



# PUNTLAND SITUATION REPORT

## Somali Law & Policy Program

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## 1. SUMMARY

In June, the overall situation in Puntland State of Somalia remained relatively peaceful and stable. The state parliament's first ordinary session opened in Garowe, with Puntland MPs forwarding a parliamentary agenda that concerned the administration, more interestingly regarding past agreements such as DP World's 2017 Bossaso port expansion deal. The government continued its institutional reforms, naming new Puntland Darawish Force commanders, new governors and mayors, to spearhead the reform agenda. Also, the collective resignation of Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) presented the government with both a surprise, and an opportunity to double its efforts to restart the state's stalled democratization process.

Tensions remained high in parts of Sool and Sanaag regions, with increasing military and political activity in eastern Sanaag region. While there were no armed clashes, the Somaliland-Puntland military standoff near Yubbe town in eastern Sanaag region, combined with rising local clan sentiments, remained a major threat to regional stability. Media reports alleging that Somaliland government wrote a letter to international aid organizations warning against aid operations in parts of eastern Sanaag region seemed to further inflame the complex security, political and social dynamics in the affected region. Meanwhile, Puntland government forces continued conducting security operations, especially in Bossaso and Bari region, including arresting terrorism suspects and foiling a bomb attack. However, Al Shabaab insurgents dealt a publicity blow to Puntland after its forces briefly seized Af Urur military camp. Days later, Puntland soldiers were killed in a bomb attack at Af Urur village, indicating that insurgent operations remained an active and daily risk to Puntland security forces. With regards to sexual violence endemic, Puntland courts upheld a death sentence for three men convicted of the rape and murder of 13-year-old Aisha Ilyas, after the convicted men filed an appeals case, drawing credibility to the state's justice system.

Puntland government continued its efforts to fix major roads damaged by Gu seasonal rains in May. Furthermore, the government was actively leading flood relief while analysts warn of an impending food crisis that could break out in Puntland. Drought response initiatives seemed to be at inception stage across Puntland, but less than half of the funding requirements for the humanitarian response plan have been met. Meanwhile, the government also signed two new agreements during President Deni's working trip to China in early June, including an MOU for developing Horn of Africa Economic Zone in Puntland.

## 2. PEACE AND SECURITY

**2.1 Key Developments:** During the reporting month of June, local and international media reported a total of 12 violent deaths in Puntland State. This number decreased from 16 violent fatalities in May, down approximately by 25%. Puntland government actions such as increased security presence in Bossaso has led to a decline in the number of attacks. Also in June, government forces foiled one bomb attack and detained six suspects during security operations in Bossaso. This month's attacks were attributed to U.S. military airstrikes on insurgent groups in Bari region (50%), VEO attacks against Puntland security forces accounted for (41.7%) of all violent deaths, and violence against women accounted for (8.3%) of all fatalities in June.

**2.1.1 Violence Against Women:** On Jun. 17, Puntland Deputy Prosecutor-General Mohamed Hared told local media three men convicted of rape and murder had requested an appeals verdict which was scheduled to be announced in court on Jun. 22. The court again delayed the appeals case verdict.<sup>1</sup> On May 12, Nugal Regional Court convicted the three men to death for the rape and killing case of 13-year-old Aisha Ilyas in Galkayo in Feb. 2019.<sup>2</sup> The Ilyas case presents a major test for Puntland government's court system, as there is local pressure to "settle" the case out of court through traditional engagement among family and clan representatives. However, in light of growing pressure from civil society and media groups, Puntland courts have dealt with this major case with credible legality and professionalism, in an effort to placate public frustrations. Finally, on Jun. 30, Nugal Regional Appeals Courts rejected the three convicted men's appeals, thereby upholding the validity of the prior court's death sentence ruling.<sup>3</sup>

On Jun. 18, in an unrelated case Puntland media reported that a 12-year-old girl who was raped in March had died from wounds sustained during the violent sexual assault.<sup>4</sup> Puntland courts are hearing the case of three suspects of the rape of 12-year-old Najma Abdulkadir Hassan, who was violently raped on Mar. 2 in Burtinle district in Nugal region. Najmo's family members said the girl suffered major physical wounds and scars and was taken for surgery and other medical treatment to Bossaso and Addis Ababa. She was buried in Garowe on Jun. 18. The Nugal Regional Court, which is handling the rape case, postponed the court date to Jun. 29. As of Jun. 30, the prosecutor did not introduce any new charges against the suspects following Najma's death, as a direct result of the violent rape three months ago.

**2.1.2 Violent Extremist Organizations:** Armed non-state actors such as Al Shabaab and ISIS continued violent attacks targeting Puntland government and security forces. On Jun. 8, Al Shabaab fighters in the Golis Mountains southwest of Bossaso descended from their mountain hideouts and briefly captured AfUrur village without any fighting, after Puntland troops vacated the army post hours earlier as a "military tactic".<sup>5</sup> Af Urur, about 70km southwest of Bossaso, is a major Puntland army post in the fight against Al Shabaab group in the Golis Mountains. Citing unnamed sources, Puntland media reported that commanders leading the troops cited unpaid salaries and moved the forces out of the area to pressure Puntland government to pay troop salaries.<sup>6</sup>

The development triggered the government into action, and on Jun. 9, Vice President Ahmed Elmi Osman 'Karash' leading a senior government delegation arrived at Puntland State House in Bossaso. The senior delegation was tasked with resolving the government forces' alleged salary complaints and returning them to the army base at AfUrur.<sup>7</sup> On Jun. 12, Vice President Ahmed Karash visited Af Urur military camp after Puntland troops returned, and encouraged the troops to continue serving and defending Puntland and reiterated promises of government support.<sup>8</sup>

On Jun. 25, four Puntland soldiers and a female civilian were killed in a bombing attack at a small restaurant in Af Urur village.<sup>9</sup> Of the four dead soldiers, two were serving with Puntland Darawish Force and the other two were members of Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF). The type of bombing device was not immediately clear and Puntland officials have yet to provide more details to local media.

**2.1.3 Counter terrorism Operations:** Puntland security commanders were seemingly growing frustrated with security operations in Bari region, particularly Bossaso. On Jun. 4, Puntland Police Commissioner Gen. Muhiyadin Ahmed Muse told a public congregation in Bossaso celebrating Islamic holiday of Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, "local people do not cooperate with security forces".<sup>10</sup> The harsh words came on the heels of hit-and-run guerrilla attacks by Al Shabaab and ISIS operatives in Bossaso, primarily targeting

members of the Puntland security forces. In May, three police officers were killed in guerrilla-style attacks in Bossaso.

Meanwhile, US military airstrikes continued in Bari region; on Jun. 5, US airstrikes killed at least 6 combatants, according to AFRICOM press statement. Al Shabaab and ISIS militants are known to operate and maintain hideouts in the Al Miskoot Mountains of Golis Mountain Range, in Puntland.<sup>11</sup>

On Jun. 19, Puntland security forces in Bossaso foiled a bomb attack after soldiers seized a bomb hidden near Bossaso Market. Bari regional police commander Hussein Ali Mohamud told media that the bomb was “hidden at a place full of people and vehicles and near storefronts, and police successfully removed the bombing device before detonation”.<sup>12</sup> On Jun. 20, Puntland Security Force (PSF) unit announced that its forces captured 6 members of Al Shabaab and ISIS during overnight security operations in Bossaso. The PSF statement said the suspects “were carrying logistics support” to Al Shabaab and ISIS during the overnight security sweep in Bossaso.<sup>13</sup> On Jun. 29, PSF announced that its forces raided a militant hideout in the Golis Mountains and seized food, ammunition and other material supplies. No fighters were engaged or captured during the operation, according to the PSF statement.<sup>14</sup>

**2.1.4 Sub-national Conflict:** On Jun. 4, Somaliland and Puntland authorities exchanged prisoners from Tukaraq conflict in 2018. International aid group ICRC facilitated the transfer, commencing first by transporting 14 Puntland prisoners by flight to Garowe and returning 3 Somaliland prisoners to Hargeisa.<sup>15</sup> The prisoner-exchange initiative first became public when Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi announced the proposed initiative at a May 18 celebration event in Hargeisa.<sup>16</sup>

On Jun. 3, military tensions remained high in eastern Sanaag region between Somaliland and Puntland forces. Somali media reported increased military movements in the region, although there were no reports of armed clashes.<sup>17</sup>

On Jun. 10, local media reported more Somaliland troops had mutinied against the Somaliland military and were in communication with Puntland military commanders.<sup>18</sup> The next day, Somaliland-appointed Sanaag Governor Mohamed Ahmed Alim accused Somaliland clan elder Bogor Osman Aw’Mohamud ‘Burmadow’ of “establishing a rebel faction” after Somaliland troops left their army post in Hingalool district, Sanaag region, and reportedly traveled east to “join Puntland forces”<sup>19</sup>. In Apr. 2018, a Somaliland court convicted Bogor Burmadow to five-year prison term after attending a clan elder coronation ceremony in Puntland.<sup>20</sup> Puntland officials did not publicly comment on reports of Somaliland army units leaving their bases in Hingalool to “join Puntland” forces deployed in eastern Sanaag region.

On June. 12, Puntland Cabinet ministers, parliamentarians and security commanders visited Puntland troops stationed near Yubbe town, where Somaliland deployed its forces in March, provoking increased military tensions in Sanaag region.<sup>21</sup> The Puntland government officials met the commanders and encouraged security forces to maintain their defensive positions.

On the night of Jun. 12, fighting was reported between Somaliland forces and local militia led by Col. Faisal Falalug, in Sool region. Local media reported that the fighting lasted for one hour and there were unconfirmed reports of casualties. The fighting started after local militia launched a surprise attack on Somaliland troops near Tukaraq military outpost in Sool region.<sup>22</sup> This is the latest in a string of attacks so far this year on Somaliland’s

Tukaraq military outpost; in Apr. 2019, Somaliland troops stationed at Tukaraq post mutinied after their commanders “rejected” to attack rebel leader Col. Falalug.<sup>23</sup>

**2.1.5 Clan Fault-lines:** There have been no reports of violent clan conflicts in Puntland during the reporting period. However, issues related to clan dynamics surfaced, some of which could transform and adversely impact peace and community cohesion, without adequate preventative measures.

On Jun. 23, Puntland police in Galkayo arrested three men, including the imam of a local mosque. Local media reported that the three men organized a “clan meeting” whereby the meeting attendees declared to “abide by Islamic Sharia law” and called on fellow Somali clans to join. Some reports suggested Al Shabaab group was pressuring local clans in parts of Mudug region to pledge allegiance in exchange for security, and Puntland government has since been countering against this new development in Galkayo.<sup>24</sup>

On Jun. 23, commander of Puntland Darawish force in Towfiq district of Mudug region Col. Mohamed Mohamud Omar Gacayte issued a video statement reiterating that Towfiq district is part of Puntland. The commander was responding to social media posts in which speakers at a Somali Diaspora conference in Sweden declared that Towfiq district was part of Galmudug administration, Puntland’s southern neighbor.<sup>25</sup> Towfiq district was incorporated into Puntland in 2012 and the district has a representative in the Puntland Council of Ministers.

On Jun. 14, nine persons were killed in what was described as indiscriminate clan-based revenge killings in south Galkayo.<sup>26</sup> The sporadic revenge killings sparked after senior Galmudug intelligence officer Ali Tahliil Ad’eed ‘Ali Dhiif’ was killed by unknown assailants in south Galkayo on Jun. 13. The attackers were accused of targeting only members of the Somali Rahaweyn clan and the indiscriminate killings were widely and strongly condemned by Somali people and politicians across the country.

**2.1.6 Security Sector Governance:** Puntland government continued its security sector governance efforts throughout the month of June. A new police station was launched in Bossaso and new commanders nominated to lead the Puntland Darawish Force. However, the state government continued to face numerous challenges in instituting tangible and effective security sector reforms.

On Jun. 14, a one-million-dollar police headquarters was officially opened in Bossaso. Puntland Security Minister Abdisamad Mohamed Gallan and Bossaso Mayor Abdisalam Bashir attended the opening of the new regional police headquarters at a ceremony in Bossaso. Other Puntland officials present include state minister of interior, police commanders, judges and prosecutors attended the event.<sup>27</sup> Security Minister Gallan told the event that the government would soon “build five new police stations” in Puntland, as part of the government’s efforts to upgrade the state’s police facilities.

Separately, Puntland Darawish Force troops continued to express their dissatisfaction with delayed salaries and temporarily withdrew forces from Af Urur, a strategic army post in the fight against Al Shabaab militants in Golis Mountains. The new reform-minded government inherited a Darawish Force with weak capacity, lacking resources and overwhelmed by debt. Within two days, the troops returned to Af Urur; however, the withdrawal signaled that the new government’s reform efforts in Puntland continues to face stiff challenges in its aim to improve morale, force cohesion and command-and-control structures. Despite these internal developments, insurgent attacks and rising military tensions in Sanaag region did not seem to subside.

On Jun. 29, Puntland President Said Deni appointed Gen. Yasin Omar Dheere as commander of Puntland Darawish Force, and Col. Ahmed Ali Salad as second Deputy Commander of the force. The new commander formerly served as Deputy Commander of Puntland Darawish Force, the state government's paramilitary force.<sup>28</sup> The new commanders inherit a force in urgent need of major reforms, including reliable provision of monthly salaries, improved training, discipline, hardware and communications equipment. It is not clear what reforms the new commander can implement to change the conduct and performance of Darawish forces, the state government's oldest security organ.

## 2.2 Security Forecast

2.2.1 **Sexual Violence Against Women:** Sexual violence against women and children continues to haunt Puntland, as Najmo Abdulkadir Hassan is the latest young victim in a series of tragic events. The Puntland government has managed to temporarily quell public distress by carrying out a swift trial of Aisha Ilyas' convicted murderers. However, many of the other cases have yet to be brought to court and more importantly the government has yet to unveil a strategy or take measures that tackle the root causes of the problem. That gap is being filled by civil society who have embarked on assessing sexual violence against women. It will be wise for the government to work closely with the civil society to identify long-term remedies for the disturbing phenomena of sexual violence against women. It is likely that the Puntland government will continue to carry swift trials of alleged suspects, but the courts should proceed with caution. Ensuring thorough investigations and due process, while balancing the need to react and calm the public, will be a crucial test for the legitimacy of the Puntland justice system.

2.2.2 **Violent Extremist Organizations:** June saw a steady number of violent deaths attributed to VEOs. However, the number of VEO operations decreased overall during June. The decrease in operations could be attributed to increased Puntland security operations in Bossaso, or could stem from a wave of US airstrikes in the mountainous area of Bari region. Puntland has prioritized improving security in the state's commercial capital of Bossaso with some visible improvements; however, VEOs continue to conduct operations and showcase their presence in Bari region.

2.2.3 **Counter-Terrorism Operations:** There was a sharp decrease in US airstrikes in Bari region compared to May, with only one airstrike in the beginning of June. However, Puntland stepped up its counter-terrorism operations by foiling attacks and apprehending alleged suspects. The May 2019 Puntland Situation Report identified the need to improve preemptive measures, and the government has had some success. The government's priority of fostering a closer relationship between the security forces and local communities may have started to pay dividends. However, controversial statements from Puntland security commanders may not have the desired effect and can seriously hinder progress. The fragile security context in Bari region requires a measured approach to build consensus and trust between the community and security forces.

2.2.4 **Sub-national Conflict:** The sub-national conflict between Somaliland and Puntland continued to destabilize peace in Sool and Sanaag regions during the month of June. The duality of events and the potential linkages between them identify either a change in strategy or unexpected opportunities for both Puntland and Somaliland. The exchange of prisoners can be construed in many different lights, ultimately however, both sides continue to avoid compromise. Somaliland continues to maintain a military presence in parts of eastern Sanaag, despite a large number of Somaliland soldiers defecting to Puntland in condemnation of Somaliland policy. Meanwhile, the local militia led by Col. Falalug in Sool region continues to carry out offensives against the Somaliland forces, despite the deadly

risk of launching surprise attacks on the better organized Somaliland forces. Puntland also maintains forces in Sool and eastern Sanaag regions, but has not clearly communicated its strategy or plans for the two fronts. Attempts to de-escalate the tension in Sanaag region by traditional elders have had a measure of influence in the past, but the broader question cannot be solely left to the titled elders. In the near-term, Puntland and Somaliland are expected to maintain their military posture in the affected regions and for military tensions to remain high.

**2.2.5 Clan Fault Lines:** The recent clan tensions and conflict in Galkayo may have a detrimental impact on the security of the city. Known for its protracted clan conflicts which have led to intra-state conflict on several occasions, Galkayo has undergone successive years of consolidated efforts on both sides to maintain peace in the city and the wider region. Statements from the diaspora and responses from military officials in Towfiq district, a multi-clan area with history of sporadic armed clashes, may impact progress made. The recent attack of clan violence on a large scale in South Galkayo contributed to higher tensions and brought identity politics to the forefront. The fact that reported clan violence that occurred in South Galkayo did not involve the clans who have historically fought over Galkayo does not create a sense of assurance either. To further complicate the already complex clan dynamics in the region, Puntland's detention of religious and clan leaders may cause more harm than good in a fragile powder keg such as Galkayo. As proposed elections draw closer for Galmudug, developments in clan fault lines in Galkayo and Mudug region and how both Puntland and Galmudug cooperate, will need to be closely observed.

**2.2.6 Security Sector Governance:** Appointments within Puntland Darawish Force has long been a rumor in government circles, after the institution's commanding officers resigned earlier this year. The appointment of a commander from within the Darawish Force and whom local sources say has a deep understanding of security dynamics will likely boost confidence among the Darawish forces. However, Security Sector Reform will require committed efforts by the Puntland government to resolve recurring incidences of unpaid or delayed salaries. The government will further need to harmonize and cultivate a SSR policy that incorporates and expands on the wider national security strategy and the donor backed Comprehensive Approach to Security (CAS).

## 3. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

### 3.1 A Parliamentary Agenda

**3.1.1 Key Developments:** On Jun. 15, the 44<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Puntland House of Representatives officially opened in the state capital Garowe, with President Said Deni giving an opening statement to update parliamentarians on the government's achievements since the January presidential election.

President Deni's speech focused on government's achievements, including security sector and other institutional reforms, financial accountability, federalization process, Puntland Development Plan, and taxation reforms.<sup>29</sup> He reiterated the Puntland government's worsening relations with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), on key matters such as national security, constitutional review, federal laws, and the 2020/2021 national elections. Much of the content in President Deni's parliamentary speech and key message was contained in documents previously issued by the new government, such as "Policy Strategy Conference Communiqué" of March, and "Puntland Policy Statement on Failed Political Negotiations in Somalia", published in May.

After the opening day of ceremonies, Puntland legislators commenced their ordinary session, which opens twice every year in Garowe, in June and October. The 17-point parliamentary agenda included:<sup>30</sup>

1. Listening to reports submitted by sub-committees on security, finance etc.;
2. Appraising the situation in Sool and Sanaag regions;
3. Debate on goods imported from Somaliland that harm Puntland economy;
4. 2018 budget report;
5. Constitution and federal affairs;
6. Debate on policies and laws submitted by the former Puntland administration;
7. Puntland Democratization Process
8. Review of agreements signed by new administration and follow-up on old agreements;
9. Review policy on foreign workers;

The Puntland Parliament's first session agenda since the election in Jan. 2019 showcased a new cadre of parliamentarians eager to review key laws and policies, discuss major issues such as the situation in Sool and Sanaag, promote the democratization process, and approve the 2018 budget report submitted by Ministry of Finance. Furthermore, the new MPs included as part of parliament's session agenda to debate and review new agreements signed during the term of President Deni, and older agreements signed during the term of former President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali 'Gaas'. President Deni's administration signed two Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Chinese companies in Beijing last month, for a proposal to build Sister-City MOU and a Horn of Africa Economic Zone MOU.

However, the two MOUs have not transitioned to become contracts, which would require parliamentary vote. Local media reports that parliament was exerting additional pressure on President Deni and his administration about Bossaso port expansion agreement, signed in Apr. 2017 with DP World subsidiary P & O Ports, and the Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) signed with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) for building of Eyl-Garowe Road and a new Galkayo Airport. In Jul. 2017, the Puntland Parliament approved both agreements and approved the projects, with P & O Ports and CCECC maintaining offices and operations in Puntland since. One media report further noted that Puntland parliamentarians were expressing "public frustrations" with the Bossaso port deal after "two years with no construction", making the port deal locally unpopular for some time.<sup>31</sup> However, President Deni has supported continuity of ongoing projects as part of respecting agreements inherited from the former Puntland administration.

**3.1.2 Analysis:** Puntland Parliament's new generation of legislators comprise approximately 74% of parliament. This new generation is pushing bold measures and exerting pressure on the government, while at the same time sending a clear message to their constituencies that local communities' concerns have been incorporated into the parliamentary agenda. For example, Puntland local investors and traders have been struggling to expand their market share in the face of cheaper products imported from or manufactured in Somaliland. Parliament addressing such concerns by proposing higher tariffs certainly attracts local support. Similarly, parliament's bold effort to launch a review of approved agreements intends to signal to local constituencies that the MPs are holding the government to account, especially in the matter of Bossaso port expansion project.

However, it remains unclear how well-informed the legislators are about the past agreements approved by parliament. Some information suggests that "many parliamentarians" have not read nor studied the said agreements, but that their focus is to "voice" the concerns of local communities and to help diffuse local tensions. Government ministers were reportedly busy lobbying Puntland MPs to withdraw discussion on the



approved agreements and prevent political tensions with the administration, a move that is likely to gain traction once MPs have appealed to their support base, by openly questioning the government on said agreements.

**3.1.3 Forecast:** For 21 years, the Puntland Parliament's most memorable acts have been the election of new presidents and vice presidents of Puntland. The parliament is not known to be an independent branch of government that genuinely holds the administration to account on key issues, such as taxation, new agreements, annual budget or government policy. However, from time to time, and in observance of public pressure, Puntland MPs have voiced their concerns to mirror public frustrations; hence, parliamentary proclamations intend to dampen growing public discontent with the Bossaso port deal. As such, the parliament is not expected to critically evaluate the Bossaso port expansion agreement and the parliamentary agenda will likely lead to a discussion and nothing further.

## 3.2 Somaliland Attempts to Block Aid to Sanaag Region

**3.2.1 Key Developments:** The military tensions in parts of Sanaag region, which began in March, has led to a number of acts that continue to destabilize the erstwhile peaceful region. In particular, Somaliland government has faced troop mutiny and local community uprisings in parts of Sool and eastern Sanaag regions; furthermore, a local community conference was organized and held in Badhan district, whereby the communiqué issued condemned Somaliland's "military aggression" in Sanaag region, further complicating the Sanaag situation with the inclusion of a clan element.

In light of worsening tensions in the region, on Jun. 3, Somaliland administration allegedly sent a letter to international aid agencies warning of "insecurity" in parts of eastern Sanaag region which, "was seized by clan militias" and other districts were "controlled by Al Shabaab", according to the alleged letter reported by Puntland media.<sup>32</sup>

Local communities had mobilized to confront Somaliland military and diplomatic offensives. On Jun. 10, reports emerged that local community leaders and activists were planning to organize an anti-Somaliland community conference in Badhan, a major town in eastern Sanaag region.<sup>33</sup> The community conference was held over a period of nearly two weeks and, on Jun. 22, the Badhan conference concluded. According to the final communiqué, local leaders blamed Somaliland troops of "destabilizing Sanaag region" and demanded the Federal Government of Somalia "clarify its position about Somaliland provocation of conflict in Sanaag region". The communiqué underlined that, "Sanaag communities are not represented by Somaliland" and urged Puntland government "to fulfill its obligation to defend the people and region of Sanaag" against Somaliland troops. Further, the communiqué demanded that Somaliland forces "withdraw from those territories...to return peace and stability to [Sanaag] region".<sup>34</sup>

On Jun. 15, as the Puntland Parliament opened its ordinary session in Garowe, Speaker Abdihakim Mohamed Ahmed 'Dhoobo' – who hails from Sanaag region – was openly critical of the Somaliland administration and accused Somaliland of "destabilizing Sanaag region", and that Somaliland government sent troops to Sanaag region to "disrupt state examinations", adding: "Hargeisa [Somaliland capital] shall bear responsibility for all problems in Sanaag resulting from Somaliland's aggressive actions".<sup>35</sup>

**3.2.2 Analysis:** Somaliland's seemingly unplanned military incursion into parts of eastern Sanaag region has had many detrimental effects, for all stakeholders. Since March, Sanaag region has been the new epicenter of a territorial struggle between Somaliland and Puntland forces, which led to violent armed conflict in May. Reports that Somaliland



attempted to block aid agencies from operating in eastern Sanaag further polarized local communities, who already opposed Somaliland's military presence. The conclusion of the Badhan community conference with the community's demands of Somaliland troop withdrawal from Sanaag region is the clearest indication yet that Somaliland is rapidly losing the hearts and minds battle. Sanaag local communities felt compelled to organize Badhan conference and to confront Somaliland after the latter deployed troops to eastern Sanaag region and attempted to enforce strict control over aid operations. As reported in May, over 200 Somaliland troops vacated their bases and joined Puntland to protest against Somaliland's military maneuvers in Sanaag region.<sup>36</sup> Puntland government's troop deployments to Sanaag region, combined with Badhan community conference and Somaliland troops and commanders abandoning their posts, places Somaliland in a difficult predicament as the Sanaag issue evidently took on clan implications which further complicates the situation in the region.

**3.2.3 Forecast:** Somaliland government is not in a position for further military incursions in Sanaag region. This became evident after Somaliland lost the local narrative and local clans convened a meeting demanding the withdrawal of Somaliland forces. As such, recent developments in Sanaag region indicate that Somaliland has been pushed further into a corner where any new action could have destabilizing impact in Sanaag region. It is unlikely that neither Somaliland nor Puntland will take any new military actions over the next month; however, in line with Badhan community conference outcomes, the local clans are expected to organize a larger gathering to exert additional pressure on Somaliland to withdraw its forces from new areas in eastern Sanaag region.

### **3.3 Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission Resigns**

**3.3.1 Key Developments:** In a surprise move, members of the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) resigned collectively on Jun. 22. In a press statement, the nine-member TPEC announced that "some members of TPEC already resigned and others requested to leave due to personal reasons". Further, the statement added that "all members of TPEC decided to collectively resign, so a new Commission may be nominated".<sup>37</sup> The Commission's resignation came as a surprise, especially since reliable information indicated that President Deni of Puntland intended to "work" with existing members of TPEC. However, the collective resignation gives the new government an opportunity to renew its commitments to the democratization process.

Meanwhile, the government continued efforts to establish Local Councils in districts of Puntland, including Burtinle and Badhan. Puntland Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization already postponed Local Council elections in Badhan district; however, on Jun. 19, President Deni nominated a new interim Mayor of Burtinle, Abdirisak Dihal. The interim mayor was appointed after Burtinle Local Council members voted to unseat former Mayor Mohamed Mohamud 'Bur-dibi' on Jun. 18, and the Local Council then dissolved itself, paving the way for President Deni's nomination of an interim mayor. The new interim mayor's task is to coordinate work with local elders, nominate new members of Burtinle Local Council and hold a mayoral election.

**3.3.2 Analysis:** The new Puntland administration has underscored its commitment to restarting the stalled democratization process. So far this year, the government has been able to organize a Local Council election in Galkayo, following a familiar policy pattern inherited from previous administrations. President Deni's quick nomination of an interim mayor of Burtinle indicates that the government is keeping a close eye on developments at the district level; Local Councils form a key pillar of implementing district-level policies and

projects, including the Joint Program on Local Government (JPLG) which provides funding support to districts to build technical capacity, and improve the delivery of public services.

Moreover, Puntland Interior Minister Mohamed Abdirahman Dhabanad announced in March that the government planned to organize “multiparty elections for three select districts” of Puntland in 2019<sup>38</sup>; however, thus far, the government has successfully completed formation of only one Local Council in Galkayo, using traditional power-sharing arrangements. It is clear that the government is committed to advancing the democratization process, but tangible progress in this regard is slow to materialize.

**3.3.3 Forecast:** Puntland government received a golden opportunity when TPEC members inherited from the former administration resigned collectively. It remains to be seen if the new government will utilize this golden opportunity to nominate new TPEC members known for their experience, integrity, expertise and commitment to implementing multiparty politics in Puntland. However, given the slow pace of clan-based Local Council elections and lack of international funding for this endeavor, it is unlikely that the government is able to organize multiparty elections for select districts in the coming months. Government leaders are expected to continue lobbying international support and capacity-building for restarting Puntland state’s democratization process.

## 4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### 4.1 Puntland: Flash Floods and Looming Drought

**4.1.1 Key Developments:** On Jun. 2, Puntland Interior Minister Dhabanad stated in a meeting in Garowe that 9 persons were killed including 3 children from one family, during the heavy rains that led to deadly flash flooding in the regions of Sanaag and Karkaar.<sup>39</sup> The Minister also stated that 100 households lost their possessions and livestock in the flash floods. A day prior, on Jun. 1, Puntland Vice President Ahmed Karash nominated a Flood Relief Committee to oversee government support to victims of flooding, property destruction and assess damaged infrastructure such as roads, bridges and boreholes. The 14-member committee is led by Interior Minister Dhabanad and senior figures from State House, government Ministries, road agency, and security forces.<sup>40</sup> The tasks of the committee include assessing and costing the damages to infrastructure, citizens’ property and loss of life. Vice President Karash visited the construction of temporary roads between Garowe and Haji Khayr village, 120m north, which were completed to ensure that travel could continue to flow.<sup>41</sup> In a bid to ensure road safety, the Puntland government banned night travel between Bossaso and Garowe, pending further notice.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the flash flooding and the above average rains for May in most parts of Somalia, experts state that a looming food security crisis persists. The initial days of June saw some moderate showers in parts of Bari, Nugal and northern Mudug regions and some heavy rainfall in Sanaag and Sool regions.<sup>43</sup> However, the trend did not continue as dry and windy conditions prevailed in many regions throughout the rest of month.<sup>44</sup> On Jun. 3, a joint appeal by UNICEF, WFP and FAO for the Horn of Africa was issued which stated that as of May 1.7 million people in Somalia were food insecure.<sup>45</sup> It urged for the necessary funding to be disbursed before the crises worsened. On the same day of the joint appeal, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in a press release stated that 2.2 million were projected to face acute food insecurity by September.<sup>46</sup> The UNCERF raised 45 million USD for the Horn of Africa, which the bulk of – 30 million USD – would go to Somalia. UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said the Gu’ rainy season of 2019 was “one of the driest on record in over 35 years”.<sup>47</sup> Many regions that are projected to be hardest hit are in Puntland.<sup>48</sup> As of July, only 38.1 percent of the

1.08bn dollar funding requirement of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia was funded.<sup>49</sup>

**4.1.2 Analysis:** Decent rains in May and early June were rejoiced by Somalis far and wide. Social media platforms were buzzing with pictures of green pastures and abundant water reservoirs across many parts of Somalia. The initial purported narrative may be factual; but it doesn't fully incorporate the brevity of the rains and its lasting impact on the country. Last month we reported that experts indicated that May rainfall was below averages of last year and that forecasts for June did not expect increased rains and were in fact lackluster. But an apparent disconnect between the public and humanitarian agencies with regards to the Gu' rainy season, has manifested itself on social media spaces. Outcries from the international community suggesting a possibility of a critical food security situation has been met with initial criticism from many in the Somali community. Somali social media responded strongly to the international community's food security warning:

"Why UN concerns about a massive drought & severe starvation in [#Somalia](#), while many regions in South & Central have got weeks of heavy rains & road closures???"  
[@SahraCabdi](#)

"There's no drought!! fysisomalia has been receiving plenty of rain in the past few weeks"  
[@mr\\_favoriteexx](#)

"There's has been floods for the last 5 weeks ..why is that 😊 [@UNReliefChief](#) would always exaggerate the issue of famine yet there is way of solving it through irrigation Etc ...Conspiracy at its best." [@abdiwalito13](#)

Replying to [@UNReliefChief](#)

Are you for real?? Somali had the heaviest rain falls this June, are you fundraising for future drought? [@SSCVoices](#)

In PSR May report, experts warned that May rainfall was not temporal and that soil moisture was at depleted levels which, coupled with a limited rains in June, led to an early Hagaa season that saw high winds in coastal communities that destroyed properties.<sup>50</sup> Somali pastoralists rightly believe the Hagaa winds signal the early end of the Gu' rainy season, because over the years Hagaa season has arriving earlier than the usual July. The effects of climate change have had a significant impact on Somalia; the early arrival of the Hagaa winds is connected to a little-known phenomenon called the Indian Ocean Dipole. The Indian Ocean Dipole is a phenomenon also known as the Indian Niño that refers to the cycling between warm and cold in the eastern Indian Ocean near Indonesia that has ripple effects across the vast breadth of the ocean.<sup>51</sup> In short, a negative Indian Ocean Dipole event results in lower rainfall in East Africa<sup>52</sup>, and increased winds which signals the arrival of Hagaa winds in Somalia. Increased negative Indian Ocean Dipole events and its more recent irregularities have largely been blamed for the impact it has on Somalia and East Africa's drought. However, the forecast is not all grim for Somalia as AccuWeather's Senior Meteorologist Jason Nicholls, suggests that the Indian Ocean Dipole may go positive in August, which will bring more rain to East Africa.<sup>53</sup>

Despite some in the public who believe that aid agencies are 'overdramatizing' the drought conditions of the country, the Puntland government continued initiating and coordinating with donors and aid agencies on strategies and programs to improve nutrition and resilience. The Puntland government met with officials from the consortium SomRep comprised of 7 INGOs including ACF, Oxfam, Care International and DRC.<sup>54</sup> The program intends to build the resilience of Somalis to better deal with climatic shocks that threaten their livelihoods. But it is clear that more needs to be done by the Puntland government to ensure that adequate preparations are in place for the possibility of chronic food insecurity.

PSR May report noted a need for better coordination and strategizing of a possible worsening of food security and drought conditions. Efforts must not begin and end with aid agencies however; the Puntland government will also need to do better reaching out to local and Diaspora communities with accurate information on the conditions of the state to ensure that they are not misinformed about the drought situation. This is pivotal because humanitarian aid has had a track record of being chronically underfunded and experiencing delays in aid delivery. The joint appeal by UNICEF, WFP and FAO states that average funding levels of budget requirements of the Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan since 2014 is only at 68 percent. Currently only 38.1 percent is funded and it is likely more funding will come, however, the successive droughts of the past six years have had sustained detrimental impact on local communities who have yet to recover, which may further complicate drought response.

**4.1.3 Forecast:** Little to no rain was forecasted for July, however, meteorologists believe that there is hope, as the forecast suggests a big change in the weather pattern for August. In the meantime, it is more than likely that aid agencies will continue to make appeals for the funding of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2019. Evidence suggests that Puntland will continue welcoming these appeals but it is unclear whether the state will play leading role in vocalizing the need for increased efforts in Puntland by local and international stakeholders as the forecasted situation for many Puntland regions remains at critical levels.

## **4.2 Puntland State's Economic Focus**

**4.2.1 Key Developments:** On the tailwind of an economic trip to China, Puntland continued its investment and economic development initiatives with international partners. On Jun. 5, Puntland Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment signed an MOU to develop the Horn of Africa Economic Zone with China-based Tongxiang Economic Development Zone. The MOU was witnessed by President Deni in Beijing, plans on creating a "Horn of Africa Economic Zone" in Puntland after assessments and field studies.<sup>55</sup> Also while in China, President Deni was party to the signing of Sister-City Agreement between Galkayo and Tongxiang, the administrative capital of Jiaying Zhejiang province of China. Returning from China, President Deni had a stopover in Addis Ababa where he met with Ethiopian Airlines CEO Mr. Tewolde Gebre Mariam, among others. This meeting was followed by an official announcement by Ethiopian Airlines that it will commence regular weekly flights to Garowe and Bossaso, starting Jul. 15.<sup>56</sup>

On Jun. 29, a delegation led by Indian Ambassador to Somalia, Mr. Rahul Chhabra met with President Deni and Cabinet ministers. The official four-day trip to Puntland was a result of previous meeting between President Deni and Ambassador Chhabra in Nairobi, in which Deni invited the ambassador to visit Puntland.<sup>57</sup> Ambassador Chhabra spoke about the purpose of his trip, which included building stronger ties between Somalia and India, and to further develop links in key sectors such as health and education.<sup>58</sup> On healthcare, Ambassador noted health programs that have linked Indian hospitals and universities through satellite, to improve education and health. According to the ambassador, the Indian government has implemented these programs in Africa and discussions focused on how similar programs could be implemented in Puntland. The ambassador also announced that visas to India for Somalis would no longer require Somalis to travel to Indian Embassy in Kenya, as the Indian government would setup "visa camps" that would grant Indian visas in Garowe.

**4.2.2 Analysis:** President Deni's administration has been trying to ramp up international engagement, economic development and security progress since the election six months

ago. A key pillar of the president's campaign platform, the former businessman campaigned for economic reform and development in Puntland. The trip to China and the subsequent MOUs that were signed indicate another phase of the Puntland-China economic relationship, and it remains to be seen whether the Chinese infrastructure agreements are implemented in Puntland.

Puntland administration has been lobbying for more international and local flights in a bid to boost flight access and improve regional trade. On overseas trips to Ethiopia and UAE, President Deni discussed launching direct flights to Puntland airports in Bossaso and Garowe.<sup>59</sup> Ethiopian Airlines' commitment of regular weekly flights from Addis Ababa to Garowe and Bossaso is a vital step in the right direction, as previously Puntland-bound passengers would routinely be stuck at airports in Hargeisa, Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Dubai, due to limited number of available flights to Puntland airports. Nevertheless, viability of these flights will likely depend on competitive pricing. The Ethiopian Airlines website did not publish prices for the newly scheduled flight, at the time of this report. President Deni's focus on introducing new flights to Puntland airports can only be deemed as creating an enabling environment for investment and economic development, as this will allow for more accessibility to Puntland State. However, in order to sustainably capitalize on this accessibility, the administration will need to create/reform vital policies that enable and facilitate investment and trade.

The trade between India and the Horn of Africa is ancient and documented; spices, gold, myrrh, botany and ivory would be traded between the two regions. In recent history, Somalia and India share a relationship that has continued to evolve to more technical aspects of trade, specifically services. The access to education and healthcare that India has provided has impacted Somalia in many ways. Enrollment of Somali students to universities in India has continued to increase over the years as India was one of the first countries that re-opened its doors to Somali students. A high turnout of Somali students who studied in India was evident during Ambassador Chhabra's stay in Garowe, where he participated in a function that included Somali alumni who had studied in India, as a testament to the high number of Somali graduates from Indian universities.<sup>60</sup> The increase of Somalis who have studied in India is coupled with the influx of skilled Indian workers employed in various sectors like construction, carpentry, IT and the food industry. The injection of skilled Indian workers into a reeling employment sector may be construed in some circles as taking jobs away from Somalis, however, labor analysts say that the jobs occupied by Indian workers do not warrant panic and account for a very small percentage of the employment sector. The analysts also believe that the potential impact to the labor market can drastically outweigh the jobs currently taken, if the government can create policies that protect its citizens while enabling fair competition through skill transfer and capacity injection into under skilled industries.

India's most lucrative service is by and large health. A recent phenomenon that has spread through Somalia, an NAI estimate found that health tourism to India has injected upwards of \$300,000 USD to the Indian economy every year, just from Puntland state alone.<sup>61</sup> The announcement by the Indian Ambassador is very strategic to India's economy and will likely make the process of entry into India easier and less costly. But, the benefit does not end there; if visas for India are to be issued in Puntland, Somalis from across the country will be taking trips to Garowe rather than Nairobi, injecting much needed capital back into Somalia instead of outside the country. The Ambassador cited the recent announcement of Ethiopian Airlines as pledge booster, as flight accessibility stands to improve. But Puntland should capitalize on the other aspects of health and education that the Ambassador mentioned in his press conference and mechanize linking local hospitals and universities to Indian universities and hospitals through technology that can improve capacity of the future work force, which leads to better localized services and sustainability of the labor market.

4.2.3 **Forecast:** Puntland has called for an investment forum to be held in the coming months, with sources stating that the current date is for September. The investment forum will likely attract foreign and domestic interests. In the lead up to the investment forum, Puntland will likely look to continue its economic development initiatives to raise the state's economic profile. Puntland's strategy to mechanize and monetize the agreements signed in China will be key to how potential investors view Puntland state's planned investment forum.

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***New Access International (NAI Somalia)**, founded in 2012, is a development agency based in Somalia. NAI Somalia specializes in research, organization and policy development, and advocacy programs, and launched its **Somali Law and Policy Program** in January 2019, publishing the monthly **Puntland Situation Report** that focuses on collecting, observing, recording, and analyzing all major events and developments linked to matters of law and policy, and its impact on peace, politics and development in Puntland State, Somalia.*

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