



# Three Crises

## Escalating security threats to the future of the Somali State

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Somalia is witnessing an escalation in the current political crisis, which is likely to undermine the credibility of the Somali leadership, in addition to threatening the internal stability in Somalia, as concerns heighten regarding the country possibly plunging into civil wars, similar to what happened in previous historical periods due to the clan nature of the Somali society.

### Outlines of the Somali Crisis

Three main dimensions of the Somali crisis can be mentioned, as follows:

**1- A clash between the Heads of State and government:** Tensions raged for weeks between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, also known as Farmaajo, and Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Robley. President Farmaajo announced the suspension of the authority of the Somali Prime Minister to appoint and dismiss officials, which the latter rejected, citing the illegality of this decision.

This crisis witnessed an escalating severity, in the wake of political disputes that exacerbated following the disappearance and murder of Ikram Tahlil, Head of Cyber Security at NISA. The intelligence

service announced that the Head of Cyber Security, who had been missing since June 26, was kidnapped and killed by Al-Shabaab movement, which in turn denied its involvement in the incident.

Tahlil's disappearance sparked widespread criticism of the agency and its head, Fahad Yasin, who is known to be close to the Somali President. Her family even demanded an investigation into her disappearance and filed a lawsuit with the Armed Forces Public Prosecutor's Office implicating Fahd and others in the kidnapping.

Ikram was on the verge of revealing information regarding the disappearance of some Somali forces and their non-return from Eritrea since 2019, although Mogadishu claimed then that they were sent

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there for training. It seems that Ikram had intended to publish information confirming that these forces were deployed to fight on the front lines in support of the Ethiopian government in its war against the Tigrays, as the Eritrean army supports the Ethiopian Federal forces.

This issue caused great embarrassment for the Somali President, as the families of the soldiers organized several demonstrations to demand more information about the training program and the fate of their children, particularly since they had not received any messages from them since they left for Eritrea two years ago.

In light of the successive events, Robley formed a committee last June to investigate the fate of the soldiers, and demanded that the intelligence service provide a full explanation for Ikram's disappearance within 48 hours, which Yasin did not respond to. This prompted Robley to dismiss him, and to appoint Major Gen. Bashir Mohamed Gobe as interim head. He also demanded that the Attorney General of the Armed Forces start an investigation into the case.

Farmaajo intervened in the crisis, defending the head of the intelligence service, declaring that Robley's dismissal of Yasin was unconstitutional, and insisting on his remaining in his position. Moreover, Farmaajo argued that the intelligence service is a military institution within his jurisdiction as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Robley objected to this interpretation on the grounds that the agency was under the Ministry of Internal Security, not the Armed Forces, and that since Robley is Prime Minister, he controls the intelligence Service.

The conflict between the two parties escalated on September 8, when Farmaajo appointed Yassin Fary as Head of the Intelligence Service to block Robley's attempt of appointing Gobe, his affiliate. The events almost ended in a military confrontation between the intelligence services units loyal to Fahad and those who recognize the authority of the Prime Minister.

However, the forces of the Somali President withdrew from this confrontation at the last moments.

## **2- The predicament of postponing the elections:-**

Somalia was unable to hold the elections, which were scheduled for November 2020. The second date for holding them in February 2021 was also not adhered to, causing violent confrontations in Mogadishu between the pro-government forces and the forces affiliated with the opposition.

In an attempt to contain the crisis, President Farmaajo announced a de-escalation initiative by assigning the Prime Minister to organize elections as soon as possible, in addition to reaching an agreement with the opposition on May 27, which stipulated that elections would be held within 60 days. On June 4, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a 25-member Federal Electoral Committee. However, the committee was criticized by the opposition, particularly as it included some of the Somali President inner circle, in addition to members of the presidential palace office and intelligence.

Although the committee announced the schedule for the elections, starting with the election of the Council of Elders on July 25, and ending with the election of the Somali President on October 10, this schedule was not adhered to, which led to the postponement of the elections again, as some regions were unable to submit lists of candidates to participate in the vote. This comes in addition to the failure to form local voting committees. This crisis reflects the magnitude of political differences between the different parties, specifically with the opposition accusing the Somali President of interfering in the electoral commission.

It is worth noting that elections for the Council of Elders have been launched in a number of states, and have been fully completed in Southwestern Somalia and Puntland. As for Galmudug and Jubaland, the voting process was partially conducted, while Somaliland did not start the voting process. The process



has also been launched in Hirshabelle. The voting process for the selection of members of the House of Representatives in Somalia was postponed to the end of November, which will delay the indirect elections for the country's President.

The process of electing the Council of Elders and the House of Representatives is a very complex process, as the parliaments of the five regional states (Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Southwestern Somalia, Jubaland and Puntland) elect elders, in addition to 46 members representing Somaliland, and the seats in Mogadishu. As for the House of Representatives, each parliamentary seat is elected by 101 delegates representing the clan holding the seat. After the constitutional oath is taken by the members of both houses, the President of the country is elected.

This complex electoral process came in consideration of the clan and tribal foundations on which the Somali state is based, and in an effort to elect a president who enjoys consensus. This electoral system was implemented despite the Somali President's objection to it and his preference for voting by direct ballot using the rule of one vote per person.

### **3- Mogadishu's row with other heads of provinces:**

There are several dimensions to the clash between the two parties, whether at the political or economic level. Politically, regional heads believe that the Somali government is excluding them from crucial political decisions, in addition to being excluded from the process of reviewing the constitution, which led to the failure of the National Conference for constitutional reform.

From the economic and administrative points of view, the regional heads have reservations about the central government's handling of wealth files, and the sharing of natural wealth revenues amongst them.

## **Possible Repercussions**

The main repercussions of the previously-mentioned three crises are as follows:

### **1- Increasing political instability:**

Elections of Senate in late July witnessed negative practices in some provinces, as provincial chiefs, who wield broad power to nominate candidates, chose their preferred ones and excluded the opponents. Several former senators who are in disagreement with their provincial chiefs were also denied the opportunity to run again.

In other cases, members from the opposition withdrew, ensuring an easy victory for the preferred candidates. What intensifies the political instability is the continued postponement of the parliamentary elections. The Parliament announced the postponement of the voting of its members until end of next November, which would delay the indirect elections of the President, who was seeking to extend his term for two more years.

**2- Growing divisions along tribal lines:** Concerns are growing about the division of the security forces on political and tribal grounds, and their plunging into armed confrontations, thus destabilizing the country, a scene that has been recurrent in the past. This happened after some security leaders objected to the decision to extend the term of President Farmaajo, and after the dismissal of General Sadiq John, Banaadir Regional police chief, in addition to the dispute between the Somali President and the Somali Prime Minister over the dismissal of the Head of Intelligence Agency.

### **3- Escalation of Al-Shabaab terrorist activity:**

Extremist groups are taking advantage of the widespread political conflicts within the country, and so the movement was able to exploit political divisions by resuming its terrorist operations in the Somali capital.

Mogadishu witnessed a series of bombings, which targeted security points in addition to other attacks.



The latest attacks claimed by the movement were a car bomb explosion near a checkpoint by the presidential palace in Mogadishu, killing eight people in the attack.

The elections also represent a prime opportunity for the increase of violence carried out by the movement, particularly in light of the political instability in the country. One of the movement's common

post-election behaviors is the targeting of voters.

Al-Shabaab movement controls substantial parts of Southern and Central Somalia, and focuses its attacks on government-controlled areas, particularly Mogadishu. The biggest threat is the emergence of other armed groups, such as ISIS, in addition to "The Proclaimers of the Truth" group in Puntland.


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In conclusion, Somalia is facing a vicious circle of political turmoil as a result of recurring conflicts between Somali elites, both at the national and regional levels. Therefore, during the upcoming elections, if any, the extent to which the political elites are able to set aside their differences in order to preserve the Somali state will get to be better revealed.


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## ABOUT FARAS

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) is an independent think tank founded on April 4, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. FARAS seeks to enrich public dialogue, support decision-making and enhance academic research pertaining to future trends that currently constitute a real problem in the Middle East region. In light of instability and unpredictability, the overarching goal of FARAS is to help ward off future shocks regarding these developments.

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