AUGUST/SEPTEMBER TRENDS

The new front line between Dhulbahante clan militias and government forces stabilised in September after the Dhulbahante captured several army positions near Las Anod, the capital of Sool region, effectively driving Somaliland forces out of Dhulbahante territory. Election-related tensions have dissipated after President Bihi in late August accepted a compromise with the opposition.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS

1 Fighting for control of Sool region could resume, drawing in wider array of actors

Dhulbahante leaders, who have long rejected Somaliland’s state-building project, which they view as both secessionist (vis-à-vis Somalia) and serving the dominant Isaaq clan’s interests, will continue steps toward establishing their own administration in Sool region.

President Bihi could attempt to re-enter lost territory in Sool to reverse losses ahead of November 2024 Somaliland elections. He could do so to try to strengthen internal cohesion after the recent deal on elections restored Isaaq unity.

2 Election-related tensions might turn violent in some locations

In Awdal region, the Gadabursi clan’s resentment regarding perceived marginalisation in Somaliland may grow, as evidenced by Hilaac political association’s rejection of the election deal (and other attempts by prominent Gadabursi to organise themselves, both inside and outside Somaliland).

Clan tensions in different parts of Somaliland may be inflamed by electoral proceedings. Notably, newly-formed Haber Yonis militia, which has recently agreed to lay down arms, could re-emerge if implementation of electoral agreement stalls; unresolved conflict between Haber Yonis and Haber Jeclo sub-clans may continue to result in small-scale skirmishes around El Afweyn.

TO WATCH Implementation of August election deal, including the National Election Commission’s announcement of a new electoral roadmap.

Potential Consequences

If implementation of electoral agreement does not proceed smoothly, it could be a trigger for inter-clan violence and increase risk of disputed results.

Methodology: The information provided above relies on our monthly global conflict tracker, CrisisWatch, and qualitative assessments provided by Crisis Group’s analysts based in or near conflict areas. The selection is not exhaustive, and should be read in conjunction with country/regional reports and other early warning products, all available at crisisgroup.org.