



# COVID-19 in Somalia: A Public Health Emergency in an Electoral Minefield

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**What's new?** Somalia is highly vulnerable to both the COVID-19 virus and the socio-economic dimensions of the crisis. Its first cases of infection have also appeared at a time of heightened political tension over forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.

**Why does it matter?** Opponents of the president worry that he might exploit virus fears to put off elections, as a way of staying in office past his term's expiry. Any attempt to reschedule the contests without consulting the president's rivals would meet with heated objections – and possibly violence.

**What should be done?** The president's administration should take no unilateral step regarding the planned elections. Instead, it should seek to reach consensus with both opposition politicians and regional officials on electoral timetables and procedures.

## I. Overview

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With one of Africa's most fragile health care systems, millions of internally displaced people and a bureaucracy still recovering from state collapse and civil war, Somalia might be less prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic than almost any other country in the world. The coronavirus's onset risks undermining Somalia's recent progress toward debt relief, and it could also tempt the Al-Shabaab insurgency to step up attacks. To make matters worse, the virus broke out at a particularly inopportune time in Somali politics: tensions are running high among the central government, opposition groups and the country's semi-autonomous regions, or federal states, including over preparations for elections (parliamentary polls are due by November 2020 and a presidential vote by February 2021).

The Somali government should take care not to add a political crisis to the public health emergency. The authorities should resist the temptation to unilaterally extend the electoral calendar or amend voting rules, steps their rivals would almost certainly contest, perhaps violently. Instead, they should forge consensus on how and when to conduct the vote and call a truce in their other disputes with federal states.

## II. A Highly Vulnerable Country

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How badly Somalia will be hit by the coronavirus remains unclear. The country reported its first case, a student returning from China, on 16 March, but the number of known infections is still low at 928.<sup>1</sup> Grounds for hope exist that Somalia may escape the type of outbreak that has overwhelmed some Western health systems. Somalia's population is young – the median age is eighteen – and few foreigners visit the country due to persistent insecurity, including the battle against the Al-Shabaab insurgency centred in the south. That said, the current low figures likely reflect a lack of testing, and public health experts express concern that so many of those who can get tested show up positive.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, official figures, even if low, are rising fast. Cases have increased tenfold since mid-April, and there are worrying signs of community transmission beyond the capital Mogadishu. The outbreak has not spared political elites. A regional minister from the Hirshabelle in south-central Somalia has died after contracting the virus, while two other regional officials are in quarantine after contact with persons believed to be infected.<sup>3</sup>

The country could suffer enormously were a major outbreak to occur. The limited testing means that for now it is impossible to know the true extent of the viral spread. The World Health Organization (WHO) rates Somalia's public health system as one of the weakest across the globe.<sup>4</sup> One study prior to COVID-19's onset ranked Somalia as the country most vulnerable to infectious disease in the world.<sup>5</sup> An estimated 2.6 million of the 15 million-strong population are uprooted by war, with many living in crowded camps. The displaced are concentrated around cities like Mogadishu, where the majority of coronavirus cases have been reported thus far. A major eruption could take a terrible toll. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the mortality rate from the crisis may already be far higher than official reports indicate, with medics and gravediggers saying they have seen a surge in deaths over the past few weeks.<sup>6</sup>

Federal authorities have undertaken a range of containment measures but stopped short of imposing a lockdown, in part to mitigate the economic impact. The government has suspended international flights except for humanitarian purposes, closed educational institutions, restricted religious gatherings and instituted night-time curfews in major urban areas. A number of Mogadishu residents told Crisis Group that despite some violations, most people are respecting the curfew, but that many

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<sup>1</sup> "Somalia: One of the Countries Least Prepared to Cope with the COVID-19 Virus", CARE, press release, 17 April 2020. The national tally includes twelve cases reported in the self-declared republic of Somaliland.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Health Minister Fawzia Abikar Nur announced on 18 April that nineteen of 25 people tested that day were found to have the virus – a much higher percentage than in neighbouring countries. The high rates could also be explained by the limited testing, concentrated on those already displaying symptoms. "Somalia struggles with coronavirus as infections go undetected", Al Jazeera, 28 April 2020; "Somalia's surge in COVID-19 cases raises alarm", *Daily Nation*, 20 April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> "HirShabelle state minister dies of COVID-19 in Mogadishu", Goobjoog, 12 April 2020; "Somalia: Regional presidents, speaker quarantined over coronavirus fear", SomTribune, 12 April 2020.

<sup>4</sup> "Humanitarian Response Plan: Somalia", World Health Organization, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Melinda Moore, Bill Gelfeld, Adeyemi Theophilus Okunogbe and Christopher Paul, "Identifying Future Disease Hot Spots: Infectious Disease Vulnerability Index", RAND, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> "Somali medics report rapid rise in deaths as Covid-19 fears grow", *The Guardian*, 2 May 2020.

youth are ignoring social distancing orders.<sup>7</sup> The government has also backtracked on some restrictions, allowing mosques to continue to host prayers, albeit under guidelines in keeping with those the WHO advocates, as the holy month of Ramadan commenced.<sup>8</sup> Regional administrations have generally put in place similar preventive policies, but measures are not always coordinated.

The crisis appears set to exact a heavy economic toll. The containment measures, despite variations in enforcement, will inevitably make Somalia's economic situation more precarious as people suffer disruptions to daily livelihoods and a breakdown in local and regional trade. Already reeling from the worst locust invasion in a generation, the country must now contend with a coronavirus-related drop in remittance income, as shutdowns around the world depress the earnings of many Somalis in the diaspora.<sup>9</sup> The World Bank estimates that \$1.4 billion in remittances flow into Somalia annually under normal circumstances.<sup>10</sup> That total amounts to approximately one quarter of GDP – and many families depend on these funds for sustenance. International assistance flowing to Somalia might also decrease, given the impact of the virus globally. To soften the blow, authorities have ordered traders to avoid price inflation and lowered some taxes.

With fortuitous timing, however, Somalia finds itself in good standing with international financial institutions for the first time in 30 years.<sup>11</sup> Having cleared its arrears to the World Bank in March, Somalia can now gain access to concessional financing from the Bank's International Development Association – including support from the \$14 billion fast-track fund established to assist countries to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-19.<sup>12</sup> Starting with a Paris Club decision to immediately approve \$1.4 billion in debt relief, Somalia also recently began a three-year macroeconomic monitoring process under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.<sup>13</sup> With over \$3 billion of additional debt relief at stake, Somalia may need to strike new agreements with international financial institutions that reflect rapidly shifting economic conditions while preserving efforts to expand the government's revenue base, improve financial transparency, increase funding of public services and promote private investment.

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<sup>7</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, April 2020. On 24 April, a police officer killed two civilians who were reportedly in violation of the curfew in Mogadishu, sparking protests against the incident and government-imposed restrictions. "Police arrest soldier who allegedly killed two citizens in Mogadishu", Halbeeg, 25 April 2020.

<sup>8</sup> In the event that religious gatherings are not cancelled or held virtually, the WHO recommends observing physical distancing of at least 1 metre, shortening the assembly's duration and ensuring that hand-washing stations are available at the venue, among other guidelines. "Safe Ramadan practices in the context of the COVID-19", WHO, interim guidance, 15 April 2020.

<sup>9</sup> "Somalia declares emergency over locust swarms", BBC, 2 February 2020.

<sup>10</sup> "World Bank Makes Progress to Support Remittance Flows to Somalia", World Bank, press release, 10 June 2016.

<sup>11</sup> "Somalia to Reestablish Financial Relations with the World Bank after Thirty Years", World Bank, press release, 27 February 2020.

<sup>12</sup> "Somalia Clears Arrears to World Bank Group", World Bank, press release, 5 March 2020.

<sup>13</sup> "Somalia to Receive Debt Relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative", World Bank, press release, 25 March 2020; "Paris Club creditors agree to cancel \$1.4 billion of Somali debt", Reuters, 31 March 2020.

Added to the public health and economic concerns are fears that Al-Shabaab may try to use the crisis to its advantage. At a forum in mid-March, the group's leaders asked militants to fight on. They labelled COVID-19 an export to Somalia by "crusader forces who have invaded the country", a reference to the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia, whose thousands of troops support the UN-backed government against the insurgency.<sup>14</sup> An outbreak in rural areas under Al-Shabaab's control could be disastrous, especially if the group refuses outside humanitarian assistance as it did during the 2011 famine, which contributed to the loss of 260,000 lives and fuelled public indignation at the militants.<sup>15</sup>

### **III. An Electoral Minefield**

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Aside from public health and the potential economic harm, the federal government's key challenge amid the COVID-19 threat is political: how to handle the contentious planning for voting slated to kick off with parliamentary elections in November and culminate in a presidential contest in February 2021.

This process was already difficult prior to the disease's spread, as parties remain divided over a raft of issues. The federal government has insisted on a one-person, one-vote electoral model, in line with international expectations that such a vote would symbolise Somalia's recovery from state collapse.<sup>16</sup> Observers, however, privately say this model is unrealistic, given the prevailing insecurity and poor electoral preparations.<sup>17</sup> Some opposition figures are concerned that President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (commonly known as Farmajo) is purposely sticking to an impractical plan, so as to have a pretext for delaying the election and extending his time in office.<sup>18</sup>

The public health crisis will compound the problems with electoral preparations. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, for instance, the Puntland federal state leadership complained that authorities were formulating a new electoral law without adequate consultation. They subsequently refused to cooperate with Mogadishu in planning for the polls.<sup>19</sup> In early February, Puntland's Ministry of Interior ordered the closure of the National Independent Electoral Commission office in the state capital Garowe, stymieing steps to organise the vote in the region.<sup>20</sup> Farmajo ratified the electoral law on 20 February, but parliament named a committee to reconcile outstanding issues

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<sup>14</sup> "Al-Shabaab fails to stop attacks in Somalia, blames AU forces for coronavirus pandemic", Garowe Online, 28 March 2020. The group's spokesman Ali Dheere released two audio messages in late April, in which he referred to the coronavirus as a punishment and called on Muslims to pray for protection. Interestingly, he also urged those living outside Al-Shabaab areas to pray at home, rather than directly challenge government regulations. Audio messages on file with Crisis Group.

<sup>15</sup> Rashid Abdi, "Al-Shabaab and Somalia's Spreading Famine", Crisis Group Commentary, 10 August 2011; "Somalia famine 'killed 260,000 people'", BBC, 2 May 2013.

<sup>16</sup> "Somalia's 2020 Elections Will Be Historic Milestone on Long Journey Back to Security, Stability, Special Representative Tells Security Council", UN Security Council, press release, 24 February 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group interviews, regional diplomats and analysts, Addis Ababa, February-April 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, opposition politicians, April 2020; "Farmajo blamed for 'conspiracy' to block Somalia's elections", Garowe Online, 5 April 2020.

<sup>19</sup> See the Puntland leadership's letter posted in a tweet by Garowe Online, @radiogarowe, 6:52am, 6 February 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

in its text. On 2 April, however, the committee suspended meetings due to virus fears, calling into question how it could complete its tasks within the 45 days that parliament gave it at the end of February. Other election-related business, such as voter registration, will also be subject to delay with social distancing regulations in effect.

Time is running short to fix these problems. According to the new electoral law, legislative elections are to commence one month before the sitting parliament's term expires in December and the electoral commission is to announce the timetable for the vote 180 days prior. Working backwards, the commission should thus unveil the schedule by the end of May. Otherwise, it must acknowledge its inability to organise the vote within the given timeframe, due to shortcomings in preparations, now exacerbated by the onset of the coronavirus. In this scenario, parliament would have the authority to determine a new timetable, but the virus has delayed its reopening after a regularly scheduled recess. The speaker of the lower house, Mohamed Mursal, said on 22 April that parliament will resume in May, in part to address the elections' status.<sup>21</sup> It is unclear, however, given the restrictions imposed by the virus and the fact that many deputies are outside the country, if the body will convene in person or remotely.

Opposition groups and some regional authorities have signalled that they will not accept any electoral delay. On 3 April, the Forum for National Parties (FNP), a formidable coalition that includes two former presidents and a sizeable proportion of parliament, called for the elections to be held on schedule.<sup>22</sup> The FNP, which enjoys the support of powerful clans, has stridently rejected many of the Farmajo administration's policies. Puntland's interior minister has also demanded that the vote go ahead on time.<sup>23</sup> As a result, if parliament, which is divided between Farmajo's supporters and opponents, decides to postpone the vote, serious unrest could ensue.

#### **IV. Centre-periphery Fault Lines**

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Farmajo's first term in office has already been marked by major tensions between the federal government and Somalia's regions. The president favours a strong central government, while federal states and other politicians seek to safeguard their prerogatives within a loose federal model. Farmajo's government has secured better working relations with Hirshabelle, South West and Galmudug states by installing allies in those state governments, albeit through controversial and contested elections.<sup>24</sup> His attempts to achieve the same in Puntland and Jubaland failed, however, paralysing cooperation between Mogadishu and these states. Mogadishu's rejection of the August 2019 Jubaland regional elections has exacerbated tensions, leading to

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<sup>21</sup> "House to reopen in May, Speaker Mursal says, dismisses claims of term extension", Hiiraan, 22 April 2020.

<sup>22</sup> See the FNP's letter posted in a tweet by Harun Maruf, journalist, @HarunMaruf, 5:04pm, 4 April 2020.

<sup>23</sup> "Puntland interior minister: 2020 elections must take place on time", *Puntland Post*, 12 April 2020.

<sup>24</sup> In 2018, for example, Mogadishu muscled in on an election in South West state by arresting an Islamist candidate who might otherwise have won. Rashid Abdi, "Somalia's South West State: A New President Installed, a Crisis Inflamed", Crisis Group Commentary, 24 December 2018.

a military standoff between the federal government and the administration led by Ahmed Mohamed Islam (Madobe) in the state's Gedo region, as both sides vie for political control there.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, federal states have put in place their own policies, which for the most part resemble the federal government's measures but at times differ. On 27 March, for example, Puntland reportedly took the lead in closing its international borders, a move other states have followed, but not in a coordinated fashion.<sup>25</sup> The mayor of Mogadishu has also criticised the federal government's infection recordkeeping as incomplete.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the dispute over Somaliland, the north-western region that asserts its independence over Mogadishu's objections, has reared its head amid the seemingly mundane task of tallying the COVID-19 caseload. Leaders in Hargeisa, the territory's capital, argue that the federal government should stop including Somaliland's cases of infection in the countrywide reporting. These examples show how political quarrels could result in disjointed or contested responses to COVID-19. An uneven response to COVID-19, due to political division or a lack of coordination, risks hindering measures to contain its spread.

The good news is that a basis exists for tighter cooperation between Mogadishu and the states. The federal government is the primary recipient of international aid, which gives it a crucial opportunity to overcome political divides with fair and rapid distribution of assistance. Mogadishu has already doled out medical equipment donated by Chinese billionaire Jack Ma's foundation to various federal states, while Prime Minister Ali Khayre has directed that emergency funds in Mogadishu's treasury be distributed in a similar fashion.<sup>27</sup> Actions like these will be critical to overall political stability, as the division of resources was a bone of contention between centre and periphery before Farmajo took office. Any failure by Mogadishu to appear anything less than even-handed in handling aid distribution inevitably would provoke its opponents.

## V. Fashioning Consensus

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The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic demands an unprecedented response, which should involve all parties embracing a spirit of consensus and setting aside poisonous divisions.

Authorities, particularly at the federal Health Ministry and the various coronavirus-related task forces that have emerged at the regional level, will need to work together closely. As noted, the distribution of international assistance without regard to political allegiance will be crucial not only to foster cooperation but also to avoid uneven efforts at containing the spread of the virus. For its part, Al-Shabaab, which in spite of its ruthless assaults on civilians has shown a capacity for pragmatism, for

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<sup>25</sup> "Puntland closes border with other regions over coronavirus fears", Mustaqbal Radio, 27 March 2020; "Somalia closes border with Kenya, Ethiopia to curb COVID-19 spread", Somali Affairs, 9 April 2020; "Hirshabelle leader calls for closure of Somali-Ethiopian border over COVID", Halbeeg, 14 April 2020.

<sup>26</sup> "Mogadishu mayor claims COVID-19 cases and deaths in Somalia 'higher'", Goobjoog, 9 April 2020.

<sup>27</sup> "PM instructs COVID-19 funds delivery to states", Hiiraan, 15 April 2020.

example by permitting some humanitarian organisations to operate in the territories it controls, should accept the imperative to cooperate with aid efforts for the sake of the Somali populace, rather than seek its own advantage.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the federal government should engage electoral stakeholders without delay to discuss how the coronavirus affects the planned timeline and format for the polls. Unilateral decision-making could prove perilous, given the high degree of polarisation and the readiness for confrontation some actors display. Rather, engagement with those who want to avoid election delays – including federal states and opposition groups – will be pivotal to managing any fallout from choices the authorities make on this matter.

Federal engagement should focus on achieving consensus on the timeframe for elections and/or on adjustments to the electoral model. The latter could include abandoning plans for a one-person, one-vote election and instead providing for some form of an electoral college system, as was used in the 2016-2017 vote, whereby some 14,000 delegates selected the representatives for 275 parliamentary seats. This system would allow a smaller electorate to vote, minimising risks to public health by avoiding the need for mass registration and mobilisation. Postponing the vote would require further agreement on the Farmajo government's status, given its constitutional restriction to a four-year term. Parliament might agree to a term extension of its own, or it might propose the formation of a temporary national unity government in the event of an extended delay, which could involve the federal government offering posts to opposition nominees as a compromise.

External actors engaged in Somalia, such as the AU, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, UN and EU, in addition to bilateral donors, should maintain public pressure on the federal government, opposition and states to emphasise the need for consensus, as they continue to engage the various actors through back channels. A starting point would be to push for open lines of communication – virtual, at first, given social distancing restrictions – between Farmajo and his principal opponents in the states and the capital.

Mogadishu's partners may be distracted by events related to COVID-19 at home, but they ought not to ignore Somalia during this pivotal period. The U.S. and EU in particular could play prominent roles, as both have responded to the federal government's battle against the coronavirus with financial packages and worked to forge consensus in Somalia in the past.<sup>29</sup> The federal government's intolerance of international criticism may have muted responses to the Farmajo administration's more divisive policies so far, but now is the time for a sustained diplomatic push to prevent the potential for even more bitter political divisions.

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<sup>28</sup> Ashley Jackson and Abdi Aynte, "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with Al-Shabaab in Somalia", Humanitarian Policy Group, December 2013; Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°99, *Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*, 26 June 2014.

<sup>29</sup> "U.S. Provides Nearly \$274 Million in Emergency Health, Humanitarian Assistance to Help Combat COVID-19", U.S. Embassy in Somalia, 1 April 2020. Tweet by EU Delegation in Somalia, @EU\_in\_Somalia, 9:14am, 9 April 2020.

## **VI. Conclusion**

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COVID-19 is likely to be a huge challenge for Somalia. Tackling the public health emergency will require high levels of cooperation among all Somali political actors as well as international partners. Even if the country escapes a major outbreak, the economic impact is likely to be profound. Injudicious actions designed to exploit the crisis – especially any unilateral decision by the federal government to postpone the elections – could pose a serious threat to the internationally supported Somali state-building project. Somalia’s politicians in particular should unite at this unprecedented time. Failure to do so would come at a high cost, especially to Somalia’s long-suffering population.

**Mogadishu/Nairobi/Brussels, 8 May 2020**



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## Appendix A: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2017

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### Special Reports and Briefings

*Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

*Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy*, Special Briefing N°1, 30 April 2019.

*Seven Opportunities for the UN in 2019-2020*, Special Briefing N°2, 12 September 2019.

*Seven Priorities for the New EU High Representative*, Special Briefing N°3, 12 December 2019.

*COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch*, Special Briefing N°4, 24 March 2020 (also available in French and Spanish).

### Africa

*A Tale of Two Councils: Strengthening AU-UN Cooperation*, Africa Report N°279, 25 June 2019.

*The Price of Peace: Securing UN Financing for AU Peace Operations*, Africa Report N°286, 31 January 2020.

*Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2020*, Africa Briefing N°151, 7 February 2020 (also available in French).

### Central Africa

*Fighting Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond Military Measures*, Africa Report N°246, 8 March 2017 (also available in French).

*Burundi: The Army in Crisis*, Africa Report N°247, 5 April 2017 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads*, Africa Report N°250, 2 August 2017 (also available in French).

*Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic*, Africa Report N°253, 28 September 2017 (also available in French).

*Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, Africa Report N°255, 17 October 2017 (also available in French).

*Cameroon: A Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures*, Africa Briefing N°130, 19 October 2017 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Far North: Reconstruction amid Ongoing Conflict*, Africa Briefing N°133, 25 October 2017 (also available in French).

*Time for Concerted Action in DR Congo*, Africa Report N°257, 4 December 2017 (also available in French).

*Seven Priorities for the African Union in 2018*, Africa Briefing N°135, 17 January 2018 (also available in French).

*Electoral Poker in DR Congo*, Africa Report N°259, 4 April 2018 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How the Catholic Church Can Promote Dialogue*, Africa Briefing N°138, 26 April 2018 (also available in French).

*Increasing the Stakes in DR Congo's Electoral Poker*, Africa Briefing N°139, 8 June 2018 (also available in French).

*DR Congo: The Bemba Earthquake*, Africa Briefing N°140, 15 June 2018 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Far North: A New Chapter in the Fight Against Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°263, 14 August 2018 (also available in French).

*Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis*, Africa Report N°264, 31 August 2018 (also available in French).

*Cameroon: Divisions Widen Ahead of Presidential Vote*, Africa Briefing N°142, 3 October 2018 (also available in French).

*Chad: Defusing Tensions in the Sahel*, Africa Report N°266, 5 December 2018 (also available in French).

*Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?*, Africa Report N°272, 2 May 2019 (also available in French).

*Chad: Avoiding Confrontation in Miski*, Africa Report N°274, 17 May 2019 (only available in French).

*Making the Central African Republic's Latest Peace Agreement Stick*, Africa Report N°277, 18 June 2019 (also available in French).

*Running Out of Options in Burundi*, Africa Report N°278, 20 June 2019 (also available in French).

*A New Approach for the UN to Stabilise the DR Congo*, Africa Briefing N°148, 4 December 2019.

*Avoiding the Resurgence of Inter-communal Violence in Eastern Chad*, Africa Report N°284, 30 December 2019 (also available in French).

*Averting Proxy Wars in the Eastern DdR Congo and Great Lakes*, Africa Briefing N°150, 23 January 2020 (also available in French).

*A First Step Toward Reform: Ending Burundi's Forced Contribution System*, Africa Briefing N°153, 8 April 2020 (also available in French).

### Horn of Africa

*Instruments of Pain (II): Conflict and Famine in South Sudan*, Africa Briefing N°124, 26 April 2017.

*Instruments of Pain (III): Conflict and Famine in Somalia*, Africa Briefing N°125, 9 May 2017.

*Instruments of Pain (IV): The Food Crisis in North East Nigeria*, Africa Briefing N°126, 18 May 2017.

*Kenya's Rift Valley: Old Wounds, Devolution's New Anxieties*, Africa Report N°248, 30 May 2017.

*Time to Repeal U.S. Sanctions on Sudan?*, Africa Briefing N°127, 22 June 2017.

*A New Roadmap to Make U.S. Sudan Sanctions Relief Work*, Africa Briefing N°128, 29 September 2017.

*How to Ensure a Credible, Peaceful Presidential Vote in Kenya*, Africa Briefing N°129, 2 October 2017.

*Managing the Disruptive Aftermath of Somalia's Worst Terror Attack*, Africa Briefing N°131, 20 October 2017.

*An Election Delay Can Help Avert Kenya's Crisis*, Africa Briefing N°132, 23 October 2017.

*Uganda's Slow Slide into Crisis*, Africa Report N°256, 21 November 2017.

*After Kenya's Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead*, Africa Briefing N°136, 13 March 2018.

*Somalia and the Gulf Crisis*, Africa Report N°260, 5 June 2018.

*Averting War in Northern Somalia*, Africa Briefing N°141, 27 June 2018.

*Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa*, Africa Report N°265, 21 September 2018.

*Improving Prospects for a Peaceful Transition in Sudan*, Africa Briefing N°143, 14 January 2019.

*Managing Ethiopia's Unsettled Transition*, Africa Report N°269, 21 February 2019.

*Salvaging South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal*, Africa Report N°270, 13 March 2019.

*Bridging the Gap in the Nile Waters Dispute*, Africa Report N°271, 20 March 2019.

*Averting Violence in Zanzibar's Knife-edge Election*, Africa Briefing N°144, 11 June 2019.

*Women and Al-Shabaab's Insurgency*, Africa Briefing N°145, 27 June 2019.

*Time for Ethiopia to Bargain with Sidama over Statehood*, Africa Briefing N°146, 4 July 2019.

*Somalia-Somaliland: The Perils of Delaying New Talks*, Africa Report N°280, 12 July 2019.

*Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution*, Africa Report N°281, 21 October 2019.

*Déjà Vu: Preventing Another Collapse in South Sudan*, Africa Briefing N°147, 4 November 2019.

*Keeping Ethiopia's Transition on the Rails*, Africa Report N°283, 16 December 2019.

## Southern Africa

*Zimbabwe's "Military-assisted Transition" and Prospects for Recovery*, Africa Briefing N°134, 20 December 2017.

*Four Conflict Prevention Opportunities for South Africa's Foreign Policy*, Africa Briefing N°152, 27 March 2020.

## West Africa

*Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°244, 23 February 2017.

*Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-insurgency*, Africa Report N°245, 27 February 2017 (also available in French).

*The Politics of Islam in Mali: Separating Myth from Reality*, Africa Report N°249, 18 July 2017 (only available in French).

*Double-edged Sword: Vigilantes in African Counter-insurgencies*, Africa Report N°251, 7 September 2017 (also available in French).

*Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict*, Africa Report N°252, 19 September 2017.

*The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North*, Africa Report N°254, 12 October 2017 (also available in French).

*Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force*, Africa Report N°258, 12 December 2017 (also available in French).

*Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of Schoolchildren in Nigeria*, Africa Briefing N°137, 12 April 2017.

*Frontière Niger-Mali : mettre l'outil militaire au service d'une approche politique*, Africa Report N°261, 12 June 2018 (only available in French).

*Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*, Africa Report N°262, 26 July 2018.

*Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali*, Africa Report N°267, 13 December 2018 (also available in French).

*Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Six States to Watch*, Africa Report N°268, 21 December 2018.

*Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province*, Africa Report N°273, 16 May 2019.

*Returning from the Land of Jihad: The Fate of Women Associated with Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°275, 21 May 2019.

*Speaking with the "Bad Guys": Toward Dialogue with Central Mali's Jihadists*, Africa Report N°276 (also available in French), 28 May 2019.

*Getting a Grip on Central Sahel's Gold Rush*, Africa Report N°282, 13 November 2019 (also available in French).

*The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa,*  
Africa Briefing N°149, 20 December 2019 (also available in French).

*Managing Trafficking in Northern Niger,* Africa  
Report N°285, 6 January 2020 (also available in French).

*Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence,*  
Africa Report N°287, 24 February 2020, (also available in French).

*The Central Sahel: Scene of New Climate Wars?*, Africa Briefing N°154, 24 April 2020 (also available in French).



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