

# ATROCITIES WATCH AFRICA

## Atrocities Watch Africa Monitor

March 2023

Atrocities Watch Africa (AWA) is a non-partisan, civil society organisation that provides continental leadership in matters pertaining to the prevention of mass atrocities within Africa, our strategies and approaches are grounded in the realisation that atrocities can be prevented through various interventions, including, but not limited to, early warning mechanisms, diplomatic efforts, use of social media and new technologies, litigation, and advocacy campaigns.

This newsletter builds on our team's continuous monitoring of the region that allows us to identify deteriorating situations where atrocities may be committed as well as track ongoing situations of ongoing atrocities to detect increasing tendencies or opportunities for improvement.

We were watching Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. This monitor will cover these countries on a rolling basis highlighting those in which significant changes have occurred in the period under consideration.

This month newsletter covers:

- Cameroon
- Ethiopia
- Nigeria
- Somalia

### **Cameroon:**

In February, in the run up to senatorial elections this month, there was an increase in violence in Cameroon's Anglophone regions.<sup>1</sup> Anglophone separatist rebels oppose elections. The Ambazonia Defense Forces spokesman, Daniel Capo, said that "any Ambazonia citizen that participates in Cameroon's senatorial elections will face serious consequences." The officials of Cameroon that are charged to conduct such elections, will be hunted by our forces for charges of enabling colonialism."<sup>2</sup> This has led to clashes between Cameroonian armed forces

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<sup>1</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa February 2023, 3 March 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/regional-overview-africa-february-2023/>

<sup>2</sup> VOA, "Two Election Officials Killed in NW Cameroon as Separatists Vow to Disrupt Senate Elections," 20 January 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/two-election-officials-killed-in-nw-cameroon-as-separatists-vow-to-disrupt-senate/>

and rebels, scores have been killed on both sides.<sup>3</sup> Two election officials were killed in January<sup>4</sup> and in February, two politicians were kidnapped.<sup>5</sup> The increase of violence against civilians led to more Cameroonian military presence, which led to an increase in attacks against civilians by soldiers in the Mezam division.<sup>6</sup> In January, two Nigerian Fulani herdsmen who refused to pay taxes to the separatists were reportedly killed, leading to reprisals from the Fulani.<sup>7</sup> The clashes left at least a dozen dead and Cameroonian troops were sent to the border. Separatists had previously clashed with Nigerians in June 2022.<sup>8</sup>

Ambazonian violence was also reported in the Ouest Francophone-region where separatists raped and killed a young girl accused of collaborating with the military.<sup>9</sup>

There has been an increase in looting and property destruction in recent months in Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga departments in the Far North, which ACLED related to the rising criminalization of jihad and partnerships with criminal groups.<sup>10</sup>

Two journalists were murdered on two separate occasions in Yaounde, one of them, Martinez Zogo, showed clear signs of having been tortured and the second, Jean-Jacques Ola Bebe, had a history of reporting on corruption.<sup>11</sup> Many intelligence officers were arrested on suspicion of murdering Martinez Zogo, and accused the Minister of Justice of ordering the assassination.<sup>12</sup>

*International*

*response:*

There were mixed messages regarding a possible peace process between the government and separatists including the Ambazonia Governing Council and the Ambazonia Defence

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[elections/6926753.html#:~:text=Officials%20in%20Cameroon%20say%20separatists,will%20continue%2C%20despite%20the%20killings.](https://www.voanews.com/a/scores-killed-in-cameroon-s-battles-with-separatists-ahead-of-senate-elections-6973130.html#:~:text=Officials%20in%20Cameroon%20say%20separatists,will%20continue%2C%20despite%20the%20killings.)

<sup>3</sup> VOA, "Scores Killed in Cameroon's Battles with Separatists Ahead of Senate Elections," 21 February 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/scores-killed-in-cameroon-s-battles-with-separatists-ahead-of-senate-elections-6973130.html>

<sup>4</sup> VOA, "Two Election Officials Killed in NW Cameroon as Separatists Vow to Disrupt Senate Elections," 20 January 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/two-election-officials-killed-in-nw-cameroon-as-separatists-vow-to-disrupt-senate-elections/6926753.html#:~:text=Officials%20in%20Cameroon%20say%20separatists,will%20continue%2C%20despite%20the%20killings.>

<sup>5</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa February 2023, 3 March 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/regional-overview-africa-february-2023/>

<sup>6</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa January 2023, 3 February 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/02/03/regional-overview-africa-january-2023/>

<sup>7</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa January 2023, 3 February 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/02/03/regional-overview-africa-january-2023/>

<sup>8</sup> VOA, "Cameroon Sends Troops to Border After Separatists, Herders Clash," 18 January 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301190006.html>

<sup>9</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa February 2023, 3 March 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/regional-overview-africa-february-2023/>

<sup>10</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa January 2023, 3 February 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/02/03/regional-overview-africa-january-2023/>

<sup>11</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Cameroon: From Bad to Worse in Cameroon?," 13 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302150002.html>

<sup>12</sup> Reporters Sans Frontiers, "Cameroonian Journalist Martinez Zogo's Murder Was a State Crime, Official Confesses," 6 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302060106.html>

Force, the African People's Liberation Movement and the Southern Cameroons Defence Force, the Interim Government, and the Ambazonia Coalition Team. The Canadian government, which was to lead the talks, claimed the parties had agreed to begin.<sup>13</sup> However, days later the Cameroonian government denied this.<sup>14</sup>

## **Ethiopia:**

Although ACLED reported over a 50% decrease in violent events overall and a 74% decrease in battles in Ethiopia as a whole in February, continuing violence in Oromia was perpetrated by Oromia regional special forces.<sup>15</sup> Fighting between OLA and the Ethiopian government continued, and OLA targeted an IDP camp and killed at least 50 people between 2 and 4 February in East Wollega Zone, Oromia. After the Ethiopia National Defense Forces (ENDF) regained control of the area at least eight youths were killed, suspected of collaborating with OLA.<sup>16</sup> The Oromo regional president said he wanted to end the fighting with OLA and called for the group to participate in reconciliation processes.<sup>17</sup>

Banking services were restored in Tigray, and school resumed in the capital, Mekelle.<sup>18</sup> Following a meeting between Prime Minister Abiy and the TPLF, the ENDF transferred control of the Central and North Western zones to Tigrayan control.<sup>19</sup>

Eritrean forces are withdrawing from northern Ethiopia, and victims are beginning to speak of the abuses. It was recently reported that EDF allegedly massacred about 300 people just days before the signing of the November peace deal.<sup>20</sup>

A referendum was held in six zones and five special woredas of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples region (SNNPR) on whether to establish a new regional state to incorporate the zones and special woredas.<sup>21</sup> Although it was initially reported that a majority

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<sup>13</sup> CBC, "Canada to guide peace process aimed at ending years-long fighting in Cameroon, Joly says," 20 January 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-cameroon-peace-process-1.6721844>

<sup>14</sup> VOA, "Cameroon Denies Canada's Mediation With Separatists," 24 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301250037.html>

<sup>15</sup> Ethiopia Peace Observatory, EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious disputes and government involvement in Ethiopia, 8 March 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/03/08/epo-february-2023-monthly-religious-disputes-and-government-involvement-in-ethiopia/>

<sup>16</sup> Addis Standard, "News: At least 50 killed on IDPs shelter in East Wollega, attack blamed on Oromo rebels; eight more killed by federal forces accused of links with rebels: Rights Commission," 15 February 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-at-least-50-killed-on-idps-in-east-wollega-attack-blamed-on-oromo-rebels-eight-more-killed-by-federal-forces-accused-of-links-with-rebels-rights-commission/>

<sup>17</sup> Addis Standard, "Breaking: Oromia Region President calls for reconciliation with OLA," 17 February 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/breaking-oromia-region-president-calls-for-reconciliation-with-ola/>

<sup>18</sup> VOA, "Ethiopia: Children in Ethiopia's Tigray Return to School but Face Extended Trauma," 7 March 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202303080065.html>

<sup>19</sup> Ethiopia Peace Observatory, EPO Weekly 4-10 February 2023, 15 February 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/02/15/epo-weekly-4-10-february-2023>

<sup>20</sup> The Washington Post, "Hundreds massacred in Ethiopia even as peace deal was being reached," 1 March 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/28/ethiopia-massacre-tigray-eritrea/>

<sup>21</sup> Ethiopia Peace Observatory, EPO Weekly 4-10 February 2023, 15 February 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/02/15/epo-weekly-4-10-february-2023/>

of voters favoured the creation of a new southern region, numerous irregularities were reported,<sup>22</sup> and the referendum will reportedly be repeated.<sup>23</sup>

Religious tensions began to rise at the end of January after a split in Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the situation turned violent when EOTC supporters were violently repressed by Oromo security forces.<sup>24</sup> Factions from different synods clashed over control of the churches in the region and at least eight people were killed.<sup>25</sup> The Oromo regional forces sided with the newly established Holy Synod of Oromia and Nations and Nationalities thus risking widening the ethno-political tensions in the country.<sup>26</sup> An agreement between both synods was reached on 15 February,<sup>27</sup> but tensions remain high.

#### *International response:*

The Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia announced the Ethiopian government planned to present a resolution at the March session of the UN Human Rights Council to terminate the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE). Termination of a commission mid-mandate is unprecedented. Civil society organisations requested the Council to reject the resolution and support the work of the commission. Such a move is unprecedented and could set a dangerous precedent regarding international scrutiny and encourage impunity for rights abuses elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Although the effort was ultimately unsuccessful, there is concern about the future of the commission once its current mandate expires in September.

#### **Nigeria:**

Nigerians headed to the polls to elect the President, Vice President and members of the Senate and House of Representatives, on 25 February. Days later, and despite still having over 28,000 polling units still unaccounted for,<sup>29</sup> the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, Bola Tinubu, the winner with

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<sup>22</sup> Addis Observer, "NEBE reports majority vote in favor of new region in recent referendum, irregularities in Wolaita zone," 21 February 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-nebe-reports-majority-vote-in-favor-of-new-region-in-recent-referendum-irregularities-in-wolaita-zone/>

<sup>23</sup> Fana Broadcasting Corporate, "NEBE Announces Results Of Referendum Held In SNNPR," 1 March 2023, <https://www.fanabc.com/english/nebe-announces-results-of-referendum-held-in-snnpr/>

<sup>24</sup> Atrocities Watch Africa, Monitor February 2023, February 2023,

<sup>25</sup> Ethiopia Peace Observatory, EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious disputes and government involvement in Ethiopia, 8 March 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/03/08/epo-february-2023-monthly-religious-disputes-and-government-involvement-in-ethiopia/>

<sup>26</sup> Ethiopia Peace Observatory, EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious disputes and government involvement in Ethiopia, 8 March 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/03/08/epo-february-2023-monthly-religious-disputes-and-government-involvement-in-ethiopia/>

<sup>27</sup> Addis Standard, "News Analysis: Ethiopian Orthodox Church leaders resolve schism through dialogue, restore Church unity "based on church's canon", 16 February 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-ethiopian-orthodox-church-leaders-resolve-schism-through-dialogue-restore-church-unity-based-on-churchs-canon/>

<sup>28</sup> Atrocities Watch Africa, "Letter to the UN Human Rights Council on the threats to terminate the mandate of the ICHREE," 28 February 2023, <https://atrocitieswatch.org/publications/letter-to-the-un-human-rights-council-on-the-threats-to-terminate-the-mandate-of-the-ichree/>

<sup>29</sup> Daily Post, "Nigeria election: INEC yet to upload 28,000 results after declaring Tinubu winner," 2 March 2023, <https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/02/nigeria-election-inec-yet-to-upload-28000-results-after-declaring-tinubu-winner/>

over 36% of the total votes, followed by Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who received 29% of the votes and Peter Obi from the Labour Party(LP) with 25% who won in both Lagos and Abuja.<sup>30</sup>

Less than 25 million Nigerians, out of more than 93 million registered voters, turned out to cast their votes. Only around nine million voted for Tinubu, who will now govern over 220 Nigerians.<sup>31</sup> The Labour Party called the election a “sham”<sup>32</sup> and indicated they would legally challenge the result.<sup>33</sup>

Various irregularities called into question the legitimacy of the results. A large number of polling units remained unaccounted for at the time the announcement was made, although the INEC insists these results were unable to change the outcome.<sup>34</sup> While many Nigerians were able to cast their votes undisturbed, logistical failures and delays were common and in some states such as Lagos, Rivers, Kogi, Edo and Imo violent incidents where armed men attacked civilians and poll workers and voting materials were destroyed were reported.<sup>35</sup> The police officers at polling units were not able to contain the situation as they were unarmed.<sup>36</sup> At least 14 journalists and media workers covering the elections were detained, harassed, or attacked.<sup>37</sup> HumAngleMedia reported high levels of violence in areas where the LP was popular.<sup>38</sup> The results at multiple polling units were cancelled due to such events.<sup>39</sup>

The lead up to the election was also plagued by violence and insecurity, hate speech was utilised by candidates and fake news was shared on social media.<sup>40</sup> Violence involving political parties was highest in southern states where the competition between APC and PDP has occasionally turned violent.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Civichive, 2023 Presidential Results, <https://liveresults.civichive.org/presidential/2023> (checked 01 March 2023)

<sup>31</sup> Premium time, “ANALYSIS: Trend of low voter turnout continues in Nigerian elections,” 5 March 2023, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/586193-analysis-trend-of-low-voter-turnout-continues-in-nigerian-elections.html>

<sup>32</sup> NPR, “Nigeria's opposition parties call elections a 'sham' and demand a new vote,” 28 February 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/28/1160062514/nigeria-election-opposition-parties-call-sham>

<sup>33</sup> CNN, “Opposition vows challenge as Tinubu wins Nigerian presidency,” 2 March 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/28/africa/nigeria-presidential-election-result-intl-hnk/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> Premium Times, “INEC declares APC's Bola Tinubu winner of Nigeria's presidential election,” 1 March 2023, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/585443-breaking-inec-declares-apcs-bola-tinubu-winner-of-nigerias-presidential-election.html>

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria's Elections Remain Risky for Many Citizens,” 27 February 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/27/nigerias-elections-remain-risky-many-citizens>

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria's Elections Remain Risky for Many Citizens,” 27 February 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/27/nigerias-elections-remain-risky-many-citizens>

<sup>37</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, “At least 14 journalists detained, attacked, or harassed covering Nigeria's election,” 27 February 2023, <https://cpj.org/2023/02/at-least-14-journalists-detained-attacked-or-harassed-covering-nigerias-election/>

<sup>38</sup> Humangle, “Nigeria Elections 2023: A Look Ahead To The Gubernatorial Polls,” 3 March 2023, <https://humanglemedia.com/nigeria-elections-2023-a-look-ahead-to-the-gubernatorial-polls/>

<sup>39</sup> Al Jazeera, “How violence robs Nigerians of their votes,” 2 March 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/2/how-violence-robs-nigerians-of-their-votes>

<sup>40</sup> Incident Centre for Election Atrocities, Monthly tracking of hate speech and election atrocities in Nigeria, January 2023, <https://www.nigeriamourns.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ICEA-report-JANUARY-2023-1.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> ACLED, Regional Overview Africa February 2023, 3 March 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/regional-overview-africa-february-2023/>

Civil society organisations had called for the Nigerian government to take measures to ensure safe elections<sup>42</sup> and for the international community to pay close attention to the elections and ensure impartial media focus.<sup>43</sup>

Post-election violence was also reported. Residents were threatened at their workplace for not having voted for APC in Lagos state.<sup>44</sup> There were also reports of violent events in Kano State where an INEC office was burned down and two people were killed. Fears were expressed that worse violations would occur in the March gubernatorial elections.<sup>45</sup>

Observer missions, including the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) Joint Election Observation Mission (IEOM) reported challenges with the electronic transfer of the results and said that the “inadequate communication and lack of transparency” by INEC “created confusion and eroded voters’ trust.”<sup>46</sup> The EU election observation mission (EU EOM) also noted that the lack of transparency and operational failures reduced Nigerian’s trust in the process.<sup>47</sup>

The Commonwealth Observer Group noted that although an overall peaceful process, there were “inconsistencies in procedures, particularly in the positioning of some polling booths which compromised the secrecy of the ballot as well as lack of advance voting for those deployed on election day.”<sup>48</sup> The Election Observation Missions of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Africa Union (AU) reported signs of increasing tension following INEC’s preliminary results, and called for a de-escalation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Crisis Group, “Mitigating Risks of Violence in Nigeria’s 2023 Elections,” 10 February 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/311-mitigating-risks-violence-nigerias-2023-elections> and Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Impunity, Insecurity Threaten Elections,” 6 February 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/nigeria-impunity-insecurity-threaten-elections>

<sup>43</sup> Atrocities Watch Africa, “Statement: Risk of increased violence in Nigeria’s 2023 elections,” 21 February 2023, <https://atrocitieswatch.org/publications/statement-risk-of-increased-violence-in-nigerias-2023-elections/>

<sup>44</sup> Humangle, “Nigeria Elections 2023: A Look Ahead To The Gubernatorial Polls,” 3 March 2023, <https://humanglemedia.com/nigeria-elections-2023-a-look-ahead-to-the-gubernatorial-polls/>

<sup>45</sup> Humangle, “Nigeria Elections 2023: A Look Ahead To The Gubernatorial Polls,” 3 March 2023, <https://humanglemedia.com/nigeria-elections-2023-a-look-ahead-to-the-gubernatorial-polls/>

<sup>46</sup> Daily Post, “NEWSNigeria elections below expectations, INEC lacked transparency – NDI/IRI observers,” 27 February 2023, <https://dailypost.ng/2023/02/27/nigeria-elections-below-expectations-inec-lacked-transparency-ndi-iri-observers/>

<sup>47</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, First Preliminary Statement - Elections held on schedule, but lack of transparency and operational failures reduced trust in the process and challenged the right to vote, 27 February 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/first-preliminary-statement-elections-held-schedule-lack-transparency-and\\_en?s=410279](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/first-preliminary-statement-elections-held-schedule-lack-transparency-and_en?s=410279)

<sup>48</sup> The Commonwealth, Commonwealth observers say Nigeria’s 2023 elections ‘largely peaceful’ with room for improvement, 27 February 2023, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-observers-say-nigerias-2023-elections-largely-peaceful>

<sup>49</sup> African Union, Election Observation Missions of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Africa Union (AU), 1 March 2023, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20230301/joint-statement-post-electoral-phase-25th-february-2023-nigerian-general>

The US Secretary of State congratulated the president-elect and also noted Nigerians' frustration with the electoral process, condemning attacks on media on election day,<sup>50</sup> however some US officials questioned the congratulatory message delivered as observer missions noted irregularities in the process and fearing it could undermine any future challenges to the results.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, in north-eastern Nigeria, clashes between Jamatu Ahli Al-Sunna lil Da'wa Wal Jihad (JAS), a faction of Boko Haram, and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been taking place for the last few months, causing casualties and fighters to surrender on both sides. This has proven beneficial for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) who has reported significant gains.<sup>52</sup>

### **Somalia:**

Fighting broke out on 6 February in Las Anod, capital of the disputed Sool region claimed by both Somaliland and Puntland. Over 185,000 people were displaced<sup>53</sup> and over 200 were killed.<sup>54</sup> The fighting took place between Somaliland forces and militias loyal to Somalia allegedly assisted by Puntland troops.<sup>55</sup> It erupted when elders in the surrounding Sool region declared they no longer considered themselves part of Somaliland and that the regions of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn would now be governed by Somalia.<sup>56</sup> Somali president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud called for an end to the fighting the following day,<sup>57</sup> but was met with silence. Somaliland announced an unconditional ceasefire on 10 February,<sup>58</sup> but both parties accused each other of violating it and fighting resumed a week later when clan leaders requested Somaliland forces withdraw from the region.<sup>59</sup> At the end of February, the Somaliland President accused al-Shabaab of meddling in the Las Anod conflict as several sources linked

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<sup>50</sup> US Department of State, 2023 Presidential Election Results in Nigeria, 1 March 2023, <https://www.state.gov/2023-presidential-election-results-in-nigeria/>

<sup>51</sup> Foreign Policy, "U.S. Hailed Nigeria Election Results While Election Observers Cried Foul," 6 March 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/06/nigeria-elections-us-biden-democracy-africa-tinubu/>

<sup>52</sup> African Arguments, "Inside the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria," 22 February 2022, <https://africanarguments.org/2023/02/inside-the-insurgency-in-northeastern-nigeria/>

<sup>53</sup> The East African, "UN says Somaliland clashes have displaced over 185,000 people," 17 February 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/las-anod-clashes-displace-185000-un-4127412>

<sup>54</sup> VOA, "Somalia: Over 200 Killed in Fighting in Disputed Somaliland Town," 6 March 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202303070154.html>

<sup>55</sup> Reuters, "Somaliland agrees to ceasefire after five days of fighting in disputed territory," 11 February 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somaliland-agrees-ceasefire-after-five-days-fighting-disputed-territory-2023-02-10/>

<sup>56</sup> Africa News, "Fighting resumes in Somaliland as tens of thousands flee," 22 February 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/22/fighting-resumes-in-somaliland-as-tens-of-thousands-flee/>

<sup>57</sup> Shabelle Media Network, "Somalia: Somali President Calls for an Immediate End to Lasanod Fighting," 7 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302080073.html>

<sup>58</sup> Reuters, "Somaliland agrees to ceasefire after five days of fighting in disputed territory," 11 February 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somaliland-agrees-ceasefire-after-five-days-fighting-disputed-territory-2023-02-10/>

<sup>59</sup> Africa News, "Fighting resumes in Somaliland as tens of thousands flee," 22 February 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/22/fighting-resumes-in-somaliland-as-tens-of-thousands-flee/>

group members to the fighting, although they may be acting on a personal basis.<sup>60</sup> According to analysts it is unlikely either side would cave on their demands for dialogue, elders in Las Anod view the withdrawal of Somaliland troops as critical for confidence building while Somaliland believes that withdrawing from the city could risk its control over it,<sup>61</sup> and pressure from the international community is key for resolving the dispute.<sup>62</sup>

#### *International response:*

In early February, the international community expressed concern over the fighting in Las Anod and called for a de-escalation of the conflict.<sup>63</sup> The Djibouti government requested the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to act as mediator.<sup>64</sup>

The Somali government briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in the country and indicated they had finalised the national security architecture, paving the way to address division of powers with the federal member states and the Somali Security Forces, requesting the arms embargo be lifted. They also mentioned their commitment in the fight against al-Shabaab and concern over the ongoing drought that could make 50% of the population food insecure.<sup>65</sup>

The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Somalia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United States held a meeting with Somali representatives and vowed to support Somalia's efforts in meeting the benchmarks to fully lift the UN arms embargo.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Africa Intelligence, "Somaliland conflict takes a regional turn," 8 March 2023, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2023/03/08/somaliland-conflict-takes-a-regional-turn,109921456-art>

<sup>61</sup> VOA, "Somalia: Over 100 Reported Killed in Contested Somaliland Region," 24 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302270103.html>

<sup>62</sup> VOA, "Somalia: Over 100 Reported Killed in Contested Somaliland Region," 24 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302270103.html>

<sup>63</sup> UNSOM, International partners call for an immediate de-escalation of violence in Laascaanood, 7 February 2023, <https://unsom.unmissions.org/international-partners-call-immediate-de-escalation-violence-laascaanood>

<sup>64</sup> Africa Intelligence, "Somaliland conflict takes a regional turn," 8 March 2023, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2023/03/08/somaliland-conflict-takes-a-regional-turn,109921456-art>

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