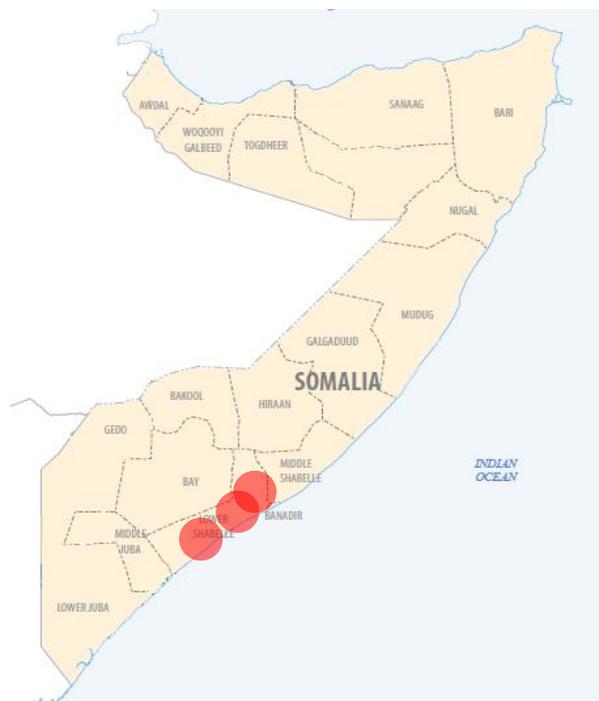


Fighting in Lower Shabelle has displaced more than 15,000 local residents

Intense fighting erupted on 21 May 2017 in Marka and Afgoye districts, Lower Shabelle region, between forces of the Interim South West Administration and Al Shabaab, eventually spreading to multiple outlying districts over the course of three days, including Awdheegle and Qoryoley. Approximately 100 houses were torched to ashes (and livestock either killed or taken) within the Marka area as part of the violence. Villages and towns most affected include Negadi weyne, Bulo sheikh abukar, Cambanane, Sagaaroolle, Bulo-cadey, and Km 60.

By 24 May 2017, PRMN partners had monitored at least 15,240 individuals (approximately 2,540 households) who were forced to flee as a result of the violence. The majority of those displaced by the incident are said to have sought refuge in Marka town (Ayuub area, Bulo sheikh Xasan Yusuf, Bulo beylow camp, Km 50 (Alayasir camp) and Ceeljaale. However, the network also monitored the arrival of around 102 individuals at Bogol Soon area, and Kaxda; while several more persons are said to still be en route. A significant number of pastoralist families are also reported to be moving toward Kurtuwarey District. Al Shabaab is reported to have imposed taxes ranging from USD 20 to 30 on fleeing households, according to those interviewed on arrival.



Recent waves of displacement in the Lower Shabelle region are being occasioned by other factors linked to generalized insecurity. Approximately 70 individuals, adults and children combined – mostly women, were abducted by Al Shabaab from Km 50 village between 21 and 23 May and taken to Mubarak due to heightened tensions between members of the Biyamal clan and the militant group. More than 700 households were also monitored on 23 May fleeing Muuri and Km 50 area after an attack on their villages left scores of homes burned down and livestock forcibly taken. The security situation in the region remains unpredictable.

The most immediate protection concerns in the region remain:

- **Restriction of movement:** Al Shabaab is interrogating civilians on ethnic lines at check points within their control areas; those belonging to or affiliated with specific clans are understood to be detained due to their perceived opposition to AS. So far, hundreds are reported as been detained and many are missing. Secondly, there are general restrictions on movement in and out of Al Shabaab controlled areas, including of goods and basic supplies, (e.g. on Bariire-Afgoye road). These restrictions on movement could further exacerbate the situation.
- **Destruction of property and livelihood assets:** Approximately 100 houses were burned in Marka and surrounding villages, in addition to looting and killing of livestock.
- **Kidnapping and abductions:** Between 21-23 May, around 70 individuals, were reported to have been abducted in the region, including 10 children from a public school in Canbanane, Marka district. This number is expected to increase with new checkpoints being set up and intensified raids on villages in the region, particularly in Canbanane, Janale and Gendawe (Marka district), Mubarak (Aw Dheghele district), and Km 50 (Afgoye district).

The PRMN (Protection & Return Monitoring Network) is a UNHCR-led project which identifies and reports on displacements as well as protection risks and incidents underlying such population movements.

On behalf of UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 41 local partners in the field in Somalia (South Central regions, Puntland and Somaliland) undertake data gathering (primarily through interviews with affected communities and key informants) and monitoring at strategic locations.

This 'flash' report highlights only a selection of movements and incidents - some of these reports may not be verified independently by UNHCR.