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The Greater Horn in October:

Escalating Rivalries, Contested Sovereignty, and the Search for Regional Stability

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Foreword

"The Greater Horn" Strategic Brief offers a monthly synthesis of key diplomatic and security trends in one of the world's most volatile yet consequential geopolitical theatres. This edition, covering developments from October 2026, draws on open-source intelligence, strategic assessments, policy briefings, and regional commentary to deliver nuanced, non-partisan, and research-driven insights into strategic complexities, internal vulnerabilities, emerging partnerships, and geopolitical recalibrations shaping the region's trajectory. Intended to inform regional policymakers, analysts, and stakeholders, the briefing is produced by independent experts committed to regional stability, cooperative security, and evidence-based policy making.

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Executive Director & Editor-in-Chief,
Horn Review

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The Greater Horn in October: Escalating Rivalries, Contested Sovereignty, and the Search for Regional Stability

Executive Summary

October 2026 exposed the growing intersection of conflict, political fragility, and geopolitical competition across the Horn of Africa. Renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia, deteriorating Ethiopia–Eritrea relations, Sudan's escalating war, and political tensions in Somalia and South Sudan underscored the region's worsening security environment.

Ethiopia's renewed conflict in Tigray, the establishment of a caretaker administration, and reports of Eritrean military incursions into Ethiopian territory heightened the risk of interstate confrontation. The breakdown of diplomatic relations further narrowed opportunities for de-escalation. Against this backdrop, Ethiopia's pursuit of reliable maritime access and efforts to strengthen its defence capabilities reflect its strategic concerns over national security, economic connectivity, and regional autonomy. Resistance from neighbouring states, however, has intensified geopolitical tensions, underscoring the urgency of diplomatic engagement and respect for Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Sudan's war intensified through widespread drone attacks, civilian casualties, and destruction of essential infrastructure. Despite renewed diplomatic initiatives and international consultations, competing military objectives and external involvement continued to obstruct ceasefire efforts. Sudan's coordination with Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia through the El-Alamein framework, alongside rising tensions with Ethiopia, further embedded the conflict within the Horn's broader strategic competition.

Somalia faced persistent electoral disputes, federal–regional tensions, and continued Al-Shabaab operations. The conclusion of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia raised concerns about political mediation, while Somaliland's pursuit of international recognition deepened regional disagreements over sovereignty and territorial integrity.

South Sudan confronted mounting pressure to establish credible conditions for its planned December elections amid political disputes, opposition exclusion, and uncertainty surrounding the transitional process. Meanwhile, Djibouti maintained its strategic importance as Ethiopia's principal maritime gateway while facing humanitarian pressures.

Overall, October highlighted the interconnected nature of the Horn's security challenges. Preventing wider confrontation requires renewed Ethiopia–Eritrea dialogue, civilian protection, inclusive political transitions, humanitarian access, and stronger regional cooperation. The African Union and IGAD remain essential platforms for advancing stability, but meaningful progress ultimately depends on political commitment, mutual respect for sovereignty, and coordinated regional action.

Section One: Escalating Conflicts, Political Fragility, and Strategic Competition

1.1 Ethiopia: Ethiopia's New Government Formation Amid Intensified Internal Stabilisation and Assertive External Engagement

October 2026 marked a pivotal reset for Ethiopia as the House of Peoples' Representatives opened its seventh term on 5 October and swore in Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for a second Government mandate, followed by endorsement of a new cabinet on 8 October, while federal forces and allied Tigray Peace Force fighters retook Mekelle and advanced across northern Tigray, ending key provisions of the 2022 Pretoria Agreement and leading to the establishment on 16 October of a six-month caretaker administration tasked with restoring services, facilitating returns of the displaced and preparing elections. Concurrently, relations with Egypt and Eritrea deteriorated sharply through the formation of a national committee to assess losses from projects allegedly blocked by Egypt, the expulsion of an Egyptian diplomat and ten Eritrean diplomats, closure of the embassy in Asmara, severance of ties by Eritrea, and defensive responses to reported Eritrean troop movements, alongside Ethiopia's rejection of the El-Alamein Joint Declaration's framing of Red Sea and Nile issues; at the same time Addis Ababa diversified external partnerships through high-level engagement with South Africa, Nigeria, India, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, the UAE, the IMF and World Bank, and especially Russia,highlighted by Abiy's participation in the Third Russia–Africa Summit and early delivery of Su-35 jets while continental platforms such as the Tana Forum and Mashujaa Day in Kenya reinforced priorities of sovereignty, dialogue-based Red Sea access and African agency amid persistent local challenges including inter-communal violence in Moyale.

On 1 October Water and Energy Minister Habtamu Itefa announced a national committee to evaluate economic losses from twenty-two development projects allegedly blocked by Egypt amid deteriorating relations over Nile water management.[1]The same day Ethiopia declared an Egyptian diplomatic staff member persona non grata, ordering departure within forty-eight hours, and expelled ten Eritrean diplomats while formally closing its embassy in Asmara.[2] Eritrea responded by announcing the complete severance of all diplomatic relations.[3] These steps reflected deepening regional frictions linked to disputes over Nile waters and Red Sea access at a moment when internal security challenges were intensifying.

Amnesty International on 2 October urged the African Union Peace and Security Council to convene an emergency session focused on safeguarding civilians, restoring unhindered humanitarian access and halting further escalation.[4] Federal forces and allied Tigray Peace Force fighters retook control of Tigray's regional capital Mekelle on 5 October following a

[1] Addis Standard. "Ethiopia Establishes Abay Compensation Committee to Assess Projects Allegedly 'Obstructed by Egypt.'" October 1, 2026.
[2] Reuters. "Eritrea Cuts Ties with Ethiopia over Asmara Embassy Closure." October 1, 2026.
[3] Al Jazeera. "Eritrea Severs Diplomatic Ties with Ethiopia in Tit-for-Tat Move." October 1, 2026.
[4] Amnesty International. "Ethiopia: African Union Must Convene Emergency Session on Ethiopia as New Conflict Expands." October 2, 2026.

tactical withdrawal by Tigrayan forces that the rebels described as temporary to spare the city further destruction.[5] The renewal of heavy fighting, alongside reported explosions in Addis Ababa, effectively ended key stability provisions of the 2022 Pretoria Peace Agreement. The federal government moved quickly to re-establish administration, restore telecommunications and essential services, impose security measures and invite resident participation in building new local structures aimed at eventual elections. Federal police later deployed across the city while the Tigray Peace Force imposed a curfew and the National Rehabilitation Commission designated reception points for combatants willing to enter the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process, supporting stabilisation and civilian recovery.

This domestic recovery coincided with the formal launch of a new five-year political chapter. On 5 October the House of Peoples' Representatives opened its seventh term and swore in Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for a second mandate under the Medemer Government following the Prosperity Party's electoral success. [6]The session set the stage for institutional consolidation focused on national unity, development and resilience against internal and external pressures. In his address that day the Prime Minister reaffirmed Ethiopia's determination to assert its interests on its own terms, pursue reliable Red Sea access through dialogue and mutual benefit, complete major infrastructure and agricultural gains such as wheat self-sufficiency, advance macroeconomic reforms and strengthen the country's role as a decisive regional anchor while navigating external challenges including those related to the Nile.

Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day issued a clear press statement responding to the El-Alamein Joint Declaration signed by the leaders of Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia.[7] Although the declaration made no direct reference to Ethiopia, its positions on Red Sea governance as the exclusive preserve of littoral states and rejection of unilateral Nile measures engaged established Ethiopian interests. The statement grounded regional discussion in geographic and historical facts, recording that the Ethiopian highlands generate approximately eighty-five percent of the Nile's total flow through the Abay and that Ethiopia's nearest border lies barely thirty miles from the Red Sea coast. It insisted these realities cannot be altered by political rhetoric or coercive measures and must inform any serious discussion of water utilisation or maritime security. African Union clarification around the same period confirmed that no blame had been assigned to any neighbouring state for Ethiopia's internal developments, emphasising de-escalation, sovereignty and non-interference in a manner consistent with Ethiopia's preference for African-led solutions.[8]

Prime Minister Abiy welcomed South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on 5 October,

[5] The Africa Report. "Ethiopian Forces Seize Mekelle as Regional Rivals Gather in Egypt." October 4, 2026.
[6] Ethiopian News Agency. "Ethiopia Opens a New Five-Year Chapter of National Renewal." October 5, 2026.
[7] Al Jazeera. "Four African Leaders Issue Joint Declaration as Ethiopia War Escalates." October 5, 2026.
[8] ChimpReports. "Ethiopia Pushes Back at Four-Nation Declaration on Nile, Red Sea." October 5, 2026.

expressing appreciation for congratulations on the new Medemer Government and underscoring historic ties rooted in African solidarity, peace and shared development aspirations. Nigerian Vice President Kashim Shettima arrived on 6 October for a three-day working visit focused on experience sharing in nutrition, agriculture and multisectoral development. Received by Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos, the engagement offered opportunities for two of Africa's most populous nations to deepen practical cooperation aligned with Ethiopia's development priorities. Talks between the Prime Minister and the Nigerian Vice President on 7 October further highlighted mutual learning and the potential for strengthened bilateral ties.

Local residents and conflict monitors on 7 October reported movements of Eritrean military personnel crossing into northern Tigray through Zalambessa and advancing along the Adigrat–Edaga Hamus corridor. Ethiopian authorities characterised these troop movements as an unauthorised breach of national sovereignty, citing the absence of active diplomatic relations, and announced defensive measures to secure the northern border. Concurrently, security monitors reported Ethiopian air strikes targeting reported Eritrean vehicle convoys near Adigrat as forces adjusted positions. Government-allied forces subsequently entered Adigrat and reported gains in other towns including Shire and Idaga Hamus, consolidating control in northern Tigray. On 8 October the House of Peoples' Representatives endorsed the new cabinet following the participation of over fifty-four million citizens in the recent election, reappointing Temesgen Tiruneh as Deputy Prime Minister, confirming key figures such as Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos and appointing several other new ministers across key sectors under criteria focused on professional competence, experience, diversity and dedication to national service.

Foreign Minister Timothewos on 9 October addressed a formal letter to the UN Security Council and directly briefed UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, invoking Ethiopia's inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter and calling for international recognition of the country's sovereign right to protect its borders. Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar arrived the same day and held talks with Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos focused on expanding cooperation in education, culture, trade, investment and digitalisation, with appreciation expressed for Ethiopia's BRICS engagement. Saudi Arabia's ambassador later highlighted growing investment opportunities in Ethiopia, noting the Kingdom ranked first globally in imports from the country in 2025 particularly coffee and identifying mining, agriculture and tourism as promising sectors.

Ethiopian government forces entered the town of Adigrat in northern Tigray on 12 October after rebel fighters withdrew, an advance that brought federal troops closer to the Eritrean border and further elevated regional tensions. Federal forces subsequently pushed farther north, reaching the border town of Zalambessa amid reports of earlier Eritrean troop

movements inside Ethiopian territory, Ethiopian drone strikes and subsequent withdrawals.[9] The same day Prime Minister Abiy held a constructive call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu focusing on bilateral relations and key regional developments while reaffirming mutual commitment to stronger cooperation. On 13 October Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sent a congratulatory message to the Prime Minister following his re-election, wishing him success and expressing hopes for further progress and prosperity for the Ethiopian people. The House of People's Representatives the same day unanimously approved a 145.8 million US dollar concessional loan from the International Development Association for the first phase of a power-sector reform, investment and modernisation project that will expand transmission infrastructure, build and upgrade substations and install underground lines in Addis Ababa while supporting reliable electricity for the COP32 climate conference Ethiopia will host in 2027.

National Bank of Ethiopia Governor Eyob Tekalign held talks with the Central Bank of the UAE governor on the sidelines of the IMF–World Bank meetings exploring deeper financial and banking cooperation.[10] IMF Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke commended Ethiopia's reform momentum and resilience during a bilateral meeting, reaffirming the Fund's commitment to continued partnership. The Ethiopian delegation in Bangkok advanced discussions with the World Bank on a new Country Partnership Framework prioritising macroeconomic stability, private-sector growth, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable infrastructure, regional energy integration and technical support for COP32 preparations, while officials highlighted finalised bilateral creditor agreements, progress with Eurobond holders and a deliberate shift from debt relief toward attracting fresh investment capital.

Prime Minister Abiy spoke on 14 October with United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio about bilateral, regional and multilateral matters of shared interest. The Ethiopian leader welcomed Washington's assurance of continued support and described the exchange as evidence of a more strategic partnership. The United Kingdom on 15 October issued a formal statement expressing deep concern at the worsening security situation in the Horn of Africa, calling on all parties to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, avoid escalatory actions and return to dialogue under African Union facilitation while ensuring humanitarian access and civilian protection. United States Secretary Rubio later in the week similarly urged restraint, noting troop movements on both sides of the border and warning that the situation risked a broader regional conflict, while acknowledging Ethiopia's security concerns.

The federal government on 16 October established a six-month caretaker administration for the Tigray Region following a House of Federation resolution and a Council of Ministers decision. The body is mandated to restore peace and public services, rebuild infrastructure, facilitate the return of displaced people and prepare conditions for free and transparent

[9] Critical Threats Project. "Ethiopia War Security Review" series, October 2026.
[10] Ethiopian News Agency. "House Approves 145.8 Million USD Loan for Power Sector Modernization." October 13, 2026.

elections within six months.[11] Officials appointed include Assefa Abreha Hagos for administration and public services, Dr. Tewodros Aregawe for economy and reconstruction, Brigadier General Gebre-Egziabher Beyene Hailu for peace and security, Redae Halefom for political mobilisation and Dr. Shishay Amare as mayor of Mekelle.[12] The government attributed the measure to repeated obstruction of the Pretoria Agreement by TPLF leadership and the group's initiation of another round of conflict. Ethiopia's international standing received further recognition the same day when the country was elected to chair the seventy-eighth session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, acknowledging its longstanding role as host to more than 1.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers. Ethiopia also briefed foreign military attachés at Bishoftu Air Force Base on recent security operations, displaying captured weapons and emphasising the defence of national sovereignty. The Tigray People's Liberation Front promptly rejected the new arrangement as illegitimate, describing the caretaker administration as a Prosperity structure imposed by the ruling party and declaring that its decisions would have no legality.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Eldoret on 20 October as Guest of Honor for Kenya's Mashujaa Day celebrations, underscoring the deep historical and contemporary ties between the two nations.[13] Paying tribute to Kenya's freedom fighters, he drew parallels with Ethiopia's victory at Adwa and called for continued cooperation under the spirit of Medemer in clean energy, connectivity, telecommunications, trade and regional security[14]. In recent interviews the Prime Minister addressed longstanding regional challenges, noting that Eritrean cities and industries had declined significantly since secession and urging a return to good neighbourliness. He also stated that the TPLF had violated the Pretoria Agreement by preparing for renewed conflict while the federal government fulfilled its commitments, and urged Tigrayan youth to abandon weapons and contribute to the region's rehabilitation.

These themes of peace, sovereignty and cooperation converged at the twelfth Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa held in Bahir Dar under the theme Pathways to Peace in Africa: Economic Sovereignty and Geopolitical Transformation. African leaders, policymakers and experts examined responses to economic uncertainty, geopolitical competition and shifting global power dynamics, focusing on African-led solutions to instability.[15] Participants highlighted the need to convert early warning systems into timely preventive action, strengthen economic sovereignty through domestic processing of resources, youth employment and women's inclusion, and advance integration via the African Continental Free Trade Area. Prime Minister Abiy used the forum to reaffirm that

[11] Reuters. "Ethiopia's Abiy Names New Tigray Government, Wants Polls in Six Months." October 16, 2026.
[12] Ethiopian News Agency. "Caretaker Federal Gov't Administration Established in Tigray Region." October 16, 2026.
[13] Tuko.co.ke. "Captivating Moment William Ruto, Abiy Ahmed Were Captured Watching KDF Aircrafts at Mashujaa Day." October 20, 2026.
[14] Radio Generation. "PM Abiy Calls for Stronger Kenya–Ethiopia Trade and Energy Ties during Mashujaa Day." October 20, 2026.
[15] Ethiopian News Agency / AllAfrica. "Tana Forum Concludes with Call for African Sovereignty, Integration." October 25–26, 2026.

reliable sea access constitutes an existential necessity for Ethiopia's more than 130 million people and pledged to pursue this goal through dialogue and mutual benefit, linking it to broader African needs for efficient corridors while citing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as a model of national determination now delivering power across neighbouring countries. On the sidelines the Premier conferred with Mozambique's President Daniel Chapo on strengthening bilateral cooperation.

At the inauguration of the Megech Irrigation Dam in Gondar, Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama praised the project's revival as an inspiration for restarting Ghana's own stalled irrigation initiatives, noting its capacity to irrigate over 17,000 hectares. National Intelligence and Security Service Director General Redwan Hussien and Prime Minister's Advisor Getachew Reda underscored the Horn of Africa's strategic importance and Ethiopia's pivotal position, calling for collective approaches to Red Sea security and continued commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts. Ethiopia marked Defense Forces Day by honouring the Ethiopian National Defense Force's resilience. On 25 October at the same ceremony ENDF Chief of Staff Field Marshal Birhanu Jula reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to safeguarding its legitimate interests in the Abay River and the Red Sea, describing both as vital to long-term development and future generations while affirming the resolve to protect sovereignty and pursue peaceful good-neighbourliness.

Even as high-level discussions advanced continental peace agendas, localized violence underscored persistent challenges. Fighting between Oromo and Somali groups in the Ethiopian border town of Moyale that erupted around 22 October and continued into the following days killed at least nine people and injured dozens, prompting some 2,500 residents, mainly women and children, to cross into Kenya by 23 October.[16] The Kenya Red Cross rapidly mobilised aid including temporary shelter, tents, blankets, water containers and food supplies while local authorities coordinated humanitarian support.[17]

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Moscow on 28 October to attend the Third Russia–Africa Summit where he was received by senior Russian officials amid gatherings of African leaders focused on advancing partnerships, trade and strategic dialogue rooted in over a century of Ethiopia–Russia ties. That same day Ethiopia took delivery of its first twelve Su-35 fighter jets a year ahead of schedule, with four S-400 air defence batteries to follow,[18] an achievement Abiy credited to President Vladimir Putin as a major boost to national defence, deterrence and regional stability.[19] Concurrently the Russian edition of Abiy's book Medemer was launched in Moscow. In bilateral talks held on the summit sidelines on 28 October Abiy and Putin discussed deepening cooperation across nuclear energy, health, trade

[16] Addis Standard. "Moyale Clashes Leave Trail of Death, Destruction across Seven Districts; Tens of Thousands Flee to Kenya." October 26, 2026.
[17] Reuters. "Fighting in Ethiopia Border Town Kills Nine, Thousands Flee to Kenya." October 23, 2026.
[18] The Aviationist. "Ethiopia Receives First Russian Su-35 Fighters in Moscow." October 30, 2026.
[19] Bloomberg. "Russia Delivers Su-35 Jets, S-400 Air Defense to Ethiopia Early, Abiy Says." October 28, 2026.

and multilateral issues, with the Russian leader highlighting bilateral trade that surpassed 1.3 billion USD in the first nine months of 2026, more than double the entire 2025 figure. Abiy emphasised that the strategic partnership would diversify Ethiopia's energy options through construction of a world-class nuclear power plant while advancing the country's three core pillars of food security and productivity, reliable energy supply and skills and knowledge transfer. Addressing the summit plenary on 29 October Abiy invited Russian universities and institutions to partner with Ethiopia's newly established Medemer University of Artificial Intelligence in teaching and research as part of a drive for technological sovereignty. On the same day in Moscow the Ethiopian News Agency signed a cooperation agreement with Russia's ITAR-TASS and Russia Today establishing frameworks for information exchange, professional training and mutual staff visits.

1.2 Eritrea: Diplomatic Re-entry, Ethiopia Escalation, Enduring Repression

October brought a sharp deterioration in Eritrea's relations with Ethiopia alongside a widening diplomatic campaign by Asmara. Ethiopia expelled Eritrean diplomats and closed its embassy in Asmara on 1 October, citing security concerns and Eritrean hostility. Eritrea severed diplomatic ties the same day. Eritrean forces entered Tigray and were present inside Ethiopian territory during the month. Ethiopia also stated that Eritrea was supporting armed groups inside Ethiopia. The two governments advanced rival claims at the UN, linking the confrontation to Ethiopia's interest in Red Sea access and the question of territorial sovereignty.

At the same time, Eritrea expanded contacts with Egypt, the United States, Russia and UN representatives, and established diplomatic relations with The Gambia. These engagements raised Asmara's international profile, but their immediate results were chiefly political. Egypt pressed for closer coordination on regional affairs and Red Sea governance, while talks with Washington were described as preliminary. Isaias Afwerki's late October visit to Moscow produced public alignment and exploratory discussions on economic sectors and transport, with implementation and financing still undefined.

This diplomatic activity unfolded amid evidence of continued political closure inside Eritrea. UN human rights experts on 30 October renewed calls to address arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and religious persecution, while PEN International pressed for action on the long-unresolved cases of 12 writers and journalists detained since 2001. Meanwhile, the UN allocated $3.5 million for early action against worsening food, water and livelihood pressures linked to rainfall deficits and El Niño. Eritrea's greater multilateral visibility has run alongside the persistence of these domestic conditions.

The month's central tension was between external reconnection and internal continuity. Asmara sought diplomatic support by emphasizing sovereignty, territorial integrity and dialogue, even as Eritrean military activity inside Ethiopia raised questions about its own conduct toward a neighboring state. New contacts and institutional roles create opportunities

for engagement. They do not, on the evidence available this month, demonstrate a change in the PFDJ's governance practices or an easing of the pressures facing Eritreans.

Cairo's partnership with Asmara deepens amid the Ethiopia dispute

On 30 September, an Eritrean delegation led by economic-affairs head Hagos Gebrehiwet and Trade and Industry Minister Nesredin Mohammed Saleh met Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty in Cairo.[20] Eritrea's account said the discussions covered Egyptian private-sector participation in energy, industry, infrastructure, trade and fisheries, as well as technical support and training.[21] The parties agreed to continue consultations, but the reporting identified no specific projects, financing or implementation schedule. The economic agenda therefore remains prospective, with the political value of visible alignment clearer than the scale of any commercial opening.

The meeting took place as Cairo sought closer ties with Asmara amid its dispute with Ethiopia over the Nile and concerns about Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access, including at Assab. On 4 October, Eritrea joined Egypt, Sudan and Somalia at a quadrilateral summit in New Alamein, where leaders agreed to establish a mechanism for continued consultation and coordination.[22] The summit demonstrated political alignment among states with distinct concerns about Ethiopia. Somalia's participation, by itself, does not establish that Mogadishu shares a common anti-Ethiopian agenda. The meeting also announced no specific support for Eritrean actions on the ground.

Egyptian and Eritrean officials sustained this coordination later in the month. Around 22 October, Eritrean Chargé d'Affaires Berhane G. Solomon met Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Hamdy El-Molla to discuss bilateral ties, Red Sea and Horn of Africa developments, and coordination with U.S. officials and other stakeholders.[23] On 26 October, Abdelatty and Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh discussed trade, investment, regional affairs and follow-up to the quadrilateral summit. They affirmed that Red Sea security and governance belong to littoral states. That position excludes landlocked Ethiopia from the proposed framework, sharpening the political stakes of the two governments' coordination.

For Asmara, Cairo's support offers a channel to reinforce its position as its military and diplomatic confrontation with Addis Ababa intensifies. For Egypt, closer ties with Eritrea form part of broader pressure on Ethiopia over Nile politics and maritime access. The reported meetings show coordination and agenda-setting, while the extent of material cooperation remains unclear.

[20] Ministry of Information, Eritrea. "Senior Eritrean Delegation Holds Talks with Egyptian Officials." Shabait / APO Group, October 1, 2026.
[21] Yemane G. Meskel (@hawelti). "Eritrea's senior delegation composed of Mr. Hagos Gebrehiwet… met in Cairo with Dr. Badr Abdellaty…" X, September 30, 2026.
[22] Ministry of Information, Eritrea. "El-Alamein Joint Declaration: The Quadrilateral Consultative Summit between Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia." Shabait, October 4, 2026
[23] Berhane (@EmbassyEritrea). "It was an honor to receive H.E. Mohamed Hamdy El-Molla… productive discussion on the excellent bilateral relations between #Eritrea and #Egypt…" X, October 22, 2026.

The Ethiopia Rupture and Eritrean Military Intervention

The crisis grew from the breakdown of the 2018 rapprochement and the fragile aftermath of the 2022 Pretoria agreement, which ended the Tigray war. Eritrea had fought alongside Ethiopian federal forces during that war. Ethiopia, UN experts and human rights organizations later reported that Eritrean troops remained in parts of northern Tigray, a claim Asmara denied. The October reports place that unresolved legacy alongside Ethiopia's increasingly prominent calls for Red Sea access.

Fighting between Ethiopian federal forces and a seven-group opposition alliance led by the TPLF began on 23 September. Previous reports had revealed divisions within the TPLF over Pretoria and an alignment between hardliners and Eritrea. It is also established that logistical support for leaders of the Amhara Fano had developed and National Movement and Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front relocated to Eritrea before the fighting.

More specific accounts followed. On 7 October, ACLED analyst Jalale Getachew Birru reported that Eritrean forces crossed at Zelambesa and moved toward the Adigrat–Idaga Hamus route, where Ethiopian drones reportedly targeted their vehicles near Guada. Reuters cited Adigrat residents who said they had seen Eritrean soldiers.[24] On 8 October, ACLED reported drone strikes against Eritrean vehicles as troops withdrew from positions. Sources speaking to Reuters could not determine whether the forces were leaving Ethiopia or redeploying within it. An unnamed Ethiopian official's estimate of roughly 6,000 Eritrean troops in Tigray remains unverified.[25]

Ethiopia's 9 October letter to the Security Council said Eritrean units had advanced up to 60 kilometres into Tigray and described the move as an invasion.[26] Eritrea's reply on 10 October called Ethiopia's maritime ambitions evidence of aggressive intent and asked the Council to condemn Addis Ababa.[27] Eritrea's information minister rejected reports of an incursion as a pretext for war. Meanwhile, residents told Reuters that Ethiopian forces and allied militia had entered Adigrat, and Reuters verified video showing militia members there.[28] Later reporting also described federal forces re-establishing a substantial presence in Tigray and near the Eritrean border, while the opposition alliance came under pressure.

Eritrean forces were present inside Ethiopia during the month. The precise scale and operational role of the forces, along with their movements within Tigray, remain less clear. ACLED's proposed explanations, including a possible effort to preserve a buffer or counter Ethiopia's interest in Assab, remain interpretations of possible motives. Eritrea's military activity inside Ethiopia conflicts directly with Asmara's appeal to sovereignty and territorial

[24] "Eritrean Troops Drive through Northern Ethiopian Town, Witnesses Say." Reuters, October 7, 2026.
[25] "Drones Target Eritrean Troops inside Ethiopia, Conflict Monitor Says." Reuters, October 8, 2026.
[26] United Nations Security Council. Letter Dated 9 October 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council. S/2026/797. October 9/13, 2026.
[27] "Eritrea Asks UN to Intervene in Standoff with Ethiopia." Reuters, October 10, 2026.
[28] "Ethiopian Troops Enter Town on Border with Eritrea, Stoking War Fears." Reuters, October 13, 2026.

integrity. The risk is that the Tigray conflict becomes a more direct interstate confrontation, especially as both governments frame the other as the source of escalation.

Competing Sovereignty Claims and Asmara's Multilateral Campaign

Eritrea sought to establish its account of the crisis across several diplomatic forums. On 9 October, Foreign Minister Osman Saleh asked the Security Council to condemn Ethiopia and take deterrent measures under Chapter VII. Ethiopia invoked its right to self-defence under Article 51 in a 9 October letter, accusing Eritrea of arming, financing and directing insurgent groups. Eritrea's reply centered Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access, particularly through Assab, as a threat to Eritrean sovereignty. Ethiopia has said it seeks access peacefully. The Council held closed consultations on 13 October, its second discussion of the crisis in roughly two weeks, without a public statement or detailed readout.

Eritrea also challenged Ethiopia's expulsion of its diplomats through the African Union and UNECA.[29] In a 15 October letter, Asmara said the removal of ten diplomats, including its permanent representative and staff assigned to the organizations, had denied Eritrea its membership rights. The dispute involves both Ethiopia's authority as host state to declare diplomats persona non grata and Eritrea's ability to maintain representation in multilateral bodies. Eritrea's withdrawal of remaining mission personnel and closure of its embassy further complicate its claim that Ethiopia alone ended its representation.

At the UN, Permanent Representative Sophia Tesfamariam met U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz and Ambassador Jeffrey Bartos around 20 October[30], Bahrain's Permanent Representative Jamal Fares Alrowaiei on 22 October,[31] and China's Permanent Representative Fu Cong on 23 October.[32] She also met UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martin Kimani on 7 October. Eritrean accounts say she emphasized Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, alleged threats to Eritrean sovereignty, and Asmara's stated commitment to dialogue. Her claim that there was no bilateral crisis sits uneasily beside severed diplomatic ties and Eritrean military activity inside Ethiopia. These meetings gave Eritrea platforms to present its position, but the available reports do not establish that they secured support for it.

Eritrea's engagement with Washington began earlier in the month. Saleh met U.S. Under Secretary of State Allison Hooker on 1 October and Assistant Secretary for African Affairs

[29] "News: Eritrea asks AU to restore representation after Ethiopia expels diplomats," Addis Standard, October 15, 2026.
[30] Sophia Tesfamariam (@AmbStesfamariam), "Had constructive engagements with H.E. Mike Waltz, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, and Ambassador Jeffrey Bartos, U.S. Representative to the UN for Management and Reform," X, October 20, 2026,
[31] Tesfamariam, Sophia [@AmbStesfamariam]. "Held discussions with H.E. Mr. Jamal Fares Alrowaiei, PR of Bahrain to the @UN, and briefed him on #Eritrea's assessment of the situation in the #Horn of #Africa. Explained the #Ethiopia|n leadership's three-year-long campaign over access to the Red Sea..." X, October 22, 2026.
[32] Sophia Tesfamariam (@AmbStesfamariam), "Held discussions with H.E. Mr. Fu Cong, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of #China to the @UN...," X, October 23, 2026.

Frank Garcia on 2 October[33], welcomed the lifting of U.S. sanctions and called for cooperation on trade, investment and regional security. The discussions were described as preliminary. The U.S. Embassy in Asmara issued a security alert on 9 October, citing rising tensions and reported fighting near the border; the notice reflected consular concern rather than independent confirmation of battlefield claims or a policy shift.

On 23 October, Saleh addressed a United Nations Day gathering in Asmara, reiterating the government's emphasis on sovereignty, independence and self-reliance. Eritrea and The Gambia also established diplomatic relations through a communiqué signed by their UN representatives that day. These steps add to Asmara's international contacts, though the new relationship came without announced initiatives or sustained political coordination. Eritrea's sovereignty-based messaging has gained more venues even as its military activity in Ethiopia raises questions about its application of the principle.

Moscow, Ports znd the Limits of Commercial Reconnection

Isaias Afwerki attended the Russia–Africa Summit in Moscow on 28 and 29 October and met Russian President Vladimir Putin on 30 October. Their public remarks emphasized alignment on sovereignty and international affairs, and Putin thanked Eritrea for supporting Russian initiatives at the UN. Isaias criticized unilateral sanctions and the Western-dominated financial system, and urged Russia to lead cooperation programs drawing on its industrial and technological capacity. Political coordination was the clearest result of the visit.[34]

The two governments identified energy, technology, mining and agriculture as areas for closer cooperation. Russia's Transport Ministry described interest in port development and modernization, coastal protection, railway cooperation, feasibility studies and specialist training. Russian companies were said to be ready to consider participation, with specialists expected to identify cargo routes and volumes. These discussions could carry strategic weight given Eritrea's Red Sea coastline, but their practical significance depends on financing, agreed projects and implementation. The reported outcomes identify an agenda, rather than a confirmed investment program.

The visit fits Asmara's broader effort to widen external partnerships while keeping its economy under tight state control. In September and October, Eritrean officials also raised possible Egyptian participation in economic sectors, while Washington discussions included trade and investment. Across these channels, the reporting records proposals and sectoral priorities but few concrete commitments. Diplomatic reconnection is advancing faster than evidence of commercial transformation.

Domestic Repression and Rising Humanitarian Needs

On 30 October, UN human rights experts expressed concern about a decades-long pattern of

[33] "Senior Eritrean Delegation Meets with US Officials," Shabait, October 2, 2026.
[34] "Meeting with President of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki." President of Russia (Kremlin.ru), October 30, 2026.

arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance dating from 1991.[35] They cited Bitweded Abraha, whose detention the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found arbitrary in 2018, as well as former officials, journalists and religious leaders detained since 2001. The experts said prolonged arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and religious persecution may constitute crimes against humanity, and called for releases, disclosure of the fate of those reported disappeared, independent investigations and remedies. They issued these views in their capacities as independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council, rather than as a court ruling.

At the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' session in Dakar, PEN International urged action concerning 12 writers and journalists arrested in September 2001.[36] In a 14 October oral statement, Awet Fissehaye of PEN Eritrea in Exile said they had been held incommunicado for 25 years without charge or trial, and that their whereabouts and condition remained unknown. PEN recalled the Commission's 2007 decision in Article 19 v. Eritrea, which found violations of rights under the African Charter and called for release or a fair trial, among other remedies. The unresolved cases illustrate the continued suppression of independent journalism and the absence of accountability under PFDJ rule.

Humanitarian conditions add a separate measure of the country's structural pressures. The UN allocated $3.5 million from its Central Emergency Response Fund for early action in districts affected by El Niño.[37] According to the UN, below-average rainfall is reducing crop and livestock productivity, pasture regeneration and water availability, with impacts expected to worsen after harvest and into the 2027 lean season. The allocation targets food security, livelihoods, nutrition, maternal and newborn health, and water and sanitation. The reporting points to climate-related needs across Eritrea and the wider Horn of Africa, while the country's political restrictions shape the context in which assistance and accountability operate.

Conclusion

October's diplomatic activity marks a real expansion of Eritrea's external engagement, from renewed U.S. contact and Egyptian coordination to Isaias Afwerki's Moscow visit, new ties with The Gambia and Eritrea's growing participation in UN institutions. These developments may broaden Asmara's channels and visibility. Their reported outcomes remain chiefly political or exploratory, and they offer limited evidence of concrete economic change or of restraint in the Ethiopia crisis.

The counterweight is the PFDJ's enduring record of repression, unresolved disappearances,

[35] "UN Experts Call for End to Decades of Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearances: Eritrea." OHCHR / National Tribune / related Special Procedures statement, October 30, 2026.
[36] PEN International, "Eritrea: Oral Statement by PEN International at the 89th ACHPR Session," October 21, 2026.
[37] Tom Fletcher (@UNReliefChief), "As El Niño hits the Horn of Africa, low rainfall in Eritrea is affecting crops and livestock. Early action will save lives. I've allocated $3.5M from UN's Global Emergency Fund CERF to help partners deliver food, nutrition, healthcare and water, complementing government efforts," X, October 30, 2026.

prolonged detention and governance closure, alongside humanitarian pressures intensified by rainfall deficits. UN experts and PEN International's interventions in October underscore that diplomatic access has not resolved these realities. The defining analytical tension is therefore between commercial and diplomatic reconnection accumulating around the Eritrean state and the structural conditions imposed on people within it.

1.3 Djibouti: Humanitarian Pressures, Maritime Hub, Strategic Balancing

Djibouti's position at the Bab el-Mandeb and its role as Ethiopia's principal maritime gateway shaped the month's main developments. Port traffic reportedly held steady as shipping routes shifted, while the government managed rising arrivals from Yemen and Ethiopia, a deadly Gulf of Aden shipwreck, and humanitarian needs in remote areas. The country's role as a transit and logistics hub brings commercial opportunities alongside demands on rescue services, infrastructure and public resources.

Diplomatic activity with China, Egypt and Somalia, alongside military cooperation with France, reflected Djibouti's continuing engagement with a range of partners. These relationships have practical dimensions in trade, security dialogue and training. Their larger strategic implications depend on how announced cooperation develops and how Djibouti balances external partnerships with its own priorities and its neighbours' reliance on its ports.

Migration, Refugee Arrivals and the Humanitarian Burden

By early October, more than 3,793 Yemenis were registered as refugees in Djibouti, according to a representative of Yemen's Refugees Affairs Commission. UNHCR said nearly 3,000 people had arrived from Yemen in less than a week in September, crossing the Bab el-Mandeb.[38] Djiboutian authorities identified shelter, sanitation, food distribution and health care around Obock as urgent needs. In an interview reported on 1 November, Prime Minister Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed put the number of Yemenis seeking refuge at 3,836 and said the government had spent nearly $1.7 million on food, health care and medicines.[39] He said arrivals along the Obock coastline were being relocated to the Markazi refugee centre. The figures point to a sustained response burden for a country with limited resources.

Migration through Djibouti also carried severe risks. The IOM reported that at least 139 people, including 15 children, died and 84 remained missing after a vessel carrying more than 300 people capsized near Guhere on Djibouti's eastern coast.[40] The vessel had been travelling from Djibouti to Yemen. Djiboutian authorities continued search and rescue operations. The disaster occurred along the Eastern Route, used by migrants travelling from the Horn of Africa toward Yemen and Gulf labour markets.

[38] International Organization for Migration. "Thousands Flee Yemen by Sea as Displacement Tops 268,000." IOM Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa, October 23, 2026.
[39] Dawan Africa. "Djibouti Has Spent Nearly $1.7M on 3,836 Yemeni Refugees, PM Says." Dawan Africa, November 1, 2026.
[40] International Organization for Migration. "109 Including 15 Children Dead, Over 116 Missing in Deadliest Shipwreck off Djibouti." IOM, October 11, 2026.

The IOM also reported that more than 20,000 Ethiopian migrants had crossed into Djibouti since 20 September, with over 3,000 stranded in remote desert areas amid shortages of food, water and essential supplies.[41] The agency said alternative routes were making some groups harder to reach. Djibouti was also receiving Ethiopian migrants returning from Yemen. Separately, the IOM recorded 3,836 Yemenis crossing by sea to Djibouti by 17 October and 1,327 migrants transiting from Yemen toward their countries of residence. Together these movements place distinct demands on emergency assistance, border-area access and maritime rescue.

The prime minister said authorities had no confirmed information that Houthi fighters were among the Yemeni refugees. He separately reported that about 17 Yemeni government-affiliated fighters had entered Djibouti and were being housed at a military camp. These are official statements about how the government is managing arrivals. The material provided does not detail the method used to calculate refugee numbers or expenditure, or the scale of external support for the response. The IOM has warned that funding shortfalls are constraining assistance, leaving refugee and migrant needs in tension with the resources available to Djibouti and its humanitarian partners.

Ports, Ethiopian Trade and Changing Maritime Routes

According to Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority chairman Aboubaker Omar Hadi, port traffic remained relatively stable in early October,[42] with a slight increase in cargo volumes driven mainly by transshipment. He said shipping companies were redirecting containers through Djibouti to serve Red Sea and East African markets. Hadi also reported higher fuel, equipment-maintenance and cargo-handling costs amid regional instability and shipping disruptions. The volume figures suggest Djibouti's ports have accommodated some diverted traffic, while the cost pressures indicate that higher throughput does not shield the sector or consumers from wider maritime disruption.

The Ethiopia–Djibouti corridor remains central to this role. On 25 October, Ethiopia's ambassador, Legesse Tulu Goe, met Doraleh Multipurpose Port CEO Ide Ahmed Mohammed to discuss cargo clearance and capacity ahead of higher expected Ethiopian import volumes in the 2026–27 production season.[43] The meeting focused on operational efficiency, reinforcing both Ethiopia's reliance on Djibouti's port infrastructure and Djibouti's economic stake in maintaining reliable throughput.

A separate proposal could add an energy dimension to corridor infrastructure. On 31 October, the Ethiopian Electric Utility signed agreements with three Chinese companies for a

[41] African Press Agency. "Over 20,000 Ethiopians Cross into Djibouti since September 10-IOM." APA News, October 7, 2026.
[42] La Nation. "Djibouti : Le trafic portuaire tient bon, malgré les turbulences." La Nation, October 11, 2026.
[43] Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti. Official statement on Ambassador Legesse Tulu Goe meeting with Doraleh Multipurpose Port CEO. X (formerly Twitter), October 22, 2026.

six-month feasibility study of an electric-truck charging network along the trade route.[44] The study will assess power supply, transmission and station requirements, and may include a charging station in Djibouti. Financing, costs and implementation remain undecided. Its practical value will depend on cross-border coordination and adequate grid capacity, particularly for heavy freight vehicles.

Africa Intelligence reported that the Russia-linked tankers Kamelot and Astra had called at Djibouti. The report places these calls within growing African port activity associated with Russian oil flows under Western sanctions. Djibouti is developing liquid-bulk capacity at the Damerjog facility, designed to handle petroleum products and support regional energy distribution. Port calls alone establish neither cargo transfer nor government facilitation of sanctions evasion. They do, however, draw attention to the regulatory and commercial scrutiny that may accompany Djibouti's energy-hub ambitions.

External Partnerships snd Red Sea Security

China and Djibouti reinforced their high-level engagement during Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar's official visit from 19 to 25 October.[45] On 21 October, Omar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi issued a joint communiqué calling for freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb, while emphasizing the sovereignty, territorial integrity and stated wishes of littoral states. They also signed a memorandum on cooperation under China's Global Security Initiative. The communiqué connects the shared interest in open shipping routes with coastal states' role in regional security arrangements. The published account specifies no operational measures or division of responsibilities for protecting shipping.

Egypt's engagement combined commercial and diplomatic initiatives. On 14 October, the two countries signed a tourism memorandum covering promotion, investment, hospitality training, liaison officers, hotel management, museums and heritage sites.[46] Ministers also discussed twinning Sharm El-Sheikh with Djibouti City. On 17 October, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met his Djiboutian counterpart in Baghdad and called for stronger cooperation among Red Sea littoral states. Their discussion covered ports, logistics, energy, regional security and freedom of navigation.

Djibouti's dependence on port services and Ethiopia's reliance on its trade corridor give external engagement in logistics a wider regional relevance. The researcher's assessment links Egypt's outreach to its effort to strengthen its position around Ethiopia, amid the GERD dispute and Ethiopia's interest in more independent access to the sea. Djibouti's meetings

[44] Capital Ethiopia. "Ethiopia to Electrify Strategic Djibouti Trade Corridor with Multi-Million-Dollar EV Infrastructure Plan." Capital Ethiopia, October 31, 2026.
[45] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. "Wang Yi Holds Talks with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar." October 21, 2026.
[46] Al-Masry Al-Youm. "Twinning between Sharm El-Sheikh and Djibouti… Tourism Minister Signs Memorandum of Understanding to Enhance Cooperation." Al-Masry Al-Youm, October 13, 2026.

and agreements establish continued engagement with Cairo, while the material provided does not indicate any transfer of port control or a new operational arrangement. The practical implications will depend on whether the diplomatic and commercial initiatives develop into specific projects.

Djibouti also maintained ties with Somalia and France. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met President Ismail Omar Guelleh in Djibouti on 30 September to discuss bilateral relations, cooperation and regional peace and security. The public readout announced no new initiative.[47] On 11 October, French and Djiboutian personnel held joint airborne training involving the French Forces stationed in Djibouti, Djibouti's Parachute Commando Battalion and internal security personnel.[48] France has supported Djiboutian parachuting, infantry and commando training since 2024. The defence treaty renewed in 2024 runs for twenty years, and France has about 1,500 personnel stationed in the country. The exercise reflects an established security partnership and sustained French military presence near a major maritime route. The United Kingdom's appointment of ambassador David Hall, whose background includes security policy and African affairs, is another sign of continuing diplomatic engagement, though the appointment alone provides little basis for inferring a policy change.

Djibouti's regional profile and associated scrutiny

Djiboutian Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar used his 29 October address at the Russia–Africa Summit to call for African countries to act as decision-makers in global partnerships. He also presented government reforms as efforts to make Djibouti's business environment more transparent, predictable and attractive to investors. The speech positioned the country as an investment destination while placing its pitch within a broader call for African agency. The account identified no specific Russian commitments or projects.

Djibouti's ports and dhow networks have also drawn attention over alleged links to Houthi supply channels. Africa Intelligence reported on 22 October that Djiboutian companies were under scrutiny. Its public summary provided few details. A previous investigation by Century International cited interdictions of shipments imported through Djibouti by 77 Logistics, a company reportedly linked to the president's brother, and traced dual-use materials and chemicals toward Houthi-held Yemen. Djiboutian authorities denied official complicity and said they were investigating the alleged networks. These claims concern reported commercial and logistical channels, and the available material does not establish state policy or government involvement.

The allegations place port oversight and enforcement in a sensitive context. Djibouti's

[47] Présidence de la République de Djibouti. "Entretien au sommet entre le Président de la République et son homologue somalien." September 30, 2026.
[48] French Joint Staff. "Djibouti | Training Flights and Parachuting Focused on Teamwork." X (formerly Twitter), October 11, 2026.

geography and maritime networks support its role as a transit and logistics hub, while the same routes may attract scrutiny when goods are alleged to reach armed actors in Yemen. The relevant test is how investigations and oversight develop. The reporting supplied for this brief leaves the allegations unresolved.

Conclusion

Djibouti's October activity reflects the practical demands and strategic attention that come with its position on the Red Sea and its role in Ethiopian trade. Its ports have handled diverted cargo, regional partners have pursued security and commercial cooperation, and the country has faced significant humanitarian needs linked to migration and conflict. These developments show a regional hub managing overlapping responsibilities, while the scale of investment, security coordination and external assistance remains an important determinant of their longer-term significance.

1.4 Somalia and Somaliland

The Federal Republic of Somalia: Political Crisis, Counterterrorism Operations and Diplomatic Engagement

Somalia's Supreme Court formally certified the results of Hirshabelle State's parliamentary elections. The Justice and Unity Party associated with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud won 78 of 99 seats. The decision confirmed no timely legal challenges under the electoral law and finalized the process after provisional results from late September elections across 10 districts with approximately 114,600 votes cast. Hirshabelle State's House of Representatives subsequently re elected Abdihakim Luqman Haji Mohamed as Speaker with 77 votes and chose two deputy speakers, Abdirahman Abdi Iidow as first deputy and Jama Ali Mahmoud as second. This followed the swearing in of the new one person one vote parliament. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and other federal figures congratulated the new leadership. The regional presidential election was scheduled for the following day.[49]

In Galmudug, state lawmakers elected Liban Ahmed Hassan of the Justice and Solidarity and Unity Party associated with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new regional president. He won 72 of 89 votes against Abdulkadir Abdullahi Diriye of Sincad, who received 14 votes with three invalid. Abdiweli Ibrahim Garyare also JSP linked was elected vice-president. This followed a Supreme Court ordered parliamentary rerun in September after the July vote was annulled with JSP holding a strong majority. Hassan pledged inclusive governance.[50]

Meanwhile the Independent National Elections and Boundaries Commission announced on state media that parliamentary elections for both houses would be held on April 15, 2027

[49] Hiiraan Online. "Somali Supreme Court Certifies Hirshabelle Parliamentary Election Results." Hiiraan Online, October 20, 2026
[50] Hiiraan Online. "JSP Candidate Wins Galmudug Presidential Election with 72 Votes." Hiiraan Online, October 22, 2026.

followed by a presidential election on May 15, 2027. The commission cited constitutional and electoral law provisions including a five year presidential term starting from the swearingin date. Additional deadlines were set including voter and political organization registration reopening from November 1 to 22, 2026 candidate lists by November 22 provisional voter list by January 21, 2027 campaign start on February 27 and final voter list by March 15. The federal government issued a statement dated October 15 welcoming the timetable as an important step toward strengthening democracy while saying consultations with stakeholders would continue and that the two approaches were complementary. Opposition leaders strongly condemned the unilateral announcement.[51]

Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni speaking at the opening of the 59th session of the Puntland Parliament in Garowe, accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of abandoning consensus based elections. He rejected the federal government's electoral timetable with parliamentary elections announced for April 15, 2027 and presidential for May 15, 2027 saying Puntland would not participate in the process as currently framed. He called for urgent national dialogue and an inclusive settlement and urged the international community to monitor the situation.[52]

Domestic Politics and Governance

Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed called for a broad and united national front to save Somalia and warned against the use of force against political opponents. In a statement issued on Thursday, he said disputes over institutional mandates and the political transition cannot be resolved through the use of force or unilateral measures and must be handled through dialogue, consensus and constitutional rules. He rejected threatening rhetoric, the threat of force or military mobilization against political opposition groups stating that political disagreement is not a crime and the opposition is not an enemy of the state. He also demanded a clear, public and credible electoral timetable, criticized recent government foreign policy engagements including sequential visits linked to Addis Ababa and Cairo and urged focus on security, livelihoods, and national challenges rather than political confrontation.[53]

In a related development, the National Intelligence and Security Agency accused armed men linked to former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed of attacking its forces in Mogadishu. In a statement issued on October 11 the agency said armed men described as militias loyal to Sharif attempted to provoke a confrontation with its Public Protection Forces in Wadajir district around the First Branch of the General Daa'uud Division in the Tiintiinley area. The agency claimed the men carried AK-47s, PKM machine guns and RPGs and forcibly entered homes. This followed days of reports that government forces were deploying near the residences of Sharif and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire near the airport, closing

[51] Al Jazeera. “Somalia Says It Will Hold Elections in 2027.” Al Jazeera, October 15, 2026.
[52] FTL Somalia. “Puntland’s Deni Rejects Federal Election Process.” FTL Somalia, October 25, 2026.
[53] Somali Guardian. “Sharif Calls for ‘United National Front to Save Somalia.’” Somali Guardian, October 8, 2026.

roads, and tightening security. Opposition figures accused the government of targeting them and Sharif rejected the agency's claims.[54]

Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed who served from 2009 to 2012 denied NISA claims that armed men under his command attacked NISA Public Protection Forces in Mogadishu's Wadajir district, including allegations of an officer's abduction in June and earlier obstructions. His side described roadblocks, restricted access to supplies and deployments near his residence near the airport warning against using security forces for political pressure and calling for an independent investigation. Opposition-aligned groups, including the Somali Future Council linked to Puntland, Jubaland and others, warned that troop deployments near opposition compounds risked clashes and held President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud responsible. Local reports mentioned government force buildups in the capital.[55]

In a separate but related development, Defence Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi said authorities had removed 260 armed men from residences of opposition leaders in Mogadishu accusing them of threatening security. He stated the men were in custody and would be presented to the media, while alleging others remained. Fiqi accused the United Arab Emirates of arming opposition figures and said recent UAE hosted talks aimed to destabilize Somalia. He also alleged involvement of forces linked to Puntland and Jubaland administrations. He rejected reports of a planned government military operation to disarm or arrest opposition leaders, instead accusing the opposition of provoking security agencies.[56]

On another front, the Northeast State denied reports that its president escaped an abduction plot. Somalia's Northeast State dismissed social media claims regarding President Abdulkadir Ahmed Aw-Ali also known as Firdhiye.[57]

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud led a ceremony at the presidential palace, Villa Somalia, marking the 72nd anniversary of the Somali flag, first raised on October 12, 1954. Units from the Somali National Army including land, air, and naval forces, participated in military displays emphasizing sovereignty and unity. Senior officials attended including parliamentary leaders, the prime minister, the chief justice, and armed forces commanders.[58]

In a further governance development, the National Financing Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Committee issued a decision dated October 13 adding Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen, former Southwest State president and nine associates including Mahad Abdirahman Adan known as Shub, former Custodial Corps commander, to the national targeted financial sanctions list over suspected links to and cooperation with Al-

[54] The Somali Digest. "NISA Accuses Sheikh Sharif's Guards in Wadajir as Troops Close the Roads to His Home." The Somali Digest, October 12, 2026.
[55] Hiiraan Online. "Former President Accuses Government of Targeting His Staff, Blocking Access to His Home." Hiiraan Online, October 11, 2026.
[56] Somali Guardian. "Somalia Says 260 Armed Men Removed from Opposition Leaders' Homes." Somali Guardian, October 13, 2026.
[57] Somali Guardian. "Somalia's Northeast State Denies President Escaped Abduction Plot." Somali Guardian, October 10, 2026
[58] Mustaqbal Media. "Somalia's Top Leaders Mark National Flag Day at Villa Somalia." Mustaqbal Media, October 12, 2026.

Shabaab. Banks and other reporting entities were ordered to freeze assets and report transactions to the Financial Reporting Centre, and dealings were prohibited.[59]

Additionally, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud appointed Major General Mohamed Ali Barise as Deputy Commander of the Somali National Army. Barise had previously held the post, removed under former President Farmaajo in 2020, and has held senior roles including with the Joint Operations Coordination Cell.[60]

Former intelligence chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali Sanbalolshe said his Hawadle clan intended to establish a new regional administration in Hiran after being denied the Hirshabelle presidency. He indicated the initiative could become armed resistance against the federal government and did not rule out cooperation with Al-Shabaab. The remarks, from a Gaylan Media interview were reported amid separate warnings of possible guerrillastyle movements.[61]

Former US Ambassador to Somalia Larry André Jr., in comments reported October 13 from a Sky News interview described President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's government as illegitimate and overstaying its mandate accused it of using forces primarily as a political militia and called on the international community to intensify pressure to halt fighting and displacement in Southwest State, particularly around Baidoa. He highlighted humanitarian risks including potential famine conditions, and raised concerns about reported Turkish F-16 airstrikes.[62]

Parliament Speaker Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur accused Kenya of "harbouring terrorists," referring to Laftagareen and associates reportedly in Nairobi following Somali sanctions and blacklisting related to alleged Al Shabaab links. He urged diplomatic action and also pressed for accountability from Ethiopia over the South West advances. The Speaker publicly called for accountability regarding the towns seized by Laftagareen aligned forces.[63]

South West State Conflict and Humanitarian Situation

Forces loyal to former Southwest State leader Abdiasis Laftagaren captured the town of Qansahdhere in the Bay region. Local reports said the town about 90 kilometers west of Baidoa, fell on Thursday without a gunfight. It was described as the first town to pass fully out of federal control since a federal military offensive earlier in the year removed Laftagaren from power in Baidoa. Laftagaren, who continues to claim legitimacy as the region's president, reportedly aimed to retake Baidoa while the federal government continued

[59] Somalia Today. “Somalia Sanctions Ex-Regional Leader over Alleged Shabaab Links.” Somalia Today, October 13, 2026.
[60] Inside Somalia. “Gen. Barise Has Been Appointed as SNA Deputy Commander.” Inside Somalia, October 25, 2026.
[61] Somali Guardian. “Somalia’s Ex-Spy Chief Does Not Rule Out Al-Shabaab Alliance to Topple President.” Somali Guardian, October 25, 2026.
[62] Somali Guardian. “Larry André Calls Somalia’s Government ‘Illegitimate,’ Urges Action to Halt Southwest Conflict.” Somali Guardian, October 13, 2026.
[63] Somali Guardian. “Somalia Parliament Speaker Accuses Kenya of Harbouring Terrorists.” Somali Guardian, October 19, 2026.

deploying additional troops to strengthen defenses around the city.[64]

The United Nations urged an immediate halt to fighting in Baidoa amid a deepening crisis. UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia George Conway called for de-escalation of clashes in Baidoa, the Southwest State capital, warning that repeated violence was worsening an already severe humanitarian situation. He highlighted impacts on displaced people, women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, and called for protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure, and unhindered humanitarian access. Context included displacement from recent fighting affecting tens of thousands in waves, damage to health facilities, and projections of catastrophic food insecurity with around 26,000 internally displaced persons in Baidoa at risk of IPC Phase 5 hunger between October and December, with famine risk under worst case flooding and displacement scenarios.[65]

Subsequently forces loyal to former Southwest State President Laftagareen seized Burhakabo in the Bay region on Thursday October 15 after fighting that began early in the day. The town lies on the main road linking Mogadishu and Baidoa roughly 64 kilometers from Baidoa. A brief gunfight was reported and Laftagareen's side later displayed captured federal troops. Ministers from the former administration visited the town. Federal and current Southwest authorities had not immediately commented in available reports.[66]

On Friday, October 16 fighters loyal to former Southwest State President Laftagareen took control of Bardaale district in the Bay region roughly 55 to 60 kilometers northwest of Baidoa. Government aligned security personnel largely withdrew without major fighting abandoning positions including the district police station. The district commissioner reportedly sought refuge at an Ethiopian base.[67]

Forces loyal to ousted South West State president Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen seized multiple towns around Baidoa in the preceding days, including reports of Bardale, Dinsoor, Buurhakaba, Qansaxdheere, and Awdiinle, leaving the federally backed administration largely confined to Baidoa. The federally supported side announced plans for a counter offensive. In response, the federal government accused former South West State president Laftagareen of links to Al-Shabaab, building on earlier financial sanctions. Residents reportedly observed fighters with his militias in seized Bay region areas, and officials warned of action against cooperators. This occurred amid calls for federal intervention to restore control in contested districts.[68]

[64] Somali Guardian. “Somalia: Laftagaren Forces Take Qansah-dhere, West of Baidoa.” Somali Guardian, October 8, 2026.
[65] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mr. George Conway, on Escalating Violence in Baidoa (9 October 2026).” OCHA, October 9, 2026.
[66] Somali Guardian. “Somalia’s Government Loses Burhakabo to Ousted Southwest Leader’s Forces.” Somali Guardian, October 15, 2026.
[67] Somalia Today. “Somalia: Opposition Fighters Seize Third Town in Just Over a Week.” Somalia Today, October 16, 2026.
[68] Arab News. “Regional Forces Capture Key Towns in Southern Somalia.” Arab News, October 17, 2026.

Counterterrorism and Security Operations

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency announced the killing of a former senior Al-Shabaab Amniyat leader. The agency stated that forces working with international partners killed Bashir Ahmed Haji Nunow, known by aliases including Geescadde, Fanax, Gardhuub, and Ali Dheere, in a planned operation in Jilib district in Middle Juba on the night of October 1. The agency described him as the former head of Al-Shabaab's Amniyat security and intelligence wing from 2016 to 2024 and linked him to major attacks, including the October 14, 2017 Soobe Junction truck bombing in Mogadishu, one of the deadliest in Somalia's history, the Ex-Control Afgooye attack, Soobe 2, and other bombings targeting civilians in the capital.[69]

Fighting occurred in Hiiraan between Al Shabaab and local Macaawiisley fighters. At least seven people were killed and nine wounded in hours of fighting in Tardo village in the Hiiraan region according to a local administrator. The clash began after AlShabaab fighters tried to seize a weapon from a local herder, residents intervened and the battle intensified. Civilians were among the dead, and others fled. The incident occurred amid reports of a claimed Al-Shabaab agreement with Hawadle clan representatives, which local officials questioned. Hiiraan has been a focus of the Macaawiisley uprising against Al-Shabaab.[70]

The government reported three territorial losses in 48 hours involving Al Shabaab, Jubaland forces and rivals. Al-Shabaab captured Hees in central Hiran near Mataban on the road to Beledweyne after a brief battle with the Somali National Army on Friday, cutting a key supply route. Jubaland forces seized Balad Hawo in Gedo from federal troops who had taken it months earlier. This followed Thursday's loss of Qansax Dheere in the Bay region to forces loyal to former Southwest leader Abdiaziz Laftagareen. Jubaland was reported holding Balad Hawo, Dolow, Luuq, and El Wak, while federal-aligned forces retained Bardere and Garbaharey.[71]

Jubaland forces assumed control of key government offices including the Immigration and Citizenship Agency in Beled-Hawo in the Gedo region after reported defections of federal intelligence officers to the Jubaland administration.[72]

Following that Somalia's Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre opened a National Conference on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Mogadishu marking the ninth anniversary of the deadly 2017 Zoobe bombing. He called for national unity against Al-Shabaab stressing that military operations alone are insufficient. Barre outlined a strategy

[69] FDD's Long War Journal. "Somalia Claims to Have Killed Another Senior Shabaab Leader." Long War Journal, October 9, 2026.
[70] Hiiraan Online. "Seven Killed in Hiiraan Fighting between al-Shabab and Macaawiisley Fighters." Hiiraan Online, October 9, 2026.
[71] Somali Guardian. "Somalia's Govt Loses Three Towns in 48 Hours as Rivals Advance." Somali Guardian, October 10, 2026.
[72] Raxanreeb Online. "Jubaland Forces Seize Government Offices in Beled-Hawo After Federal Intelligence Officers Defect." Raxanreeb Online, October 14, 2026

combining security efforts, religious scholars' rulings against extremist ideology, and community awareness to prevent recruitment.[73]

The United Arab Emirates carried out its first reported drone strike in Somalia in nearly a year, targeting Al-Shabaab militants planting roadside bombs in the Galgala mountain pass in the Cal Madow range of Puntland. Officials told AFP the strike, on Tuesday followed surveillance. Two militants were wounded with Puntland forces then killing two. It came as Puntland prepared a new offensive and amid strained UAE federal relations with Mogadishu having earlier annulled agreements. A prior US strike in the area was also noted.[74]

U.S. Africa Command announced an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab on October 21, in coordination with Somalia's federal government in the vicinity of Hargeisa Yare, approximately 93 kilometers northeast of Kismayo. This was part of ongoing operations to degrade the group.[75]

An attempt by Somali National Army special forces, including Danab and Gorgor units, to retake Buurhakaba district in Bay region from Laftagareen aligned forces reportedly failed after an Al Shabaab ambush near Jamaada. Sources described losses including two armored vehicles and a subsequent withdrawal. This highlighted Al-Shabaab exploitation of the security vacuum amid the political-military contest.[76]

A key ally of former South West State leader Laftagareen, former internal security minister Hassan Abdulkadir, survived an alleged Turkish drone or F-16-linked strike in Bay region on Wednesday night. Two others were reportedly killed when their motorcycle was hit. This occurred as Laftagareen-aligned forces held gains in several Bay towns. Attribution and intent remained unverified by independent sources at the time.[77]

Somalia's federal government deployed more than 200 military vehicles including armored personnel carriers, troop and supply trucks and technicals toward Burhakabo in Bay region. Forces loyal to former South West leader Laftagareen had seized the town and other districts earlier in the month. The column moved from the Wanlaweyn and Baledogle area along the Mogadishu Baidoa road. Local reports described heavy fighting near Leego and continued Al Shabaab IED and ambush activity on the route with Danab units reported clearing the road. Officials had vowed to retake the lost towns.[78]

On 26 October, Al-Shabaab ambushed a large Somali National Army (SNA) convoy reported at approximately 2,000 troops and 200 plus vehicles near Leego/Jame'o in the

[73] Goobjoog English. “PM Barre Calls for United Front against Extremism on Anniversary of 2017 Mogadishu Bombing.” Goobjoog English, October 14, 2026
[74] Somalia Today. “UAE Launches First Somalia Drone Strike in Nearly a Year.” Somalia Today, October 21, 2026.
[75] U.S. Africa Command. “U.S. Forces Conduct Strike Targeting al-Shabaab.” AFRICOM, October 21, 2026.
[76] WardheerNews. “SNA’s Bid to Retake Buurhakaba Fails After Al-Shabaab Ambush.” WardheerNews, October 21, 2026.
[77] Somali Guardian. “Somalia: Key Laftagaren Ally Survives Alleged Turkish Drone Strike.” Somali Guardian, October 22, 2026
[78] Somali Guardian. “Somalia Sends More Than 200 Military Vehicles Toward Burhakabo.” Somali Guardian, October 24, 2026.

Lower Shabelle/Bay regions during Operation Banooda. The operation aimed to reopen the Baidoa Mogadishu road and counter forces loyal to former Southwest State president Abdiaziz Laftagareen who had seized several Bay region towns earlier in the month. Al-Shabaab claimed hundreds of SNA killed claims of 321–413 plus captured vehicles including some described as Turkish-supplied; the Somali Defense Ministry said approximately 75 militants killed and 56 wounded, acknowledged vehicle damage from VBIEDs, but gave no clear SNA casualty figures. An officer told AP at least 20 SNA dead, with others unaccounted for. The advance stalled and forces reportedly withdrew. This was described as one of the deadliest attacks on the SNA in years.[79]

The Somali Defense Ministry subsequently stated that SNA forces killed about 75 Al-Shabaab fighters and wounded 56 others during fighting on 26 October near Jameeca in Buurhakaba district, Bay region. It described the action as a major assault under Operation Banooda against Al-Shabaab positions, confirmed that militants used explosives-laden vehicles that damaged army vehicles, and said the operation would continue. The statement gave no figures for SNA casualties. Reuters reported that two soldiers said dozens of SNA troops were killed; one claimed he helped transport about 40 dead and more than 100 wounded to Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab claimed it killed 321 or higher in some statements of government soldiers in a three-hour ambush near Leego/Jame'o, captured prisoners and equipment, and targeted Turkish-trained forces. Neither side's casualty figures could be independently verified. Local reports described forces withdrawing after the clashes. Reporting noted that the ambush occurred amid the ongoing federal versus Southwest opposition dispute. Some local outlets mentioned an emergency cabinet discussion over the scale of losses and equipment damage. The broader political crisis the disputed term extension and election timetable continued to complicate military operations.[80]

Somalia's Office of National Security issued a statement rejecting reports that Turkish F-16s or armed drones had struck SNA positions in Leego on 26 October calling the claims false and misleading. It reaffirmed the Somalia–Türkiye security partnership focused on counterterrorism.[81]

Reports circulating on 27 and 28 October indicated President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was canceling a planned trip to the Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow because of the security setback and domestic political pressures. Turkey's role in training and support was widely referenced in coverage of the fighting.[82]

African Union peacekeepers were reported to be withdrawing from four forward operating bases in Lower Shabelle the following week due to financial constraints, despite a one year

[79] Somali Guardian. “Somali Army Convoy Ambushed by Al-Shabaab in Deadliest Attack in Years.” Somali Guardian, October 27, 2026.
[80]
[81] Somalia Today. “Somalia Denies Turkish F-16 Fighter Jets, Drones Struck Its Troops.” Somalia Today, October 28, 2026.
[82] Critical Threats. “Al Shabaab Ambush In South West State; Algeria Deploys To Niger: Africa File, October 29, 2026.” Critical Threats, October 29, 2026.

extension of U.S./UN logistical support until December 2027. Analysts warned that Somali forces may lack capacity to hold the positions, potentially allowing Al-Shabaab to exploit gaps in a region that helps shield Mogadishu. The specific bases were not publicly named.[83] Separately, Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, announced that the UPDF had started withdrawing from Somalia after nearly 20 years, stating forces were handing over security to Somali counterparts. Uganda has been the largest contributor to AU missions.[84]

International Engagement and Diplomacy

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud traveled to Egypt arriving on Friday, 2 October, after the 29 September Addis Ababa meeting with Abiy Ahmed and the 30 September meeting with Djibouti's Guelleh. The Alamein Africa Forum ran 2–4 October and he pitched Somali investment and held bilateral talks. The meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi was reported for Saturday, 3 October. Sisi restated support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity; coordination on the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandab, and Red Sea was discussed. No new troop or basing agreement was announced. Egypt described the relationship as a comprehensive strategic partnership since January 2025.[85]

In comments tied to an Al Jazeera interview, Mohamud stated Somalia would not accept an Israeli presence under any circumstances, claimed Israel was planning a naval base in Berbera and use of the airport, said relations with Ethiopia were good and Somalia was ready to allow Ethiopia use of two or three Somali ports under Somali sovereignty with no formal request yet filed, called the US Somalia's strongest partner against terrorism, asserted al-Shabaab had no presence in major cities and could not take control of the country and in a Sunday clip accused Yemen's Houthis of destabilising the region and disrupting Bab al-Mandab. The timing aligns with early October coverage around the forum.[86]

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud denied that Turkey maintains a permanent military base in Somalia. In comments tied to an Al Jazeera Arabic interview reported on October 7, he stated that the Turkish facility is a training center for Somali forces, not a base with permanently stationed Turkish troops operating as such. He called reports of it as Turkey's first overseas military base baseless propaganda. He described Somalia Turkey relations as strategic, citing support during the 2011 drought and security challenges, plus investments in Mogadishu's airport and seaport, oil and gas initiatives, and a satellite launch facility project.[87]

[83] Somali Guardian. "AU Troops to Leave 4 Bases in Somalia's Lower Shabelle." Somali Guardian, October 29, 2026.
[84] Monitor (Uganda). "UPDF Starts Somalia Exit as Financial Pressures, Diplomatic Shifts Reshape Peace Mission." Monitor, October 30, 2026.
[85] Egyptian Presidency. "President El-Sisi Meets Somalia's President on the Sidelines of Alamein Africa Business Forum." Egyptian Presidency, October 3, 2026.
[86] Al Jazeera. "Somalia Won't Accept Israeli Presence 'Under Any Circumstances': President." Al Jazeera, October 3, 2026.
[87] Somalia Today. "Somali President Rejects Turkish Military Base Claim as Propaganda." Somalia Today, October 17, 2026.

Türkiye's ambassador to Somalia, Ferhat Alkan and the Turkish Task Force commander visited the site of a planned Turkish spaceport in Warsheik in Middle Shabelle on or around this period following President Erdoğan's comments that construction had begun. The project has drawn attention amid broader Turkish engagement in Somalia including hydrocarbons and military training and support.[88]

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met UK Ambassador Charles King at Villa Somalia. On October 11, the president received the British Ambassador for talks focused on the Somalia-UK partnership. Discussions covered shared priorities including humanitarian preparedness amid El Niño and flood risks, security and stability, and the political situation. Ambassador King described the meeting as an honor and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to supporting a prosperous and stable future for Somalia.[89]

Reports indicated that Egypt was preparing to deploy troops to Somalia. Technical military teams including advisors, trainers, and officers were reportedly preparing for Egyptian army deployment to Somalia under bilateral military cooperation signed in 2024 and within the AUSSOM framework. Positioning was discussed around Ceelcade in the former Cisiley Airfield area on the northern outskirts of Mogadishu in Middle Shabelle. This followed earlier Egyptian visits, multiple meetings between President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and the recent Alamein summit.[90]

Deputy Foreign Minister Hassan Mohamed Ali Nadaara stated that Mogadishu's position is one of peace and neutrality amid Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions, rejecting suggestions that Somalia's participation in an October 4 Egypt summit with Egypt, Eritrea, and Sudan's leadership aligned it against Ethiopia. He emphasized monitoring developments, protecting Somali interests, and maintaining ties across the region, including with Ethiopia, which continues contributing to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia.[91]

Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned an attack reported around October 3 to 5 on civilian infrastructure providing electricity to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia. It called the incident a violation of international law and Saudi sovereignty, an affront to a holy site, and expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia while calling for accountability. Somalia also condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi airports. On October 9, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement strongly condemning Houthi attacks on Abha International Airport and King Khalid International Airport in Saudi Arabia. The attacks, occurring between October 6 and 8, killed and injured civilians.[92]

[88] The Somali Digest. "Turkiye's Ambassador Inspects Warsheikh as Mogadishu Publishes No Terms." The Somali Digest, October 7, 2026.
[89] FTL Somalia. "President Hassan Meets UK Ambassador Charles King at Villa Somalia." FTL Somalia, October 11, 2026.
[90] Addis Standard. "News: Egypt to Deploy Troops in Somalia under Bilateral Deal Ahead of AUSSOM Integration." Addis Standard, October 26, 2026.
[91] The Somali Digest. "Somalia Calls Itself Neutral Between Ethiopia and Eritrea Eight Days After Alamein." The Somali Digest, October 13, 2026.
[92] SANA. "Somalia Condemns Houthi Attack on Madinah Power Station." SANA, October 3, 2026.

Somalia's federal government condemned a map displayed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an October 18 security briefing. The graphic depicted Somaliland and Puntland separately from the rest of Somalia in a grouping linked to Israel and the UAE. Officials called it misleading a violation of internationally recognized borders and inconsistent with the UN Charter and AU principles, reaffirming national unity and territorial integrity.[93]

Somalia's federal government expressed anger toward Ethiopia for refusing to intervene militarily on its side in the South West conflict. Ethiopian commanders cited their mandate as not covering political disputes between Somali stakeholders. Ethiopian forces also declined related requests involving Egyptian forces or a Turkish base in certain areas under their influence.[94]

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held a phone call with Somali Foreign Minister Abdulsalam Abdi Ali, among other regional counterparts. They discussed bilateral ties, Horn of Africa and Red Sea developments, Egypt's support for Somalia's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and follow-up to a prior quadrilateral summit involving Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan in New Alamein.[95]

Somalia and Spain agreed to explore formal political consultations to strengthen bilateral ties, potentially with meetings in Mogadishu or Madrid. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar (Ali Balcad) met Spain's secretary of state for foreign and global affairs in Doha on the sidelines of a Global Security Forum. Fisheries was a noted focus area amid broader efforts to expand European partnerships.[96]

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met Somali Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali on the sidelines of the Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow. They discussed strengthening bilateral ties including economic, developmental, and investment cooperation, regional security in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea, and follow up on outcomes of the recent El Alamein quadrilateral consultative summit involving Egypt, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Egypt reaffirmed support for Somalia's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and rejected unilateral measures that undermine them. The meeting was widely reported around 29–30 October.[97]

Reports indicated that Somalia agreed to acquire Pakistani JF-17 Thunder fighter jets as defense ties deepen. Turkish media outlet TRHaber reported that Somalia had agreed to buy

[93] Hiiraan Online. “Somalia Condemns Netanyahu Map Showing Somaliland, Puntland Separately from Rest of Country.” Hiiraan Online, October 2026.
[94] Somali Guardian. “Somalia Angry as Ethiopia Refuses to Intervene in South West State Conflict.” Somali Guardian, October 19, 2026
[95] Ahram Online. “Egypt, Eritrea Discuss Ties, Red Sea Security and Alamein Summit Follow-up.” Ahram Online, October 27, 2026
[96] allAfrica / Shabelle Media Network. “Somalia, Spain Agree to Explore Formal Political Consultations.” allAfrica.com, October 20, 2026.
[97] Egypt Today. “Foreign Minister Affirms Egypt’s Rejection of Unilateral Measures Affecting Somalia’s Unity.” Egypt Today, October 29, 2026.

the multirole combat aircraft from Pakistan as part of efforts to rebuild its air force. Neither government publicly confirmed a final procurement deal, the number of jets, value, or delivery schedule. The reports followed expanding cooperation including an August memorandum of understanding on defense and security covering training, capacity building, and counterterrorism, and a September visit by a senior Pakistan Air Force delegation to Mogadishu that met President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the prime minister, defense minister, and military officials. [98]

Regional Security and Maritime Developments

All seven surviving Pakistani crew members from the late April hijacking of the Palau-flagged tanker MT Honour off Somalia's coast were confirmed rescued with the last group flown via Addis Ababa. Three Pakistani crew members had been killed, and remains were repatriated. This was reported on October 6.[99]

Four Indonesian seamen returned home after a Somali pirate ordeal. They were among the crew of the Palau-flagged MT Honour tanker hijacked in April and later rescued by Puntland forces. Some crew members had been killed. Their return was reported around October 7.[100]

A U.S. Africa Command official stated that Yemen's Houthis are seeking to expand into Somalia, potentially using Al-Shabaab territory for operations that could threaten shipping and U.S. forces including at Camp Lemonnier. Concerns included possible Houthi presence alongside Al-Shabaab in northern Somalia and transfer of advanced capabilities such as drones.[101]

The United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia closed around 31 October after more than three decades with no agreed political mediation replacement. The government framed it as a milestone of ownership critics noted the timing amid the unresolved election dispute, Al-Shabaab fighting, and other pressures. AU forces and UN aid and logistics support continue. The mission was set to close on 31 October after more than three decades of successive UN political missions. There was no agreed replacement mechanism to help mediate the election and constitutional disputes. The government described it as a milestone of national ownership; critics noted the timing amid contested presidential tenure, Al-Shabaab fighting, and other pressures. UN aid agencies and a separate logistics office supporting AU forces remain.[102]

[98] Somali Guardian. “Somalia Agrees to Buy Pakistani JF-17 Fighters.” Somali Guardian, October 14, 2026.
[99] Hiiraan Online. “All 7 Surviving Pakistani Crew Members Rescued after Somalia Pirate Hijacking.” Hiiraan Online, October 6, 2026.
[100] The Straits Times. “Indonesian Seamen Return after Somali Pirate Ordeal.” The Straits Times, October 7, 2026
[101] Stars and Stripes. “Houthis Eye Somalia as New Base for Operations.” Stars and Stripes, October 9, 2026.
[102] United Nations in Somalia. “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the Conclusion of the Mandate of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS).” United Nations in Somalia, October 27, 2026.

Somaliland: U.S. Recognition Push, Regional Security, and Domestic Enforcement

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi convened a consultative and operational session with newly appointed ambassadors and diplomatic representatives stressing their national duty, the representation of Somaliland's interests abroad, the strengthening of international partnerships and the mobilisation of diaspora communities. In parallel, discussions surrounding Somaliland's control over its airspace and the IATA Billing and Settlement Plan continued with officials emphasising independent aviation administration and rejecting claims of any new agreement with Somalia. A full Council of Ministers session covering national security, described as stable, public health preparedness including Ebola, livestock, diplomacy, and airspace was reported around 21 October, with some briefings linked to earlier activity.[103]

British House of Lords member Lord Stuart Polak addressed the Somaliland Investment Summit in London and urged investors to examine Somaliland more closely, citing political stability, democratic transitions, expanding infrastructure, and economic potential, while specifically highlighting the expansion of Berbera Port, the operational Berbera Economic Zone, and the transport corridor linking the port to Ethiopia and the wider region.[104]

Meanwhile, Somalia's Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi claimed that the federal government had provided substantial financial support for President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi's 2024 election campaign in the expectation that he would be more open to negotiations on Somali unity. Somaliland's Minister of National Defence, Mohamed Yusuf Ali Ahmed, strongly rejected the claim, stating that Irro's mandate came directly from Somaliland voters and noting that he won approximately 63.92 percent of the vote.[105]

Somaliland's Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Development issued a regulatory directive dated 25 October banning the acceptance of airline tickets issued through Somalia's Billing and Settlement Plan for departures from airports in the Republic of Somaliland, including Hargeisa Egal International Airport and Berbera International Airport. The ban applies immediately and covers previously purchased tickets, including return tickets. Passengers must obtain tickets through authorised channels consisting of official airline websites, mobile apps, airline ticket offices, airport counters, or travel agents licensed by Somaliland's Department of Civil Aviation Regulation and Air Transport. Airlines were instructed to review bookings, establish verification procedures, notify affected passengers, and provide lists of potentially non-compliant agents who had until 31 October to regularise their status. From 1 November, only agents meeting Somaliland's licensing requirements

[103]SomalilandCurrent.com. "President Irro Meets Newly Appointed Diplomatic Corps, Stresses National Duty and Strategic Representation." SomalilandCurrent.com, October 17, 2026.
[104] allAfrica / Horn Diplomat. "Somalia: British Lord Stuart Polak Highlights Somaliland Investment Potential." allAfrica.com, October 20–21, 2026
[105] The Somali Digest. "Fiqi Says Mogadishu Paid for the Waddani Campaign That Elected Irro." The Somali Digest, October 24, 2026.

may maintain distribution arrangements. This step asserts independent control over aviation operations amid ongoing disputes with Somalia over airspace, e-visas, and the IATA BSP system.[106]

In a related development Aviation Minister Fu'ad Ahmed Nouh briefed the Council of Ministers on his recent visit to Canada and engagements with international aviation stakeholders concerning airspace management rights, e visa issues, and related disruptions. He outlined legal and diplomatic efforts to secure Somaliland's airspace rights, with support from partner countries and organisations in the ICAO and IATA context and reaffirmed that Somalia's BSP system does not apply to Somaliland airports, consistent with the 25 October ministerial directive.[107]

The Ministry of Interior and Security issued and publicised a directive dated 28 October signed by Interior and Security Minister Abdalle Mohamed Arab, ordering security agencies to enforce a longstanding parliamentary ban on participation in Somalia's political activities. The measure implements a joint decision of Somaliland's House of Representatives and House of Elders from 11 October 2003.[108]

Regional Security and Counterterrorism

Somaliland had asked the United States and Israel for help acquiring air defence systems, pointing to Turkish drones and aircraft operating from Somalia and to threats from Yemen. No agreement was announced. Defence Minister Mohamed Yusuf Ali said in June that Israel was training police and soldiers and denied the existence of a base or base talks. This account is treated as an unconfirmed claim. A senior presidential foreign affairs adviser, Mohamed Osman Fadal, told Middle East Eye that Somaliland seeks Israeli support against Turkey's expanding military role in Somalia, citing Turkish F-16 aircraft, drones, and related cooperation, and stated that Somaliland requires air-defence systems and wishes Israel to support it against Turkey.[109]

The Somaliland Coast Guard commenced structural maintenance and hull overhaul of a primary patrol vessel at the Naval Forces' repair facility in Berbera. The works which include the removal of barnacles, algae, and other deposits, are intended to restore the vessel's performance, speed, and fuel efficiency. This activity forms part of wider efforts to strengthen maritime operational capabilities, patrols, and interdiction operations along the Gulf of Aden coastline, under the direction of Coast Guard Commander Admiral Ahmed

[106] Somalilandpost News. "Somaliland Bans Somalia BSP-Issued Flight Tickets." Somalilandpost News, October 25, 2026
[107] Somalilandpost News. "Somaliland Pursues Legal and Diplomatic Efforts to Secure Airspace Management Rights." Somalilandpost News, October 30, 2026
[108] The Horn Tribune. "Somaliland Declares Participation in Somalia's Political Activities an Act of Treason, Warns of Legal Action." The Horn Tribune, October 28, 2026.
[109] The Jerusalem Post. "Somaliland Seeks Israeli Military Support as Turkey Expands Role in Somalia." The Jerusalem Post, October 6, 2026.

Hurre Hariye.[110]

Local reporting published around 8 October described ongoing competition between Somaliland and Somalia for influence over armed fighters in eastern areas linked to the Sool and Sanaag regions. Somaliland was reported to be seeking the reintegration of former members of its security forces, including the payment of salaries on or around 3 October to approximately 2,000 fighters from the Jamac Siyad clan of the Dhulbahante community who had previously served in Somaliland forces. Somalia's federal government was reportedly providing financial support to some of the same fighters as well as to an additional group of around 2,000 others undergoing training at Goja-Adde, a former Somaliland facility near Las Anod. The reporting raised concerns that fighters associated with figures linked to Las Anod-based groups could be employed in potential operations directed toward Erigavo, the capital of Sanaag, accompanied by unverified allegations of possible external military assistance.[111]

The Somaliland National Army launched a large scale military exercise named Heegan 2026 in Benderwanaag in the Maroodi Jeex region. Army Commander Brigadier General Nimcaan Yuusuf Gaaxnuug inaugurated the exercise on 28 October. The multi week drills involve live fire training, tanks, artillery, armoured vehicles, and drones. Objectives include improving operational readiness, training standards, coordination and cooperation between units and assessing capacity for combined operations. The military stated it intends to make the exercise annual to modernise skills and adapt to evolving tactics. A public safety notice was issued warning residents of Benderwanaag and surrounding areas of gunfire, artillery noise, and military movements, advising pastoralists and others to avoid designated training and live fire zones.[112]

Somaliland took part in a four day regional maritime security and search and rescue workshop hosted by the Ethiopian Navy in Addis Ababa, running from approximately 26 to 29 October. Participants also included representatives from Yemen, Oman, Djibouti, and Puntland. Discussions focused on maritime search and rescue, regional security challenges, information sharing, and coordination under frameworks linked to the Djibouti Code of Conduct and related partners. Ethiopian Navy Commander Vice Admiral Kindu Gezu attended the opening. Somaliland's involvement aligns with its Gulf of Aden coastline and Berbera port interests.[113]

[110] The Horn Tribune. "Somaliland Coast Guard Overhauls Patrol Warship in Berbera to Strengthen Maritime Operations." The Horn Tribune, October 5, 2026.
[111] Somalilandpost News. "Somaliland-Somalia Rivalry over Fighters Raises Tensions around Erigavo." Somalilandpost News, October 8, 2026.
[112] The Horn Tribune. "Somaliland Launches 'Heegan 2026' Military Drills Involving Tanks and Drones." The Horn Tribune, October 29, 2026
[113] Addis Standard. "'Ethiopia's Return to a Sea Port Is Inevitable': Navy Commander Calls for Regional Maritime Cooperation." Addis Standard, October 30, 2026

International Engagements and Diplomacy

In an interview published on 3 October, President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro said China opposes Somaliland's Taiwan ties and that Hargeisa would keep them as a government choosing its own partners. Representative offices have existed since 2020. On Israel he said there is currently no Israeli military presence and he did not rule out future talks. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected claims by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud concerning Berbera and Israel. The ministry called his Al Jazeera interview misleading and said Mogadishu has no authority over Somaliland's foreign relations or to speak for its people and no authority to dictate its partnerships. It said ties with Israel are sovereign decisions of two states, aimed at cooperation and stability, and that claims Berbera would be used to attack other countries are unfounded. It restated independence on 26 June 1960, restoration of sovereignty on 18 May 1991 and support for negotiated Ethiopian sea access.[114]

On 6 October President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro issued a statement extending sincere congratulations to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on his appointment by Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives and his swearing in for a new five year term following the general election of 1 June. The President highlighted the longstanding ties between the two sides rooted in geography, history, and shared interests, and expressed the hope of deepening cooperation in trade, development, and regional peace and stability. The Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs and official accounts likewise issued statements congratulating Prime Minister Abiy on his re election and reaffirming support for Ethiopia's sea access. Somaliland's Foreign Minister stated that the territory was ready for Ethiopia to utilise the port of Berbera, aligning with ongoing discussions on maritime access, bilateral relations, and regional security cooperation. The Somaliland National Army Commander held a meeting with Ethiopian Ambassador Teshome Shunde.[115]

Separately, Foreign Minister Abdirahman Dahir Adan received the Ethiopian Ambassador at the ministry to discuss strengthening bilateral relations, shared interests, regional security developments and cooperation to support peace and stability. President Irro described Ethiopia as an important neighbouring country and reaffirmed confidence in bilateral cooperation. He stated that Somaliland "strongly opposes interference and any act that could endanger Ethiopia's stability and security" or threaten its statehood.[116]

On 10 October the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extended warm congratulations to the Government and people of Taiwan on the occasion of Taiwan's 115th National Day and reaffirmed Somaliland's commitment to strengthening friendship and bilateral cooperation.

[114] FTL Somalia, "Somali President Accuses Israel of Seeking Berbera Base; Somaliland MFA Issues Direct Rejection," FTL Somalia, October 2026
[115] Hiiraan Online. "Horn of Africa Leaders Congratulate Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Following Swearing-In." October 6, 2026.
[116] Somaliland Current. "Somaliland Foreign Minister Receives Delegation to Discuss Security and Sea Access." October 2026.

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded positively, thanking Somaliland and expressing gratitude for the support of its friends in Somaliland. The exchange continues the partnership established through reciprocal representative offices in 2020, which has since expanded into areas including healthcare, agriculture, education, technology, institutional development, and maritime security.[117]

Somaliland's Ambassador to Israel, Mohamed Omar Hagi Mohamoud, in comments reported around 5 and 6 October rejected a joint declaration issued by the Egypt, Eritre, Sudan, Somalia summit held in New Al Alamein City. The declaration had backed Somalia's position and rejected any recognition or support for Somaliland. The Ambassador stated that political gatherings cannot manufacture a veto over Somaliland's future, erase its history or sovereignty, or determine the aspirations of its people. [118]

US President Donald Trump referred to Somaliland as "a totally different country" during a political rally in Youngstown, Ohio, on October 12. Trump distinguished Somaliland from Somalia, calling it "a totally different country" and suggesting it should change its name, for example to "Somalia Land." The remarks, made in the context of US domestic politics and immigration, did not constitute a formal policy change or recognition announcement. Somaliland authorities later welcomed them as underscoring the territory's distinct identity and separate political reality, renewing hopes for deeper US engagement and eventual recognition. [119]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a statement on October 13 welcoming President Trump's acknowledgement from his October 12 Ohio rally of Somaliland as a "totally different country" and distinct country from Somalia. The government highlighted these remarks, and Foreign Minister Abdirahman Dahir Adan Bakal had briefed the Cabinet in a prior session that the comments, following President Irro's U.S. visit, strengthened Somaliland's international standing and opened opportunities for engagement.[120]

China and Djibouti reaffirmed support for Somalia's territorial integrity and opposed diplomatic recognition of Somaliland in a joint statement following talks in Beijing between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar. The statement described Somaliland as an inseparable part of the Federal Republic of Somalia, opposed any attempt to gain diplomatic recognition for it, and opposed any form of collusion between Somaliland and the Taiwan authorities.[121]

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[117] Mohamed Duale, "Somaliland Congratulates Taiwan on National Day, Reaffirms Bilateral Ties," Horn Diplomat, October 10, 2026,
[118]Mohamed Duale, "Somaliland Envoy Rejects Al-Alamein Stand on Recognition," Horn Diplomat (republished by AllAfrica), October 5, 2026,
[119] Geeska, "Trump Calls Somaliland a 'Totally Different Country', Raising Recognition Hopes," October 13, 2026,
[120] News Desk. "Trump Calls Somaliland a 'Totally Different Country', Raising Recognition Hopes." Horn Diplomat, October 13, 2026.
[121] Garowe Online, "China and Djibouti Send Clear Message Over Somaliland Recognition," October 2026

1.5 Sudan: Drone Warfare at Scale, Mass Civilian Casualties, and a War Deepening on Every Dimension

October 2026 was the deadliest month for Sudanese civilians since the war began, measured by the scale and concentration of drone warfare casualties. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk reported that at least 306 people had been killed and hundreds more injured in drone strikes during the first three weeks of October alone, a figure that captured only part of the month's toll before the Tanqong Market massacre in Nyala and continued attacks in the final days brought the cumulative cost higher still. Several mass casualty events defined the month: a drone strike on Amiet Market in Abyei killed at least 153 people; attacks in West Kordofan during a single 24-hour period killed approximately 150, including mourners travelling to a funeral; and competing accounts of a strike on Tanqong Market in Nyala placed the dead at between 21 and more than 100.[122] Alongside these mass casualty incidents, the conflict's infrastructure warfare dimension intensified sharply, with RSF drones striking electricity facilities across multiple states and causing widespread power outages. At the diplomatic level, October produced a new regional alignment through the Alamein summit, a letter from Burhan to Trump, and a Moscow meeting between Burhan and Putin that exposed the widening geopolitical contest over Sudan's postwar orientation. A new Sudan-Ethiopia accusation of drone launch sites produced the most specific and consequential bilateral accusation of the conflict, even as it remained independently unverified. None of these developments brought a ceasefire closer.

The month's opening week established the pattern. On October 9, a drone strike near a displacement site in Abu Shandi, Wad al-Mahi locality in Blue Nile, killed at least 31 civilians, the majority women and children who had been sheltering after earlier displacement from Geissan and Kurmuk.[123] In West Kordofan, attacks attributed to the RSF killed at least 10 civilians in Abu Ajal, while the UN condemned the repeated targeting of displacement sites as a serious violation of international humanitarian law.[124] Approximately 2,800 people were displaced in a single day around Ed Damazin in Blue Nile State due to insecurity in the area.[125] In West Darfur, regional authorities accused the RSF of attacking a displacement settlement in the Hajar Sanakeet area of Sirba locality on October 17, killing at least 11 people and injuring five, most of them women and children who had previously fled violence near the Chad border. A separate SAF drone strike in West Kordofan reportedly killed four civilians travelling toward North Kordofan, including people seeking medical

[122] "At Least 306 People Killed and Hundreds Injured in Drone Strikes Across Sudan in First Three Weeks of October," *UN News*, October 2026;
[123] "Drone Strike Near Displacement Site in Abu Shandi, Wad al-Mahi, Kills at Least 31 Civilians, Mostly Women and Children," *Sudan Tribune*, October 9, 2026.
[124] "RSF Attacks in Abu Ajal, West Kordofan, Kill at Least 10 Civilians," *Sudan Tribune*, October 2026; "UN Condemns Repeated Targeting of Displacement Sites; Warns of Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law," OCHA, October 2026.
[125] "Approximately 2,800 People Displaced in Single Day Due to Insecurity Around Ed Damazin, Blue Nile State," International Organization for Migration (IOM), October 2026.

treatment.[126]

The most catastrophic single concentration of civilian deaths came in the third and fourth weeks. On October 18 and 19, the Sudan War Observatory reported drone strikes in West Kordofan killing approximately 150 people, including mourners travelling to a funeral and people gathered at the site, with a separate strike hitting Al-Mujlad in the same state.[127] On October 19, a drone attack struck Amiet Market in the disputed Abyei region, killing at least 153 people according to local authorities; the market was reported to contain fuel storage facilities suspected of supplying the RSF, and Abyei officials attributed the strike to the SAF. South Sudan subsequently summoned Sudan's ambassador and warned against allowing its territory to become an extension of the war.[128] The identities of the intended targets and the full circumstances of the attacks have not been independently established. Turk's figure of 306 killed in the first three weeks of October, with attacks striking homes, markets, hospitals, displacement sites, power stations, and water infrastructure across Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Khartoum, placed October's civilian toll in stark international focus.

The month's final week produced the Tanqong Market strike in Nyala on October 26. Emergency Lawyers reported more than 100 people killed and 113 injured including women and children; the Sudan Doctors Network placed the toll at at least 21 killed and more than 40 injured; MSF received 36 bodies and treated more than 150 wounded. The SAF claimed the operation targeted RSF recruits, but the discrepancies in figures across monitoring groups and the reported presence of civilians underline the urgent need for independent investigation.[129] Drone warfare simultaneously extended to Sudan's electricity grid: between October 26 and 29, RSF strikes targeted electricity facilities across Al Jazirah, Sennar, Gedaref, and White Nile states, causing widespread power outages, while the Al-Markhiyat power station near Omdurman was struck, disrupting electricity supplies across the Khartoum area.[130] UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a formal condemnation on October 31, warning of the catastrophic impact of escalating drone attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure and calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities.[131] Eastern Sudan also faced aerial threats in the second week: on October 18, air defenses intercepted RSF drones reportedly targeting the Upper Atbara and Setit dam complex, the Khashm el-Girba dam, and the army's Second Infantry Division headquarters in Gedaref and Kassala states.[132]

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[126] "West Darfur Regional Authorities Accuse RSF of Attacking Displacement Settlement in Hajar Sanakeet Area, Sirba Locality, Killing at Least 11 and Injuring Five," *Dabanga Radio TV Online*, October 17, 2026.
[127] "Drone Strikes in West Kordofan Kill Approximately 150 People, Including Mourners Travelling to a Funeral," *Dabanga Radio TV Online*, October 19, 2026.
[128] "Drone Strike on Amiet Market, Abyei, Kills at Least 153 People; Market Contained Fuel Storage Suspected of Supplying RSF," *Radio Tamazuj*, October 19, 2026.
[129] "More Than 100 Killed and 113 Injured in Drone Strike on Tanqong Market, Nyala, South Darfur," *Sudan Tribune*, October 26, 2026.
[130] "RSF Drone Strikes Target Electricity Facilities in Al Jazirah, Sennar, Gedaref, and White Nile States, Causing Widespread Power Outages," *Sudan Tribune*, October 29, 2026.
[131] "Secretary-General Condemns Escalating Drone Attacks by Warring Parties in Sudan, Warns of Catastrophic Impact on Civilians and Critical Infrastructure, Calls for Immediate Cessation of Hostilities," *UN News*, October 31, 2026.
[132] "Air Defense Systems Intercept RSF Drones Targeting Army Positions and Infrastructure in Gedaref and Kassala States."

A separately consequential incident occurred on October 10, when an airstrike hit an artisanal gold mining site near the disputed Sudan-Egypt border area of Jabal al-Uqaydat. Emergency Lawyers reported that at least 72 miners were killed and more than 50 injured; survivors described an aircraft circling before striking workers.[133] Egypt subsequently announced military operations against illegal gold mining near the Sudanese border, framing the campaign as enforcement of Egyptian sovereignty and protection of state resources, while Burhan ordered a national investigation into the incident.[134] The full circumstances of the attack and its relationship to any specific military objective remain to be independently established. The incident concentrated international attention on several intersecting dynamics: the economic pressures driving civilians into hazardous informal mining as agriculture and formal employment collapse, the significance of cross-border gold trade and smuggling networks to Sudan's wartime economy, Egypt's documented engagement in the conflict including military support for the SAF, and the unresolved border demarcation between the two countries in the area.

The most significant new bilateral accusation of the month emerged on October 28, when Sudanese officials presented what they described as technical flight data and satellite imagery identifying drone launch sites inside Ethiopia, including Bahir Dar Airport, and claimed that 162 drone attacks had originated from Ethiopian territory targeting Sudanese civilian sites, fuel depots, and power stations.[135] These allegations remain independently unverified and require further evidence before any assessment of Ethiopian state involvement can be made. Ethiopia has consistently rejected Sudanese accusations of facilitating RSF military support. Nevertheless, the specificity of the October 28 presentation, naming an airport and providing claimed technical data, represented an escalation in the public accusatory posture compared with previous allegations. The claims arrive in an already fraught bilateral environment shaped by competing accusations, mutual concerns regarding opposition group support, and the strategic significance of the Blue Nile corridor for both countries. Their potential consequences for regional stability are substantial regardless of their ultimate verification.

The Alamein summit convened by Egypt brought together the leaders of Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan for discussions that produced a joint declaration emphasizing state sovereignty, territorial integrity, Red Sea security, and cooperation on Nile-related matters.[136] Egyptian President el-Sisi held separate discussions with Burhan on efforts to end the war, with Cairo continuing to frame Sudan's unity and territorial integrity as core regional

Sudan Tribune, October 18, 2026.

[133] "At Least 72 Gold Miners Killed and More Than 50 Injured in Airstrike Near Sudan-Egypt Border; Emergency Lawyers Accuses Egyptian Military," *Sudan Tribune*, October 10, 2026.

[134] "Egypt Announces Operations Against Illegal Gold Mining Near Sudanese Border, Citing Enforcement of Sovereignty and Protection of State Resources," *Reuters*, October 2026.

[135] "Sudan Presents Technical Flight Data and Satellite Imagery Accusing Ethiopia of Allowing Its Territory to Be Used for Drone Attacks on Sudanese Sites." *Sudan Tribune*, October 28, 2026.

[136] "Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan Issue Joint Declaration at Alamein Summit on Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, Red Sea Security, and Nile Cooperation," *Anadolu Agency*, October 2026.

interests.[137] The summit signaled the emergence of a coordinated regional position among four states with increasingly overlapping concerns regarding Ethiopia's strategic position, Nile water governance, and Horn of Africa security competition. For Sudan, the meeting offered an opportunity to reinforce diplomatic backing from key regional actors at a moment when its western front with the RSF remains active and its southeastern frontier with Ethiopia is generating acute bilateral tensions. The convergence of interests among the four Alamein signatories around Red Sea security and sovereignty, while stopping well short of a formal alliance, is becoming increasingly difficult to separate analytically from the broader competition shaping the Horn.

Diplomatic engagement with Western partners proceeded along multiple parallel tracks during October. Burhan wrote to US President Trump reaffirming his commitment to ending the conflict, following contacts between Burhan and US adviser Massad Boulos facilitated by Egypt.[138] The Quad continued discussions on securing a 90-day humanitarian truce, improving aid access, and establishing a path toward a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive Sudanese-led political process.[139] At a UN Security Council meeting on October 16, US representatives called for an immediate humanitarian truce and an end to weapons flows, while UN officials warned that continued external support was encouraging both parties to pursue their objectives through force.[140] A Geneva meeting involving 21 countries focused on more limited confidence-building measures including prisoner exchanges and coordination over secondary-school examinations.[141] On October 8, the Security Council extended the Darfur arms embargo and Panel of Experts mandate until January 2027 but declined to adopt the US proposal for a nationwide embargo following Russian and Chinese opposition. Sudan's UN mission rejected the nationwide proposal as an infringement on the country's right to self-defense.[142] The UN's own fact-finding mission renewed its call for a nationwide embargo, warning that foreign weapons, technology, logistical support, and personnel supplied to both sides were sustaining and intensifying the conflict.[143]

The month's most geopolitically consequential diplomatic meeting took place in Moscow on October 30, when Burhan met Russian President Vladimir Putin. Burhan offered Russian investors opportunities in Sudan's gold, copper, and mineral sectors, and proposed a Russian economic zone on Sudan's Red Sea coast that could incorporate fuel and wheat storage

[137] "Sisi Holds Separate Discussions with Burhan on Efforts to End Sudan War," *Reuters*, October 2026.
[138] "Burhan Writes to Trump Reaffirming Commitment to Ending the Conflict in Sudan," *Sudan Tribune*, October 2026; "Egypt Facilitates Meeting Between US Adviser Massad Boulos and Sudanese Army Chief Burhan," *Reuters*, October 2026.
[139] "Quad Discusses Securing Humanitarian Truce, Improving Aid Access, Path Toward Permanent Ceasefire and Inclusive Political Process."US Department of State, October 2026.
[140] "US Representatives Call for Immediate Humanitarian Truce and End to Weapons Flows at UN Security Council Meeting," US Mission to the United Nations, October 16, 2026. *UN News*, October 2026.
[141] "Geneva Meeting of 21 Countries Discusses Confidence-Building Measures Including Prisoner Exchanges and Coordination Over Secondary-School Examinations," *Sudan Tribune*, October 2026.
[142] "UN Security Council Extends Darfur Arms Embargo and Panel of Experts Mandate Until January 2027." UN Security Council, press release, October 8, 2026.
[143] "UN Fact-Finding Mission Renews Call for Nationwide Arms Embargo, Warns Foreign Weapons, Technology, Logistical Support, and Personnel Are Sustaining and Intensifying Sudan's Conflict," UN Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan, October 2026.

facilities and railway development.[144] The proposals reflect Khartoum's sustained effort to attract external investment and strategic partnerships amid wartime economic pressures, and its deliberate cultivation of non-Western partnerships as a hedge against anticipated expansions of Western sanctions. A Russian Red Sea presence, if realized, would represent a significant geostrategic development with implications for maritime security, access to the Horn, and the regional balance of power extending well beyond Sudan's immediate postwar reconstruction.

October produced the most concentrated month of accountability actions since the war began. On October 26, the United Kingdom sanctioned 15 senior commanders from both the RSF and SAF over suspected atrocities, including conflict-related sexual violence during the siege and capture of El Fasher.[145] The UAE sentenced eight people, including senior Sudanese military and security figures, to life imprisonment over an arms-trafficking and money-laundering network linked to weapons supplies for Sudan's army.[146] At the OPCW Executive Council's October session, chemical weapons allegations against the SAF remained a subject of international concern following a Washington Post investigation presenting internal documents, videos, and communications pointing to a concealed chemical weapons program; Sudan denied wrongdoing.[147] Amnesty International marked one year since the RSF's capture of El Fasher by documenting conditions inside the city: fewer than 70,000 people remain in a city whose pre-war population exceeded one million, with civilians facing unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, torture, restrictions on movement, and schools being used as detention centers.[148] On October 31, senior RSF commander Siddiq Ander publicly defected, accusing Hemedti and his relatives of controlling the group's finances, weapons, troop movements, and promotions, adding to a series of departures suggesting growing internal dissatisfaction within the paramilitary leadership.[149] The UAE's nomination of senior diplomat Lana Nusseibeh for UN Secretary-General separately attracted scrutiny over Abu Dhabi's alleged RSF support, with critics arguing the candidacy raised questions about implications for the UN's credibility; the UAE has consistently denied arming the RSF.[150]

[144] "Burhan Meets Putin in Moscow, Offers Russian Investors Opportunities in Gold, Copper, and Minerals." *Reuters*, October 30, 2026.
[145] "UK Sanctions 15 Senior Commanders from RSF and SAF Over Suspected Atrocities Including Conflict-Related Sexual Violence During El Fasher Siege," UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, October 26, 2026.
[146] "UAE Sentences Eight People, Including Senior Sudanese Military and Security Figures, to Life Imprisonment Over Arms-Trafficking and Money-Laundering Network Linked to Weapons Supplies for Sudan's Army," *Reuters*, October 2026.
[147] "Washington Post Investigation Presents Internal Documents, Videos, and Communications Pointing to Concealed Chemical Weapons Program in Sudan," *Washington Post*, September 2026.
[148] "El Fasher One Year On: Civilians Face Unlawful Killings, Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Severe Restrictions on Movement; Fewer Than 70,000 Remain in City of Over One Million Pre-War Population," Amnesty International, October 2026.
[149] "Senior RSF Commander Siddiq Ander Defects, Accuses Hemedti and Relatives of Controlling Finances, Weapons, Troop Movements, and Promotions," *Sudan Tribune*, October 31, 2026.
[150] "UAE Nomination of Senior Diplomat Lana Nusseibeh for UN Secretary-General Draws Scrutiny Over Abu Dhabi's Alleged Support for RSF," *Reuters*, October 2026.

The humanitarian situation reached new thresholds of severity during October. A joint statement by the United Kingdom and 31 international partners on October 23 warned that 19.5 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity, with five million at emergency levels and more than 825,000 children expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition in 2026.[151] A WFP driver was killed in an airstrike on a humanitarian convoy, further constraining the ability of aid agencies to reach affected populations.[152] In North Darfur, 1,150 people fled four villages between October 29 and 31, some crossing into Chad. In Port Sudan, water shortages and rising prices left some families spending the equivalent of an entire month's salary to secure basic supplies.[153] Against this backdrop, Sudanese authorities announced plans to establish 22,000 micro- and small-scale projects across 11 states to support household incomes, with the social welfare minister citing sharply rising poverty since the conflict began, a measure that reflects recognition of the scale of economic collapse but sits at a vast remove from the structural conditions required to address it.[154]

October 2026 leaves Sudan at a juncture where the accumulation of documented atrocities, diplomatic initiatives, and accountability actions has produced no discernible reduction in violence and no credible pathway toward a ceasefire. The month produced the war's highest documented drone casualty figures, the most specific bilateral accusation directed at Ethiopia, a new regional diplomatic bloc through Alamein, a Moscow meeting signaling Russia's potential for a formal postwar role on the Red Sea, and the most concentrated single month of accountability designations. Each of these represents a significant development in its own domain. None of them has altered the fundamental dynamic: both the SAF and RSF continue to calculate that the costs of military continuation remain lower than the costs of political compromise, that external support sustains their operational capacity, and that the international community's demonstrated unwillingness to enforce its own frameworks removes a meaningful constraint on their conduct. The 19.5 million people facing acute food insecurity, the 306 killed in October's first three weeks of drone strikes alone, and the fewer than 70,000 remaining in El Fasher are the measure of what that calculation has produced across two and a half years of war.

1.6 South Sudan: Constitutional Concerns, Communal Violence and Electoral Uncertainty as December Approaches

South Sudan's political life in October 2026 was organized around the December 22 election date, but the conditions for a credible vote continued to fall short of the requirements that domestic and international actors have consistently identified as necessary. The National

[151] "19.5 Million People Experiencing Acute Food Insecurity in Sudan; Five Million Facing Emergency Levels" Joint Statement by the United Kingdom and 31 international partners, October 23, 2026.
[152] "WFP Driver Killed in Airstrike on Humanitarian Convoy in Sudan," World Food Programme (WFP), October 2026.
[153] "1,150 People Flee Four Villages in North Darfur Between October 29 and 31, Some Crossing into Chad," International Organization for Migration (IOM), October 2026.
[154] "Sudanese Authorities Announce Plans to Establish 22,000 Micro- and Small-Scale Projects Across 11 States to Support Household Incomes." *Sudan Tribune*, October 2026.

Elections Commission had received only $27 million of the approximately $250 million assessed as needed to conduct the elections; voter registration had not begun and a comprehensive election calendar remained unpublished by the final week of October.[155] NEC Chairperson Gabriel Bol returned from consultations in Pretoria where he had held discussions on electoral materials, technical assistance and logistical support, following President Kiir's meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in which Ramaphosa pledged electoral assistance and emphasized the importance of implementing the 2018 peace agreement.[156] The Political Parties Council registered four pre-election coalitions comprising 25 parties and set October 22 as the deadline for completing coalition formation.[157] The ruling SPLM moved from institutional preparations toward active electoral mobilization, with an open-queue voting system used for candidate selection in Duk County drawing concerns over voter privacy and potential coercion.[158] Civil society groups assessed the overall state of electoral preparedness and argued that the country was not ready for the December vote, calling for inclusive dialogue and a realistic roadmap that acknowledged the gap between the government's timetable and conditions on the ground.

New political actors also entered the electoral space during October. The Revive South Sudan Party appointed musician and political aspirant Meen Mabor Meen as its interim chairman; he indicated his intention to contest a parliamentary seat in Rumbek East rather than challenge Kiir for the presidency, illustrating how elections are drawing new entrants into formal politics without yet resolving the structural questions about whether the process will be sufficiently competitive and inclusive.[159] On the regional diplomatic side, Kiir's October 5 meeting with Kenyan President William Ruto in Nairobi covered election preparations alongside discussions of the Lamu corridor, the Dangote East Africa Petroleum Refinery and the Naivasha dry port, with Ruto pledging institutional and technical support and encouraging dialogue among South Sudanese political actors.[160] The engagements with both Nairobi and Pretoria reflect a broader strategy of seeking to consolidate political backing through a wider regional agenda, while the deeper questions of inclusion, trust and the unfinished peace process remain unresolved.

Constitutional Legitimacy and Opposition Exclusion

The most significant formal challenge to the government's transitional approach emerged on October 27, when the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan warned that the handling of the electoral transition risked amounting to a constitutional coup. The

[155]"Voter Registration Has Not Begun and Comprehensive Election Calendar Remains Unpublished Ahead of December Vote." The EastAfrican, October 28, 2026.
[156]"President Kiir Meets South African President Cyril Ramaphosa." Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.
[157]"Political Parties Council Registers Four Pre-Election Coalitions Comprising 25 Parties." Radio Tamazuj, October 22, 2026.
[158]"Civil Society Groups Argue Country Is Not Ready for December Elections, Call for Inclusive Dialogue and Realistic Roadmap." Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.
[159]"Revive South Sudan Party Appoints Musician and Political Aspirant Meen Mabor Meen as Interim Chairman." Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.
[160] "Ruto Pledges Institutional and Technical Support for South Sudan Elections, Encourages Dialogue Among Political Actors." Kenya State House, cited in Eye Radio, October 2026.

Commission argued that unilateral constitutional and legislative changes made following the September 22 dissolution of the Transitional Government of National Unity, combined with the concentration of governing authority in Kiir's hands and the exclusion of opposition actors, were undermining the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. The Commission specifically cited the continued detention and trial of suspended First Vice President Riek Machar and his exclusion from the electoral process as a direct threat to political inclusion.[161] One day later, on October 28, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission released a report warning that unresolved political disputes, incomplete security arrangements and outstanding peace commitments threatened the credibility of the December elections.[162] The convergence of these two international institutional assessments in the closing days of October represented a concentrated moment of formal pressure on the government's approach, signaling that the credibility of the process is a broader concern than its technical organization alone, and that proceeding under existing conditions risks deepening rather than resolving South Sudan's political divisions.

Communal Violence and Armed Confrontations

Security conditions deteriorated independently of the electoral dynamic during October, with communal violence producing significant casualties across multiple states. In Rumbek, Lakes State, intercommunal clashes killed approximately 71 people including four soldiers; more than 50 wounded were taken to Rumbek State Hospital as residents fled fighting that spread through the town. UN peacekeepers deployed to protect the hospital and humanitarian facilities, and government forces subsequently regained control, but longstanding disputes over cattle, land and retaliatory killing cycles that have fuelled repeated outbreaks in Lakes State remained unaddressed.[163] Separately, communal violence in Tonj North, Warrap State, saw a reported death toll that rose to 72 during the month's final week, and clashes near the Ugandan border between South Sudanese rebel forces left one person dead and three injured.[164][165] Each of these incidents illustrates that the violence threatening civilian security in South Sudan operates largely independently of the broader peace process, emerging from local armed dynamics that no transitional framework has yet succeeded in containing.

Factional fighting also erupted in Unity State between rival SPLM-IO groupings, with confrontations reflecting a leadership dispute between factions aligned with Oyet Nathaniel

[161]"UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan Warns That Unilateral Constitutional and Legislative Changes, and Trial of Riek Machar and Exclusion of Opposition Actors as Threats to Political Inclusion." UN Commission on Human Rights, October 27, 2026.
[162]" Unresolved Political Disputes, Incomplete Security Arrangements and Outstanding Peace Commitments Threaten Credibility of 22 December Elections." Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), October 28, 2026.
[163]"Intercommunal Clashes in Rumbek, Lakes State Kill Approximately 71 People Including Four Soldiers." Radio Tamazuj, October 2026; "UN Peacekeepers Deploy to Protect Rumbek Hospital and Humanitarian Facilities Following Deadly Clashes." Eye Radio, October 2026.
[164]"Communal Violence in Tonj North, Warrap State; Reported Death Toll Rises to 72 as Clashes Continue." Eye Radio, October 2026.
[165]"Clashes Between South Sudanese Rebel Forces Near the Ugandan Border Leave One Person Dead and Three Injured." Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.

Pierino and those loyal to Gatwech Dual.[166] The Unity State clashes add a distinct layer of insecurity to an oil-producing region already severely affected by years of conflict, displacement and flooding. The rift indicates that divisions within the opposition movement are now producing armed consequences independent of the formal political dispute, and that even opposition cohesion cannot be assumed as a baseline ahead of December's electoral contest. The persistence of multiple concurrent armed dynamics, each with distinct drivers, underlines the scale of the security consolidation challenge that any electoral process must somehow address.

Sudan War Spillover: The Abyei Strike

The most direct and consequential spillover from Sudan's war onto South Sudanese territory occurred on October 19, when a drone strike on Amiet Market in the disputed Abyei region killed at least 153 people. The strike ignited a nearby fuel depot, causing extensive fires and leaving some victims severely burned.[167] South Sudan attributed the attack to the Sudanese Armed Forces and summoned Sudan's ambassador to protest; Sudan's military initially stated that the strike had targeted fuel supplies allegedly destined for the RSF, while Sudan's government subsequently denied responsibility. The competing accounts remain unresolved.[168] President Kiir warned against allowing Abyei to become an extension of the conflict. The incident is analytically significant beyond its immediate human cost: it illustrates the intersection of South Sudan's disputed border arrangements with the Sudan war's economic dimensions, including cross-border fuel trade networks, and demonstrates the risks posed by Sudan's prosecution of the war to civilian communities operating within a region whose political status remains unresolved between the two countries. It also focused South Sudanese public and political attention on the extent to which the absence of a defined security framework for Abyei leaves local communities exposed to the consequences of a war they are not party to.

Regional Diplomacy and Economic Engagement

October produced the most intensive regional diplomatic engagement since the transitional period began, with Juba pursuing electoral support, infrastructure connectivity and investment commitments through multiple bilateral tracks. Trade and Industry Minister Labanya Margaret Mathya's discussions with Ugandan President Museveni covered expanding bilateral trade, with Uganda's annual exports to South Sudan reported to have grown from approximately $500 million to $700 million; proposed infrastructure improvements included the Juba-Nimule road, electricity connections and a one-stop border center to reduce transit costs and inspection delays.[169] South Sudan joined the Maritime

[166]"Fighting Erupts Between Rival SPLM-IO Factions in Unity State, Reflecting Leadership Dispute Between Groups Aligned with Oyet Nathaniel Pierino and Those Loyal to Gatwech Dual." Eye Radio, October 2026; Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.
[167]"Drone Strike on Amiet Market in Abyei on 19 October Kills at Least 153 People According to Local Authorities." Radio Tamazuj, October 19, 2026.
[168]"South Sudan Summons Sudan's Ambassador to Protest Abyei Strike." Eye Radio, October 2026.
[169]"Trade and Industry Minister Labanya Margaret Mathya Holds Discussions with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni."

Organization for Eastern, Southern and Northern Africa (MOESNA) at its ministerial assembly in Dar es Salaam on October 15, framing membership as an opportunity to improve regional shipping and transit arrangements for a landlocked country whose export routes depend on neighboring states.[170] The International Monetary Fund projected South Sudan's real GDP to grow by 10.5 percent in 2026, the fastest rate in sub-Saharan Africa, though the forecast reflects oil-sector dynamics rather than broad-based economic recovery and does not indicate a comparable improvement in household welfare.[171]

Energy investment and export infrastructure featured prominently in October's economic diplomacy. The government promoted 14 open oil blocks ahead of the South Sudan Oil and Power conference scheduled for November, seeking capital for exploration and production as it attempts to revive output disrupted by the Sudan war.[172] At an East African Community meeting in Kisumu, Kenya, South Sudan called for coordinated management of the Lake Victoria Basin, with UNMISS-facilitated discussions separately emphasizing how climate shocks, flooding and drought are intensifying local competition over land, water and other resources.[173] Kiir's travel to Moscow on October 30 for the Third Russia-Africa Summit added a geopolitical dimension: bilateral talks with Putin covered cooperation in energy, agriculture, mining, tourism, education and security.[174] A proposed oil-related agreement with Russia drew criticism from opposition figures over its legality and transparency, introducing a governance dimension to Juba's external partnerships that will carry into the post-electoral period regardless of how December resolves.[175]

Humanitarian Conditions

Humanitarian conditions deteriorated across multiple dimensions during October, with funding shortfalls, displacement inflows and localized insecurity combining to deepen need. The World Food Programme warned that more than one million vulnerable people could lose access to life-saving food and nutrition assistance as funding shortages intensified, with stocks at Malakal, one of the principal humanitarian logistics hubs in Upper Nile State, having fallen from approximately 10,000 metric tons a year earlier to fewer than 300 metric tons, directly constraining the ability of agencies to reach communities beyond the main urban centers.[176] South Sudan continued to receive approximately 3,000 refugees and

Ugandan Presidency, New Vision, October 2026.
[170]"South Sudan Joins the Maritime Organization for Eastern, Southern and Northern Africa at Ministerial Assembly in Dar es Salaam on 15 October." Radio Tamazuj, October 15, 2026.
[171]"International Monetary Fund Projects South Sudan's Real GDP to Grow by 10.5 Per Cent in 2026." International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook, October 2026.
[172]"South Sudan Government Promotes 14 Open Oil Blocks for Investment Ahead of South Sudan Oil and Power Conference Scheduled for November." South Sudan Ministry of Petroleum, Sudan Tribune, October 2026.
[173]"South Sudan Calls for Stronger Regional Coordination Over Lake Victoria Basin at East African Community Meeting in Kisumu, Kenya; Eye Radio, October 2026.
[174]"President Kiir Attends Third Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow and Holds Bilateral Talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on 30 October." South Sudan Presidency and Russian Presidential Administration, Radio Tamazuj, October 30, 2026.
[175]"Proposed Oil-Related Agreement Between South Sudan and Russia Draws Criticism from Opposition Figures Who Question Its Legality and Transparency." Eye Radio, October 2026.
[176]"WFP Warns More Than One Million Vulnerable People in South Sudan Risk Losing Access to Life-Saving Food and

returnees per week crossing from Sudan, many arriving with limited resources and requiring immediate assistance at a moment when the humanitarian response was already severely overstretched.[177] At Gorom refugee camp, approximately 16,000 registered residents faced unsafe drinking water, expensive medicines, overcrowded classrooms and security concerns, with families dependent on water deliveries from Juba because local pump water was reported unsuitable for consumption, adding further costs for households with limited means.[178] The outgoing UK envoy publicly criticized the government's continued prioritization of political and security expenditures over investment in basic services and children, a pattern that places electoral ambitions in stark contrast with the welfare conditions facing the majority of the population entering an election year.[179]

Overall Assessment

South Sudan enters November 2026 with elections scheduled in seven weeks and the political, security, financial and humanitarian conditions for a credible vote visibly incomplete. The UN Commission's constitutional coup warning, the RJMEC alarm, civil society calls for postponement and the $27 million funding gap against a $250 million requirement collectively define the dimension of the challenge.[180][181][182] The Rumbek and Tonj North communal violence, SPLM-IO factional clashes in Unity State, and the Abyei strike demonstrate that the security environment is deteriorating rather than stabilizing in the weeks before polling. Regional diplomacy has generated pledges of electoral assistance and expanded economic cooperation, and the Moscow summit has added a new geopolitical dimension to Juba's external partnerships. Neither regional support nor a projected 10.5 percent GDP growth rate can resolve the political disputes and security conditions that most directly threaten the process. The government's evident determination to proceed in December regardless of these conditions reflects a calculation that a continued transition carries greater political risk to its own position than an imperfect vote. Whether that calculation produces an election that reduces or deepens South Sudan's existing divisions remains the central open question as the final weeks of preparation begin.

Nutrition Assistance Due to Funding Shortfalls." World Food Programme, October 2026.

[177]"Approximately 3,000 Refugees and Returnees Crossing from Sudan into South Sudan Each Week." International Organization for Migration (IOM), October 2026.

[178]"Approximately 16,000 Registered Residents at Gorom Refugee Camp Face Unsafe Drinking Water, Expensive Medicines, Overcrowded Classrooms and Security Concerns, Radio Tamazuj, October 2026.

[179]"Outgoing UK Envoy to South Sudan Criticizes Continued Prioritization of Political and Security Expenditures Over Investment in Basic Services and Children." Eye Radio, October 2026.

1.7 Kenya: Navigating Regional Instability Amid Expanding Diplomatic Engagements

Kenya's regional engagements during October demonstrated its continued emphasis on diplomatic cooperation, security coordination and economic integration across Africa. One of the month's important diplomatic events was the twelfth Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa, held in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, from October 23 to 25. Deputy President Kithure Kindiki attended the forum and met Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on October 24 for discussions on matters of mutual concern. During the forum, Kindiki encouraged African countries to diversify their international partnerships rather than align exclusively with individual global powers. The engagement reaffirmed diplomatic communication between Nairobi and Addis Ababa,[183] although no major new bilateral agreement was announced.

The meeting coincided with a significant humanitarian and security crisis along the Kenya Ethiopia border. Fighting linked to a territorial dispute between Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regional administrations triggered large-scale displacement beginning around October 22. By October 28, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees cited local estimates suggesting that up to 50,000 people had crossed into Kenya, although registration remained incomplete. The influx placed pressure on humanitarian services in Marsabit County, while insecurity disrupted commercial activity at the Moyale border crossing.[184] The situation demonstrated the vulnerability of a major bilateral trade corridor to instability and the importance of sustained coordination between the two governments.

Kenya also remained engaged in peace and security initiatives in the Great Lakes region. On October 5, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta joined former Ethiopian President Sahle Work Zewde and former Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi in Goma as part of the African Union Panel of Facilitators addressing the conflict in eastern DRC. The delegation held consultations with humanitarian organizations, international representatives and the AFC/M23 movement as part of wider efforts to promote dialogue and reduce hostilities. Separately, Kenya participated in meetings of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Lusaka, Zambia,[185] from October 14 to 16, where military and defence representatives discussed regional security challenges and opportunities for coordinated responses. These engagements reflected Nairobi's continued involvement in African conflict management beyond its immediate neighborhood.

In Somalia, Kenya maintained its military contribution to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), particularly around Kismayo and Jubaland.

[183] Office of the Prime Minister, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "Tana Forum: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Receives Deputy President Kithure Kindiki of Kenya," October 24, 2026; Daily Nation, "Don't Limit Yourselves to One Foreign Partner, DP Kindiki Urges African Countries," October 24, 2026.

[184] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "UNHCR Warns of Growing Humanitarian Needs as Thousands Flee Ethiopia to Kenya," October 28, 2026.

[185] African Union Peace and Security Department, "Statement by the African Union Panel of Facilitators Following Consultations in Goma, DRC," October 9, 2026; Kenya Ministry of Defence, "Kenya Advances Collective Security Agenda in Great Lakes Region," October 2026.

Kenyan personnel continued supporting stabilization efforts and operations against Al Shabaab as the mission approached the end of its existing December 2026 mandate.[186] Nairobi's commitment remains closely connected to the security of its northeastern frontier and the wider stability of southern Somalia. Although no major new bilateral agreement was announced during the month, Kenya's sustained participation in the mission demonstrated its continuing security interests in the Horn of Africa.

Economic integration also featured prominently in Kenya's regional diplomacy. On October 6, Kenya and Rwanda signed eleven cooperation instruments during the tenth Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation in Nairobi. The agreements covered political consultations, immigration, legal assistance, police cooperation, urban development and other areas. Meanwhile, Kenya and Uganda[187] held technical consultations in Kampala from October 6 to 8 to address trade barriers and regulatory challenges affecting bilateral commerce. Both engagements reflected efforts to strengthen institutional cooperation and facilitate economic activity within the East African Community.

Regional infrastructure development remained another important element of Kenya's economic diplomacy. The Dangote East Africa Petroleum and Petrochemicals Special Economic Zone in Lamu, whose groundbreaking took place on September 30 and was publicized on October 1, drew attention because of the participation of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni alongside President William Ruto. The proposed refinery, with a stated processing capacity of up to 700,000 barrels per day, is intended to strengthen regional petroleum supply, industrial production and transport connectivity. Its location near the Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport[188] Corridor could support Kenya's ambition to expand Lamu's role as a commercial gateway serving neighboring countries. Nevertheless, the project's projected benefits remain dependent on financing, construction and supporting infrastructure.

Beyond Africa, Kenya continued expanding its diplomatic and commercial relations with international partners. Consultations with Yemen on October 5 addressed maritime security, trade, investment and political developments affecting the Red Sea and the wider Middle East. Nairobi emphasized the importance of regional stability, particularly because developments around the Red Sea can affect shipping routes, trade costs and commercial connectivity between East Africa, Asia and Europe. Kenya also pursued closer cooperation with Bangladesh, Thailand and Georgia through discussions on investment, trade, education and institutional partnerships. The third Kenya Bangladesh Foreign Office Consultations,

[186] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2809 (2025), December 2025.
[187] Rwanda Ministry of Defence, "Rwanda and Kenya Sign 11 Agreements to Strengthen Bilateral Cooperation," October 7, 2026; Uganda Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, "Uganda and Kenya Deepen Efforts to Harmonise Trade and Industrial Policies and Remove Trade Barriers," October 2026.
[188] Kenya Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, "President Ruto, Dangote Launch East Africa Petroleum and Petrochemicals Zone in Lamu," October 1, 2026.

held in Dhaka[189] on October 14, provided an opportunity to strengthen cooperation in sectors of mutual economic interest.

A significant international diplomatic concern involved Kenyan nationals recruited into Russia's war against Ukraine. During an October parliamentary hearing, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi disclosed that the government had recorded 354 Kenyans connected to the conflict, including individuals on the front lines, missing persons, prisoners and repatriated nationals. He reported that 62 Kenyans had been repatriated and that diplomatic measures were underway to prevent further recruitment. The government also indicated that Russia had included Kenya[190] on a list intended to prevent additional military enlistments. The development highlighted concerns regarding overseas recruitment networks, consular protection and the consequences of foreign conflicts for Kenyan citizens.

Kenya's international security profile also remained connected to Haiti, where it had previously led a multinational security mission. Although the Kenyan contingent departed earlier in 2026, the successor Gang Suppression Force continued operating under a United Nations mandate extended through March 2027. This development remained relevant to Kenya's experience in international security operations, although it did not represent a new Kenyan deployment during October.

Domestically, preparations for the August 2027 general elections increasingly shaped the political environment. During an October 9 briefing to the diplomatic community, Mudavadi reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining electoral stability and protecting the independence of constitutional institutions. Political disagreements surrounding the Orange Democratic Movement and its relationship with President William Ruto's[191] administration continued against a background of economic pressures and debate over government policy.

Public health also became a significant concern following the confirmation of Ebola case[192]s in Kenya. By October 26, authorities had recorded nine cases and two deaths, while twenty monitored contacts had completed quarantine without developing symptoms. The outbreak, linked to the wider epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo[193], raised concerns about regional disease surveillance and the movement of people across borders.

October 2026 demonstrated Kenya's continuing emphasis on regional diplomacy, collective

[189] Kenya Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, "Kenya, Yemen Deepen Dialogue on Bilateral Cooperation, Regional Security," October 5, 2026; "Kenya and Bangladesh Hold 3rd Foreign Office Consultations," October 15, 2026; Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, News Update, October 2026.
[190] Kenya Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, "Kenya and Bangladesh Hold 3rd Foreign Office Consultations," October 15, 2026; Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, report on Kenya's campaign for Professor Phoebe Okowa's International Court of Justice candidature, October 29, 2026.
[191] Parliament of Kenya, "Mudavadi: Kenya Pursuing Diplomatic Routes to Secure Return of Nationals Caught in Russia Ukraine War," October 9, 2026.
[192] Vincent Mumo Nzilani and Ammu Kannampilly, "Kenya Releases First Ebola Contacts from Quarantine, Milestone in Containment Efforts," Reuters, October 26, 2026.
[193] United Nations Support Office in Haiti, "Security Council Extends Gang Suppression Force and UNSOH Mandates," September 29, 2026.

security and economic integration. Engagements with Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda strengthened bilateral and institutional cooperation, while Kenya's involvement in DRC mediation, Great Lakes security consultations and Somalia's stabilization mission reflected its wider African security commitments. The Moyale crisis illustrated the immediate consequences of instability in neighboring countries, while the proposed Lamu petroleum complex highlighted Kenya's longer term interest in developing regional trade and energy infrastructure.

Internationally, Nairobi pursued diversified diplomatic partnerships while confronting challenges related to the Russia Ukraine conflict. Kenya's ability to sustain these engagements will remain closely connected to regional stability, economic conditions and domestic political developments ahead of the 2027 elections.

Section Two: MENA Region, Gulf, and Global Engagement

2.1 Egypt: Regional Alignments and Strategic Developments

Egypt's October 2026 posture combined intensified peripheral diplomacy with a sustained effort to restrict Ethiopia's room for maneuver on the Nile and the Red Sea. Early in the month Ethiopia accused Cairo, Sudan and Eritrea of supporting an opposition alliance as government-aligned forces recaptured Alamata in Tigray. Cairo rejected the charge and insisted it remained outside Ethiopia's internal conflict.[194] The accusation arrived precisely as Egypt deepened coordination with the same states, revealing a pattern in which formal disavowals of interference coexisted with the construction of a regional environment designed to raise the costs of Ethiopian policy choices.

On 4 October leaders from Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia issued the El-Alamein Declaration. The text assigned Red Sea governance exclusively to littoral states, rejected unilateral measures affecting downstream Nile uses, and opposed recognition of Somaliland, while creating a periodic follow-up mechanism.[195] Although the document named no state, each clause engaged established Ethiopian positions on maritime access, the operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and commercial arrangements with Somaliland. The gathering institutionalized a consultative format that placed Ethiopia outside the preferred circle of interlocutors and treated highland geography and demographic weight as secondary to coastal prerogatives.

Parallel engagement with Somalia reinforced the same logic. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi reaffirmed support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity during talks with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, positioning Cairo as a partner against arrangements that might expand Ethiopian commercial access through northern Somali ports. Talks with

[194] Elkabany, Hussien, and Serdar Dincel. "Egypt Denies Any Role in Ethiopian Conflict." Anadolu Agency, October 3, 2026.
[195] Daily News Egypt. "Alamein Declaration: Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, and Somalia Forge Unified Front on Red Sea Governance, State Sovereignty, and Nile Rights." October 4, 2026.

Sudanese leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan similarly emphasized Sudan's territorial integrity and state institutions, preserving Egyptian alignment with Khartoum while retaining influence over mediation, refugee flows and the wider Nile balance.

The Nile dispute supplied the structural core. Egyptian Irrigation Minister Hani Sewilam stated that Cairo had exhausted negotiation avenues over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and described a United States-hosted draft involving Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia as a balanced framework that Ethiopia had declined.[196] At Cairo Water Week el-Sisi called for cooperation based on consultation and protection of downstream interests, while the irrigation ministry tracked Ethiopian dam operations by satellite and managed daily releases from the Aswan High Dam.[197]

Ethiopia's completion and operation of the dam already demonstrated that upstream development could proceed without permanent reduction in downstream flows and that regulated releases had mitigated extreme flooding. Egypt's continued demand for binding operational rules that would subject Ethiopian reservoir management to downstream oversight reflected a preference for preserving historical allocation patterns rooted in colonial-era instruments rather than adapting to principles of equitable and reasonable utilization.

Red Sea security provided the complementary theatre. Throughout the month Egyptian officials repeatedly asserted that governance of the sea and the Bab el-Mandeb belonged exclusively to littoral states. El-Sisi carried this message to Seoul,[198] Jakarta and Moscow. In Seoul the two governments elevated relations to a strategic partnership and began talks on a comprehensive economic agreement;[199] in Jakarta a joint statement with Indonesia addressed freedom of navigation, energy security and Nile water security,[200] with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto expressing support for Egypt's position on transboundary watercourses; in Moscow at the Russia-Africa Summit el-Sisi rejected militarization of the Red Sea by non-littoral states and expressed concern over Horn of Africa tensions while meeting President Vladimir Putin to discuss the El-Dabaa nuclear plant and a Russian industrial zone in the Suez Canal Economic Zone.[201]

Parallel diplomacy with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan and Oman focused on containing escalation following Houthi attacks against Saudi infrastructure. El-Sisi announced readiness to provide defensive military assistance if Riyadh requested it, while

[196] RT Arabic. "Egypt Reveals What Happened Behind Closed Doors with GERD Negotiations." Egypt Independent, October 22, 2026.
[197] News Desk. "Egypt's Water Security Is Non-Negotiable, El-Sisi Warns." Al Manassa, October 25, 2026.
[198] Egypt Today Staff. "Egypt Rejects Red Sea Access Arrangements Undermining Littoral States' Sovereignty: El-Sisi to Lee." Egypt Today, October 8, 2026.
[199] The World Korea. "South Korea and Egypt Elevate Ties to Strategic Partnership, Expanding Cooperation Across Economy, Defense and Culture." October 9, 2026.
[200] Ahram Online. "Egypt, Indonesia Target $5 bln Trade, Reaffirm Palestinian Statehood and Stress Nile Water Security." October 11, 2026.
[201] Ahram Online. "El-Sisi Rejects Moves to Militarize Red Sea, Outlines Five Priorities for African Development." October 29, 2026.

the National Defense Council endorsed the commitment. Parliament subsequently considered authorization,[202] with deliberations exposing concerns over operational scope, duration and costs. The proposal carries wider escalation risks. Given the Houthis' military relationship with Iran, Egyptian involvement could draw Cairo further into the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, expose Egyptian personnel to retaliation and widen threats to Red Sea shipping. Although the Houthis retain independent political objectives, their alignment with Tehran creates additional channels through which a localized confrontation could acquire broader regional consequences.

Domestic messaging reinforced the external posture and revealed deeper strategic calculations. At the Armed Forces' 44th Cultural Symposium on 14 October, marking the 53rd anniversary of the 1973 war, el-Sisi responded directly to Israeli remarks about Sinai attributed to Bezalel Smotrich. He asked who had claimed Egypt wanted war, stated that Egypt had recovered its territory, and denied hidden agendas or ambitions against other states, describing border protection and stability within peace as Egypt's priorities. He reaffirmed the 1979 peace treaty as the governing framework for Egyptian-Israeli relations, reiterated support for a two-state solution, and described Gulf security as integral to Egyptian national security.

Domestic messaging also exposed growing tensions over Sinai's military status. At the Armed Forces symposium on 14 October, Sisi responded to Bezalel Smotrich's 6 October remarks against Egyptian sovereignty over Sinai, reaffirming the 1979 peace treaty.[203] However, Netanyahu had already asked Washington in September 2025 to pressure Cairo over reported runway extensions[204] and underground military facilities in Sinai, and reiterated concerns about Egypt's growing military capabilities in February 2026. The treaty establishes limited-force zones across the peninsula, with changes requiring bilateral agreement. Although Cairo disputes the allegations, reported military infrastructure expansion raises substantive questions about compliance with these arrangements. The growing militarization of areas designed to maintain a security buffer risks undermining the treaty's central stabilizing mechanism and intensifying Egyptian-Israeli tensions

The same themes reappeared at the Police Academy graduation on 15 October and the Military Academy graduation on 17 October, where el-Sisi warned of continued efforts to discredit state institutions, cited risks on Egypt's southern and western borders, and framed any support for Saudi Arabia as strictly defensive. He declared that his presidential term would end in 2030 without constitutional amendment and proposed a 30-month leadership-

[202] Reuters. "Egyptian Parliament Authorises Military Aid for Saudi Arabia." Al Jazeera, October 26, 2026.
[203] Elkabany, Hussien, and Rania Abushamala. "Egypt Has 'No Hidden Agendas,' Ambitions Against Anyone: President." Anadolu Agency, October 14, 2026.
[204] "Netanyahu Urges US Pressure on Egypt Regarding 'Military Buildup in Sinai.'" Daily News Egypt, September 20, 2025.

preparation program at the Military Academy for future senior officials.[205] His declaration however raises question about the nature of Egypt's political succession.

If fulfilled, his departure would mark the first voluntary transfer of presidential power in modern Egyptian history. Yet placing the preparation of future presidents and senior officials within a military institution reinforces the military establishment's influence over civilian political leadership. The contradiction is particularly significant given that economic grievances, including unemployment, fuel shortages and deteriorating living conditions, helped mobilize the 2013 protests that preceded Mohamed Morsi's removal.[206] Egypt continues to face substantial debt and financing pressures under Sisi, exposing the limits of a governing model that prioritizes centralized control over institutional accountability and economic reform.

Questions of institutional independence also arose at the continental level, where the African Union Commission's handling of regional tensions exposed the pressures that influential member states can exert on its public positioning. On 1 October, Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf issued a declaration calling on Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia to exercise restraint.[207] Three days later, following formal objections from Cairo, the Commission published a clarification stating that the earlier declaration had not attributed responsibility to any neighboring country.[208] It also offered individualized reassurance to Egypt as a founding member and important continental partner. The rapid adjustment left the broader allegations of external involvement unresolved and raised questions about the Commission's ability to maintain an even-handed position when confronted by diplomatic pressure from an influential member.

Over all, the month's record shows Egypt advancing a strategy of peripheral alignment and doctrinal restriction aimed at limiting Ethiopia's freedom of action on both the Nile and the Red Sea. The El-Alamein format, sustained engagement with Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, and repeated assertions of exclusive littoral authority formed a coherent effort to construct a regional environment in which Ethiopian development choices and maritime aspirations face coordinated diplomatic and political costs. Ethiopia's sovereign right to develop its water resources for national energy and economic needs, already demonstrated through the operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, remains the central fact against which these maneuvers are measured. The resulting tensions risk converting technical and developmental questions into zero-sum contests that constrain cooperative outcomes across the Horn.

[205] Alashray, Enas. "Egypt's Sisi Says His Presidency Will End in 2030, Outlines Plan to Prepare Future Leaders." Reuters, October 17, 2026.
[206] Nada, Garrett. "Morsi Meter: 9,427 Protests and Counting One Year Later." Wilson Center, June 25, 2013.
[207] African Union Commission. "Statement of the AU Commission on the Escalating Tensions Between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt." African Union, October 1, 2026.
[208] African Union Commission. "Clarification by the AU Commission on Its Statement of 1 October 2026 on Restraint and De-escalation of Tensions in the Horn of Africa." African Union, October 4, 2026.

2.2 Yemen: The Return to Full-Scale War and the Regionalisation of the Conflict

Yemen's Yemen's conflict entered a more dangerous phase in October 2026 as the breakdown of the post-2022 restraint gave way to sustained military confrontation between the Houthis and the internationally recognised government, supported by Saudi Arabia. Houthi advances along the Red Sea coast, particularly around Mokha and the approaches to Bab al-Mandeb, prompted a major government counter-offensive backed by intensive Saudi airstrikes. Meanwhile, the Houthis expanded their attacks against Saudi territory and government-controlled infrastructure, demonstrating the conflict's growing regional implications. The escalation also intensified the humanitarian emergency, particularly in Taiz, where disrupted supply routes, deteriorating healthcare services and continued displacement placed additional pressure on civilians. The expanding involvement of regional and international actors further highlighted Yemen's growing importance to security dynamics surrounding the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula.

The Collapse of Restraint and the Contest over Bab al-Mandeb

The most consequential development during the month was the transition from intermittent confrontation to sustained military operations across several frontlines. On October 9, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg informed the Security Council that Yemen had returned to full-scale war, with hostilities spreading across multiple regions. The escalation followed Houthi advances towards Mokha and the western coastline, alongside intensified fighting in the highlands west and south of Taiz and across Lahij. Fighting also continued in Marib, al-Jawf and Hajjah, demonstrating that the renewed confrontation was not confined to the western coastal theatre.[209]

Government forces launched Operation Dawn of Yemen to reverse Houthi territorial gains and restore control over the approaches to Bab al-Mandeb. On October 5, Saudi-backed government forces advanced through Dhubab, capturing strategic positions, including an airstrip near the strait, and reaching the outskirts of Mokha. The Yemeni Defence Ministry subsequently announced that Mokha had been recaptured, while Saudi aircraft conducted extensive airstrikes against Houthi positions. Government-aligned forces also reported further advances around Bab al-Mandeb towards the end of the month. Although the extent of these territorial gains remained difficult to independently verify, the operations demonstrated the government's determination to prevent the Houthis from consolidating their position along the strategically important western coastline.[210]

Despite these advances, the Houthis continued demonstrating their capacity to strike government military and political institutions. On October 15, Houthi missiles struck the Al-

[209] United Nations 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,” 9 October 2026.
[210] Reuters, “Yemeni Government Forces Seize Strategic Strait from Houthis,” 5 October 2026.

Maashiq presidential palace complex in Aden, killing five people, according to government officials. On October 19, a ballistic missile struck the Al-Alam security forces training camp in Shabwa, killing 73 people and injuring more than 200, according to the provincial governor. The Houthis acknowledged responsibility for the latter attack but disputed the government's account of the facility's operation. Towards the end of October, Aden International Airport came under repeated ballistic-missile attacks, temporarily disrupting operations. The Yemeni government also reported that at least three missiles were directed at the Maashiq Presidential Palace on October 30. These attacks exposed the continuing vulnerability of government-controlled political, military and transport infrastructure despite the counter-offensive.[211]

The Saudi Front and the Expansion of Regional Military Involvement

Saudi Arabia increasingly became a direct target of the renewed escalation. On October 10, a Houthi strike against King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh killed at least 12 people and injured more than 300, according to Saudi authorities. A further projectile strike against the airport on October 11 caused additional casualties and disrupted operations. On October 22, an attack against King Fahd International Airport in Dammam killed two people and injured eight, according to reports citing Saudi authorities. The Houthis also claimed responsibility for targeting the Saudi Defence Ministry and an Aramco facility. Throughout the second half of the month, Saudi air defences reported intercepting ballistic missiles and drones directed towards different parts of the kingdom, including the Eastern Province, Riyadh and the southern regions.[212]

The escalation continued during the final days of October. The Saudi-led coalition reported destroying four ballistic-missile launchers, five storage tunnels and a weapons depot during operations against Houthi military infrastructure on October 26. It also reported intercepting additional incoming missiles and drones. On October 30, the Houthis claimed six attacks against Saudi airports, oil facilities and military installations, including Ras Tanura, Abqaiq, King Khalid International Airport, King Fahd International Airport, the Rabigh refinery and a military headquarters in Najran. These claims were not independently confirmed. Saudi authorities separately reported further interceptions over Riyadh and the Mecca region, while falling debris reportedly injured a civilian and damaged property. The continued attacks demonstrated the Houthis' capacity to threaten critical infrastructure beyond Yemen, even as Saudi Arabia intensified its defensive and military response.[213]

Saudi Arabia's response increasingly involved regional and international security partners. On October 5, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan convened an emergency meeting of the Makkah Alliance for Defence in Riyadh. The participants agreed to accelerate collective

[211] Al Jazeera, "Houthi Attack on Yemen Army Camp in Shabwa Kills at Least 53: Reports," 19 October 2026.
[212] Al Jazeera, "Saudi Arabia Says 12 Killed, 300 Wounded in Houthi Attack on Riyadh Airport," 10 October 2026.
[213] Saudi Press Agency, "Coalition: We Carried Out Operation to Neutralize Threat Sources in Response to the Repeated Attacks by the Terrorist Houthi Militia," 26 October 2026.

defence arrangements, including the implementation of commitments involving agreed military capabilities. Britain also expanded its defensive support, announcing on October 20 the deployment of Royal Air Force Typhoon aircraft for defensive missions over Saudi Arabia, alongside military personnel and transport support.[214]

The diplomatic dimension of regional involvement became more visible on October 23, when the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Pakistan and Egypt met in Istanbul under the R4 framework. Their joint statement condemned Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia and commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb, expressed solidarity with the internationally recognised Yemeni government and called for de-escalation and a return to the political process. On October 26, senior representatives of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan also held discussions with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and senior Iranian officials in Tehran. The talks focused on regional de-escalation and maintaining diplomatic engagement amid the deteriorating security environment. Separately, Egypt's parliament authorised President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to take necessary measures to provide military support to Saudi Arabia if requested, indicating Cairo's potential for more direct involvement in the regional security response.[215]

Taiz and the Deepening Humanitarian Emergency

The humanitarian situation deteriorated significantly during October, with Taiz emerging as one of the most severely affected areas. The principal supply road connecting Taiz with Aden remained disrupted, restricting the movement of food, fuel, medicines and other essential commodities. On October 14, the World Food Programme warned that approximately 800,000 people had been cut off from life-saving assistance because of shifting frontlines, blocked roads and growing insecurity. The restrictions also affected humanitarian organisations' ability to reach vulnerable communities and placed additional pressure on already overstretched public services.[216]

The scale of displacement continued to increase. The International Organization for Migration reported that more than 184,000 people had been displaced between August 1 and October 4. By October 23, UN agencies estimated that approximately 258,679 people had been displaced between June 7 and October 19, while at least 1,574 people had been killed and 6,939 injured since the renewed escalation began in August. By October 31, UN reporting placed the displacement figure at approximately 290,000. Taiz and Lahij remained among the areas hosting the largest concentrations of displaced populations. The deterioration also affected refugees and asylum seekers, with more than 65,000 facing

[214] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, “Joint Statement: Emergency Meeting of the Strategic Political and Defense Committee of the Makkah Alliance for Defense,” 5 October 2026.
[215] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Statement on the R4 Ministerial Meeting, İstanbul, 23 October 2026.”
[216] World Food Programme, “WFP Warns Escalating Yemen Conflict Is Cutting Off Life-Saving Assistance to City of Taiz,”14 October 2026.

worsening living conditions as rising food and fuel prices compounded disruptions to essential services.[217]

The situation in Taiz became particularly critical towards the end of the month. Hospitals faced acute shortages of medicines, oxygen, fuel and anaesthetics, while the International Committee of the Red Cross reported that medical facilities had recorded up to 700 war casualties in one week. On October 30, Taiz Governor Nabil Shamsan appealed for international intervention to secure humanitarian access. He reported that the city was receiving approximately 1,000 cubic metres of water daily against an estimated requirement of 35,000 cubic metres, while 120 health centres had suspended operations. The humanitarian and human rights situation deteriorated further following confirmation of the death of Mohammad el-Shami, a Yemeni employee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, while in Houthi detention. He had been arbitrarily detained since June 2024, and the circumstances surrounding his death remained unclear.[218]

Bab al-Mandeb and the Wider Red Sea Security Implications

The renewed military confrontation also reinforced the connection between Yemen's internal conflict and wider Red Sea security. The Houthis' positions along the western coastline and their advances towards Mokha and Bab al-Mandeb provide them with strategic leverage over a maritime passage connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. The government counter-offensive therefore carries significance beyond territorial recovery, as it seeks to prevent the Houthis from consolidating positions that could threaten international navigation and regional trade. Although the Istanbul meeting condemned attacks against commercial shipping, no new confirmed Houthi attack against a commercial vessel was established during October. Nevertheless, continued fighting near the western coastline and the movement's missile and drone capabilities sustained concerns over maritime security and the potential disruption of international shipping.[219]

October ended with Yemen facing a substantially more dangerous security environment than at the beginning of the month. The Houthis demonstrated their capacity to challenge government forces along the western coastline while simultaneously threatening Saudi territory and critical infrastructure. The government's counter-offensive, supported by Saudi airpower and expanding regional defence cooperation, challenged Houthi territorial advances but did not produce a decisive military resolution. Meanwhile, repeated attacks against Aden's political and transport infrastructure exposed the vulnerability of government-controlled institutions. The widening regional involvement, particularly through Saudi defence arrangements, diplomatic engagement with Iran and Egypt's authorisation of potential military support, demonstrated the growing geopolitical implications of the conflict. At the same time, the worsening humanitarian emergency in Taiz, continued displacement

[217] International Organization for Migration, Yemen displacement reporting, October 2026.
[218] Reuters, “Yemen’s Hospitals Buckle as Fighting Escalates,” 29 October 2026.
[219] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Statement on the R4 Ministerial Meeting,” 23 October 2026.

and the death of a UN employee in Houthi detention underscored the mounting civilian costs. Without sustained diplomatic engagement, improved humanitarian access and coordinated efforts to contain military escalation, Yemen risks becoming an increasingly entrenched theatre of regional confrontation, with serious consequences for neighbouring countries and the wider Red Sea region.

2.3 Israel: Netanyahu's Doctrine, Election Stalemate and Iran Confrontation

October 2026 saw Israel navigate the presentation of an updated national security approach, a parliamentary election that produced no immediate governing majority, and ongoing diplomatic and security interactions with Iran concerning maritime passages and related matters. These developments unfolded against a backdrop of regional alignments that extended into adjacent areas, including the Horn of Africa, while domestic political processes continued under established institutional frameworks.

On 18 October Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a security briefing for diplomatic correspondents in Jerusalem,[220] his first major in-person presentation of this kind since the attacks of 7 October 2023. He outlined a revised national security doctrine developed with the National Security Council. The doctrine places greater emphasis on prevention and offensive measures, including the possibility of pre-emptive action, relative to earlier approaches focused more heavily on containment and defense. Netanyahu described operations conducted in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and against Iranian targets as having significantly degraded the operational capacity of the network of groups linked to Iran. He characterized the cumulative results as a substantial military achievement while stating that further steps remained necessary to complete the stated objectives.

During the briefing Netanyahu presented a color-coded map of the Middle East titled in Hebrew Main Threats – Arenas, with the caption Convergence of Axes.[221] The graphic, which resembled a May 2026 map produced by Marc Saxer and Marcus Schneider for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, illustrated overlapping regional alignments rather than formal military alliances.[222] Areas associated with Iran and groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis and certain Iraqi militias appeared in darker shading. A second grouping, referred to as the Sunni Diamond, centered on Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan, with additional territories including Syria, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Eritrea and parts of Somalia shown in related colors.

A third configuration, labelled the Hexagon alliance and associated with Israel and the United Arab Emirates, appears in dark blue. Territories that Israel and the United Arab Emirates consider friendly appear in light blue and include Ethiopia, Somaliland, Puntland

[220] Freiberg, Nava. "In Pre-Election Briefing, Netanyahu Vows to Topple Iranian Regime, Downplays Settler Violence." The Times of Israel, October 18, 2026.
[221] Khalil, Sarah. "Israel's Netanyahu Unveils War Doctrine, Maps New Regional Threats." The New Arab, October 19, 2026.
[222] Saxer, Marc, and Marcus Schneider. "Map: Geopolitical Alliances in the Middle East." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, May 19, 2026.

and Djibouti. Eritrea and federal Somalia, together with the area marked North East State, appear among the territories that the Sunni Diamond considers friendly. Elements associated with the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan also appear in the light-blue friendly category linked to the Hexagon. This explicit distribution of Horn of Africa actors across the two groupings reflected an Israeli assessment that developments in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea littoral form part of the broader regional security environment affecting maritime routes and the balance of influence among major actors.

Netanyahu linked the doctrine to the need for greater self-reliance in ammunition and weapons production, including underground facilities, and to expanded capabilities in artificial intelligence, cyber systems, precision munitions, unmanned platforms and related technologies. He identified ongoing challenges including terrorism, internal security, international campaigns questioning Israel's legitimacy, and certain border concerns. On Gaza he stated that large-scale reconstruction would depend on the disarmament and demilitarization of Hamas, while noting limited arrangements already in place in specific areas. On Lebanon he indicated that the Lebanese Armed Forces had been given an opportunity to address Hezbollah infrastructure and that Israel retained the option to act if progress proved insufficient.[223] He also referred to differences with the United States regarding Turkey's role in Syria and to ongoing contacts with the Russian Federation as required.

Israel held its parliamentary election on 27 October, the first national vote since the events of October 2023 and the subsequent multi-front operations.[224] Final tallies completed by 29–30 October showed the bloc associated with Netanyahu holding 53 seats in the 120-member Knesset, with Likud the largest single list. The principal opposition grouping led by Gadi Eisenkot obtained 48 seats. Arab-led lists together secured 19 seats.[225] Neither major bloc reached the 61 seats required for a governing majority.

Netanyahu continued as caretaker prime minister pending coalition negotiations that were expected to be prolonged. In the campaign's closing phase, he presented the election as a choice between continuity of the existing security approach and alternative platforms. Opposition figures advanced proposals for a state commission of inquiry into the events of 7 October 2023 and for statutory limits on the tenure of the prime minister.[226] Pre-election polling had shown a closely contested landscape, and the Supreme Court overturned decisions by the Central Elections Committee that would have excluded certain Arab lists.

Bibi's 53 seats leave him needing eight more, through support from outside his bloc or a unity arrangement that could require sidelining far-right partners. Eisenkot's 48 could reach

[223] "Prime Minister Netanyahu's National Security Doctrine." Jewish Virtual Library, October 19, 2026.
[224] Stern, Itay. "A Quick Guide to Israel's High-Stakes Election." NPR, October 27, 2026.
[225] Shankar, Priyanka. "How Can Israel Break Its Election Deadlock?" Al Jazeera, October 30, 2026.
[226] Haddad, Mohammed, and Hanna Duggal. "Israel's Elections 2026 Explained in Maps and Charts." Al Jazeera, October 20, 2026.

67 if all 19 Arab-party members backed it, although several partners resist that dependence. Negotiations will test whether red lines can be reconciled; otherwise, caretaker rule and a fresh election remain possible.

Israel – Iran War

Throughout October, the confrontation between Israel and Iran centered on sustained pressure in the maritime domain, residual proxy and nuclear-related activity, and limited diplomatic maneuvering, against the backdrop of a significantly degraded Iranian regional network.

The Strait of Hormuz remained the primary arena of active friction. Iranian officials repeatedly conditioned the restoration of normal maritime passage on a package of U.S. steps that included lifting the naval blockade of Iranian ports, ending oil-related sanctions, and halting regional hostilities. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Supreme National Security Council figures stated that Tehran could reopen the waterway within seven days once its conditions were met; U.S. responses were characterized in Tehran as insufficient.[227]

Multiple commercial vessel incidents were reported during the month. Iranian Revolutionary Guard statements claimed tankers and cargo ships had struck naval mines or been hit by projectiles, with at least one vessel catching fire. Separate reporting confirmed damage to Singapore-registered vessels whose crews were safely evacuated. U.S. Central Command stated that American and partner forces were facilitating commercial shipping through the strait while interdicting vessels assessed to be violating the blockade.[228] Washington also announced that it had blocked approximately $25 billion in Iranian crude oil exports and frozen roughly $35 million in Iranian cryptocurrency holdings.[229]

These maritime dynamics illustrate a clear strategic shift. After the substantial degradation of its proxy network and conventional forces, Iran has treated control or disruption of the Strait of Hormuz as its most consequential remaining lever. The waterway's importance derives from the volume of global energy and commodity trade that transits it, and prolonged disruption carries significant economic costs far beyond the region. Iran's willingness to employ mines, projectiles, and controlled access has altered previous assumptions that the strait would remain open even during high-intensity conflict, turning maritime pressure into a primary tool of asymmetric leverage.

On land and in the air, Israeli operations continued against Iranian-linked infrastructure. Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon and Gaza during October reflected a

[227] "Iran's Araghchi Offers to Reopen Strait of Hormuz in 2 Days If US Meets Its Demands." Edited by Priyanka Jaiswal. The Times of India, November 1, 2026.
[228] Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore. "Two Singapore-Registered Vessels Struck in Strait of Hormuz." October 14, 2026.
[229] Tavana, Kambiz, and Niloufar Goudarzi. "CENTCOM Says It Blocked $25 Billion in Iran Oil Exports, IRGC Struggling with Paychecks." Iran International, October 16, 2026.

sustained effort to prevent armed groups aligned with Iran from restoring their operational capabilities. In southern Lebanon, the IDF's October 20 assessment placed the number of infrastructure sites destroyed in its security zone at more than 540, alongside the recovery of over 150 weapons.[230] The scale of these operations points to an increasingly entrenched approach to preventing Hezbollah's military reconstitution through continued ground presence and the physical removal of weapons and infrastructure.

In Gaza, the campaign increasingly encompassed the organizational and financial structures supporting Hamas alongside its military command. ACLED's October assessment identified at least 11 Hamas commanders killed during the month, while also documenting continued targeting of financial operatives and networks sustaining the group's military activities.[231] This broader targeting strategy could constrain Hamas's ability to coordinate operations, finance its activities and restore its command structure, although the resilience of informal financial networks limits the extent to which military strikes alone can dismantle these structures. The wider implication is that Israeli military pressure is increasingly directed towards restricting the institutional and operational capacity of Iran-aligned armed groups across separate theatres, while leaving the longer-term political and security arrangements in both Lebanon and Gaza unresolved

Iran's nuclear position presents a more complicated picture. Satellite imagery examined by the Institute for Science and International Security in October identified renewed vehicle activity, site clearance and earth-moving operations at Minzadayi, a compound associated with Iran's nuclear-weapons development activities.[232] Although these developments raise the possibility of efforts to restore previously damaged capabilities, they do not establish that nuclear-weapons work has resumed. At Pickaxe Mountain, the October evidence points primarily to the reinforcement of underground facility entrances, preserving the site's potential future utility and resilience against further strikes.[233]

At the same time, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi maintained that the agency had found no evidence of attempts to repair or reconstruct nuclear facilities damaged in the 2025 and 2026 attacks.[234] The central unresolved issue remains the agency's inability to verify the current status of Iran's estimated 440.9 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 percent. Consequently, physical degradation of the nuclear infrastructure has created substantial obstacles to reconstitution, but the absence of independent verification of the enriched-uranium stockpile prevents a conclusive assessment of the program's remaining potential.

[230] Israel.com Newsroom. “IDF’s 91st Division Reports over 540 Sites Dismantled in Southern Lebanon.” Israel.com, October 20, 2026.
[231] Abd Rabbo, Line. “Is Israel Targeting Hamas with a Different Tactic?” ACLED, October 28, 2026.
[232] Albright, David, Sarah Burkhard, Spencer Faragasso, and the Good ISIS Team. “Significant Activity Identified at Minzadayi, an Iranian Nuclear Weapons Development Site.” Institute for Science and International Security, October 6, 2026.
[233] Albright, David, Sarah Burkhard, Spencer Faragasso, and the Good ISIS Team. “Activity Remains Dormant at Pickaxe Mountain.” Institute for Science and International Security, October 16, 2026.
[234] Lederer, Edith M. “Iran Hasn’t Tried to Repair Nuclear Facilities Damaged in US Strikes, UN Nuclear Chief Says.” AP News, October 27, 2026.

Diplomatically, Tehran pursued closer coordination with Moscow while keeping indirect channels with Washington open. Sergey Lavrov's October 19 visit reinforced the Russian-Iranian strategic partnership, with discussions extending to regional security, economic cooperation and coordination within multilateral institutions. Meanwhile, Qatar and Pakistan continued facilitating indirect US-Iran communications. However, negotiations remained constrained by opposing priorities, with Washington seeking to place nuclear restrictions at the center of discussions, while Tehran insisted that sanctions relief and the lifting of the US port blockade should precede substantive nuclear negotiations. The appointment of Mehrdad Akhlaghi as defense minister on October 18, accompanied by warnings of substantial consequences in the event of renewed American military action, reinforced the military dimension of Tehran's negotiating position.[235] Taken together, these parallel engagements indicate an Iranian effort to preserve diplomatic options, strengthen external partnerships and maintain conventional deterrence while seeking terms for a broader settlement. The principal obstacle remains the absence of agreement over the sequence and scope of concessions required to prevent another military confrontation.

2.4 Türkiye: Regional Security and Strategic Engagement

October showed Ankara expanding its influence through maritime diplomacy, defense partnerships and strategic access across the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the Black Sea. The common thread is an effort to shape regional security and connectivity arrangements while retaining diplomatic flexibility amid overlapping disputes.

The most consequential Eastern Mediterranean development came on 20 October, when Libya’s eastern-based House of Representatives approved the 2019 maritime-jurisdiction memorandum with Turkey and repealed its 2020 decisions rejecting the agreements and severing political relations with Ankara.[236] Originally signed with the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, the memorandum had long faced opposition from eastern authorities aligned with Khalifa Haftar. The vote signals a widening of Ankara’s political access across Libya’s divided institutions.

For Turkey, it strengthens its negotiating position over maritime boundaries, offshore energy and regional connectivity, while creating scope for engagement with eastern Libya. Libya’s institutional division and competing third-state maritime claims remain unresolved. Greece and Egypt rejected the approval.[237] On 26 October, Greece, the European Union, Cyprus, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates issued a joint declaration challenging the memorandum’s legal standing and its implications for third-country rights. The dispute is therefore linking Libya’s internal political balance to energy access and relations between

[235] “New Iranian Defense Minister Warns US and Israel Against Miscalculations.” IranWire, October 19, 2026.
[236] Al Jazeera Staff and Reuters. “Eastern Libya Parliament Approves 2019 Maritime Deal with Türkiye.” Al Jazeera, October 20, 2026.
[237] Egypt State Information Service. “Egypt Rejects Libyan Parliament’s Ratification of Maritime MoU with Turkey.” October 21, 2026.

Ankara, Cairo and Athens.[238]

The Mecca Joint Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan moved from political announcement toward institutional implementation. At an emergency meeting in Riyadh on 5 October, the three countries' strategic political and defense committee appointed retired Pakistani Lieutenant General Nauman Mahmood as its first secretary-general and discussed collective-defense arrangements.[239] The process accelerated after Houthi attacks on Saudi targets, including King Khalid International Airport, condemned by Turkey on 11 October.[240]

Erdoğan announced on 12 October that the agreement would be submitted to parliament. The bill was introduced on 21 October, and by 28 October the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee had approved it for General Assembly consideration. The pact treats an external armed attack on one signatory as an attack on all and provides for military, intelligence and logistical cooperation. For Ankara, it expands its role in Gulf security and strengthens links with two influential partners, while creating exposure to crises involving Yemen, Iran and wider Gulf rivalries. Ratification and the scope of future assistance will determine its practical reach.

Somalia remained the clearest example of Turkey's expanding role in the Horn of Africa, with security cooperation increasingly intersecting with maritime and commercial interests. Erdoğan's announcement that construction had begun on a Somali spaceport added a strategic-technology dimension to the partnership, although details concerning financing and implementation timelines remained limited.[241] The relationship faced a difficult test on 26 October, when Somali forces clashed with al-Shabaab near Leego. Somali authorities reported that government troops had killed 75 militants, while al-Shabaab claimed to have inflicted heavy losses on government forces.

Independent reporting cited Somali soldiers who said dozens of troops had been killed, leaving the competing casualty accounts unverified. Somalia's Office of National Security also rejected reports alleging Turkish airstrikes against Somali positions.[242] The incident highlighted the risks of close security cooperation in a conflict where battlefield outcomes remain contested and foreign involvement can become politically sensitive, while tying Turkey's reputation more closely to the performance of Somali federal security institutions.

Turkey's Middle East diplomacy combined criticism of Israeli actions with sustained engagement across regional divisions. On 13 October, Turkey's UN ambassador Ahmet

[238] The National Herald. "Greece, Egypt, Cyprus, Bahrain, UAE and EU Issue Joint Statement at UN, Call Turkey-Libya Maritime Deal 'Null and Void.'" The National Herald. Accessed November 1, 2026.
[239] Saudi Press Agency. "Emergency Meeting of the Strategic Political and Defense Committee of the Makkah Alliance for Defense." Saudi Press Agency, October 5, 2026.
[240] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Regarding the Houthi Attack on King Khalid International Airport in Saudi Arabia." No. 195, October 11, 2026.
[241] Somali Magazine. "Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan Announces Construction of Strategic Spaceport in Somalia." Somali Magazine, October 6, 2026.
[242] Soohoyde, Zakaria. "Somali Government Denies Reports of Turkish Airstrikes on Army Positions in Leego." Dawan Africa, October 27, 2026.

Yıldız urged Israel to comply with the 1974 disengagement agreement, citing activity around the Sufa 53 line in Quneitra as a threat to Syrian sovereignty and reconstruction.[243] The following day, Erdoğan's Presidential High Advisory Board identified Al-Aqsa and Syria's recovery as key regional concerns.[244]

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on 13 October before meeting him in Baghdad during the 17–18 October OIC ministerial session. In Baghdad, Fidan also met Egypt's Badr Abdelatty, with both sides supporting renewed US-Iran dialogue and greater regional coordination to reduce escalation and protect Gulf security and maritime routes.[245] Turkey subsequently transferred the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers chairmanship to Iraq.[246] These engagements reflected an effort to preserve diplomatic channels with Iran, Egypt and Iraq while maintaining an active role in regional security discussions, even as disputes over Gaza and Syria continued to sharpen tensions with Israel.

The wider diplomatic agenda extended this approach through economic partnerships, regional defense coordination and military diplomacy. During his visit to Baku on 15 October, Fidan met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who called for closer alignment between China's Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey's Middle Corridor, alongside stronger investment ties and cooperation around COP31.[247] Turkey also sustained defense coordination with Azerbaijan and Georgia following a meeting of their defense ministers in Shusha on 2 October, while a military framework agreement signed with Cambodia on 16 October extended its defense diplomacy into Southeast Asia.

These partnerships complement Turkey's expanding defense-industrial ambitions, reflected in the proposed 2027 budget presented on 16 October. Allocations for defense-equipment procurement were set to increase by 229 percent, while the proposed overall defense budget stood at 2.206 trillion lira, approximately $44.5 billion.[248] The procurement increase is particularly significant because it links military modernization to the practical demands of a wider foreign policy, including sustaining overseas security partnerships, strengthening regional military relationships and supporting a defense industry capable of underpinning Turkey's strategic reach. Parliamentary approval and implementation, however, remain ahead.

The Black Sea remained a significant vulnerability, particularly given Turkey's reliance on

[243] Hürriyet Daily News. "Türkiye Urges Israel to End Incursions into Syria." October 13, 2026.
[244] Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications. "Head of Communications Duran's Statement on Presidential High Advisory Board's Meeting." October 14, 2026.
[245] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Participation of Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, in the 52nd Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 17–18 October 2026, Baghdad." Accessed November 1, 2026.
[246] Efesoy, Can, and Esra Tekin. "Turkish Foreign Minister Praises Iraqi Premier's 'Strong Vision' for Advancing Bilateral Ties with Ankara." Anadolu Agency, October 18, 2026.
[247] Anadolu Agency. "Turkish Foreign Minister Meets Chinese Counterpart in Baku." Reuters Connect, October 15, 2026.
[248] Avcıoğlu, Mücahithan. "Türkiye Raises Defense Equipment Procurement by 229% in 2027." Anadolu Agency, October 16, 2026.

secure maritime routes and its efforts to maintain working relations with both Moscow and Kyiv. On 5 October, a fire sank the Turkish-owned cargo vessel Royad Mammadov in Romania's exclusive economic zone, killing two people and prompting the rescue of eleven crew members.[249] Ukraine attributed the incident to Russian drones, while Romanian authorities confirmed the casualties without publicly establishing the cause.[250] During a telephone conversation with Vladimir Putin on 7 October, Erdoğan emphasized safe navigation and reiterated Turkey's readiness to facilitate direct Russia-Ukraine contacts. The incident underscored the difficulty of protecting commercial interests in an increasingly militarized maritime environment while preserving Turkey's diplomatic role between the two sides.

Overall, Turkey's October engagements reveal a foreign policy increasingly supported by defense capacity, military partnerships and strategic infrastructure. Its expanding role in Somalia, defense coordination with regional partners and proposed procurement increase demonstrate how military capabilities are being integrated into wider diplomatic and economic objectives. The immediate priority will be to consolidate these relationships while managing exposure to regional conflicts, particularly where security commitments intersect with maritime interests and commercial investment. The central test is whether Turkey can translate its growing military reach and diplomatic access into lasting influence without incurring strategic costs that weaken its broader regional position.

2.5 Saudi Arabia: The Yemen Spillover and Riyadh's Recalibrated Regional Deterrence Architecture

Saudi Arabia experienced a sustained deterioration in its security environment as the conflict in Yemen expanded and Houthi forces intensified attacks against Saudi territory and critical infrastructure[251]. The internationally recognized Yemeni government, backed by Saudi airstrikes and naval support, launched a major counteroffensive known as Operation Dawn of Yemen to reclaim territory from Houthi forces,[252] including the strategic port city of Mocha and areas surrounding the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.[253] The operation reflected Riyadh's continued involvement in the Yemeni conflict and its interest in preventing Houthi control from expanding toward important maritime routes connecting the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The offensive was followed by a wave of Houthi drone and missile attacks against Saudi infrastructure. King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh was struck, resulting in

[249] Wlodarczak-Semczuk, Anna, and Jason Hovet. "Romania Says Two Dead after Fire on Ship, Ukraine Blames Russian Drones." Reuters, October 5, 2026.
[250] "Grain Ship Sinks in Black Sea after Suspected Drone Strike, Killing 2." Politico, October 5, 2026.
[251] Shankar, Priyanka. "Are Houthis Using Russian Satellites as Saudi Arabia Fends Off Strikes?" Al Jazeera, October 31, 2026
[252] Al Jazeera. "Yemen War: What's the Latest on the Battlefield?" October 6, 2026.
[253] Toomey, Bridget. "Yemeni Government Forces Launch Saudi-Backed Counteroffensive against Houthis." FDD's Long War Journal, October 6, 2026.

casualties, injuries, fires, and the suspension of flight operations[254]. Other reported targets included King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, facilities in Khamis Mushait, and Saudi Aramco's headquarters.[255] The scale of the attacks raised questions about the effectiveness of the Kingdom's air defense network. Saudi authorities launched an investigation into how Houthi weapons had bypassed layered defensive systems[256]. Initial findings reportedly pointed to a saturation strategy involving successive drone waves intended to overwhelm radar systems before the launch of cruise and ballistic missiles. Investigators also examined the reported failure of Patriot missile batteries to intercept incoming weapons and the absence of early warnings along the weapons' flight trajectories.[257]

Following the attacks, the General Authority of Civil Aviation extended the suspension of operations at Riyadh's main airport. The Saudi-led coalition also issued evacuation warnings to civilians in Yemen before conducting retaliatory airstrikes against Houthi military infrastructure, including an oil facility near Sana'a.[258] The Saudi Cabinet warned that attacks against the Kingdom's economic and religious facilities would carry serious consequences[259]. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior enforced restrictions on filming and sharing footage of air defense operations and impact sites.[260] The U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia also warned that foreign nationals had been detained for unauthorized photography near government and military facilities.[261]

The attacks accelerated Saudi Arabia's efforts to strengthen its regional defense arrangements. Riyadh convened an emergency meeting of the Strategic Political and Defense Committee of the Makkah Alliance, bringing together Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan[262]. The alliance appointed retired Pakistani Lieutenant General Nauman Mahmood as its first Secretary-General for a three-year term and discussed arrangements for the rapid deployment of military forces and capabilities to protect Saudi territory. Riyadh subsequently activated collective deterrence measures under the defense agreement, leading to further discussions about deploying military assets and personnel to the Kingdom. Military chiefs and defense officials from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey also met in Riyadh to review regional threats, intelligence-sharing arrangements, military coordination, and the protection of

[254] Parul Gupta and Jaroslav Lukiv, "Twelve Killed and 300 Injured in Attack on Airport in Saudi Capital Riyadh," BBC News, October 11, 2026
[255] Palestine Chronicle Staff. “Seven Operations Target Saudi Airports, Aramco and Major Oil Pipeline.” Palestine Chronicle, October 24, 2026.
[256] Associated Press. “Saudis Probe How Defense Systems Failed to Stop Deadly Houthi Attack on Riyadh Airport.” PBS NewsHour, October 2026.
[257] Reo, M., Samy Magdy, and Konstantin Toropin. “Iran Strikes on US Mideast Bases First Took Out Early-Warning Systems, Analysis Finds.” The Times of Israel, October 31, 2026.
[258] Sio, Mohammad. “Saudi-Led Coalition Orders Evacuation of Oil Facility in Houthi-Held Sanaa Ahead of Military Operation.” Anadolu Agency, October 13, 2026.
[259] The Times of Israel. “Saudi Arabia Strikes Oil Facility in Yemen Capital Sanaa as Houthis Up Threats.” October 13, 2026.
[260] Ajel News, "Filming or Sharing Footage of Missile Interceptions is a Legal Offense: Interior Ministry," Ajel English, October 16, 2026
[261] U.S. Mission to Saudi Arabia. “Security Alert: U.S. Mission Saudi Arabia, October 12, 2026.” October 12, 2026.
[262] Al Jazeera. “Turkiye, Pakistan Agree Saudi Arabia Military Deployment under Mecca Pact.” October 5, 2026.

critical infrastructure.[263]

The composition of the alliance also became a subject of regional political discussion. Reports indicated that Saudi Arabia had blocked Egypt from joining the Makkah Defense Alliance.[264] According to these accounts, Saudi officials viewed Cairo as an increasingly unreliable partner because of its dependence on financial assistance and its close relationship with the United Arab Emirates. These reports point to differences among regional partners over the direction of defense cooperation and the political relationships underpinning emerging security arrangements.

Saudi Arabia also pursued diplomatic engagement to contain the escalation. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani held discussions with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, expressing solidarity with Riyadh and condemning attacks against civilian airports[265]. U.S. President Donald Trump indicated that Washington was considering whether to support or participate in Saudi retaliatory measures against the Houthis[266]. Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi contacted Prince Faisal bin Farhan to discuss the regional escalation and the diplomatic channels available for reducing tensions[267]. The engagement demonstrated that, despite the confrontation involving Iranian-backed forces, diplomatic communication between Riyadh and Tehran remained open.

Saudi Arabia's diplomatic outreach extended beyond the immediate conflict in Yemen. Foreign ministers from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt met with their European counterparts from Britain, France, and Germany, alongside Italy, to discuss regional de-escalation, Palestinian statehood, Houthi hostilities, and maritime freedom of navigation[268]. Saudi officials also participated in high-level security discussions in Tehran involving Prince Khalid bin Salman, Turkey's intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalın, Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, and Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary Mohsen Rezaei. The discussions brought together several regional actors seeking to address the wider confrontation and its implications for Gulf security[269].

Within Yemen, Riyadh continued facilitating reconciliation talks between representatives of the internationally recognized government and the Southern Transitional Council. The discussions focused on implementing existing political agreements and maintaining unity among competing political and military actors. The Saudi Cabinet, chaired by Crown Prince

[263] Seth J. Frantzman, "Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey Defense Pact Faces First Test in Houthi Offensive - Analysis," The Jerusalem Post, October 6, 202
[264] Axadle Times. “Saudi Arabia Blocks Egypt Joining New Defence Alliance.
[265] Joudah, Ghadi. “Saudi FM Receives Calls Expressing Support for Kingdom.” Arab News, October 13, 2026
[266] Sukri, Azhar, and Terri Cullen. “Trump Says He Is ‘Going to Look at’ Joining Saudi Arabia in the Fight against Iran-Backed Houthis after Deadly Airport Strike.” CNBC, October 11, 2026.
[267] Saudi Gazette. “Saudi, Iranian Foreign Ministers Discuss Latest Regional Escalation.” October 12, 2026.
[268] Hussain, Sajjad. “Eight Regional, European Countries Call for Dialogue to Resolve Conflicts.” ETV Bharat, October 24, 2026.
[269] Al Jazeera. “Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan Agree to Continue Talks for Peace.” October 26, 2026.

Mohammed bin Salman, reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to regional stability, supported mediation efforts involving Qatar and Pakistan, and condemned continued Houthi attacks.

The security crisis also affected Saudi Arabia's economic and diplomatic calendar. Organizers postponed the Future Investment Initiative, commonly known as Davos in the Desert, until the following year because of mounting regional security concerns[270]. The decision reflected the difficulties of maintaining international business and investment activities while the Kingdom's civilian infrastructure remained exposed to missile and drone attacks. The United States subsequently ordered the departure of non-emergency government personnel and their families from its diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia[271]. American authorities cited the growing threat to civilian airports and critical infrastructure, while introducing additional restrictions on personnel using Saudi airports and travelling near border areas.

Saudi Arabia attempted to restore normal operations by partially reopening King Khalid International Airport. However, the resumption of services was followed by renewed Houthi threats and further interceptions of incoming missiles and drones. The Saudi-led coalition reported intercepting projectiles targeting Riyadh, Medina, Khamis Mushait, and areas near the Kingdom's southern border. The continued attacks demonstrated that the partial restoration of civilian aviation had not eliminated the security risks facing the Kingdom.

The conflict also reinforced the strategic importance of the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait to Saudi security policy. Military operations in Yemen, Houthi attacks, and threats to commercial shipping have direct implications for maritime routes connecting the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the wider Horn of Africa. Saudi Arabia's efforts to protect these routes therefore intersect with the security interests of Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, as well as the broader competition over access and influence along the Red Sea corridor.

2.6 United Arab Emirates: Post-Conflict Agility, Overland Corridors, and the Red Sea Security Dilemma

The United Arab Emirates faced mounting security and diplomatic pressures as the wider regional conflict disrupted Gulf aviation and maritime activity. Abu Dhabi condemned Houthi missile and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia, describing the strike on King Khalid International Airport as a violation of Saudi sovereignty and reaffirming its solidarity with Riyadh[272]. At the same time, maritime security around the Strait of Hormuz remained a significant concern. Shipping and security agencies issued repeated warnings about vessel safety and incidents involving commercial tankers, while the Iranian Revolutionary Guard

[270] Seeking Alpha. "'Davos in the Desert' Postponed until 2027 amid Security Concerns." October 2026.
[271] Atwood, Kylie, and Jennifer Hansler. "US Orders Departure of Some Embassy Staff and Families from Saudi Arabia amid Houthi Threat." CNN, October 21, 2026.
[272] United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "UAE Condemns Houthi Attack on Saudi Arabia." October 11, 2026.

Corps Navy threatened expanded action against vessels it considered unauthorized in the corridor[273]. These developments contributed to uncertainty for commercial shipping and increased the risks associated with the movement of energy supplies through the Gulf.

The regional confrontation also affected aviation and diplomatic engagement between the UAE and Israel. A planned meeting between Israeli transportation officials and their Emirati counterparts, intended to address aviation security protocols and the resumption of direct commercial flights, was reportedly cancelled amid continuing security concerns[274]. Airlines operating from the UAE faced disruptions as regional airspace restrictions affected routes connecting Abu Dhabi and Dubai with Saudi cities[275]. Emirates, Etihad, and flydubai adjusted their operations, while several international carriers altered routes or avoided parts of the Gulf airspace. The U.S. Mission in the UAE also updated its security guidance, warning American citizens about potential flight disruptions and regional security risks[276].

The UAE maintained an elevated defense posture as regional tensions continued. The Federal National Council's Defense Committee emphasized the country's readiness to use its integrated defense capabilities to protect sovereign territory[277]. Emirati authorities also continued reviewing the security of airspace, maritime corridors, and critical logistics infrastructure. In parallel, the UAE pursued investments in alternative energy transportation routes designed to reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz. These efforts included developing overland infrastructure and pipelines connecting energy facilities to ports outside the Persian Gulf, allowing the country to maintain export capacity in the event of prolonged maritime disruption[278].

The UAE also maintained its engagement with Ethiopia through established economic and security partnerships. As regional developments continued to draw attention to the Horn of Africa, Abu Dhabi remained supportive of Ethiopia's federal government and continued its cooperation with Addis Ababa. These ties reflected the UAE's longstanding interest in maintaining strong relations with Ethiopia and sustaining its role as a partner in the region.

Despite the security pressures, the UAE continued advancing its defense and technology partnerships. During French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Abu Dhabi, the two countries reached an agreement to jointly advance and co-develop the Rafale F5 fighter aircraft upgrade, following earlier technical and financial disagreements. The agreement reinforced bilateral defense cooperation and provided a framework for further collaboration

[273] Reuters and Jerusalem Post Staff, "IRGC Says Two Tankers Stopped South of Strait of Hormuz After Ignoring Radio Warnings from Iran," The Jerusalem Post, October 30, 2026
[274] Reuters and Jerusalem Post Staff, "IRGC Says Two Tankers Stopped South of Strait of Hormuz After Ignoring Radio Warnings from Iran," The Jerusalem Post, October 30, 2026
[275] Pavithran, Lekshmy. "UAE Flight Status Today: Full List of Cancellations, Delays and Airport Updates on October 31." Gulf News, October 31, 2026.
[276] U.S. Mission to the United Arab Emirates. "Security Alert: U.S. Mission United Arab Emirates, October 18, 2026." October 18, 2026.
[277] Horn Review. Weekly Geopolitical Report: Issue No. 42. October 2026.
[278] MI News Network. "UAE Plans to Cut Dependence on Strait of Hormuz to 'Zero' with Major Ports and Pipeline Expansion." Marine Insight, June 18, 2026.

in military technology[279]. Emirati officials also reported that the country's long-term technology investment framework in the United States was progressing ahead of schedule, with substantial investment directed toward military equipment, artificial intelligence, and energy[280].

The UAE also announced the candidacy of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Lana Nusseibeh for the position of United Nations Secretary-General[281]. Her nomination represents an effort by Abu Dhabi to increase its diplomatic profile within the United Nations and contribute to the selection of the organization's next leader. The UAE simultaneously expanded its bilateral engagement with Greece through a strategic forum in Athens. The two sides signed 18 memoranda of understanding and commercial partnerships valued at approximately €12.75 billion[282], while Abu Dhabi also pledged an additional €15 billion in investment in Greek infrastructure, energy, and artificial intelligence sectors[283]. These agreements reflected the UAE's continued use of investment partnerships to deepen its economic and diplomatic relationships with European states.

Security cooperation also extended into international law enforcement. The UAE Ministry of Interior, working with Interpol and partner countries, announced the conclusion of Operation Confrontation Ghost, a multinational operation targeting cybercrime networks[284]. The operation reportedly exposed more than $39 billion in illicit funds, blocked 4,126 bank accounts, and resulted in over 960 arrests across participating countries. The operation reinforced the UAE's role in international security cooperation beyond conventional military and defense arrangements[285].

Domestically, the UAE continued integrating artificial intelligence into its defense and administrative systems. The Crown Prince's defense agenda emphasized the development of military artificial intelligence capabilities through the EDGE-Leonardo joint venture[286]. In parallel, government policy frameworks continued preparations to move a substantial share of federal administrative operations onto the locally developed FedAI agentic cloud network[287]. These initiatives reflect the country's broader effort to connect defense modernization with the expansion of domestic technological capabilities.

Diplomatically, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized dialogue, adherence to international law, and coordination with regional and international partners as necessary

[279] Leroy, Fortuné. “Rafale F5: France & the UAE Sign Intergovernmental Agreement.” MiGFlug, October 2026.
[280] UA.NEWS. “UAE Ambassador to the US Al Otaiba Says Investments in the US Remain Unchanged — The National.
[281] Doukhi, Noura. “UAE Candidate Lana Nusseibeh’s Bid to Lead UN Draws Criticism.” L’Orient Today, October 30, 2026
[282] Synergia Research Team. “Abu Dhabi Crown Prince in Athens: €12.75 Billion in Greece–UAE Deals Signed and a Further €15 Billion Planned.” Golden Visa Greece, October 22, 2026
[283] Global Banking & Finance Review. “UAE, Greece Announce €12.75 Billion in Deals, Abu Dhabi Plans Further €15 Billion Investment.” October 2026.
[284] Emirates News Agency (WAM). “UAE-Led Operation Confrontation Ghost Identifies over US$39 Billion in Fraud-Linked Assets, Thwarts 123.71 Million Online Fraud Attempts.” October 2026.
[285] Hespress English. “Morocco Joins UAE Operation Identifying $39 Billion in Fraud-Linked Assets.” October 24, 2026.
[286] The National. “Abu Dhabi Agrees OpenAI Deals to Transform Government Services and Education.” November 2, 2026.
[287] Lemos, Robert. “UAE Transitions 50% of Government Services to Agentic AI.” Dark Reading, October 22, 2026.

conditions for containing regional crises[288]. The UAE also continued its engagement with Saudi Arabia through preparations for the United Nations Water Conference in Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum extended an invitation to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to attend the conference[289]. Emirati officials subsequently convened ambassadors, deputy chiefs of mission, and representatives of international organizations at the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy to encourage international participation and strengthen multilateral partnerships ahead of the conference[290].

2.7 Qatar: Indirect Geopolitical Mediation and Energy Infrastructure Vulnerabilities in the Strait of Hormuz

Qatar remained deeply engaged in efforts to mediate the conflict involving the United States and Iran while managing the economic and security consequences of the wider regional confrontation. Doha confirmed that indirect negotiations and exchanges of messages between Washington and Tehran were continuing through Qatari diplomatic channels[291]. Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani also received Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni in Doha for discussions on bilateral relations and regional de-escalation[292]. These engagements reflected Qatar's continued effort to maintain communication with both sides despite the direct security and economic consequences of the conflict.

Qatar's diplomatic position emphasized the sovereignty and security of Gulf states and the protection of international maritime routes. During his address to the Shura Council, Emir Tamim highlighted the readiness of the Qatari Armed Forces, stating that the country's air defense systems had achieved interception rates of between 95 and 98 percent against hostile projectiles[293]. He also stressed the need to protect critical national infrastructure, particularly energy and water facilities, following earlier attacks against the Ras Laffan gas complex, one of the world's largest liquefied natural gas facilities[294]. The government continued strengthening protective measures around these installations as regional hostilities threatened the security of energy production and transportation.

The Emir also warned that the sovereignty and security of Gulf Cooperation Council states could not be compromised[295]. He criticized the use of the Strait of Hormuz as an instrument of political pressure, arguing that international shipping routes should not be obstructed for political purposes[296]. Qatar reiterated the importance of implementing United Nations

[288] Cele, ZamaNdosi. "16 Nations on Notice: UK Warns of Middle East Flight Chaos." The National, October 30, 2026.
[289] Saudi Gazette. "Crown Prince Receives Invitation from UAE PM to Attend 2026 UN Water Conference." October 30, 2026.
[290] Emirates News Agency (WAM). "Qatar Urges Maritime Security, Rejects Pressure over Strait of Hormuz." October 31, 2026.
[291] Reuters. "Iran, Qatari Mediators Hold Third Day of Talks to End US-Iran War." CNBC, November 1, 2026
[292] Anadolu Agency. "Qatar's Emir Meets Iranian Interior Minister to Discuss Regional De-escalation." October 6, 2026.
[293] Khalili-Tari, Daniel. "Emir Says Qatar Has Shown Resilience in the Face of 'Exceptional Events'." Al Jazeera, October 13, 2026.
[294] Newsbase. "Iranian Leader Adviser Defends Attack on Qatar Gas Installations.
[295] Khalili-Tari, Daniel. "Emir Says Qatar Has Shown Resilience in the Face of 'Exceptional Events'." Al Jazeera, October 13, 2026.
[296] Institute for National Security Studies. "The Strait of Hormuz: Legal Issues.

Security Council Resolution 2817 and called for the protection of navigational rights and critical maritime routes[297]. Its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, raised concerns over violations of Qatari territory and reaffirmed Doha's commitment to maintaining indirect mediation channels between Washington and Tehran[298].

Despite the regional confrontation, Qatar maintained that it would not abandon its diplomatic role. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Dr. Majed bin Mohammed Al Ansari stated that the country would continue pursuing mediation despite being directly affected by the conflict[299]. He attributed the wider escalation to political decisions made in Tehran rather than to the Gulf states. Doha also continued preparing to host the Global Security Forum, which brought together officials and representatives from more than 100 countries to discuss the future of international alliances, regional attacks, energy disruptions, and the consequences of ongoing conflicts[300].

The security crisis had direct consequences for Qatar's economy and aviation sector. Qatar Airways temporarily suspended flights between Doha and the Saudi cities of Riyadh and Dammam as the airline monitored regional airspace conditions[301]. The Emir also disclosed that disruptions to maritime trade routes and damage to energy infrastructure had contributed to a substantial decline in government revenues during the first half of the year. Given Qatar's position as a major global liquefied natural gas supplier, restrictions around the Strait of Hormuz presented serious risks to export capacity and state revenues. In response, the government accelerated efforts to diversify non-hydrocarbon income, including investment in solar energy, hospitality, and real estate[302].

Qatar continued expanding its defense and security partnerships through international forums and bilateral engagements. The Milipol exhibition in Doha brought together more than 270 security technology exhibitors from 33 countries to discuss developments in homeland security and safety technologies[303]. On the sidelines of the Global Security Forum, Qatari officials held discussions with NATO's Special Representative for the Southern Neighborhood, Javier Colomina, focusing on regional security and defense cooperation[304]. Qatar also signed the Badr Memorandum of Understanding with Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia[305]. The framework seeks to expand cooperation in military manufacturing, joint

[297] Emirates News Agency (WAM). "Qatar Urges Maritime Security, Rejects Pressure over Strait of Hormuz." October 31, 2026.
[298] Qatar News Agency. "Qatar Urges Diplomacy and Respect for International Law to Secure Lasting Mideast Peace." October 16, 2026.
[299] L'Orient Today. "Qatar Says Iran Needs to Show Good Intentions for Mediation Efforts to Succeed." October 27, 2026.
[300] Qatar Living. "Global Security Forum 2026 Opens in Doha with 100 Countries Represented.
[301] Reuters. "Qatar Airways Suspends Riyadh, Dammam Flights as Airport Attacks Disrupt Air Travel." October 13, 2026.
[302] Marmol, Sebastian. "QatarEnergy Plans Overseas LNG Purchases to Guard against Hormuz Disruptions, Reuters Reports." Doha News, October 29, 2026.
[303] Ministry of Interior, State of Qatar. "16th Edition of Milipol Qatar Concludes." November 2, 2026.
[304] NATO. "NATO Special Representative for the Southern Neighbourhood Visits Qatar." October 21, 2026.
[305] Eurasia Review. "Badr MoU and the Changing Meaning of Defence Self-Reliance." October 29, 2026.

research and development, technology transfer, and collaborative training. These initiatives reflect Doha's effort to strengthen defense partnerships while maintaining its broader diplomatic engagement.

Economic diplomacy remained an important component of Qatar's regional and international activities. At the World Investment Forum in Doha, Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Ahmad bin Mohammed al-Sayed emphasized that regional peace and collective security were essential for international trade, economic growth, and investment. His remarks linked the stability of the Gulf and surrounding maritime routes with the broader conditions necessary for sustained economic development[306].

Qatar also maintained diplomatic engagement with partners outside the immediate Gulf region. Officials from Qatar and India held their sixth round of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi, reviewing bilateral relations and developments in West Asian security[307]. The Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, also received Libya's outgoing ambassador, Mohammed Mustafa Al Saghir Al Lafi, in Doha[308]. In the Horn of Africa, Qatar continued to express concern over military escalation and tensions involving Ethiopia and Eritrea. Its stated position emphasized adherence to the Pretoria Peace Agreement and respect for Ethiopia's unity and sovereignty[309]. Doha also continued monitoring regional alignments involving Turkey, Egypt, and Somalia, while maintaining diplomatic and humanitarian channels intended to limit the spillover of conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, and the wider Red Sea region[310].

Qatar's mediation efforts gained further momentum through the presentation of a draft agreement to Iran intended to facilitate an end to the conflict with the United States. The proposal outlined a seven-day framework of confidence-building measures, coordinated with Washington and supported by regional guarantors[311]. However, differences remained over the sequence of negotiations. Washington sought to address Iran's nuclear programme from the outset, while Tehran demanded the lifting of naval blockades and restrictions on oil exports. Qatar continued pressing for a diplomatic breakthrough while calling for a regional security architecture based on state sovereignty and mutual non-aggression. Foreign Ministry official Ibrahim Al Hashemi urged Tehran to translate diplomatic statements into concrete measures, particularly by ending threats against neighboring Gulf states and ensuring

[306] Siddiqui, Usaid. “Qatar Official Calls for Peace and Security to Boost Trade, Investment.” Al Jazeera, October 25, 2026.
[307] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar. “Qatar and India Hold Sixth Round of Political Consultations in New Delhi.” October 9, 2026.
[308] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar. “Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bids Farewell to Libyan Ambassador.” October 11, 2026.
[309] Fana Media Corporation. “Ethiopia and Qatar Explore Deeper Military Cooperation amid Shared Regional Security Concerns.
[310] The New Arab. “Turkey and Qatar Lead Push for Four-Nation Defence Partnership.
[311] 8am Media. “Qatar Presents New Proposal to End War between Iran, US and Israel.

freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz[312].

Qatar also continued presenting itself as an advocate of humanitarian diplomacy. At the United Nations Human Rights Council's Social Forum in Geneva, Second Secretary Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Mansouri reaffirmed the country's commitment to protecting healthcare systems during armed conflict and incorporating health rights into peace negotiations. Doha also continued coordinating with regional partners, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to prevent further military escalation and safeguard vital shipping routes and energy infrastructure[313].

Information security and disinformation became another issue in Qatar's international engagement. An academic investigation involving researchers at Northwestern University in Qatar, including Marc Owen Jones, and independent researchers reported a large-scale paid digital influence campaign costing more than $11 million and generating over 533 million exposures across 30 countries[314]. According to the investigation, the campaign promoted anti-Qatar, racist, and anti-Muslim narratives. Qatari officials also rejected political and election-interference allegations directed at Doha, describing them as part of coordinated disinformation efforts. The issue added an information-security dimension to Qatar's broader diplomatic concerns, alongside its efforts to manage regional conflict and maintain its international standing.

2.8 Global Powers: Expanding Regional Conflicts and Engagements

Major global powers continued to pursue their strategic, diplomatic, economic and security interests amid escalating geopolitical tensions, shifting alliances and growing competition across key regions. The United States called on Ethiopia and Eritrea to exercise maximum restraint and urged dialogue as the conflict in Tigray escalated, while US lawmakers and other American actors also called for an end to the fighting.315 The developments became particularly significant after federal forces retook Mekelle, raising concerns about a wider Ethiopia–Eritrea confrontation and the potential regionalization of the conflict.

On October 2, the US State Department updated its list of countries subject to the US visa-bond programme.316 Ethiopia remains among the countries covered, with implementation dating to April 2. The programme allows consular officers to require eligible applicants to post a bond before receiving certain B-1/B-2 visas.

Meanwhile, on October 5–8, Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Iceland, Greece and

[312] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar. “Qatar Calls for New Regional Security Framework Based on State Sovereignty Respect.” October 27, 2026.
[313] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar. “Qatar Reaffirms Commitment to Mediation, De-escalation and Humanitarian Diplomacy.
[314] Khalili-Tari, Daniel. “Report Reveals Campaign Promoting Racist, Islamophobic, Anti-Qatar Views.” Al Jazeera, October 30, 2026
[315] U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Statement on Increased Tensions Between Ethiopia and Eritrea,” October 2026.
[316] U.S. Department of State, “Countries Subject to Visa Bonds,” October 2, 2026.

Portugal, focusing on Arctic security, defence cooperation, energy and transatlantic relations.317 In Iceland, Rubio sought to reassure the government about Washington's intentions while emphasizing the importance of cooperation in the strategically significant Arctic region. The discussions followed tensions over American ambitions in the North Atlantic and the neighbouring Greenland region. In Greece, Washington announced a new counterterrorism information-sharing arrangement and agreed to deepen defence cooperation through the US–Greece Strategic Dialogue.

The following day, October 10, a deadly strike targeted Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport. Trump said Washington was considering whether to join Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthis directly.318 US assistance to the Saudi-led effort has included intelligence sharing, target identification and operational planning, although Washington had previously avoided committing its forces to a renewed offensive against the Houthis.

US engagement with Ethiopia intensified on October 14, when Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke by telephone with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed about rising tensions with Eritrea. According to the State Department's readout, Rubio urged de-escalation, a return to the 2018 Ethiopia–Eritrea peace framework, respect for neighbouring states' sovereignty and territorial integrity, and avoidance of cross-border incursions.319 He stressed that the region could not tolerate another conflict. Abiy described the conversation as fruitful and welcomed continued US support for Ethiopia.

In subsequent remarks to reporters days later, Rubio was asked directly about the risk of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and whether Washington had made a mistake by lifting some Ethiopia-related sanctions.320 He rejected the suggestion that the sanctions decision had contributed to the crisis, describing the measures as limited and explaining that Washington had lifted them partly to improve communication with Eritrea. He argued that it would be difficult for the United States to act as a mediator without being able to engage both sides, while acknowledging that Washington communicates more frequently with Ethiopia.

Rubio also recognized Ethiopia's security concerns, referring to attacks by separatist forces, including attacks against the Ethiopian capital. At the same time, he urged Addis Ababa to exercise restraint, warning that the concentration of troops on both sides of the border could turn the situation into a wider regional conflict.

On October 16, Trump signed an executive order implementing the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026.321 The following day, relations between Trump

317 U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Travel to Iceland, Greece, and Portugal, October 5–8, 2026,” October 2026.
318 zhar Sukri and Terri Cullen, “Trump Says He Is ‘Going to Look at’ Joining Saudi Arabia in the Fight against Iran-Backed Houthis after Deadly Airport Strike,” CNBC, October 11, 2026.
319 U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, “Secretary Rubio’s Call with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy,” October 14, 2026.
320 Abraham Tekle, “Rubio Urges Restraint as Ethiopia-Eritrea Tensions Risk Wider Regional War,” The Reporter Ethiopia, October 18, 2026.
321 The White House, “Implementing the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026,” Executive Order 14436, October 16, 2026.

and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy came under renewed strain. Reuters reported that Trump had waived key sanctions and tariffs linked to Russia shortly before they were due to take effect, while continuing to criticize Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil refineries.

On October 20, US special envoy Steve Witkoff met Zelenskyy in Oslo, alongside Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Finnish President Alexander Stubb.322 US officials described the talks as constructive and said they had made progress on elements of a potential peace framework, including security guarantees for Ukraine, post-war economic arrangements and European security. Witkoff was also expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Toward the end of the month, Washington's attention increasingly returned to the possibility of renewed military confrontation with Iran. On October 31, reports indicated that the Trump administration had warned several Middle Eastern governments to prepare for possible US military strikes against Iran following the November 3 midterm elections.323 Washington had reportedly discussed the possibility of a short but intensive military campaign and warned regional partners about potential Iranian retaliation against energy infrastructure and other strategic facilities. At the same time, diplomatic contacts continued through Qatar, with Iranian and Qatari representatives meeting in Doha on October 31 to explore options for ending the conflict. Rubio indicated that Trump had not made a final decision on military action, although Washington remained prepared to use force if necessary.

Russia's engagement with Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa remained an important feature of Moscow's African diplomacy during October. On October 27, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alimov reportedly confirmed Moscow's readiness to facilitate contacts between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the sidelines of the Third Russia–Africa Summit in Moscow.324 The offer came amid renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia, severed diplomatic relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara, and escalating accusations concerning cross-border military activity.

The diplomatic initiative gained additional significance as Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki travelled to Moscow for the summit. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also reiterated Moscow's readiness to facilitate dialogue between the two countries during the summit period. The initiative reflects Russia's interest in maintaining its diplomatic influence in the Horn of Africa and preventing further deterioration in relations between the two states.

On October 28–29, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted African leaders in Moscow for

[322] Burç Eruygur, “Zelenskyy Arrives in Norway for Talks with US Envoy, Meetings with Nordic Leaders,” Anadolu Agency, October 20, 2026.
[323] Aamer Madhani and Samy Magdy, “US Warns Allies to Prepare for Possible Iran Strikes, Retaliation after Elections, AP Sources Say,” Associated Press, October 28, 2026.
[324] Danara Matulyan, “Russia Ready to Help Resolve Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict — Deputy Foreign Minister,” African Initiative, October 16, 2026.

the Third Russia–Africa Summit, held under the theme For Peace, Security and Development. Representatives from nearly 50 African countries attended, including 22 heads of state and government.325 Putin presented Russia as a reliable strategic partner for African countries, contrasting Moscow's approach with Western policies on development financing and resource extraction. Discussions covered trade, investment, food security, energy, military cooperation and technology. The summit adopted the Third Russia–Africa Declaration, the Russia–Africa Partnership Forum Action Plan for 2027–2029, and a declaration on cooperation in the civilian application of artificial intelligence.

Ethiopia's military engagement with Russia also featured prominently during the summit. On October 28, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced the acquisition of Russian Su-35 fighter jets and plans to acquire S-400 air-defence systems. The announcement followed his meeting with Putin in Moscow. Abiy presented the acquisition as a major step in strengthening Ethiopia's military capabilities and deterrence capacity. Reports concerning the deal indicated that the acquisition involved 12 Su-35 aircraft and four batteries of S-400 systems, although the precise delivery schedule, agreement value and deployment locations had not been disclosed. The development represents a significant expansion of Russian military engagement with Ethiopia amid renewed internal conflict and escalating tensions with Eritrea.

China continued to expand its diplomatic engagement with countries in the Horn of Africa and the wider Red Sea region, with maritime security and regional stability featuring prominently in its October activities. On October 21, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar in Beijing.326 Their joint communiqué expressed concern about the security of shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and called for freedom of navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Both governments argued that de-escalation in the Middle East was essential to addressing the Horn of Africa's security challenges.

Building on these discussions, on October 27–28, Beijing announced plans to dispatch a special envoy to countries in the Middle East, Gulf, Red Sea and Horn of Africa to facilitate dialogue and reduce regional tensions.327 Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun expressed concern about the prolonged hostilities and their spillover effects, calling for negotiations and an early, sustainable ceasefire. The initiative came amid escalating Ethiopia–Eritrea tensions, insecurity around Red Sea shipping routes and the wider confrontation involving Iran and regional actors. It reflects Beijing's interest in protecting its economic and strategic interests along the Red Sea corridor while expanding its diplomatic role in regional conflict management.

[325] Mariem Bah, “Russia-Africa Summit: What Is on the Agenda, and Why Does It Matter?” Al Jazeera, October 28, 2026.
[326] Xinhua, “Chinese FM Meets Djibouti’s Counterpart,” The State Council of the People’s Republic of China, October 22, 2026.
[327] Reuters “China to Send Envoy to Middle East in Near Future amid Conflict Spillover,”, October 27, 2026.

On October 30–31, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted G20 foreign ministers in Atlanta, Georgia, for two days of discussions on international security, energy, supply-chain resilience and global economic challenges.[328] The meeting took place amid heightened geopolitical tensions involving Russia's war in Ukraine, the US–Iran confrontation, maritime security and the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb. The gathering concluded without a joint communiqué, with participants instead issuing a chair's statement. Disagreements over Russia's participation, the war in Ukraine, US tariffs and the conflict involving Iran exposed continuing divisions among major economies.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for further coordination among US allies and Indo-Pacific partners, particularly through discussions on maritime security, strategic supply chains and regional stability.

2.9 European Countries: Strategic Coordination and Geopolitical Uncertainty

European countries and the European Union focused on regional security, transatlantic relations, energy diversification and strategic partnerships amid growing instability in the Middle East and wider international uncertainties. The most significant development was the security incident surrounding RAF Fairford, where several people were arrested over an alleged plot against the base hosting U.S. B-1 bombers used in operations against Iran. Prime Minister Andy Burnham said there were “strong indications” of Iranian involvement, while Tehran rejected the allegation and summoned the British ambassador. The United States subsequently withdrew all of its B-1 bombers from Fairford, adding a new security dimension to Britain’s involvement in the Iran conflict.[329]

Relations with Europe also remained an important part of Burnham’s emerging foreign-policy direction. During his Labour Party conference speech, the prime minister criticized the consequences of Brexit and said Britain would examine options for a closer relationship with the European Union, including potentially going much further than the current arrangements.[330]

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham visited German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Berlin on 8 October.[331] The visit highlighted the importance of British-German coordination on European security and economic cooperation. It also came amid renewed discussion about the UK’s future relationship with the EU, with European officials signalling openness to deeper engagement.

[328] U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Travel to Atlanta to Host the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, October 30–31, 2026,” October 2026.
[329] Cachella Smith and Vicky Wong, “US Removes All Bombers from RAF Fairford Base,” BBC News, October 5, 2026.
[330] Chris Mason, “Rejecting Closer EU Ties Would Be Dereliction of Duty, PM to Say,” BBC News, October 12, 2026.
[331] Mark Hallam, Emilio Reynoso, and Timothy Jones, “Germany News: UK's Burnham Visits Berlin for Talks with Merz,” Deutsche Welle, October 8, 2026.

On 5 October, the EU issued a statement expressing alarm over escalating violence in Ethiopia and rising tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea.[332] It warned that the situation could trigger a broader conflict across the Horn of Africa, with serious implications for regional stability. Brussels called for immediate de-escalation, protection of civilians, unhindered humanitarian access and full implementation of the Pretoria Agreement within the African Union framework. It also urged external actors to refrain from interference and use their influence to prevent further escalation.

On 15 October, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office called on Ethiopia and Eritrea to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, avoid cross-border violations, and return to dialogue.[333] London also stressed civilian protection, international humanitarian law and safe humanitarian access, while backing the African Union's role in facilitating talks.

On 15 October, the Home Office announced that Eritrean officials would lose preferential visa processing. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood also warned that Britain could suspend visa access for Eritrean nationals if Asmara did not agree to resume cooperation on returns. The UK said Eritrea had withdrawn that cooperation earlier in 2026 and noted that Eritreans were the most common nationality arriving by small boat in the year ending June 2026.

On 23 October, the UK and 31 international partners issued a joint warning that Sudan's food-security situation was deteriorating rapidly and required urgent action to prevent famine. The statement cited estimates that 19.5 million people, or 41% of Sudan's population, were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, including five million facing emergency levels of hunger.[334]

On 23 October, British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband joined counterparts from France, Germany and Italy, alongside foreign ministers from Türkiye, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, in Istanbul.[335] The meeting addressed the US–Israel–Iran conflict, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, attacks by Yemen's Houthi movement against Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government, and threats to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Black Sea.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar from 19 to 21 October.[336] According to the Élysée, the tour focused on restoring stability in the Middle East, maintaining freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz,

[332] Council of the European Union, "Ethiopia: Statement by the High Representative on Behalf of the European Union on the Escalating Conflict in Ethiopia and the Implications for the Region," October 5, 2026.
[333] Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, "UK Statement on Escalating Tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea," October 15, 2026.
[334] Aysu Bicer, "UK, 31 Partners Warn of Rising Famine Risk in Sudan, Call for Urgent Action," Anadolu Agency, October 23, 2026.
[335] Al Jazeera Staff, AFP, and Reuters, "European, Middle East Ministers Urge US-Iran Diplomacy, Not New Attacks," Al Jazeera, October 23, 2026.
[336] Sahin Demir, "Kuwaiti Emir, French President Discuss Bilateral Ties, Regional Developments as Macron Starts Gulf Tour," Anadolu Agency, October 19, 2026.

diversifying energy supplies and strengthening France's strategic, economic and defence partnerships with Gulf states.

European Council President António Costa spoke by telephone with President of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council Rashad al-Alimi, reaffirming the EU's support for the internationally recognized Yemeni government.337 Costa condemned Houthi attacks within Yemen, against Saudi Arabia and on commercial shipping in the Red Sea. He called on the Houthis to immediately cease their attacks, de-escalate tensions and return to negotiations under UN auspices. The intervention reflected growing European concern about the regional consequences of the conflict, particularly threats to maritime security and the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in Montreal for the 21st EU–Canada Summit.338 The two sides launched an Alliance for the Future, aimed at strengthening their political, economic and strategic partnership. The initiative covers trade, digital technologies, critical minerals, energy, financial markets, security and preparedness. Both sides also reaffirmed their support for Ukraine and committed to increasing pressure on Russia. On the Middle East, they called for de-escalation, humanitarian assistance and a two-state solution. They further expressed support for multilateral institutions and the international judicial system, including the International Criminal Court, while voicing regret over Washington's sanctions against the Court. The summit also addressed cooperation on critical raw materials, energy connectivity and the possibility of increasing Canadian LNG supplies to Europe.

Section Three: Regional and International Organizations

October 2026 witnessed a sharp deterioration in the Horn of Africa security landscape dominated by the renewed conflict in northern Ethiopia the rupture of Ethiopia and Eritrea diplomatic relations and the resulting regional spillover risks that drew urgent attention from the United Nations, African Union, IGAD and the European Union. The UN Security Council convened two closed consultations on the Horn of Africa during the month while the annual UN and AU cooperation framework meetings proceeded as scheduled against this backdrop of crisis. The AU Commission called repeatedly for maximum restraint and reaffirmed the primacy of the 2022 Pretoria Agreement even as Tigrayan forces briefly seized key airports before federal forces recaptured Mekelle. IGAD advanced its peace and security agenda on multiple fronts, including South Sudan electoral preparations, regional Ebola preparedness and digital integration initiatives, while the EU issued a stark warning against further escalation and continued its financial and diplomatic support for regional stabilization. The financing sustainability of AUSSOM remained a persistent concern with the United States maintaining a 12 month drawdown of UNSOS support beginning January

[337] Agenzia Nova, "Yemen: Costa, Solidarietà UE al Governo e Condanna ad Attacchi Houthi," October 27, 2026.
[338] European Council, "EU-Canada Summit, 29–30 October 2026," October 30, 2026.

2027 and the EU's €75 million commitment covering stipends only through June 2026. Sudan remained a parallel focus with the Sixth Consultative Meeting in Geneva and coordinated Quad-Quintet engagement. The month concluded with revelations of a security breach at the AU Commission Chairperson's residence attributed to a Russian GRU officer, raising questions about intelligence activities ahead of the Russia and Africa Summit.

3.1 United Nations (UN)

The UN Security Council's engagement with the Horn of Africa crisis intensified in October. On the first day of the month, Eritrea severed all diplomatic relations with Ethiopia following Addis Ababa's closure of its embassy in Asmara and the expulsion of ten Eritrean diplomats a rupture that immediately elevated regional tensions and prompted Council members concern about the potential unravelling of the 2022 Pretoria Agreement. [339]The Security Council had already scheduled closed consultations on the deteriorating situation in northern Ethiopia for the first week of October with a Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs official expected to brief members on the escalating crisis and its regional spillover potential particularly given the sharp deterioration in Ethiopia and Eritrea relations and concurrent tensions over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and Red Sea security.

On 6 October the Security Council convened its 10233rd meeting to discuss cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations focusing on the African Union. [340]Special Representative of the Secretary General to the AU Parfait Onanga-Anyanga presented the Secretary-General's latest report on strengthening the UN-AU partnership on peace and security in Africa underscoring that the scale and complexity of challenges facing the continent demand a stronger partnership that anticipates crises, addresses underlying pressures, and converts shared commitment into prompt, predictable, and accountable action. He identified three priorities the changing nature of conflicts structural factors driving regional instability and practical implementation of UN and AU cooperation in peace support operations, highlighting the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and the Sahel as particularly urgent. AU Senior Adviser Zinurine Alghali noted that the AU and UN partnership had established instruments it did not have a year earlier including the Declaration signed at the Tenth AU-UN Annual Conference in Addis Ababa in May 2026 and emphasized that the measure of the partnership must ultimately be its impact on the lives of people affected by conflict. Council members echoed the need to implement resolution 2719 (2023) on predictable financing for African led peace support operations and to shift the partnership from cooperation by circumstance to partnership by design.

A second round of closed consultations on the Horn of Africa was held on 13 October

[339] Reuters. "Eritrea Cuts Ties with Ethiopia over Asmara Embassy Closure." October 1, 2026.
[340] United Nations Security Council. Provisional Agenda for the 10233rd Meeting of the Security Council, to Be Held on Tuesday, 6 October 2026. S/Agenda/10233. 6 October 2026.

requested by the United States in light of the escalation in northern Ethiopia. [341]Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martin Kimani briefed members, building on prior concerns about risks to the Pretoria Agreement Ethiopia and Eritrea relations reports of Eritrean forces in Ethiopia, drone activity, airstrikes and constrained humanitarian access. Ethiopia's 9 October letter invoking Article 51 self-defense against alleged Eritrean aggression and Eritrea's response letter seeking deterrent measures under Chapter VII remained central to discussions. [342]The Secretary-General's earlier statement of grave concern and call for cessation of hostilities and return to dialogue under the Pretoria framework continued to guide positions.

On the humanitarian and operational side discussions on sustainable financing for AUSSOM and UNSOS logistical support continued throughout the month. The United States 12-month drawdown arrangement for UNSOS beginning January 2027 and the EU's additional €75 million commitment covering stipends until 30 June 2026 remained the most recent concrete pledges with the financing situation described as precarious for a support office with an annual budget of approximately $500 million. UNTMIS operations were scheduled to conclude by 31 October 2026 after which UNSOS would handle residual administrative and logistical functions on a cost recovery basis before entering in situ liquidation and assuming new human rights due diligence functions previously handled by UNTMIS. [343]

On 21 October Switzerland and the UN Office of the Personal Envoy for Sudan co-hosted the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan at the Palais des Nations in Geneva co-chaired by Swiss State Secretary Alexandre Fasel and Personal Envoy Pekka Haavisto. [344]The meeting brought together 22 countries including the Quad members all five P5 states, neighboring and regional countries alongside the AU, EU, IGAD, League of Arab States and UN to align diplomatic engagement around the urgent needs of the Sudanese people. Participants expressed grave concern at the unabated conflict, atrocities, escalating drone warfare and a deepening humanitarian crisis, underscoring that continued fighting, access restrictions and climate related shocks were increasing famine risk. They reaffirmed commitment to Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity while rejecting parallel governments and any action risking division or regional spillover stressed there is no military solution and called for an inclusive, credible, Sudanese owned political process facilitated by the Quintet. The annual UN and AU cooperation joint consultative meeting with the AU Peace and Security Council proceeded as scheduled around 22–23 October in New York.[345]

[341] Security Council Report. "Horn of Africa: Closed Consultations." What's in Blue, 12 October 2026.
[342] Ethiopia. Letter dated 9 October 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council. S/2026/797. United Nations, 13 October 2026.
[343] United Nations. "Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the Conclusion of the Mandate of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS)." 26 October 2026.
[344] United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Summary of the Co-Chairs of the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan." 21 October 2026.
[345] Security Council Report. "UN-AU Cooperation." October 2026 Monthly Forecast. Security Council Report, October 2026.

On 27 October, Yasmin Sooka, Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan told the UN General Assembly Third Committee that South Sudan's 2018 peace agreement was being systematically dismantled, describing recent government actions as a constitutional coup through legislative means. [346]The Commission noted that President Salva Kiir dissolved the transitional government on 22 September removed the Vice Presidents and appointed a caretaker administration answerable only to him while First Vice President Riek Machar remains detained and on trial with his party and other opposition actors excluded from the electoral process. The Commission called for the activation of the joint AU,IGAD and UN task force requested by the C5 Plus Summit restoration of inclusive governance under the Revitalized Agreement an immediate cessation of hostilities, and the establishment of the Hybrid Court.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) expressed alarm at continued drone strikes on Sudan's critical civilian infrastructure. [347]On 27 October, a drone strike reportedly hit a major transformer station serving Khartoum State, following multiple strikes the previous day on power stations in Gezira, Sennar and Gedaref states with local authorities warning that the attacks threatened the stability of the national power grid. OCHA reiterated that civilians and civilian infrastructure including electricity and water facilities must be protected under international humanitarian law. Meanwhile the World Food Programme warned that funding shortages would leave 900,000 people without food assistance starting in November. On a positive note Sudan's Ministry of Health with support from WHO and UNICEF launched a nationwide polio vaccination campaign on 26 October targeting 11million children.

3.2 African Union (AU)

The African Union Commission closely monitored the rapidly deteriorating situation in northern Ethiopia throughout October, with Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf expressing deep concern over military escalation including the seizure of airports in Mekelle, Axum and Shire by Tigrayan forces and calling for immediate de-escalation and a return to the 2022 Pretoria Agreement framework tasking AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa Olusegun Obasanjo with urgent engagement. The AU also highlighted risks posed by new political military alliances reversing post 2020 gains. Following Ethiopia’s expulsion of Eritrean diplomats including those accredited to the AU and UNECA, Eritrea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the AU Commission demanding immediate corrective measures arguing that the expulsions violated the AU Constitutive Act, the Headquarters Agreement with Ethiopia and principles of sovereign equality effectively denying Eritrea its membership rights to representation and participation in AU activities in Addis Ababa. [348]Eritrea called on the AU Commission to refer the matter to the Executive Council and Assembly for

[346] OHCHR. "Statement by Yasmin Sooka, Chair of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, to the UN General Assembly Third Committee." October 27, 2026.
347 UN Media. "UN / SUDAN UPDATE." October 27, 2026.
[348] Eritrea Asks AU to Restore Representation after Ethiopia Expels Diplomats.” Addis Standard, 15 October 2026.

restoration of its full rights. The AU Commission maintained its call for maximum restraint by Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt during ongoing fighting in northern Ethiopia reports of border developments near Zalambessa and the earlier diplomatic ruptures. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights expressed concern over hostilities, civilian impacts and risks to the Pretoria Agreement.

The AU's engagement with Sudan and South Sudan continued in parallel. On 20–21 October, the African Union Commission participated in the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan in Geneva with Special Representative of the Chairperson Amb. Mohamed Belaiche leading the Quintet (AU, UN, EU, League of Arab States, IGAD). [349]The meeting brought together 27 international and regional delegations to align diplomatic engagement around de-escalation, humanitarian access and civilian protection with participants welcoming efforts particularly by the Quad to secure a humanitarian truce as a step toward a durable ceasefire. The AU reaffirmed its leadership in coordinating with the Quad to advance an African-led framework linking a humanitarian truce and cessation of hostilities to an inclusive Sudanese-led political process. The discussions took place against a grave backdrop of over 15 million people displaced nearly 34 million in need of assistance as of May 2026 eight million children out of school and a war increasingly characterized by deadly drone warfare and famine-like conditions in Darfur and Kordofan. Participants rejected the establishment of parallel governments or governance structures and reaffirmed commitment to Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

From 21–23 October, the AU Peace and Security Council held three successive joint engagements in New York its 9th Annual Consultative Meeting with the UN Peacebuilding Commission on 21 October under the theme of synergies for nationally owned peacebuilding its 11th Informal Joint Seminar with the UN Security Council on 22 October covering AU/UN peace operations including Resolution 2719, Youth, Peace and Security, counter terrorism, children and armed conflict and natural resources and the 20th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting with the UNSC on 23 October with agenda items spanning AUSSOM resources and support, Sudan, South Sudan and eastern DRC. [350]Morocco's Ambassador Mohammed Arrouchi, speaking on behalf of the PSC, served as keynote speaker on Youth, Peace and Security and addressed the protection of children affected by armed conflict, calling for continental commitments to be translated into concrete action.[351] PSC members further met with the UN Secretary-General on Africa's peace, security and stability priorities and a joint communiqué from the PBC and AUPSC meeting advanced follow-up

[349] United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Summary of the Co-Chairs of the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan." 21 October 2026.
[350] United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "African Union Peace and Security Council and UN Peacebuilding Commission Strengthen Cooperation on Peacebuilding in Africa." 22 October 2026.
[351] AU-PSC, UN Bodies Joint Meetings Conclude in New York with Morocco's Participation." MapNews (MAP), 25 October 2026.

mechanisms with peacebuilding financing and national ownership emerging as central themes.

AUSSOM continued supporting Somali-led operations and the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces during ongoing Al-Shabaab threats, with Mission Head Ambassador El-Hadji Ibrahima Diene meeting U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Ruth Anne Stevens-Klitz in Mogadishu to discuss mandate implementation, logistical support and international coordination. The mission's mandate runs through 31 December 2026, though financing and sustainability challenges remained central concerns with the AU calling for predictable funding for African-led peace operations. Reports indicated potential Ethiopian troop adjustments linked to domestic developments with Ethiopia reportedly planning to withdraw more than 3,000 troops from Somalia as renewed fighting at home put pressure on Addis Ababa to redirect military resources, though a Somali Defense Ministry official stated Mogadishu had not received formal notification of any withdrawal plan.

A significant security incident came to light on 23 October when an investigation published by The Insider identified the intruder who covertly entered the African Union Commission chairperson's residence in Addis Ababa in April 2025 as Major Aleksandr Dubikov, a GRU officer then serving as assistant to Russia's military attaché in Ethiopia. [352]The report based on CCTV footage and facial-recognition analysis found that Dubikov slipped through the gate of Africa House behind a car carrying Chairperson Mahamoud Ali Youssouf's daughter, went directly to Youssouf's bedroom, remained inside for four minutes and twenty-four seconds, briefly encountered the daughter and was released by private security who mistook him for a lost VIP. The investigation linked Dubikov's military education and service records to the GRU and found frequent phone contact with Vladislav Popov, a hacker associated with GRU unit 74455 known as Sandworm though the purpose of the intrusion remained unconfirmed and no theft or planted devices were established. The incident prompted tighter security at Africa House, and flight records indicated Dubikov remained in Ethiopia at the time of the investigation with no public indication that Ethiopian authorities had identified or acted against him. The revelations surfaced just days before Moscow was set to host the third Russia-Africa Summit on 28–29 October 2026, raising questions about the relationship between Russia's diplomatic engagement with African institutions and its intelligence activities on the continent.

A major regional diplomatic development in October was the Third Russia and Africa Summit held in Moscow on 28–29 October under the joint chairmanship of Russian President Vladimir Putin and African Union Chairperson Évariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi.[353] The summit brought together representatives from 48 African countries,

[352] Weiss, Michael, and Roman Dobrokhotov. "Uninvited Guest: How a GRU Spy Connected to State Hackers Broke into the African Union's Diplomatic Residence in Ethiopia." The Insider, 23 October 2026.
[353] "Putin Woos African Leaders at Showcase Summit, Says Russia Is Better Partner Than 'Colonial' West." Reuters, 28 October 2026.

including 22 heads of state and concluded with the adoption of a comprehensive declaration and a Russia and Africa Partnership Forum Action Plan for 2027–2029. The declaration called for a more multipolar world order, greater African representation in global governance including the UN Security Council and expanded cooperation in trade, energy, security and technology while opposing unilateral coercive measures. President Putin used the summit to position Russia as a partner against what he characterized as Western colonial and debt based exploitation, pledging expanded grain and fertilizer supplies, technology transfer and support for African representation in international financial institutions. On the sidelines, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with 41 African foreign ministers and a bilateral agreement on the foundations of relations was signed with the Central African Republic. For IGAD member states, the summit's emphasis on food security, fertilizer supplies and infrastructure cooperation was directly relevant though the event also underscored the growing competition among external powers for influence across the Horn of Africa and the continent more broadly.

3.3 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD's October activities spanned peace and security, health preparedness, digital integration and regional economic cooperation. On South Sudan, IGAD Special Envoy H.E. Moussa Djama Ali, accompanied by IGAD Head of Mission Dr. Victoria Anib, engaged in a series of high-level consultations in Juba. [354]The Envoy met with Hon. Africano Mande Gedima, Minister of Presidential Affairs, commending ongoing inter party dialogue on election related matters and stressing the need for inclusive dialogue and consensus building for a peaceful credible electoral process. The Envoy also met with National Elections Commission Chairperson Gabriel Bol Deng and Secretary-General Ahon Malou at the NEC headquarters, reaffirming IGAD's commitment to supporting South Sudan's electoral preparations through continued engagement and technical assistance. [355]

The Special Envoy stressed the urgency of voter registration and the need for a clear electoral calendar while the NEC briefed on preparations for voter registration, recruitment and training of electoral staff and efforts to harmonize the electoral legal framework emphasizing the importance of civic and voter education, women's participation, reliable electoral data and freedom of movement for citizens and electoral personnel. These engagements took place against the backdrop of South Sudan's scheduled general elections on 22 December 2026 just three months away with the NEC having not yet officially launched voter registration and concerns persisting over the exclusion of key opposition groups such as the SPLM/A-IO from the ongoing inter-party dialogue. Later in the month the Envoy met with Hon. Amb. Agnes Adlino Orifa Oswaha, Undersecretary of South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, to discuss the peace process, election preparations and mutual interests both sides reaffirming continued cooperation for

[354] "IGAD Reaffirms Support for South Sudan's Electoral Preparations." One Citizen Daily, 21 October 2026.
[355] Loku, Louis. "IGAD Reaffirms Support for South Sudan's Electoral Preparations." One Citizen Daily, 21 October 2026.

peace and stability. Around mid-October the Envoy also met the UK's Ambassador designate to South Sudan to discuss the peace process and election preparations.[356] On 13 October, the Envoy met in Juba with leadership of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM) to review progress on ceasefire monitoring, transitional security arrangements, the electoral process and the conclusion of the transition period.

On health security, IGAD and Somalia's One Health ministries concluded a four-day joint mission in Mogadishu on 1 October 2026, producing a costed, time-bound Ebola Virus Disease preparedness and response workplan under the Pandemic Fund-backed PREPARE Project. [357]The workplan built directly on Somalia's existing national EVD Preparedness and Response Plan, integrating human, animal and environmental health perspectives from the outset and aligning national investments with regional priorities including cross border surveillance, laboratory interoperability, specimen referral and points of entry preparedness.

By the mission's close the teams had established a detailed work plan and budget a regional and cross border alignment matrix, a procurement plan and implementation schedule, a monitoring and results framework and endorsed implementation roles with a consolidated action tracker. The initiative followed recent Bundibugyo Ebola outbreaks in the DRC and Uganda that prompted the Pandemic Fund to activate emergency financing procedures with Somalia's mission marking the first in a series of country consultations.

Subsequently, following Kenya's confirmation on 6 October of an imported case of Bundibugyo Ebola virus disease a Kenyan citizen who had been living in the DRC and travelled through Uganda before reaching Nairobi IGAD, represented by Ambassador Dr. Fatuma Adan held high-level consultations with Kenya's Ministry of Health and reiterated its commitment to supporting Kenya through the PREPARE Project, including mobilizing USD 1 million for surveillance, laboratory capacity and rapid response measures as part of a larger USD 7 million regional commitment to strengthen epidemic preparedness across seven IGAD member states . [358]Discussions covered contact tracing, border health security and coordination between national and regional health authorities. South Sudan's consultation under the same project was held in Juba from 12–15 October.

On cybersecurity and digital integration IGAD participated in the opening of the Cyber Month Event and Member States Discussion Sessions hosted by Ethiopia's Information Network Security Administration in Addis Ababa from 12–13 October, represented by Dr. Mohyeldeen Eltohami Taha, Director of the IGAD Economic Cooperation and Regional

[356] Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "Strengthening Partnerships for Peace in South Sudan." X (formerly Twitter), 17 October 2026.
[357] Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "IGAD and Somalia Finalize Costed Ebola Response Workplan in Mogadishu." IGAD, 1 October 2026.
[358] Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "IGAD and Kenya Step Up Ebola Preparedness and Response After Imported Bundibugyo Case." IGAD, 10 October 2026.

Integration Division.[359] Discussions focused on regional collaboration in cybersecurity with bilateral sessions exploring partnerships involving Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan and others. Later in the month IGAD participated in the Smart Africa Workshop on implementing SADC sub-regional roaming agreements under the One Africa Network in Gaborone, Botswana represented by Daniel Deng Malok of the Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration Division where delegates from Regional Economic Communities and the African Telecommunications Union exchanged experiences and explored pathways toward a unified African roaming framework. IGAD is planning a feasibility study in early 2027 under the World Bank supported Eastern Africa Regional Digital Integration Project to explore regional mobile roaming across the region. Dr. Mohyeldeen also met with Ethiopia's Dashen Bank to explore a partnership aimed at dismantling barriers to cross border trade a move that signals the regional bloc's growing emphasis on enlisting private financial institutions to operationalize its integration agenda though the absence of announced deliverables suggested the collaboration remained in an exploratory phase.

On food systems and climate resilience IGAD convened a regional meeting in Arba Minch, Ethiopia from 21–24 October under its World Bank supported Food Systems Resilience Program to advance the IGAD Digital Agro Climate Advisory Services Knowledge Network and validate Regional and Country Gender Profiles in Food Systems, bringing together technical experts from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda along with regional partner institutions. [360]Discussions underscored the growing demand for actionable, localized climate and agricultural information described by IGAD Head of Mission to Ethiopia Abebaw Bihonegn as no longer a luxury but a fundamental necessity for risk management and produced recommendations to establish national coordination arrangements develop regional minimum standards for data quality and interoperability and train extension workers and community trainers. The gender profile validation sought to strengthen the evidence base on inequalities women face in access to land, finance, technology, climate information and markets.

On transhumance and pastoral mobility Kenya fast tracked parliamentary processes to ratify the IGAD Transhumance Protocol on 28 September, with lawmakers, policymakers and technical teams advancing efforts to formalize cross border pastoral mobility frameworks supporting regional livestock trade and conflict mitigation in arid and semi arid lands. The Protocol was formally tabled in the National Assembly and committed to the Departmental Committee on Agriculture and Livestock for consideration. Kenya signed the Protocol in June 2024 becoming the fifth IGAD Member State to do so after Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda. Public participation on the ratification instrument closed on 8 April 2026 following the required constitutional process.

359 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "IGAD Joins Opening of Cyber Month Event and Member States Discussion Sessions in Addis Ababa." IGAD, 13 October 2026.
360 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "IGAD Advances Regional Collaboration on Digital Agro-Climate Advisory Services and Gender-Responsive Food Systems." October 24, 2026.

On South Sudan's regional diplomacy, Djibouti President and IGAD Chairperson Ismail Omar Guelleh addressed the African Union High Level Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan (C5) on 29 September, urging South Sudan's leaders to adopt a clear and definitive roadmap for the political transition and for elections scheduled for December 2026 stressing that neither South Sudan nor the region can afford further delays. [361]He noted that while the Revitalized Agreement has provided the country's longest period of ceasefire, recent developments including the March 2025 Nasir incident and subsequent violence had heightened tensions and increased the risk of renewed large scale conflict. Guelleh expressed concern over political decisions taken following the violence including initiatives to amend key aspects of the peace agreement and uncertainty over the sequencing of the transition stating that this state of affairs undermines credibility and confidence in the peace process. He reaffirmed IGAD's commitment to working with the AU, UN and all regional and international partners to support peace efforts while emphasizing that the primary responsibility for determining the way forward rests with South Sudanese leaders, saying IGAD cannot substitute itself for that political will it can however accompany it support it and wherever necessary, firmly recall it.

IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu attended Kenya's 63rd Mashujaa Day celebrations at Kipchoge Keino Stadium in Eldoret on 20 October, presided over by President William Ruto and attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali with IGAD joining Kenya in honoring the heroes and heroines whose sacrifices shaped the nation's independence.[362] Following the event President Ruto hosted both Prime Minister Abiy and Executive Secretary Gebeyehu at his Koilel dairy farm in Uasin Gishu County where the leaders toured the agricultural investment as part of continued bilateral and regional engagement. On 22 October, IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware participated in the Peace, Security & Transnational Solidarity panel at the Global Trust Summit 2026 in Nairobi, stressing that building trust requires sustained dialogue and practical cross border cooperation to prevent conflict, respond to shared crises and strengthen the region's voice in global negotiations. [363]

The panel also featured Ambassador Martin Kimani of the UN DPPA-DPO and former Kenyan Foreign Minister Raychelle Omamo. Earlier in the month, IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu attended the inaugural African Chiefs of Defence Forces Conference on Military Operations Other Than War in Uganda, presided over by President Museveni where he called for stronger military cooperation, joint readiness and expanded engagement beyond traditional defense to advance enduring peace, regional stability and

[361] African Union. "Declaration of the AU High-Level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan (C5) Plus at the Level of Heads of State and Government, Virtual Summit, 29 September 2026." Accessed October 30, 2026.
[362] Ministry of Public Service and Human Capital Development (Kenya). "CS Ruku and PS Prof. Imbunya Join President Ruto in Celebrating Kenya's Heroes on Mashujaa Day." October 20, 2026.
[363] Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary Participates in Peace, Security & Transnational Solidarity Panel at the Global Trust Summit 2026." LinkedIn post, October 21, 2026.

shared prosperity. [364]On 13–16 October, IGAD convened with SADC, COMESA, EAC and ECCAS in Lusaka, Zambia to strengthen collaboration among Regional Economic Communities on health emergency preparedness, response and resilience across Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. [365]H.E. Hüseyin Özdemir, Türkiye's newly appointed Ambassador to Djibouti presented his letter of accreditation to IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu at the Secretariat, a routine diplomatic formality that nonetheless carried weight given Ankara's deepening institutional ties with the regional bloc with Türkiye and IGAD operating under a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2019 and Ankara having become an increasingly visible partner in the Horn most notably through its mediation of the December 2024 Ankara Declaration between Ethiopia and Somalia.[366]

On 28 October, IGAD and the Med or Italian Foundation held their first high-level seminar in Nairobi, entitled Corridors & Chokepoints from Hormuz to Bab el-Mandeb, examining the strategic significance of maritime corridors and their implications for energy infrastructure and digital connectivity across the Horn and East Africa. [367]The seminar brought together government officials, diplomats and private sector executives under the Chatham House Rule marking the first joint initiative under the Memorandum of Understanding signed by IGAD and Med Or in June 2026.

3.4 European Union

The European Union issued a stark warning on 5 October over the escalating violence in Ethiopia and the heightened tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea cautioning that the situation risked triggering a broader regional conflict with severe consequences for peace and stability across the Horn of Africa. In a statement released by the High Representative on behalf of the EU the bloc called for immediate de-escalation on all fronts and urged all involved parties to refrain from actions or rhetoric that could further inflame tensions, while pressing the parties to the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement to recommit to its full implementation within the African Union framework. [368]The EU emphasized that respect for international humanitarian law is imperative stressing that civilians must be protected at all times and that unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured a concern echoed by UNICEF which reported that children were being injured and killed and that residential areas and public facilities had been damaged during the renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia. The bloc firmly reiterated that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected and called on external actors to refrain from interference and use their influence to prevent further escalation and advance political solutions and diplomacy. The statement

[364] Sputnik Africa. "'Cooperation Beyond the Battlefield': IGAD Urges Stronger Military Ties Across Africa." October 9, 2026.
[365] Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "Inter-REC Lusaka Meeting Pushes for Coordinated Regional Health Action." October 16, 2026.
[366] The CITIZEN. "Executive Secretary IGAD Receives Turkish Ambassador Credentials." October 15, 2026.
[367] IGAD. "IGAD and Med-Or Convene High-Level Seminar on Maritime Security and Strategic Connectivity in the Horn and East Africa." October 28, 2026.
368 Council of the European Union. "Ethiopia: Statement by the High Representative on Behalf of the European Union on the Escalating Conflict in Ethiopia and the Implications for the Region." Press release, October 5, 2026.

came during reports that Eritrean soldiers had crossed into northern Ethiopia with sources indicating they advanced up to 60 kilometers inside Tigray and entered towns including Adigrat and Idaga Hamus prompting Ethiopia to accuse Eritrea of flagrant aggression and to request UN support while Eritrea countered by accusing Ethiopia of waging a long standing war of aggression . The EU reaffirmed its commitment to regional stability, peaceful cooperation and economic integration in the Horn of Africa stating it stood ready to support diplomatic efforts towards meaningful dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

On AUSSOM financing, the EU's additional €75 million commitment from the European Peace Facility, approved earlier in the year remained the most significant recent European contribution covering up to 85% of stipends for the roughly 12,000 AUSSOM personnel and funding the mission only until 30 June 2026. Egypt called for funding through the African Peace Fund and warned that failure to secure long-term support would undermine years of collective investment in Somali state institutions. The EU's support was framed within its integrated approach to external conflicts and crises forming part of wider EU backing for peace and security in Somalia and across the Horn of Africa, including capacity building support for the Somali National Army to enable the gradual transfer of security responsibilities.

As a member of the Quintet, the European Union participated in the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Sudan held in Geneva on 21 October, joining the African Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the United Nations alongside 22 countries to coordinate international peace efforts for Sudan . [369]In parallel the EU continued its partnership with IGAD and the AU on South Sudan's electoral preparations and broader Horn of Africa stabilization with the EU Ambassador to South Sudan having stressed earlier in the year that the country stood at a precarious moment and reaffirming EU support for implementing the 2018 peace agreement, election preparations, constitution making and civic education in close coordination with the AU and IGAD. This work is underpinned by the EU funded project EU Support for Facilitating Regional Stabilization in the Horn of Africa, which IGAD launched in mid 2026 to back political dialogue, mediation, and preventive diplomacy in Sudan, South Sudan and the wider region, while the AU,EU and UN trilateral framework has further cemented cooperation on Horn peace and security including support for AUSSOM in Somalia.

On the humanitarian front the EU's concern over civilian protection in Ethiopia was reinforced by reports of continued drone activity and airstrikes placing civilians and humanitarian operations at growing risk, with aid access being negotiated case by case. The EU's statement specifically referenced the need for unhindered humanitarian access aligning with broader international concerns about the humanitarian impact of the renewed fighting in Tigray, Afar and Amhara.

[369] United Nations Peace Operations. "Summary of the Co-Chairs of the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan." Press release, October 21, 2026.



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