

Thousands Displaced Amid Clashes Between Somali National Army and Al-Shabaab in Mahaas District, Hiran Region



Displaced Families

3,800


Displaced Individuals

22,800


Deaths

0


Injuries

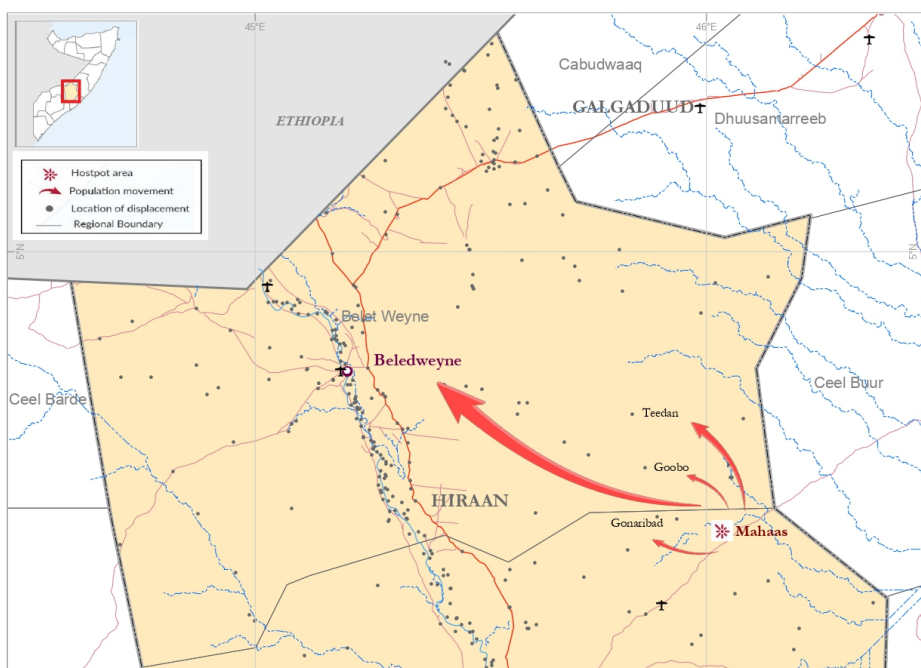
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Coordinates

 4.3926° N,
46.0873° E .


Incident Date

July 27, 2025,



Background

On 27 July 2025, significant armed clashes occurred in Mahaas District, Hiraan Region, involving the Somali National Army (SNA) and local Macawiisley community groups, in conflict with the non-state armed group Al-Shabaab. Mahaas had been under government control for over 13 years and was previously considered a safe town for thousands of residents.

Following intense fighting, government forces withdrew, resulting in Al-Shabaab gaining full control of the town. This abrupt shift has led to the mass displacement of approximately 3,800 households affecting at least 22,800 individuals, who have sought refuge in surrounding villages, including Beledweyne, Teedan, Bilcile, Goobo and Gonaribad.

While many individuals managed to escape, a considerable number of civilians remain trapped in Mahaas, facing restricted movement and heightened protection risks. Those displaced have primarily settled in open areas or overcrowded internally displaced persons (IDP) sites, where they lack adequate shelter and essential services. Vulnerable people, including children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, are among those most severely impacted.

Previous Location	Arrival locations	Households
Mahaas	Beledweyne	1980
Mahaas	Teedan	995
Mahaas	Bilcile	345
Mahaas	Goobo	268
Mahaas	Gonaribad	212
(Total 22,800 individuals)		3,800 households

As of this alert, there has been no reported humanitarian response to assist the displaced population in this crisis. Immediate action is required to address the urgent needs of those affected and to ensure their safety and well-being.

Protection Risks

Restricted Freedom of Movement and Siege Conditions: Civilians remaining in Mahaas are subjected to unlawful restrictions on their freedom of movement, placing them at significant risk amid ongoing conflict and siege conditions. The sudden takeover has left many individuals, particularly vulnerable individuals and families unable to escape the violence.

Forced Recruitment and Child Association with Armed Groups: There is an alarming increase in reports of forced recruitment of boys and adolescents by Al-Shabaab, particularly among those who still trapped within the town. The situation raises serious concerns about the safety and rights of children in the area.

Psychological and Emotional Distress: Displaced families have walked long distances—often on foot and without prior preparation—resulting in both physical exhaustion and psychological distress. Many individuals have experienced trauma and are grappling with uncertainty regarding the safety of family members left behind, exacerbating their emotional challenges. Immediate intervention is essential to mitigate these protection risks and support the affected populations.

Urgent Humanitarian Needs

Emergency Shelter: Most displaced families are currently residing in open spaces or overcrowded IDP settlements with limited shelter support. Immediate provision of emergency shelter materials is critical.

Food Assistance: Due to the abrupt displacement, families fled without belongings, food, or supplies. Urgent food aid is needed to address immediate food insecurity.

Emergency Health Support (Including Mental Health and Psychosocial

Support): Many displaced individuals are physically fatigued from the journey and suffering from mental trauma. Urgent medical care and psychosocial support services are needed to respond to injuries, chronic illnesses, and emotional distress.



Newly displaced people assessed by HCRI (Hirshabelle Commission for Refugees and IDPs)



The PSMN (Protection & Solutions Monitoring Network) is a UNHCR-led project that identifies and reports on preliminary displacements and provides early indicators of immediate priority needs, as well as the protection risks and incidents driving such population movements. On behalf of UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 10 local partners across Somalia conduct data gathering—primarily through interviews with affected communities and key informants—and monitor displacement trends at strategic locations.

Data Attribution:

All data and information in this Flash Alert are sourced from UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) and its partners. The following citation is required when referencing any part of this report:

"UNHCR Somalia. Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) – Thousands Displaced Amid Clashes Between Somali National Army and Al-Shabaab in Mahaas District, Hiran Region (July 2025). UNHCR, Somalia."

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