



25th
April 2024

Public-Police Citizen Forum Report

Garowe, Puntland, Somalia

1. Background

Puntland State, a federal member of Somalia, recently held parliamentary and presidential elections, marking a key milestone in its state-building journey. However, Puntland stands at a critical crossroads in its quest for enduring peace and security, confronted by several challenges that demand targeted and strategic responses.

Between 2022 and 2023, Puntland experienced a series of election-related crises that triggered severe instability in the security sector, resulting in armed clashes and unrest following controversial constitutional amendments.

The conflict between Somaliland and civilians in the Sool region further intensified tensions, leading to the proliferation of weapons and the formation of militia groups. This volatile situation poses unprecedented security threats to Puntland and the entire region's stability.

Over the past year, various crimes—including killings, gang rape/murder, robbery, carjacking, and the rise of armed drug cartels—have reached alarming levels. The situation was further exacerbated by armed clan militia who entered towns and posed a security threat. Additionally, Puntland continues to struggle against terror groups such as al-Shabaab and ISIS, who have established strongholds in the strategic mountains of Bari and Sanaag, where they have the potential to wreak significant havoc.

2. Community Forum with the Puntland Police Commissioner

In response to the significant security challenges facing Puntland, the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), in collaboration with the Puntland Police Commissioner, organized a Public-Police Citizen Forum. The event gathered approximately 150 participants, representing a broad spectrum of community members and key government officials.

The forum fostered greater collaboration and communication between the public and law enforcement institutions. The Puntland Police Commissioner, Gen. Mumin Abdi Shire, addressed the keynote speech, followed by a panel discussion featuring Nugal Regional Police Commander, Col. Mohamed Ali, and a senior official from the Criminal Investigation Department. The forum's attendees included elders, youth, women groups, village leaders, educators from schools and universities, and the leadership of major hospitals.

3. Opening Remarks by Ali Farah, PDRC Executive Director

The Executive Director of PDRC, Ali Farah Ali, delivered the forum with a warm welcome and insightful remarks that resonated with PDRC's mission as an independent and non-partisan research organization dedicated to promoting peace and democracy,

In his address, Mr. Ali emphasized PDRC's vital role in peacebuilding and state-building, noting that the organization is committed to bridging the gaps among citizens and their different levels of government (local and central governments). He highlighted the essential function of the police in fostering transparency and accountability within society.

Mr. Ali stated that this forum continues PDRC's ongoing initiatives, which aim to bring together citizens and their leaders to foster interaction and hold them accountable to their mandates. He hoped similar citizen forums would be organized in major towns across Puntland to further this mission.

The Executive Director also highlighted the importance of community involvement, asserting that law enforcement cannot succeed without active support from citizens. He encouraged the audience to engage collaboratively with the police to enhance their effectiveness in maintaining law and order.

4. Keynote Speech by Gen. Mumin Abdi Shire, Puntland Police Commissioner

The speech of the commissioner highlighted and underlined the current security challenges that the state is facing now, including the impact of the election impasse in 2023 on the general security of the region, increased armed drug cartels in the main towns, increased arms proliferation and formation of clan militias, fragmented of government forces, the fight against terrorism both Alshabab and ISIS and the piracy which has reemerged off the coast regions of Puntland.

The commissioner emphasized that the Puntland police, amid all these challenges, is contributing to the state functionality, such as taking care of the daily security of the citizens and supporting the government to collect the taxation revenue and apprehension of criminals and bringing them before the courts.

identified as additional responsibilities of the police force. The presentation also shed light on critical issues. It was revealed that politically induced crises had increased in the past two years, primarily attributed to transitions during the PL presidential elections. However, the graphic presentation demonstrated a decline in the number of terrorist killings over the same period, indicating the disruption of terrorist networks and targeted operations against their hideouts in Puntland. Another noteworthy point was Puntland's limited number of reported robbery cases during the past 5 years.

6. Commentaries, Questions and Answers Commentaries

"I am very happy that you have expressed your willingness and commitment to take corrective actions towards your shortcomings. Insecurity is not only the result of the poor work of the police, but it is also about the lack of public participation in the security sector. It is about the culture of impunity, and I expected that the elders would take their role by bringing their wrongdoing sons to the police. The challenge is that parents come to the police to release their sons who have been arrested in a robbery. Therefore, I advise the public to assist the police to apprehend all offenders". Dr. Artan.

Sh. Mohamud Haji Yusuf, Religious Sheik

"I want to start by expressing my gratitude to the commander of the Puntland Police Force and other government representatives for their fair reporting on the topics covered. I believe the police Commander and other government representatives have addressed every query about the current matter. All the parties here should establish a committee to oversee Garowe's security and provide funding to keep the capital safe".

Lul Mohamed Warsame, President's Advisor

"According to the comments and the participants' questions, it is apparent that Puntland is peaceful. I can say it is not even equivalent to 5% of what happens in the other regions of Somalia. The security challenges mentioned can be attributed to our failures as the public, and the police alone cannot do everything. Although we criticize them, our police are committed to delivering the best, we know that they have caught and fizzled out some terrorist networks".

7. Questions and Answers

Participants' Questions	Answers by the Police Commissioner/Officials
<p>Zakariye Botan, Secretary, Horseed Political Party First, is there any impact on security due to the influx of migrants into Puntland from neighboring countries? Secondly, what legal frameworks allow police stations to hold arrested people in what is known as "solitary confinement" (also known as "SHEELO") and for what length of time?</p>	<p>The government of Puntland has significant security concerns due to the migrant stream, particularly about the Oromo ethnic group from Ethiopia. We made every effort to send them back to the borders, but eventually they all returned. Regarding the migrants, we had a conversation with the Ethiopian consulate to ensure their safe return; nevertheless, their response was unsatisfactory. Therefore, a committee has been created by Puntland's president to oversee this matter in addition to allocating funds.</p>
<p>Gelle Asair, Puntland MP Can we have a police officers armed with baton sticks to minimize the risk of careless firing of live bullets?</p> <p>Is it possible to recruit a young, educated men and women from the universities and allocate a competitive remuneration to replace the current incompetent drug-addicted members of the police?</p>	<p>Mohamed Ali, Nugal Police Commander It is impossible for the police to undertake security operations without having guns, it is more likely that the target citizens have guns in their houses and can confront with the police.</p> <p>Gen. Mumin Abdi Shire, Police Commissioner Because of the lower salaries we paid, we cannot recruit the right personnel we needed, but anyway, there is an ongoing reform now which aims at downsizing the number of the police forces members and increasing their salary. We have lost 70 police officers in our operations against the drug dealers.</p>

Do you have plans to register the IDPs businesspeople for security purposes?

Yes, we have plans to register the IDPs businesspeople and keep their records for security references

There are people with police uniforms who rob civilians, who are they and what are your plans?

There are different government forces and militias those who have military or police uniforms and commit crimes in the town and there is a planned grand security operation to return these forces to their bases.

Said Bashir, Security expert

Sometimes, the police are investigating cases of victims, they lose the criminal evidence, such as clothes that could be used to be used in courts, why does this happen?

Col. Dabaylaha- confirm from Abdiqafar “The real name of this officer”?

Some cases happen in a hard-to-reach remote areas and after 72 hours the evidence may disappear, there is only one forensic lab in Puntland which locates in Garowe, it is very difficult to get forensic samples from the survivor after the deadline of 72 hours.

Abdirizak Ahmed Hersi, Principle, Nawawi School

A greater part of the community is in schools, so, what are your security plans towards them?

Col. Mohamed Ali

Due to the limited capacity of the police, we cannot place police officers in every school, but we respond to case reported by the schools.

Abshir Ali Halow, Clan Chief

I always hear from the radio the decisions of the regional security committee regarding the ban of carrying illegal weapons in the town and I can still see them everywhere. What is the obstacle to implementing these decisions?

Gen. Mumin Abdi Shire

Yes, that is an existing fact, but we are planning a grand operation in the town, which we will collect the illegal weapons from the civilians and apprehend all criminals including drug cartels, so it is coming soon.



8. Major Security Challenges identified during the Citizen Forum

- Deficiency in police institutional capacity regarding training, equipment, remunerations, and workspaces.
- Widespread Arms Proliferation within the communities – increasing militarization of clans, new recruitment of militias by clans, and procurement of heavy weapons by clans.
- Terrorism – Alshabaab and ISIS are expanding their presence in the Bari and Sanaag regions, which have the capability to cause chaos.
- Presence of armed drug cartels – Increasing drug abuse among the youth causes frequent armed confrontations, contributing to insecurity and jeopardizing law and order.
- Resurgence of Piracy – The resurgence of piracy off the coast of Puntland is another worrying security issue that can stain the already fragile security of the state.
- Conflict over new settlements has led to deadly communal disputes, such as the recent one in Sheerbi village in the Karkaar region, followed by frequent land disputes in main towns, causing armed conflicts.
- Uncontrolled borders – the long open border with Ethiopia is causing an influx of Ethiopian refugees and drugs, mainly wine, entering to Puntland, which is a good share of the general security fragility.
- Poor public-police relations and cooperation – There are no mechanisms to ensure effective cooperation between police and the public.

9. Recommendations

- Immediate reform of the police by recruiting competent police officers, increasing remunerations, and putting strict mechanism and code of conducts in place. Such, criminalizing the use of drugs in the workplace.
- The police plan a grand house to house security operation in major towns to apprehend suspected criminals and disarm civilians having illegal heavy weapons in their houses.
- The government to prioritize the fight against terror groups and pirates from regions.
- Police installing security traffic cameras on the main roads will enable police to keep an eye on the road and use recorded video footage to simplify the tracing of accidents and crimes.
- The police should detect and deter all illegal entries to the town, such as human trafficking, smuggling of drugs, and illegal goods entering the town. This will contribute to reducing crimes in the town when the wrongdoers are stopped and apprehended in the first place.
- The police should regularly conduct citizen forums to interact with the public, respond to security concerns, and receive recommendations for security improvement.

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