



OSAC Country Security Report

Somalia

Published: July 30, 2024

This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State [Sudan Travel Advisory](#) and [Sudan Country Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Mogadishu is located at Mogadishu International Airport. The U.S. Government is limited in its ability to provide services to U.S. citizens in Somalia. Regular Consular services are available at U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, and Djibouti.

Direct emergency requests originating in Somalia to the American Citizens Service office at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. Tel: +254 020 363 6541 and/or email Kenya_ACS@state.gov.

OSAC Country Chapter(s)

Mogadishu has an active Country Chapter. Contact [OSAC's Africa team](#) with any questions.

Somalia Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should not travel to Somalia due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, health issues, kidnapping, piracy, and lack of availability of routine consular services.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Mogadishu as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Somalia, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

A strong familiarity with Somalia and/or extensive prior travel to the region does not reduce travel risk. Those considering travel to Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland, should obtain kidnap and recovery insurance, as well as medical evacuation insurance, prior to travel. Inter-clan, inter-factional, and criminal feuding can flare up with little/no warning.

Violent crime such as kidnapping, bombings, indirect fire attacks, murder, assassination, armed robbery, carjacking, and illegal roadblocks by armed individuals in uniforms occur throughout

Somalia, including in Mogadishu and the self-declared autonomous region of Somaliland. Somali authorities have limited capacity and resources to investigate and prosecute criminal activity.

Some schools and other facilities acting as cultural rehabilitation centers (i.e., *dhaqan celis*, meaning “returning to Somali culture”) are operating in Somalia with inadequate or nonexistent licensing and oversight. Reports of minors and young adults held in these facilities against their will and undergoing physical abuse are common.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Somalia, indicating that criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure, or continue to detain individuals in order to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing something as a condition of release.

Kidnapping remains a constant threat throughout Somalia – to include Somaliland and Puntland. Al-Shabaab continues to target foreigners.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Mogadishu as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Somalia, indicating that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

The terrorism situation in Somalia remains unstable and dangerous. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia continue to attack Somali authorities, forces associated with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and non-military targets. Kidnapping, bombings, murder, illegal roadblocks, banditry, use of indirect fire, and other violent incidents to foreign nationals can occur in any region of Somalia. Avoid places where large crowds gather and government officials frequent, including hotels, restaurants, shopping areas, and public buildings.

Portions of Somalia are under Federal Government of Somalia control, with the military support of ATMIS. However, al-Shabaab, an al-Qa’ida affiliate, has demonstrated the capability to conduct attacks in government-controlled territory with particular emphasis on targeting hotels frequented by government officials; government facilities; foreign delegation facilities and movements; and restaurants, coffee shops, and other commercial establishments frequented by government officials, foreign nationals, merchants, and the Somali diaspora. Al-Shabaab maintains strongholds in rural areas in central and southern Somalia, where it controls

a large swath of the Lower and Middle Juba and Lower Shabelle regions. Al-Shabaab is also responsible for numerous high-profile bombings and shootings in the northeast Puntland State.

ATMIS is set to withdraw from Somalia by December 2024. Since June 2023, ATMIS began a phased drawdown approach, withdrawing troops in clusters and handing over ATMIS bases to Somali forces. ATMIS completed the first phase in June 2023 with the withdrawal of 5,000 troops and the handover of 13 bases to Somali forces. The second phase was completed in January 2024 with the withdrawal of 3,000 troops and the handover of 9 bases. In response to a continued degradation of the security environment and the potential reemergence of security vacuums in previous ATMIS strongholds, the Somalia government requested a delay in the completion of the third phase, originally set to be completed by June 2024.

Insurgents consistently conduct high-profile attacks, many of which target government officials and candidates. These attacks consist of complex assaults, improvised explosive device (IED) detonations, vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) and suicide bombings. Insurgents target hotels where government officials and candidates stay, various Federal Government of Somalia facilities in Mogadishu, and Mogadishu's Aden Adde International Airport (MGQ), which houses most international aid workers and diplomatic facilities.

Al-Shabaab-planned assassinations, suicide bombings, and indiscriminate armed attacks in civilian populated areas occur regularly in Somalia. Significant attacks in the past year include the siege of the SYL Hotel, a popular hotel located near federal government buildings in Mogadishu, in March 2024. Al-Shabaab gunmen conducted a complex attack utilizing VBIEDs to stage a 13-hour siege of the hotel, killing at least 3 people and injuring 27. The hotel is a popular location for government officials and candidates. In July 2024, al-Shabaab conducted a VBIED attack outside of a popular café in Mogadishu, killing five people and injuring at least 20.

IEDs remain the most lethal and common method of attack in Somalia, with Personnel Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIEDs) and VBIEDs resulting in the most significant casualty producing events. Exchanges of small arms and heavier weapons between Somali Security Forces, African Union troops, terrorist groups, and clan militias are commonplace. Projectiles from these exchanges present a significant hazard due to the chance of them inadvertently striking a target.

ISIS networks in Somalia aim to replace the Federal Government of Somalia with an Islamic state, implement a strict interpretation of Sharia, and replace al-Shabaab as the dominant armed opposition to federal authority. ISIS-Somalia directs operations, recruitment, and training from Puntland, conducting sporadic attacks against ATMIS and Somali Government personnel, predominately in Puntland, but also occasionally conducting attacks in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the country.

While the self-proclaimed "Independent Republic of Somaliland" has experienced a level of stability not present in other parts of Somalia, the Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against all travel to all of Somalia, including Somaliland. Travelers who visit Somaliland despite this warning should check conditions there before embarking on their journey. Terrorist

attacks have occurred against international relief workers, including Westerners, throughout Somalia, including in Puntland and Somaliland. No area in Somalia is immune from violence; the potential exists throughout the country for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against foreign nationals at any time.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Mogadishu as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Somalia, indicating that demonstrations, protests, and/or strikes occur frequently, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond adequately. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

In May 2022, Somali members of parliament (MPs) elected former president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as Somalia’s next president. Mohamud won in a third-round election that only involved the country’s 328 MPs, who were elected by delegates nominated by clans. Security challenges precluded a wider vote among the Somali populace. The vote followed more than a year of delays due to infighting between supporters of various Federal Member State (FMS) presidents and supporters of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and disagreements over the electoral process. President Mohamud’s term is intended to last four years, though past election delays have consistently lengthened presidential terms.

Protests & Demonstrations

Demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience are not uncommon, and often become violent.

Fighting among clans and subclans, particularly over water and land resources, occurs particularly in the regions of Hiiraan, Galmudug, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and Sool. In late 2020 and the first half of 2021, regular protests occurred regarding the presidential election impasse. Armed clashes occurred outside the airport on January 19, 2021, with RPGs fired into the airport complex striking buildings adjacent to the terminal. Most flights were canceled for the day.

On April 26, 2021, armed conflict within Mogadishu occurred between opposition militias and SNA splinter groups that sided with the opposition against SNA and NISA forces loyal to the FGS. Dozens of bullets impacted structures on the airport complex. Periodic fighting occurred for approximately two weeks and displaced an estimated 250,000 Mogadishu residents.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

There is a particular threat to foreigners in Somalia in locations where large crowds gather or where foreigners routinely spend time, including airports, government buildings, hotels, restaurants, and shopping areas.

Law Enforcement

Emergency police services are provided by the Somali Police Force. The emergency line in Somalia is **888**.

The 2012 provisional federal constitution states federal police, overseen by civilian leadership in the Ministry of Internal Security, have responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order within the country. However, many parts of the country remain outside government control, with al-Shabaab contesting government control. The African Union Mission in Somalia, under civilian African Union leadership, and the Somali National Army, under civilian leadership in the Ministry of Defense, are the primary internal security providers. Civilian authorities do not always maintain effective control over the security forces. Members of the federal and state security forces reportedly commit numerous abuses.

Broadly, the Somali Police Force (SPF) service is responsible for dealing with crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of Federal Government of Somalia, including any activities in violation of the draft constitution that may endanger constitutional order, public order, hooliganism, terrorism, trafficking in persons and transferring of drugs.

Police Response

Somali police forces are understaffed, ill-equipped, do not receive training commensurate with U.S. or EU standards, and struggle to provide consistent basic law enforcement services. Enforcement of criminal laws is haphazard to nonexistent. The consistency of enforcement and subsequent criminal penalties vary dramatically.

Local courts operate under a combination of Somali customary and Islamic law, some of which may be hostile towards foreigners. If authorities arrest or detain you, ask police or prison officials to notify the U.S. Embassy in Kenya immediately. The U.S. government's ability to provide consular services is severely restricted due to ongoing security concerns. Authorities recognize dual U.S.-Somali citizens as Somali citizens, which impedes the ability of the United States to provide any consular assistance.

The U.S. government is aware of several cases where dual U.S.-Somali citizens have been detained against their will in so-called 'rehabilitation centers' located throughout Somalia. These detentions are typically carried out at the request of family members who pay for the service. SPF contacts have been ineffective in repeated Embassy requests to assist in the release of detained U.S. citizens.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Somalia, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Somalia.

Corruption is endemic to Somalia, a nation regarded as one of the least transparent and most corrupt countries in the world. Humanitarian assistance in the form of food and other material has been diminished by theft and corruption at the hands of al-Shabaab and government officials. Arbitrary arrests of those critical of the government, particularly journalists, is common. Government forces routinely use force, including with gunfire, to disperse protests that are negative towards the government. Security forces have killed and wounded civilians in fights over land, at illegal roadblocks to extort tolls, and in clashes with al-Shabaab, clan militias, and other forces. Corrupt security and police officials are also known to collect illegal taxes and bribes from civilians and business owners.

Cybersecurity

Authorities restrict access to the internet, but there are no credible reports that the government monitors private online communications.

Import/Export Restrictions

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).