



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Somalia Genocide and Famine Warning December 2022

Since the 1980s Somalia has been in constant civil war. The war has been marked by massacres by rival warlords, Al Shabaab terrorists, and Somali government forces. Between [350,000 and 1 million people](#) have died since 1991. [2.6 million Somalis](#) are internally displaced. [3.5 million Somalis, including 1.5 million children, face starvation.](#)

The [Isaaq Genocide](#) of 1988 - 1991 is notable. Following a rebellion in the mid-1980s in Somaliland, the dictator Siad Barre launched a genocide against the Isaaq tribe, one of the largest in Somalia. The genocide, led by Barre's son-in-law Mohammed Said Hersi Morgan, killed an [estimated 200,000 people](#). The Isaaq Genocide was carried out with massive aerial and artillery bombardments and death squads. The genocide included mass rape and forced displacement. Barre's forces destroyed [Hargeisa](#), the Somaliland capital. The Isaaq Genocide was the deadliest in Somalia's modern history, but it is largely unrecognized to this day.

The Barre regime collapsed in 1991. Somaliland declared independence. A coalition led by the United States intervened in 1992 but withdrew after 18 Americans were killed in the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" incident. The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the warlords in 2006. The ICU was defeated by the internationally backed federal government in 2007. Somalia is currently paralyzed by the war between the Islamic terrorist group Al-Shabaab and the Somalia government, which is supported by the US, AU, and UN. [Al-Shabaab](#) is aligned with the Islamic State. It [regularly attacks civilians](#) in Somalia and in Kenya. An [increase in civilian casualties](#) has also resulted from [massacres](#) by clan militias. Al-Shabaab tyranny has driven many Somalis out of rural areas.

Many Somalis have fled to IDP camps and to Mogadishu and other cities, leaving their fields uncultivated during a five-year drought. There is a high risk of famine in the country that could affect [up to 7 million people](#), close to half the population. Famines killed 300,000 Somalis in 1992 and 260,000 in 2011. The UN's appeal for \$1.5 billion in food assistance has been [only 17% fulfilled](#), with grain shipments from Ukraine hampered by Russia's aggression.

Kenya, Ethiopia, and other east African nations maintain an African Union peacekeeping force, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), that will end its mandate in 2024. Many western humanitarian NGOs are present in Somalia as well as small western counterterrorism contingents, most notably [500 American troops](#). President Trump ordered US troops out of Somalia at the end of his term, but President Biden [ordered them to stay](#). US airstrikes in support of AU and Somali forces have [caused](#) civilian casualties.



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The Somalia federal government is still weak. Somali security forces lack the capacity to control much of the country or drive out Al-Shabaab. They [rely on foreign support](#) to control even Mogadishu. Basic government services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure are close to non-existent. This has allowed Al-Shabaab to set up a [parallel government](#) in many areas of the country.

Somalia is at **Stage 5: Organization, Stage 6: Polarization, Stage 8: Persecution, and Stage 9: Extermination.**

Genocide Watch recommends that:

- International donors should increase funding and support for Somali security and public services.
- Local leaders should engage in inter-clan mediation and peacebuilding efforts, and the AU, UN, US, and other nations should support their efforts.
- Troop contributors and international donors should renew the mandate and reinforce ATMIS.
- International donors should increase funding for ATMIS, particularly with pay for troop contributors.
- Al-Shabaab must be driven into uninhabitable parts of the country and defeated by attrition.
- The Somalia government should recognize its ultimate inability to win the war against Al-Shabaab militarily and explore openings for diplomacy while continuing its military campaign against the terrorists.
- **International donors should provide massively increased food relief before another Somalia famine kills hundreds of thousands more Somalis.**