecca mutual defense pact," Responsible Statecraft, August 12, 2026.

sustained attacks reached the scale of a comprehensive maritime campaign.²¹⁵ Their subsequent targeting of Saudi-linked vessels therefore served a dual purpose, imposing direct economic and security costs while demonstrating that the Houthis could translate their position along Yemen's western coast into leverage over an international maritime corridor.

The August 11 attack on the vessel Tihamah illustrated the growing danger.²¹⁶ The Houthis claimed that the vessel was carrying Saudi military equipment, while Yemeni authorities described it as a food shipment. Three ballistic missiles reportedly struck the vessel, killing four crew members, while a subsequent attack on a rescue operation killed two more people. Later in the month, the Houthis claimed a ballistic missile attack against the Saudi-flagged crude tanker Amzan in the northern Red Sea, while British maritime authorities reported that a tanker had been struck and caught fire. These incidents demonstrate how the distinction between military-linked and commercial maritime traffic can become increasingly difficult to maintain once a conflict actor declares a broad category of shipping to be subject to retaliation.

The Houthis' maritime strategy is therefore best understood as controlled coercion rather than indiscriminate disruption. Their public framing of the campaign as “blockade-for-blockade” or “siege for siege” seeks to establish a political rationale for maritime attacks by presenting them as reciprocal responses to Saudi pressure. At the same time, the group has retained room to calibrate the intensity and scope of its operations. Its earlier denial of reports that it intended to impose transit fees on vessels using Bab al-Mandab was significant in this respect. The denial sought to preserve the distinction between politically targeted maritime pressure and an attempt to assume formal commercial control over the waterway, limiting the risk of alienating actors whose shipping the Houthis may have an interest in keeping outside the confrontation.

The strategic value of Bab al-Mandab extends beyond Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The concentration of Houthi activity around Al-Makha, the western coast and nearby maritime routes places the domestic conflict directly within the security calculations of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti and other Red Sea littoral states. Sudanese and Yemeni officials discussed strengthening coordination among Red Sea states on August 1, following Saudi-led discussions involving Sudanese and Yemeni military representatives on a prospective maritime security coalition. The emerging regional response consequently reflects a recognition that Houthi pressure can produce strategic effects without requiring territorial expansion, because control over the risk environment around a maritime chokepoint can itself function as a form of political leverage.

²¹⁵ Safety4Sea Editorial Team, “Shipping traffic collapses at Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb,” SAFETY4SEA, August 6, 2026.

²¹⁶ Adam Hancock, AFP, Reuters, and the Associated Press, “Six killed in Houthi attack on Bab al-Mandeb ship, Yemen's government says,” Al Jazeera, August 12, 2026.

From Battlefield Pressure to a Regional Houthi Network

The conflict's regionalization is becoming increasingly visible in the relationship between Houthi military activity and the wider security architecture surrounding the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Saudi Arabia's efforts to develop maritime cooperation with Yemen, Sudan and other littoral states, alongside its broader defence arrangements, reflect an attempt to build layers of deterrence around the Houthi threat. The Houthis are responding from a different position. Their comparative advantage lies in the ability to connect a relatively contained territorial conflict with vulnerabilities extending across maritime routes, energy infrastructure and regional security networks.

The Century Foundation's August 24 assessment points to a further development in this trajectory, arguing that the Houthis are seeking to establish relationships with armed actors beyond Yemen and become a more autonomous regional node within the wider “Axis of Resistance.”²¹⁷ The report identifies alleged links with al-Shabaab and elements associated with the Sudanese conflict, alongside the exploitation of migration, smuggling and maritime networks across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. It also raises allegations of Houthi and Iranian activity involving Eritrea and possible arms-transit routes through Eritrean territory. The report itself cautions that the evidence for some Eritrea-related claims is considerably weaker than for other elements of the network, and evidence of advanced Houthi weapons transfers to African actors remains limited. The significance therefore lies in the emerging relationships and potential logistical architecture rather than an established Houthi military network across the Horn.

The implications are nevertheless substantial because the same geography that allows the Houthis to threaten Bab al-Mandab also connects Yemen to Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. If transactional relationships with African armed groups deepen, the distinction between the Yemen conflict and conflicts elsewhere around the Red Sea could become increasingly blurred. Training, technical assistance, intelligence cooperation and logistical facilitation could provide the Houthis with additional strategic depth while giving partner groups access to expertise and networks that are otherwise difficult to acquire. For now, the weakness and transactional character of many reported relationships leaves space for disruption, particularly through maritime interdiction and tighter monitoring of ports, air routes and coastal networks.

The Yemeni government's response increasingly reflects this broader understanding of the conflict. During the final week of August, government forces reported intercepting Iranian-made drone components in the Red Sea, including control boards, receivers, transmission equipment and propulsion systems, while another interception was reported near Al-Makha. PLC Chairman Rashad al-Alimi subsequently ordered the closure of ports and border

²¹⁷ Peter Salisbury, Nadwa Al-Dawsari, and Jay Bahadur, “From Spoke to Hub: The Houthis in Africa,” Century International, August 24, 2026.

crossings operating outside government authority, explicitly linking the measures to efforts to disrupt smuggling and Houthi financing and arms networks. The confrontation is consequently expanding from a struggle over territory and military positions into a contest over the logistical systems that sustain Houthi power.

August therefore ended with Yemen in a considerably more dangerous position than it entered the month. The Houthis have demonstrated that they can impose costs simultaneously on Saudi territory, government-held Yemen and Red Sea shipping while maintaining the ability to calibrate the intensity of their campaign. Government-aligned forces have responded with greater coordination, improved drone capabilities and efforts to interdict Houthi supply networks, while Saudi Arabia has combined military reinforcement with diplomatic and regional security initiatives. Neither side has achieved a decisive breakthrough, and the absence of a comprehensive ground offensive still distinguishes the current confrontation from the earlier stages of the war. The principal risk lies in the interaction between these separate pressures. Continued Houthi maritime attacks, Saudi countermeasures, expanding government operations and the wider regional confrontation involving Iran could progressively narrow the space for restraint until a conflict that both sides may prefer to contain becomes increasingly difficult to control.

2.3 Israel-Iran war

In August 2026 the Iran–Israel conflict settled into a pattern of economic attrition layered over residual kinetic pressure and constrained diplomacy. United States measures combined sustained naval interdiction with expanding financial designations while Iranian authorities formalized control claims over the Strait of Hormuz and retained proxy capacity in adjacent theaters. Israeli operations focused on containing secondary fronts in Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank. Regional mediation channels remained active yet produced limited concrete results as energy markets absorbed ongoing disruptions.

Maritime developments around the Strait of Hormuz formed the central strategic axis of the month. Iranian officials advanced technical discussions with Oman on an interim arrangement establishing separate inbound and outbound shipping lanes, with inbound traffic positioned closer to Iranian waters.²¹⁸ Tehran described the framework as nearing finalization and presented it as a means of formalizing a measure of practical influence over a waterway essential to global energy transit. The Supreme National Security Council simultaneously issued an expanded set of conditions for any reopening, requiring the United States to terminate threats and hostilities against Iran and its partners, lift the naval blockade of Iranian ports, remove sanctions, release frozen assets, and provide compensation for wartime

²¹⁸“Iran and Oman Propose Temporary Shipping Lane Through Strait of Hormuz,” The Media Line, August 26, 2026.

damage.²¹⁹ Iranian Foreign Ministry statements clarified that any Oman-linked route agreement would remain subordinate to these broader demands, thereby converting a navigation question into leverage for regime economic and security objectives.

IRGC messaging reinforced the characterization of the strait as a theater of war and rejected portrayals of direct negotiation with Washington. Parallel parliamentary work on draft legislation to impose transit fees and restrict vessels from hostile states²²⁰ signaled longer-term intent to monetize and securitize the waterway. United States officials, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Secretary of State Rubio, reported progress on the Hormuz track and expressed expectation of an imminent Iran–Oman understanding²²¹ that could permit performance-based lifting of the blockade of Iranian ports. Vice President Vance conveyed Iranian assurances against the imposition of tolls, framing the interim arrangement around safe transit.²²² Ship-tracking data earlier in the month showed intermittent successful transits, including a UAE LNG tanker, indicating that Iranian interdiction remained incomplete even as overall traffic stayed heavily reduced. Iranian naval units had earlier intercepted merchant vessels, while U.S. forces redirected dozens of ships attempting to reach Iranian ports, sustaining a mutual contest for practical control. A vessel strike producing a crew casualty, reported by United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, and continued Iranian warnings of fines or detention for rule violations further illustrated the elevated risk environment.

Economic pressure constituted the complementary instrument of United States strategy. Treasury Secretary Bessent announced an Economic D-Day package designating sixty foreign entities, individuals, and vessels linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,²²³ targeting procurement networks that support ballistic-missile and nuclear infrastructure. Subsequent statements described plans for a one-two punch pairing the existing naval blockade with the toughest sanctions in history, with the explicit aim of producing regime-level economic strain.

President Trump characterized the campaign as the most crushing economic operation ever taken against any country and instructed officials against indefinite talks absent clear Iranian signals of acceptance of preferred terms.²²⁴ Iranian responses framed the measures as economic terrorism and warned that cooperating states would be treated as enemies. Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei cautioned that continued enforcement could trigger interdiction of all oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf.

President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged a thirty-five percent decline in foreign trade

²¹⁹ “Iran’s Security Chief Denies Allegations of Iranian Plot to Assassinate Trump’s Son.” Reuters, August 27, 2026.

²²⁰ “Iranian Parliamentary Committee Approves Fees on Ships Using Strait of Hormuz.” Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²²¹ “Iran War: Donald Trump, US Denies Negotiations Begin, Strikes Called Off.” CBS News, 2026.

²²² “US Expects Iran to Ensure Safe Oil Flow Through the Strait of Hormuz, Says Vance.” The Star, August 9, 2026.

²²³ U.S. Department of the Treasury. Press release.

²²⁴ “Trump Announces Most Crushing Economic Operation Against Iran.” Anadolu Agency, 2026.

resulting from military operations, sanctions, and the blockade, while indicating that domestic production and resistance-economy measures would sustain institutions.²²⁵ Iran's Petroleum Ministry concluded an emergency energy agreement with Russia covering gas swaps, joint infrastructure, and non-dollar clearing to circumvent financial isolation. Brent crude prices fluctuated in a range near eighty-nine to ninety-four dollars per barrel amid the disruptions, amplifying incentives on all sides for eventual restoration of commercial flows.

Military and proxy activity remained intermittent yet structurally linked to the main confrontation. U.S. forces conducted airstrikes against IRGC missile infrastructure on Larak Island inside the Strait of Hormuz, destroying hardened anti-ship sites and radar installations;²²⁶ the IRGC Aerospace Force responded with ballistic missiles and drones against U.S. bases in Jordan.²²⁷ Earlier U.S. strikes had targeted IRGC drone command centers and assembly sites inside Iran.

Israeli operations included airstrikes in southern Lebanon linked to Hezbollah activity and continued ground friction in the West Bank, including settler entry into religious sites in Awarta accompanied by security measures that produced localized violence. Israeli strikes and ground operations produced fatalities in Gaza and the West Bank, illustrating the fragility of existing arrangements.

Houthi forces claimed missile attacks on Saudi military vessels and oil tankers in the Red Sea and a separate strike on a Marib camp that killed personnel, extending Iranian-aligned pressure into a second energy corridor. Iranian Artesh statements announced a doctrinal shift toward an offensive posture emphasizing rapid multi-target retaliation, pre-emptive action against regional U.S. assets, and potential expansion to energy facilities and undersea infrastructure. An Iranian Army spokesman had earlier announced a reciprocal temporary halt to retaliatory missile attacks coinciding with a pause in American air operations, while warning that resumption would expand the geographic scope of conflict.¹⁴ Israeli defense assessments projected that any pause in U.S. strikes remained tactical, and reports indicated Iranian use of the earlier negotiation window to expand missile and drone production capacity and to reinforce advisory presence with proxies in Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon.¹⁵

Diplomatic channels operated in parallel with these pressures yet failed to produce a successor arrangement after the sixty-day U.S.–Iran Memorandum of Understanding expired without a final deal or confirmed extension. President Trump ruled out any extension, stated that no talks were underway or scheduled, and called for Iranian surrender. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused Israel of obstructing the memorandum and claimed Iranian success in both war and diplomacy.²²⁸ UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged resumption of negotiations and cautioned against sole reliance on military solutions.

²²⁵ “Iran’s President Admits Sanctions Impacting Economy.” Asharq Al-Awsat, 2026.

²²⁶ “US Strikes Iranian Rocket Launchers in First Attack since Late July.” The Hill, 2026.

²²⁷ “Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Says It Struck 2 US Airbases in Jordan with Ballistic Missiles.” Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²²⁸ “Iran’s Foreign Minister Accuses Israel of Sabotaging Ceasefire Deal with US.” Saudi Gazette, 2026.

Mediation efforts continued through Pakistan, Oman, Qatar, Egypt, and other parties; Pakistan's army chief traveled or prepared to travel to Tehran, while Egypt, Qatar, and others called for return to the June framework. High-level Israeli representatives met a Syrian delegation in Jordan to discuss de-confliction along the Golan Heights. U.S.-mediated Israel-Lebanon talks registered technical progress according to American statements. President Trump publicly accused Iranian leadership of duplicity while claiming negotiations had occurred, and later signaled preference for allowing economic pressure additional time to operate while retaining the option of renewed military action.

The month closed with the conflict positioned between economic attrition and asymmetric maritime leverage. United States reliance on blockade and sanctions faced Iranian capacity to disrupt energy flows and to sustain proxy pressure, while mediation channels preserved limited diplomatic space. Short-term trajectories point toward continued testing of Hormuz arrangements and the durability of economic measures, with the risk of renewed kinetic escalation remaining present should either side assess that current instruments have exhausted their utility.

2.4 Türkiye: Architecting an Independent Regional Pillar

In August 2026, Ankara accelerated the construction of an independent regional security architecture while managing acute military friction with Israel and carefully calibrating its defense relationship with the United States. The signing of the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement alongside Saudi Arabia and Pakistan established a tripartite framework explicitly modeled on collective defense principles.²²⁹ This pact integrates Turkish defense manufacturing capacity with Saudi capital and Pakistani military resources to create geopolitical bloc. Working committees prepared at a subsequent Istanbul summit aim to operationalize the agreement into a standing security structure.²³⁰

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan later announced Egypt would join the framework upon completing technical procedures,²³¹ signaling Ankara's intent to institutionalize a broader Sunni security arrangement. Bangladesh also evaluated an invitation to join the Saudi-led initiative, reflecting the inter-regional appeal of the pact.²³² President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the agreement with United States President Donald Trump during a telephone consultation, framing the alignment as a stabilizing force for regional security that shifts the burden away from Western partners.²³³ Strategic assessments from regional think tanks indicate this arrangement dilutes exclusive Gulf reliance on Washington and positions Turkey as a pivotal security broker amid Iranian escalation.

Simultaneously, Turkey navigated severe escalation in the Levant following Israeli airstrikes

²²⁹ "Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan Sign Joint Defence Deal amid Regional Turmoil." Reuters, August 7, 2026.

²³⁰ "Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye Meet: What's Next for Their Defence Pact?" Al Jazeera, August 31, 2026.

²³¹ "Turkey Expects Egypt to Join the Mecca Agreement along with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan." Reuters Connect, 2026.

²³² "Bangladesh Could Consider Joining Mecca Pact to Test Foreign Ties." Reuters, August 25, 2026.

²³³ "Erdogan Tells Trump Mecca Defense Agreement Strengthens Regional Security." Al Arabiya English, August 18, 2026.

on the Abu al-Duhur airbase in Syria.²³⁴ The Israeli government claimed the facility was preparing to host Turkish troop deployments and advanced air defense systems, characterizing such a move as a fundamental threat to its security perimeter.²³⁵ Ankara categorically rejected these allegations, describing them as an election-driven pretext to legitimize unlawful strikes and expand Israeli influence.²³⁶ Officials from both the Turkish Defense Ministry and the Communications Directorate denied the presence of any military delegation at the site. Prior to the strikes, Mossad Director Roman Gofman and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani held a telephone call concerning Turkish hardware in Syria,²³⁷ highlighting the intense intelligence scrutiny surrounding Ankara's movements.

In response to the bombing, Turkey accelerated its diplomatic defense of Damascus. Fidan identified Israeli actions as a primary threat to Syrian sovereignty,²³⁸ while Erdogan reaffirmed his support for Syrian stability and announced a planned visit to Damascus.²³⁹ Turkey and Syria further demonstrated operational coordination when their respective military engineers completed a heavy-duty floating bridge across the Euphrates River to restore commercial and troop transit routes.²⁴⁰ To manage the broader fallout, United States envoy Tom Barrack initiated deconfliction talks aimed at establishing a tripartite mechanism among Turkey, Israel, and Syria.²⁴¹

Ankara also advanced its strategic integration with Iraq to secure its southern border and permanently constrain Kurdish militant groups. A one-year agreement to transport Iraqi crude oil through the Ceyhan pipeline²⁴² reinforced Turkey's position as an indispensable energy corridor amid disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. During a visit by the Iraqi prime minister, Erdogan emphasized the Development Road project and articulated a vision for a secure region entirely free of terrorism. This dual approach locks Baghdad into structural economic frameworks that inherently reduce Iraqi tolerance for militias operating near the Turkish border.

In the defense procurement domain, Turkey capitalized on the lifting of CAATSA sanctions following the Ankara NATO Summit to pursue advanced air platforms.²⁴³ Justice Department filings revealed the Turkish Ministry of National Defense hired Ballard Partners for 2.4 million dollars annually to lobby for reintegration into the F-35 program.²⁴⁴ To facilitate this return, Ankara formally offered to transfer its S-400 systems to a third country, demonstrating a willingness to reverse previous strategic choices to secure next-generation

²³⁴ "Eight Israeli Airstrikes Hit Syria's Abu al-Duhur Airbase, No Casualties: State TV." Reuters, August 18, 2026.

²³⁵ "Israel Struck Syrian Base over Planned Turkish Deployment." The Media Line, 2026.

²³⁶ "Türkiye Rejects Israeli Claims, Says Netanyahu Seeks to Justify Syria Strikes." Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²³⁷ "Mossad Chief, Syria FM Discussed Turkey Troops, Strikes." The New Arab, 2026.

²³⁸ "Türkiye Warns Israeli Attacks Threaten Syria Stability." Yeni Şafak, 2026.

²³⁹ "Erdogan Plans Syria Visit, Reaffirms Türkiye's Support for Stability." Asharq Al-Awsat, 2026.

²⁴⁰ "Turkish, Syrian Armies Complete Floating Bridge over Euphrates River." Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²⁴¹ "US Working on Deconfliction Mechanism among Turkey, Israel, Syria, US Envoy Says." Reuters, August 18, 2026.

²⁴² "Iraq, Turkey Strike 1-Year Oil Pipeline Deal to Boost Exports." The New Arab, 2026.

²⁴³ "Turkey F-35 Return Still Frozen: S-400, CAATSA 2026." MigFlug, 2026.

²⁴⁴ "Türkiye Taps Trump-Linked Lobbyists in Bid to Rejoin F-35 Programme: Report." Türkiye Today, 2026.

capabilities.

Simultaneously, Turkish pilots commenced Eurofighter Typhoon training in the United Kingdom ahead of expected 2030 deliveries,²⁴⁵ advancing a strategy to diversify combat-aircraft suppliers beyond American platforms. Domestic defense milestones included the flight acceptance testing of the Hürjet advanced trainer and successful ground-launched tests of a new long-range precision cruise missile and bunker-busting munition.²⁴⁶

Turkey aggressively protected its maritime and energy interests across the Eastern Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa, viewing these theaters as deeply interconnected. Defense Minister Yaşar Güler confirmed ongoing inter-agency contingency planning for crisis scenarios, specifically citing the expanding military coordination among Israel, Greece, and Cyprus.²⁴⁷ Tensions in the Aegean Sea escalated when Turkey designated marine parks,²⁴⁸ prompting Athens to seek European Union intervention.²⁴⁹ The announcement by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres regarding formal Cyprus talks involving guarantor powers provided Ankara an avenue to press for Turkish Cypriot political equality and disrupt unilateral Greek Cypriot hydrocarbon exploration.

In the Red Sea theater, Turkey expressed deep concern over Somaliland's diplomatic outreach to Greece, Cyprus, and Israel.²⁵⁰ Such an alignment projects Eastern Mediterranean disputes into the Gulf of Aden, threatening Turkish investments in Somalia and its maritime influence at the Bab el-Mandeb strait. Turkey basically from a reactive regional actor into the principal architect of an independent security ecosystem. By establishing the Mecca pact, Ankara codified a Sunni-led defense pillar to reduce Western dependence while extending its strategic footprint from the Levant to the Red Sea. Balancing high-stakes friction with Israel against pragmatic defense hedging with Washington and London, Turkey leveraged domestic industrial strength and energy corridor dominance. This multi-vector strategy asserts Ankara as an indispensable power broker, fundamentally reshaping the Middle Eastern balance of power.

²⁴⁵ "Turkish Eurofighter Pilots to Begin UK Flight Training in August." *Türkiye Today*, 2026.

²⁴⁶ "Turkey Flies Hürjet Training." *The Defense Post*, August 31, 2026.

²⁴⁷ "Turkey Plans for War Scenarios amid Expanding Israel-Greece Defense Ties, Official Letter Reveals." *Nordic Monitor*, August 2026.

²⁴⁸ "Greece Brands Turkey's New Marine Parks Illegal." *Euractiv*, 2026.

²⁴⁹ "Greece to Brief EU on Marine Parks Maps." *Kathimerini*, 2026.

²⁵⁰ "Türkiye's Somaliland Dilemma: Why Ankara Fears." *Times of Israel Blogs*, 2026.

Gulf States: Strategic Realignment Amid Regional Escalation

United Arab Emirates: Balancing Regional Security Pressures with Strategic Partnerships and Economic Resilience

The UAE's August trajectory was shaped initially by intensive diplomatic engagement aimed at managing regional instability, but it increasingly became defined by the deterioration of its security environment and the need to protect its maritime and economic interests. Early in the month, Abu Dhabi maintained active communication with major regional and international actors. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held consultations with the Arab League leadership on regional conflicts and de-escalation²⁵¹, while President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on regional stability and bilateral cooperation²⁵². Coordination with Kuwait also continued as Gulf governments sought to manage the broader security environment. These diplomatic efforts were accompanied by growing concern over maritime security, particularly after the UAE condemned the hostile targeting of an ADNOC²⁵³ carrier while it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz, underscoring the vulnerability of commercial shipping and energy infrastructure to the expanding regional confrontation.

The UAE's relationship with Iran subsequently deteriorated sharply as the security environment intensified. Abu Dhabi announced an indefinite suspension of trade, commercial exchanges, and financial transactions with Iran²⁵⁴, citing regional escalations that threatened international peace and security. The decision followed Emirati claims that its air defenses had detected ballistic missiles launched from Iran toward maritime navigation, with the missiles landing in and around UAE territorial waters²⁵⁵. Iran rejected the accusation and characterized it as baseless and potentially part of a false-flag operation. The economic measures were accompanied by urgent high-level consultations between Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and U.S. President Donald Trump, as well as discussions between their respective national security teams²⁵⁶. The sequence of events demonstrated how the UAE's earlier emphasis on managing tensions with Tehran gave way to a much harder security posture as direct threats to Emirati territory and maritime activity increased.

Despite the deterioration with Iran, Abu Dhabi continued pursuing a broad diplomatic strategy rather than allowing the security confrontation to define all of its foreign relations. Emirati officials sought to counter what they described as coordinated misinformation

²⁵¹ Qatar News Agency. "UAE Foreign Minister Discusses Regional Situation with Arab League Secretary-General." Qatar News Agency, August 6, 2026.

²⁵² Kremlin. "President of Russia." Kremlin, 2026.

²⁵³ Shipping Telegraph. "UAE Says Iran Attacked ADNOC Carrier with Missile in Strait of Hormuz." Shipping Telegraph, 2026.

²⁵⁴ Egypt Today. "UAE Suspends Trade, Financial Transactions with Iran Indefinitely." Egypt Today, 2026.

²⁵⁵ Middle East Forum. "Is the United Arab Emirates-Iran Trade Freeze an Economic Shock or Strategic Pivot?" Middle East Forum Observer, 2026.

²⁵⁶ WAM (Emirates News Agency). "UAE President Receives Phone Call from President." Emirates News Agency, 2026.

concerning worker residency visas and financial arrangements involving Iran, while the UAE also remained active in regional diplomatic positions concerning Gaza alongside Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and other partners. The country simultaneously maintained its wider international diplomatic outreach, including the formal assumption of office by its ambassador to Costa Rica²⁵⁷. In Africa, the UAE strengthened its engagement with Ethiopia, with the newly appointed Emirati ambassador meeting Ethiopian leadership in Addis Ababa to discuss trade, infrastructure investment, and security stabilization in the Horn of Africa²⁵⁸. These engagements demonstrated that Abu Dhabi continued to view economic and strategic partnerships in Africa as an important component of its external policy even while Gulf security pressures intensified.

The UAE also remained closely attentive to wider mediation efforts surrounding the regional conflict. Abu Dhabi monitored Qatar's diplomatic engagement with Tehran as Doha sought to create an avenue for renewed U.S.-Iran negotiations and reduce the risks to maritime navigation²⁵⁹. At the same time, the UAE deepened its technological relationship with Washington through plans for a major joint \$30 billion artificial intelligence campus²⁶⁰, linking its economic and technological ambitions with its increasingly close strategic relationship with the United States²⁶¹. This combination of security coordination, technological cooperation, and diplomatic outreach suggests that Abu Dhabi was attempting to strengthen its external partnerships while managing the risks created by its increasingly confrontational relationship with Iran.

By the end of August, the UAE's position reflected a complicated regional balancing act. Abu Dhabi remained committed to protecting its maritime and economic interests, strengthening ties with Washington, and expanding partnerships in Africa, while simultaneously resisting pressure to align completely with the Saudi-led regional security architecture. The decision by the UAE to remain outside the founding group of the Saudi-led multinational maritime coalition, alongside Oman, highlighted underlying strategic differences over the Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and southern Yemen. Consequently, August revealed both greater UAE-U.S. strategic alignment and sharper intra-Gulf divergence, particularly as Riyadh sought a more consolidated regional security structure.

Saudi Arabia: Strategic Diversification and the Emergence of a Saudi-Centered Regional Security Architecture

Saudi Arabia's August trajectory reflected a clear effort to strengthen its independent regional security posture while simultaneously preserving and expanding its wider

²⁵⁷ United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "UAE-Costa Rica." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, August 21, 2026.

²⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. "A Week in the Horn 118." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, August 28, 2026.

²⁵⁹ Arab News. "Qatar's Prime Minister..." Arab News, 2026.

²⁶⁰ Analytics Insight. "UAE's AI Dream Gets Bigger: Trump Partnership, Chips, Data Centres." Analytics Insight, 2026.

²⁶¹ Reuters. "US-UAE Multi-Billion-Dollar AI Data Campus Deal Far from Finalised, Sources Say." Reuters, June 6, 2025.

diplomatic relationships. Early in the month, Riyadh continued to broaden bilateral defense cooperation beyond its traditional Western partnerships, including military discussions with Canada²⁶² and the arrival of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Jeddah for high-level engagement²⁶³. This diplomatic activity gained greater strategic significance with the conclusion of the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan²⁶⁴, under which an armed attack against one member would be treated as an attack against all three. The agreement represented a major step toward a more diversified security architecture for Riyadh's shift occurred particularly after Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan reportedly indicated that the period of unconditional reliance on the United States for Saudi security protection was coming to an end, a claim that was later debunked²⁶⁵. At the same time, Washington publicly endorsed the trilateral arrangement²⁶⁶, while Riyadh maintained quiet consultations with Turkish and Pakistani officials on its future strategic implementation and continued seeking closer coordination with regional partners to protect critical maritime routes²⁶⁷.

Alongside the emerging defense alignment, Saudi Arabia remained active in regional de-escalation and diplomatic coordination. Riyadh welcomed, together with Qatar, the United Nations Security Council position condemning continued Houthi threats while a localized halt in cross-border attacks remained in place²⁶⁸. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also held discussions with French President Emmanuel Macron on regional developments and efforts to address them²⁶⁹, while Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan engaged his Egyptian counterpart on bilateral cooperation and regional affairs²⁷⁰. Relations with Sudan also moved toward a more institutionalized framework, with Riyadh and Khartoum established a **Strategic Cooperation and Coordination Council**²⁷¹ covering ten economic files and providing a broader mechanism for managing bilateral relations. The subsequent diplomatic reception of Saudi envoy Dr. Zaid bin Mukhlid Al Harbi by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan further demonstrated Riyadh's growing attention to Sudan and the strategic importance it attaches to developments on the western shores of the Red Sea²⁷². Saudi engagement also extended southward, with South Sudan ratifying a broad cooperation agreement that created a basis for expanded bilateral investment.

²⁶² Arab News. "Saudi, Canadian Defense Ministers Discuss Bilateral Cooperation." Arab News, July 10, 2026.

²⁶³ Al Jazeera. "Türkiye's Erdoğan to Visit Saudi Arabia: What to Expect." Al Jazeera, August 7, 2026.

²⁶⁴ Al Jazeera. "Top Officials from Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan to Meet in Istanbul." Al Jazeera, August 30, 2026.

²⁶⁵ Agence France-Presse. "Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy: AFP Fact Check." AFP Fact Check, 2026.

²⁶⁶ Saudi Press Agency. "US President Welcomes Signing of Makkah Joint Defence Agreement." Saudi Press Agency, 2026.

²⁶⁷ The Arab Weekly. "Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan Put New Defence Pact into Action." The Arab Weekly, 2026.

²⁶⁸ Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). "Saudi Arabia, Qatar Welcome UN Security Council Condemnation of Houthi Attacks." SANA, August 9, 2026.

²⁶⁹ Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). "Saudi Crown Prince, French President Discuss Regional and International Developments." SANA, August 7, 2026.

²⁷⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat. "Saudi Foreign Minister Discusses Regional Developments with Egyptian Counterpart." Asharq Al-Awsat, August 12, 2026.

²⁷¹ Sudan Tribune. "Sudan, Saudi Arabia Establish Joint Council to Boost Strategic Ties." Sudan Tribune, August 17, 2026.

²⁷² Mada Masr. "Sudan Nashra: Burhan Offers Temporary Immunity for Internal Dialogue Participants; AU Peace and Security Council in Khartoum; Khartoum-Riyadh Establish Bilateral Coordination Council." Mada Masr, August 21, 2026.

The security environment nevertheless forced Riyadh to adjust its economic and maritime calculations. Continuing Houthi threats to shipping in the Red Sea resulted in further efforts to reorganize Saudi crude-oil logistics and reduce dependence on vulnerable southern maritime routes²⁷³. The escalation reached a more serious level when a Houthi ballistic missile struck the Saudi oil tanker *AMZAN* off Yanbu²⁷⁴, while subsequent Houthi warnings to maritime insurance companies challenged Saudi security assurances and accused Riyadh of attempting to economically constrain Yemen through its counter-blockade measures. In response, Saudi Arabia explored longer alternative shipping arrangements involving the Mediterranean²⁷⁵ and Egypt, including the use of Sidi Kerir and the Suez Canal²⁷⁶, demonstrating how the maritime confrontation was increasingly affecting the kingdom's energy logistics rather than remaining a narrowly military concern.

Saudi Arabia's strategic recalibration was also visible in its nuclear and wider regional diplomacy. The submission of the U.S.-Saudi civil nuclear cooperation agreement to Congress marked an important development in Riyadh's pursuit of domestic nuclear capabilities, including uranium enrichment under American supervision²⁷⁷, while also positioning the partnership as a means of counterbalancing Russian and Chinese influence. At the regional level, the effects of the Makkah defense pact continued to shape Saudi diplomacy as Riyadh pursued a broader framework for managing regional hostility. Rapid diplomatic contacts involving Qatar, Oman, and Pakistan were linked to efforts to establish a wider non-aggression framework across the Gulf and West Asia²⁷⁸. At the same time, the evolving Saudi-led maritime security initiative exposed differences within the Gulf, particularly with the UAE and Oman declining to join the founding group of the multinational defensive maritime coalition²⁷⁹. The resulting alignment with African littoral states including Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Nigeria, alongside Qatar, highlighted Riyadh's attempt to construct a broader Red Sea security network in which African partnerships became an increasingly important component of Saudi regional strategy²⁸⁰.

The month therefore demonstrated a broader Saudi transition from reliance on a single external security guarantor toward overlapping bilateral and multilateral security arrangements. The Makkah pact with Türkiye and Pakistan, expanded defense contacts with other partners, deeper engagement with Sudan and South Sudan, alternative maritime logistics, and the emerging Saudi-led maritime coalition all point toward a strategy centered on strategic diversification. Rather than withdrawing from its relationship with Washington, Riyadh appeared to be using American cooperation alongside regional and non-Western

²⁷³ Reuters. "Yemen's Houthis Say They Attacked Ship off Saudi Arabia's Yanbu." Reuters, August 24, 2026.

²⁷⁴ Al Jazeera. "Yemen's Houthis Report Attack on Saudi Ship." Al Jazeera, August 24, 2026.

²⁷⁵ CNBC. "Saudi Arabia-Iran Tensions, Oil, Red Sea, Houthi, Suez Canal and Strait of Hormuz." CNBC, August 12, 2026

²⁷⁶ Egypt Oil & Gas. "Aramco Expands Crude Export Options via Egypt's Sidi Kerir." Egypt Oil & Gas, 2026.

²⁷⁷ Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "Trump Administration Sends Secretive U.S.-Saudi Nuclear Deal to Congress for Review." Foundation for Defense of Democracies, August 28, 2026.

²⁷⁸ GIS Reports. "UAE-Saudi Rivalry." GIS Reports Online, 2026.

²⁷⁹ Haghirian, Mehran. "New Concentric Arrangements Will Underpin Middle East Security." Bourse & Bazaar, 2026.

²⁸⁰ Al Jazeera. "Saudi Arabia Announces Start of Red Sea Defence Alliance: Will It Work?" Al Jazeera, August 14, 2026.

partnerships to increase its room for maneuver amid the wider regional conflict.

Qatar: Mediation Under Pressure, Expanding Diplomatic Engagement, Amid Regional Escalation

Qatar's August foreign-policy trajectory centered on mediation, regional de-escalation, and the preservation of diplomatic channels amid an increasingly unstable Gulf security environment. Early in the month, Doha remained actively involved in efforts to mediate the U.S.-Iran confrontation²⁸¹ alongside Oman and Pakistan²⁸². Qatari officials emphasized that indirect consultations between the parties remained active and that diplomatic efforts were aimed at creating conditions for a short-term resolution and the eventual restoration of direct negotiations. Qatar simultaneously maintained its regional diplomatic relationships, including consultations with Saudi Arabia²⁸³ on regional security challenges and coordination surrounding wider mediation efforts. Its engagement with Egypt also produced concrete bilateral outcomes, including new cooperation agreements covering customs, regulatory matters, development, and healthcare, alongside progress on major investment projects²⁸⁴. Qatar's bilateral diplomacy therefore continued to operate alongside its broader role as a regional mediator.

Qatar's mediation role became increasingly important as the security environment surrounding the Gulf deteriorated. Doha continued pressing for arrangements that would preserve freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and supported diplomatic efforts designed to prevent further escalation. Its coordination with Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, and other regional actors reflected an effort to create overlapping diplomatic channels capable of managing the consequences of the wider conflict. The country's position was particularly significant because its mediation strategy required maintaining communication with opposing sides while simultaneously dealing with the security consequences of regional military escalation.

Qatar also expanded its diplomatic engagement beyond the Gulf. Its involvement in the Doha peace process concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued through internationally supported negotiations that produced a new implementation roadmap²⁸⁵ for a comprehensive peace agreement between the DRC government and the AFC/M23 alliance²⁸⁶. Qatar's African engagement was complemented by bilateral outreach to Kenya²⁸⁷, where Qatari officials discussed cooperation in economic, investment, and energy sectors. Doha also pursued political engagement with Libya through a meeting between its Minister

²⁸¹ Iran International. "...". Iran International, August 26, 2026.

²⁸² Anadolu Agency. "Iran Holds Talks with Pakistan, Qatar on Regional De-Escalation Efforts." Anadolu Agency, 2026.

²⁸³ Arab News. "...". Arab News, 2026.

²⁸⁴ Gulf Times. "Qatar, Egypt Sign 4 Deals to Cement Ties." Gulf Times, 2026.

²⁸⁵ Gulf Times. "Qatar Hails First DRC Truce Verification." Gulf Times, 2026.

²⁸⁶ Africanews. "DRC, M23 Agree Peace Roadmap as Doha Talks Seek to Regain Momentum." Africanews, August 24, 2026.

²⁸⁷ African Pilot. "Kenya-Qatar Bilateral Cooperation." African Pilot, 2026

of State for Foreign Affairs and Saddam Haftar²⁸⁸, accompanied by an invitation for Haftar to visit Doha for further consultations concerning Libya's stability and unity. These initiatives demonstrated that Qatar's foreign policy remained geographically diversified, combining Gulf mediation with African and North African diplomatic engagement.

Qatar's engagement with Iran became particularly prominent as the regional confrontation intensified. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani traveled to Tehran for discussions with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi²⁸⁹, seeking an avenue for de-escalation and the reopening of diplomatic channels. The discussions included proposals concerning a temporary joint shipping corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and a possible framework for subsea mine clearance, directly linking Qatar's mediation efforts to the protection of maritime navigation²⁹⁰. Doha subsequently maintained coordination with Türkiye on regional de-escalation mechanisms²⁹¹ and freedom of navigation, reinforcing its effort to build a broad diplomatic coalition around maritime stability rather than relying on a single mediation channel.

Qatar's engagement with Somalia further demonstrated the expansion of its African diplomacy. The visit of Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre to Doha and his meeting with the Qatari leadership reinforced bilateral political engagement, while a written message from the Somali president to the Amir highlighted the continued importance attached to the relationship²⁹². This was particularly significant against the backdrop of Qatar's broader engagement in the Horn of Africa and its simultaneous diplomatic contacts with Kenya and Libya.

By the end of August, however, Qatar's mediator position faced a direct challenge from the worsening regional security environment. Qatari officials argued that Qatar and Oman could not effectively perform their mediation roles while themselves coming under military attack, demanding an immediate halt to hostilities. The development underscored the central contradiction in Qatar's August foreign policy: Doha sought to remain a diplomatic bridge between competing powers, but the escalation of direct attacks on Gulf infrastructure increasingly threatened the political and security space required for that mediation. Nevertheless, Qatar continued to rely on diplomacy, regional coordination, and diversified international relationships as its principal instruments for managing the crisis.

²⁸⁸ Libya Observer. "Qatar Minister Invites Saddam Haftar to Visit Doha." Libya Observer, 2026.

²⁸⁹ New York Times. "Qatar Visit to Iran." New York Times, August 27, 2026.

²⁹⁰ Al Jazeera. "Iran, Qatar Hold Hormuz Talks amid International Hopes Dialogue with US Will Resume." Al Jazeera, August 27, 2026.

²⁹¹ Iran International. "...". Iran International, August 29, 2026.

²⁹² Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "HH the Amir Receives Written Message from Somali President." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, August 30, 2026.

Section Three: Global Powers, Regional, and International Organizations

August 2026 was a pivotal month for the Horn of Africa, defined by intense diplomatic activity focused on two primary crises: the security transition in Somalia and the escalating conflict in Sudan. The African Union led a high-profile field mission to Sudan while navigating the operational and political complexities of the AUSSOM mission in Somalia. The United Nations voiced grave concerns over the humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan and the volatile situation in South Sudan with the Security Council strongly condemning an attack on its peacekeepers. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development focused on consolidating its renewed engagement with Sudan, supporting South Sudan's fragile peace and advancing regional health, gender and climate agendas. The European Union reinforced its role as a key humanitarian donor and partner for stability. The overarching theme was one of urgency, as organizations grappled with funding gaps, political fragmentation and the need to prevent security vacuums. The month was marked by a shift from dialogue to tangible on-the-ground engagement, including field missions, office reopening and new operational directives.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations' focus this month was dominated by the worsening crisis in Sudan. On August 24, the Security Council convened an open briefing where Under Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo warned of devastating consequences, highlighting that nearly 13 million people have fled their homes and over 1,400 civilian deaths were documented in just the first half of the year.²⁹³ UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher briefed on severe access challenges, noting the humanitarian appeal was only 41% funded. The UN, as part of the Quintet group (AU, IGAD, League of Arab States, EU, UN), continued its efforts to mediate with a new round of talks for Sudanese factions planned for late September in Addis Ababa to build consensus on a unified political vision.²⁹⁴

The situation in South Sudan also commanded the UN's attention. The Security Council issued its strongest condemnation of an ambush on a UNMISS patrol in Jonglei State in late August, which killed two Ethiopian peacekeepers and injured seven others. The Council demanded a prompt investigation and stressed that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) raised alarms about the broader regional food insecurity affecting over 40 million people in East Africa.²⁹⁵ OCHA also reported on new displacements in Sudan particularly around

²⁹³ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Sudan: USG DiCarlo Calls for Urgent International Action as Parties Remain Locked in 'Zero-Sum Military Logic.'" United Nations, August 24, 2026.

²⁹⁴ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Sudan: USG DiCarlo Calls for Urgent International Action as Parties Remain Locked in 'Zero-Sum Military Logic.'" United Nations, August 24, 2026.

²⁹⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Eastern Africa: El Niño Preparedness Alert – August

Geisan in Blue Nile State where clashes killed over 20 civilians and displaced thousands some crossing into Ethiopia.

African Union (AU)

The African Union's engagement in Sudan dominated its activities this month. In a landmark move an AU Peace and Security Council delegation undertook a field mission to Sudan, visiting Port Sudan and Khartoum.²⁹⁶ This was the first such visit since the country's suspension following the 2021 military takeover. Led by Algeria's Ambassador Mohamed Khaled the delegation met with Transitional Sovereignty Council President General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Prime Minister Kamil Idris. The PSC reaffirmed its commitment to Sudan's sovereignty and unity, condemned external interference and stressed that lasting peace requires dialogue. During the visit the delegation also met with political parties and civil society, underscoring the need for an inclusive, Sudanese owned peace process.

In Somalia, the AU's peacekeeping mission, AUSSOM was thrust into a controversial new role. On August 21, the AU Commission authorized AUSSOM to join federal government forces in combat operations in Southwest State against forces loyal to ousted regional president Abdiiaziz Laftagareen.²⁹⁷ This unprecedented directive to take sides in an internal political dispute drew criticism and raised serious questions about the mission's neutrality. AUSSOM also continued its routine operational activities, with troops in Sector 4 conducting patrols along the Beletweyne-Ceelgal supply route to clear mines and IEDs. Deputy Special Representative Amb. Mouktar Osman Karie and Force Commander Lt. Gen. Sam Kavuma met with a Danish delegation to discuss the mission's mandate and sustainable funding.²⁹⁸

Beyond these immediate crises, the AU continued its institutional and developmental agendas. Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf hosted a quarterly working luncheon with ambassadors from the UN Security Council's permanent and African members (P5+A3) to coordinate on continental peace and security issues.²⁹⁹ The Chairperson also met with the newly elected Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament, led by President Dr. Fateh Boutbig, to discuss strengthening institutional collaboration. In another high-level meeting, Chairperson Youssouf held talks with Mr. Harold Tavares of the World Bank Group focusing on accelerating economic development, debt sustainability and financing strategic

2026," OCHA, August 14, 2026.

²⁹⁶ African Union, "The Peace and Security Council of the African Union ... has arrived in Port Sudan on 15 August and in Khartoum, in Sudan, on 16 August 2026...", African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, August 17, 2026.

²⁹⁷ Somali Guardian. "AU Clears Peacekeepers to Join Somalia Fight against Southwest Darwish Forces." Somali Guardian, August 21, 2026.

²⁹⁸ African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, "Today in #Mogadishu, the Deputy SRCC and OiC of AUSSOM, Amb. Mouktar Osman Karie, accompanied by the Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Sam Kavuma, received a delegation from @DKinSomalia...", AUSSOM, August 19, 2026.

²⁹⁹ African Union. "AUC Chairperson Hosted the Quarterly Working Luncheon with the Permanent Members of the Ambassadors of UN Nations Security Council (UNSC) (P5) & the African Members of the Council (A3) Accredited to the AU." African Union, August 11, 2026.

infrastructure.³⁰⁰

In a significant step for continental integration, AfCFTA Secretary General Wamkele Mene visited Somalia as the country prepares to ratify the agreement.³⁰¹ The visit focused on practical steps for implementation including support for tariff schedules and customs procedures. In the realm of climate and agriculture the AU's Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and IGAD, concluded national inception workshops in Uganda and Somalia for a major project on accelerating food systems transformation for climate resilience.

On the diplomatic front, Chairperson Youssouf met with Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos to discuss preparations for the 2027 UN Climate Change Conference (COP32), which Ethiopia will host.³⁰² The meeting also covered regional peace and security. Finally the AU strongly condemned the ambush on a UNMISS patrol in South Sudan calling for a full investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD's August activities were heavily focused on consolidating its renewed relationship with Sudan. Following the official reopening of its Khartoum office, the Head of Mission, Mrs. Rania Hassan, formally presented her credentials to Foreign Minister Mohieddin Salem, solidifying the organization's on the ground presence.³⁰³ IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu also met with AU Commission Chairperson Youssouf to coordinate their approaches to the Sudan crisis agreeing to deepen joint efforts and keep the interests of the Sudanese people at the heart of all engagement.³⁰⁴

In South Sudan, IGAD facilitated several key initiatives. The organization marked a leadership transition at the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMVM), welcoming incoming Chairperson Maj. Gen. Dr. Hailu Endashaw. This was followed by a training workshop in Torit focused on integrating gender perspectives into land governance and peacebuilding. The organization also continued its support for the Juba peace process, with its special envoy holding talks with international partners to revive momentum on the constitutional roadmap and election preparations.

IGAD also advanced its regional agenda on multiple fronts. Dr. Workneh led a delegation to

³⁰⁰ African Union. "AUC Chairperson Today Received Mr. Harold Tavares, Executive Director Representing the Africa Group II Constituency on the Board of Directors of the World Bank Group." African Union, August 5, 2026.

³⁰¹ Prosper Kay, "From Ratification to the First Shipment: The AfCFTA Secretary-General in Mogadishu," NewsGhana, August 20, 2026.

³⁰² Ethiopian News Agency, "Ethiopia FM, AUC Chairperson Discuss Horn Peace and COP32 Preparations," Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), August 5, 2026.

³⁰³ Intergovernmental Authority on Development, "Strengthening IGAD–Sudan Cooperation," IGAD Secretariat, August 24, 2026.

³⁰⁴ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "Strengthening IGAD–AU Cooperation for Regional Peace." IGAD Secretariat, August 26, 2026.

the 13th East African Healthcare Federation Conference in Addis Ababa where he advocated for a paradigm shift framing health as a strategic economic driver.³⁰⁵ He outlined IGAD's commitments to investing in pharmaceutical manufacturing and dismantling trade barriers to create a unified East African health market. The organization also convened a high-level learning event on agri-food systems to accelerate the implementation of the Kampala Declaration. On August 19, IGAD's Head of Mission to Ethiopia met with the Swedish Ambassador to discuss their long-standing partnership with IGAD expressing appreciation for Sweden's four decades of support.³⁰⁶ In a separate engagement, IGAD's Deputy Executive Secretary, Mohamed Abdi Ware, clarified his earlier statements on Somalia's security transition emphasizing his message was rooted in honoring peacekeepers and ensuring an orderly handover not undermining the Somali government.

Finally, at the end of August maritime security officials from Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen gathered in Nairobi to address growing threats in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.³⁰⁷ The dialogue, facilitated by UNODC with support from IGAD, the EU, INTERPOL and IMO, focused on tackling piracy, human trafficking and illegal fishing. Participants stressed the need for stronger intelligence sharing and regional coordination to protect vital shipping routes.

European Union (EU)

The European Union's engagements in August were primarily framed by its role as a leading humanitarian donor and a partner for regional stability. On World Humanitarian Day the EU issued a joint statement from High Representative Kaja Kallas and Crisis Management Commissioner Hadja Lahbib, condemning the alarming rate of attacks on aid workers globally.³⁰⁸ The statement highlighted the EU's significant financial contributions, including nearly €2 billion for humanitarian aid in 2026 and its ongoing support in crises like Sudan and Somalia where it has provided over €750 million since 2017.

In Somalia the EU Delegation attended the launch of the "Journalists for Peace" initiative in Mogadishu. Organized by the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), this program aims to train 40 Somali journalists and media influencers to counter extremist propaganda and hate speech in the digital space.³⁰⁹ The EU's participation underscored its

³⁰⁵ Xinhua News Agency. "Experts Call for Building Resilient Regional Health Economy in East Africa." Xinhua, August 22, 2026.

³⁰⁶ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "IGAD–Sweden Dialogue on Regional Cooperation." IGAD Secretariat, August 19, 2026.

³⁰⁷ Hiiraan Online. "Somalia, Regional Officials Meet in Nairobi to Strengthen Red Sea, Gulf of Aden Maritime Security." Hiiraan Online, August 29, 2026.

³⁰⁸ European External Action Service. "Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas and Commissioner Lahbib Ahead of World Humanitarian Day." EEAS, August 19, 2026.

³⁰⁹ Hiiraan Online. "Somalia, Saudi-Backed Coalition Launch Peace Journalists Initiative to Counter Extremist Propaganda." Hiiraan Online, August 23, 2026.

support for a holistic approach to counter terrorism that goes beyond military operations.

The EU's engagement with South Sudan continued through its funding of IGAD-led initiatives, such as the Juba peace process workshops and the gender focused training in Torit. The EU also participated in high-level talks with IGAD's special envoy in Juba, focusing on reviving momentum around the constitutional roadmap and election preparations with the EU delegation's Deputy Head, Lothar Jaschke taking part in the discussions.

Global Powers: Economic Coercion, Strategic Bargaining and Great-Power Maneuvering

August marked a decisive pivot in the Trump administration's foreign policy, from kinetic intensity toward layered economic coercion, selective diplomatic openings, and burden-sharing signals, all while managing the residual costs of the six-month Iran conflict. The month's moves formed a connected web. Pressure on Tehran constrained resources and attention elsewhere, opened space for realignments in Syria and the Gulf, accelerated energy plays in the Western Hemisphere, and produced quiet great-power contacts amid ongoing Ukraine and China calculations.

The Iran theater remained the central organizing pressure. After the June memorandum collapsed and military exchanges settled into a stalemate, the administration shifted its emphasis. On 24 August, it formally launched Operation Economic Outcast, or "Economic D-Day," an unprecedented campaign of sectoral and secondary sanctions designed to sever Iran's remaining financial, shipping, digital-asset, gold, aviation, and technology lifelines.³¹⁰ Treasury actions quickly targeted UAE banking channels, Hong Kong-linked entities, and Bank Melli-related networks. Officials signaled that secondary measures would follow weekly and warned partners, including China, that continued business with Iran could expose them to exclusion from the dollar-based financial system. Concurrently, the United States maintained naval control and mine-clearance operations in the Strait of Hormuz. A limited kinetic flare-up on 30 August, involving U.S. strikes on Iranian launchers preparing sea-mine rockets on Larak Island, followed by Iranian retaliation against U.S. bases in Jordan, underlined that military options remained available even as economic isolation became the administration's primary instrument of pressure.³¹¹ Trump repeatedly stated that the United States was "not looking to meet" with Tehran until economic and strategic pressure produced meaningful change.³¹²

During the middle of the month, U.S. envoys, including Jared Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, engaged Egyptian, Qatari, and Turkish mediators, with Hamas representatives also involved at points, over a framework centred on ending hostilities, Hamas disarmament,

³¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Launches Unprecedented Campaign Against Iranian Regime on Economic D-Day," August 24, 2026.

³¹¹ Patrick Wintour, "First US Military Attacks on Iran in a Month Prompt Retaliation," *The Guardian*, August 30, 2026.

³¹² Peter Baker, "For Trump, the Iran War Is Stuck Between Combat and Genuine Peace," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2026.

Israeli withdrawal, and civilian Palestinian administration for reconstruction.³¹³ Trump's public welcome of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan further signaled a preference for regional security burden-sharing and stronger indigenous defence capabilities rather than exclusive reliance on U.S. security guarantees.³¹⁴

Hemispheric energy security moved in parallel. Late in the month, Trump announced a sweeping oil arrangement with Venezuela's interim authorities, claiming majority U.S. control, through private partnerships, of more than 65 billion barrels of proven reserves.³¹⁵ Framed as cost-free to taxpayers and beneficial for U.S. stockpiles and energy prices, the arrangement linked directly to the administration's broader effort to reduce American vulnerability to disruptions in the Middle East caused by the Iran conflict.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe made an unannounced visit to Moscow, travelling by military C-17 via Riga and meeting Russian intelligence counterparts but not President Vladimir Putin.³¹⁶ The Kremlin confirmed that Putin was briefed on the visit, while Trump described it as "semi-routine." Reports indicated that the discussions included warnings against any Russian actions that could test NATO, particularly in the Baltic region, as well as encouragement for Moscow to limit its support for Iran.

At the same time, Washington signaled a renewed interest in Africa. On 29 August, the Bureau of African Affairs announced that Assistant Secretary of State Frank Garcia would travel to Zambia, Ethiopia, and Kenya,³¹⁷ with additional stops possible if commercial agreements could be secured. The stated objective was to strengthen bilateral relationships and advance economic and security partnerships. The commercial emphasis was significant.

For China, the month began with the U.S.-China technology confrontation continuing to expand. On 5 August, Beijing announced countermeasures against Washington following a series of U.S. restrictions on Chinese technology and companies.³¹⁸ China introduced controls on certain drone exports to the United States and sanctioned six U.S. entities. Beijing also moved against American certification and testing activities involving Chinese products. The measures followed U.S. restrictions involving Chinese drones and the addition of dozens of Chinese firms to the U.S. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act list.

On 24 August, Chinese Communist Party Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Huning met U.S. representatives participating in the third China-U.S. Track 1.5 Dialogue.³¹⁹ Beijing emphasized the need to implement the understandings reached by Xi Jinping and

³¹³ Barak Ravid, "Hamas Leaders Tell Kushner They Will Demilitarize Gaza, Sources Say," *Axios*, August 16, 2026.

³¹⁴ Abid Hussain, "Trump Hails Mecca Pact: Can It Replace the Region's US Security Umbrella?" *Al Jazeera*, August 17, 2026.

³¹⁵ Jarrett Renshaw, "Trump Says US Is Taking Partial Control of Venezuela's Vast Oil Reserves," *Reuters*, August 28, 2026.

³¹⁶ Alexander Ward, Laurence Norman, and Thomas Grove, "Top White House Aides Were in the Dark on Ratcliffe Russia Trip," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 2026.

³¹⁷ Julian Pecquet, "US-Africa Week Ahead: Garcia Visits East Africa, House Tackles AGOA," *The Africa Report*, August 2026.

³¹⁸ Simone McCarthy, "China Hits US with Sanctions and Drone Export Curbs Ahead of Xi Visit," *CNN*, August 5, 2026.

³¹⁹ Feng Fan, "Third China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue Held in Beijing as Attendees Discuss Constructive Strategic Stability, Practical Cooperation," *Global Times*, August 25, 2026.

Donald Trump during their May meeting, strengthen practical cooperation, manage differences and prevent risks in areas including artificial intelligence.

That dual-track strategy became even clearer in the final week of August. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for both sides to overcome obstacles and maintain high-level exchanges ahead of the anticipated Trump-Xi summit.

On 11 August, China's ambassador to Iran, Cong Peiwu, met Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaei and conveyed President Xi Jinping's four-point proposal for restoring peace and stability in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. China reaffirmed its intention to contribute to regional stabilization.³²⁰

Axios reported on 29 August that Ratcliffe had floated the possibility of a trilateral summit during the Moscow visit and that the discussions were partly intended to determine whether Russian intelligence officials could help persuade Putin to return to U.S.-mediated negotiations.³²¹ If confirmed, this would indicate that Washington was attempting to reopen the diplomatic track through intelligence channels rather than relying exclusively on conventional diplomatic intermediaries.

The European dimension became more complicated during the month. Russia increasingly accused Britain and France of escalating the conflict by providing Ukraine with long-range missile capabilities and supporting the development of Ukrainian strike capabilities. Moscow warned that continued Western involvement could produce consequences for British and French military targets.³²²

On the other hand, Putin prepared to meet Xi Jinping at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Bishkek at the end of August and beginning of September.³²³ China, Russia, India, Iran, and other SCO members were gathering against the background of the Ukraine war, the Iran conflict, and continuing U.S.-China competition.

European Countries: Security, Maritime Power and Strategic Re-engagement

The month began with Britain intensifying pressure on Russia. On 6 August, Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband announced a new package of 19 sanctions designations targeting Russian individuals and entities connected to Moscow's military-industrial complex and its wider war effort.³²⁴ The British government described the measures as part of its continuing campaign to restrict Russia's ability to sustain the war.

³²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Chinese Ambassador to Iran Cong Peiwu upon Request Meets with H.E. Mr. Mohsen Rezaei, Secretary of Supreme National Security Council of Iran," August 12, 2026.

³²¹ Barak Ravid, "CIA Director Floated Trump-Putin-Zelensky Summit During Moscow Visit, Sources Say," *Axios*, August 29, 2026.

³²² Reuters, "Kremlin Says British Missile Help for Ukraine 'Adds Fuel to the Fire,'" *Reuters*, August 24, 2026.

³²³ Al Jazeera Staff and AFP, "Russia, China Leaders to Meet at Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit," *Al Jazeera*, August 31, 2026.

³²⁴ UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and Ed Miliband, "UK Continues Crackdown on Russia with Tough New Sanctions," *GOV.UK*, August 6, 2026.

That approach became particularly visible on 18 August, when Prime Minister Andy Burnham reaffirmed that Britain would continue supporting Ukraine “100%” after Russia warned that British-made drones were being used in Ukrainian strikes against Russian territory.³²⁵ Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that Britain's role could cause Moscow to regard the UK as a participant in the war, while the Russian embassy in London warned of unspecified consequences.³²⁶

The most consequential development came on 24 August, when Burnham made his first overseas visit as prime minister, travelling to Kyiv on Ukrainian Independence Day. He met President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and co-chaired a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing alongside European partners.³²⁷ Burnham declared that Britain was “100% behind” Ukraine and reaffirmed that Ukrainian security was directly connected to British security.

The wider Russian-British confrontation also increasingly includes hybrid warfare and intelligence. NATO stated on 30 August that it did not see an imminent threat of a direct Russian attack against a NATO member.³²⁸

The British government also strengthened its direct political engagement with Somalia. On 26 August, UK Minister for Development and Africa Kirsty McNeill visited Mogadishu, met President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and discussed Somalia's political and security transition.³²⁹ London emphasized the need for greater political dialogue among Somali actors and a credible transition toward Somali-led security. Britain also reaffirmed its support for UNSOS and AUSSOM, including non-lethal assistance such as food, medical supplies, tents and casualty evacuation.

Coming to France, the most concrete military development came on 22 August, when Macron agreed to accelerate deliveries of French air-defence capabilities to Ukraine, including the SAMP/T-NG system and additional interceptor missiles.³³⁰ Macron also agreed to help Ukraine obtain additional U.S.-made Patriot systems from European partners.

The most consequential German security issue during August was a drone attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport on 4 August.³³¹ A drone carrying explosives reportedly struck or damaged a Ukrainian cargo aircraft at the airport. Investigators subsequently found evidence connecting the incident to earlier sabotage attempts, while German officials increasingly treated the incident as a possible Russian hybrid operation.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Germany was finalizing its response to the suspected Leipzig attack and indicated that the government was working with European and NATO partners.

³²⁵ Paul Kirby, “UK ‘Supports Ukraine 100%,’ Burnham Says, after Russia’s Drone Warning,” *BBC News*, August 18, 2026.

³²⁶ Reuters, “Russia’s Lavrov Says Britain Risks Being Seen as Party to Ukraine War,” *Reuters*, August 18, 2026.

³²⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street and Andy Burnham, “Britain Is 100% Behind You: Prime Minister Andy Burnham Visits Kyiv on Ukrainian Independence Day for First International Trip,” *GOV.UK*, August 24, 2026.

³²⁸ Reuters, “NATO Sees No Imminent Threat of Attack, Official Says,” *Reuters*, August 30, 2026.

³²⁹ British Embassy Mogadishu, “UK Backs Somalia’s Path to Security and Political Progress,” *GOV.UK*, August 26, 2026.

³³⁰ Reuters, “France Agrees to Accelerate Air Defence Deliveries to Ukraine, Zelenskiy Says,” *Reuters*, August 22, 2026.

³³¹ Kate Connolly, “Third Drone and Suspected Military Explosives Found Near Leipzig Airport,” *The Guardian*, August 25.

German officials had not yet formally attributed the incident to Russia, but the possibility of coordinated European sanctions was being considered.

Germany was simultaneously strengthening its military support for Ukraine. Merz joined Macron and Burnham in Kyiv on 24 August, where the Coalition of the Willing reaffirmed European support for Ukraine, increased attention to air defence and further sanctions against Russia.

An even more concrete development occurred on 26 August. Italy's ambassador met Somalia's Minister of Ports and Maritime Transport to discuss cooperation on ports and maritime transport.³³² The Somali side specifically expressed interest in renewed Italian involvement in port operations and maritime transportation.

On 26 August, the EU Delegation to Ethiopia, together with the diplomatic missions of EU member states and the United Kingdom in Addis Ababa, issued a joint statement expressing “great concern” over developments in northern Ethiopia. European governments called on all sides to implement the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and welcomed renewed AU mediation efforts.³³³

On 19 August, the EU's legal agreement with Djibouti governing the status of EU forces under EUNAVFOR ASPIDES was formally published and entered into force.³³⁴ The agreement provides the legal framework for EU personnel and military assets operating from Djibouti in connection with the Red Sea maritime-security operation.

On 24 August, two Ethiopian UN peacekeepers serving with UNMISS were killed in Jonglei, South Sudan. On 25 August, the EU delegation and the embassies of Germany, France and the Netherlands jointly condemned the attack, warned that attacks against peacekeepers could constitute war crimes, and called for an investigation and accountability.³³⁵ They also noted that 36 humanitarian workers and contractors had already been killed in South Sudan in 2026, exceeding the 31 killed during all of 2025.

³³² Hiiraan Online, “Somalia: Ambassador Daccò Coppi Meets with the Minister of Commerce and Industry,” August 24, 2026.

³³³ Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia and Delegation of the European Union to the African Union, “Ethiopia: Joint Local Statement in Support of AU-Led Mediation Efforts in Northern Ethiopia,” August 26, 2026.

³³⁴ Council of the European Union, “EU Approves Status Agreement with Djibouti for Red Sea Mission,” *Lovguiden*, August 19, 2026.

³³⁵ *The Brussels Times Newsroom*, “EU Condemns Deadly Attack on UN Peacekeepers in South Sudan,” *The Brussels Times*, August 25, 2026.

A light blue background featuring a faint outline map of the Horn of Africa. The word "HORN" is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters. The word "REVIEW" is written in smaller, bold, red capital letters, positioned between the "O" and "R" of "HORN".

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