

Nala Weekly

A weekly product of the Nala Center

This week, the region's conflicts became contests between states. Ethiopian forces reached the Eritrean border as both capitals took their cases to the UN Security Council. In Sudan, strikes near the Ethiopian and Egyptian borders killed scores of civilians. In Mogadishu, a dispute over the President's mandate pitted security forces against the opposition. A Houthi missile struck Riyadh's main airport, and in Goma a former Congolese president took charge of the rebellion.



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Flashpoints covered in this issue. Map: Nala Center, using Natural Earth boundary data. Boundaries and names shown do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the Nala Center.

1

**Ethiopia–
Eritrea**

Key dates

7–8 October 2026

Eritrean troops reported near Idaga Hamus

8–9 October 2026

Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of invasion at the UN

9–11 October 2026

Federal and TPF forces enter Adigrat and Adwa

12 October 2026

Abiy holds a call with Israel's Prime Minister

13 October 2026

UN Security Council meets in closed session

From Mekelle to the Border

A week after Mekelle changed hands, the war in Tigray has moved to the Eritrean border. Federal forces and the allied Tigray Peace Force (TPF) pushed north along the A2 highway and into central Tigray, taking Shire, Atsbi, Idaga Hamus and Hawzen by 9 October. They entered Adigrat, about 30 km from the border, on 9–10 October, and Adwa on 11 October, a day after the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) withdrew; residents reported the overnight looting of public buildings, including Adwa Hospital. The TPLF has not contested the towns, in line with its stated shift to mobile warfare. In Mekelle, flights resumed on 11 October, and Getachew Reda, now an adviser to the Prime Minister, said Tigray would be placed under a federal command post for six months. Civilians continue to bear the cost: drone strikes were reported on Chila on 10 October, killing a child, and on schools in Egela and Ahza a day later.

The confrontation with Eritrea has reached the UN Security Council, which is due to meet in closed session on the crisis today. In a letter to the Council, Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos accused Eritrea of an 'all-out invasion' of northern Ethiopia, saying its troops had advanced up to 60 km, and invoked Ethiopia's right to self-defence. Asmara rejected the claim, accused Addis Ababa of seeking to seize the port of Assab and asked the Council for deterrent measures. Residents reported Eritrean troops in Adigrat on 7 October; they reportedly pulled back after a drone strike near Idaga Hamus that night. Reports of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces fighting around Bure in Afar, and of Ethiopian troops crossing into Eritrea on 11 October, remain unverified.

Addis Ababa is also widening its diplomatic outreach. On 12 October, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held a phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, describing it as fruitful and constructive and saying the two leaders discussed bilateral ties and regional developments and reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation. Neither side gave details, and no Israeli readout had been published at the time of writing. Coming a week after Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia aligned at El Alamein, and with Israel having recognised Somaliland in December 2025, the call is likely to be read closely in Asmara and Cairo. The wider risk is that a direct war along Eritrea's Red Sea coast would draw in Gulf and Middle Eastern powers on opposing sides, entangling it with the war in Sudan.

With the front line now on the border, the coming weeks are likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** An armed standoff takes hold along the Adigrat–Adwa line, with drone strikes and border skirmishes, while the TPLF shifts to insurgency from Tembien and north-western Tigray.
- B** Fighting around Bure becomes a deliberate push towards Assab, turning the crisis into an interstate war that draws in Egypt and Gulf powers and closes off Red Sea diplomacy.
- C** AU, US and Gulf pressure produces de-escalation talks and a buffer arrangement, as Addis Ababa turns to the Fano and OLA fronts.

Recommendation

The AU should reactivate its envoy, Olusegun Obasanjo, alongside senior figures such as Cyril Ramaphosa or Uhuru Kenyatta, to restart talks, while the AU Peace and Security Council and IGAD propose a joint verification mechanism for the border. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, despite their rivalry, should jointly press Addis Ababa not to advance into Eritrea and Asmara to withdraw any troops remaining on Ethiopian soil.

The new front line

Federal and allied forces entered Adigrat and Adwa between 9 and 11 October, bringing the front to within about 30 km of Eritrea. Fighting reported around Bure, on the road to the Eritrean port of Assab, has not been independently verified.  Towns entered this week  Fighting reported, not verified



Map: Nala Center, using Natural Earth boundary data. Boundaries shown do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the Nala Center.

2

Sudan

Key dates

8 October 2026

Darfur arms embargo extended to 11 December

9 October 2026

Drone strike near a displacement site in Wad al-Mahi

10 October 2026

Air strikes hit gold mines near the Egyptian border

12 October 2026

Burhan orders a fact-finding committee

War Without Borders

Sudan's war has pressed up against two of its borders. On 9 October, a drone struck near a displacement site at Abu Shandi in Wad al-Mahi locality, Blue Nile state, killing at least 30 civilians, most of them women and children. The state governor blamed the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and said the drone had been launched from inside Ethiopia; Addis Ababa denies hosting the RSF, and the army said on 12 October that it had shot down another drone that crossed from Ethiopian territory. In the far north, air strikes on 10 October hit artisanal gold mines at Jabal al-Uqaydat, near the border with Egypt. A Sudanese rights group put the preliminary death toll at 72 and blamed the Egyptian air force, while survivors and the RSF-led Tasis alliance said more than 200 were killed; no figure has been independently verified. Egypt's military said only that it was conducting a campaign against illegal mining along the border, and army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, for whom Cairo is a key ally, ordered a fact-finding committee on 12 October.

Diplomacy has not kept pace. Burhan's 6 October rejection of talks with the RSF stands, and there was no visible progress on the US-backed proposal for a 90-day humanitarian truce. On 8 October, the UN Security Council could agree only a two-month extension of the Darfur arms embargo, to 11 December, after proposals for a nationwide embargo met Russian and Chinese opposition. In Kordofan, drone strikes by both sides were reported, including on El-Obeid and on a shelter in En Nahud where local monitors said at least 12 civilians were killed, and shelling killed a mother and her three children in Kadugli on 10 October. The army is advancing towards En Nahud while the RSF masses forces in West Kordofan.

In the coming weeks, the war is likely to take one of the following paths:

- A** A grinding war on several fronts continues, with the army pushing towards En Nahud while the RSF and SPLM-North press on Blue Nile, and drone strikes on civilians persist.
- B** An RSF and SPLM-North advance threatens Ed Damazin or the Roseires Dam, sharply raising tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia.
- C** Pressure from the Quad produces limited local humanitarian pauses around El-Obeid or in Blue Nile, although a national truce looks unlikely before December.

Recommendation

The UN Security Council and the Quad (the United States, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) should use the period before the embargo expires on 11 December to agree a verifiable, Sudan-wide ban on drone transfers, since drones are now the main cause of civilian deaths on every front.

3

Somalia

Key dates

8 October 2026

Sharif Sheikh Ahmed calls for a 'united national front'

11 October 2026

NISA accuses Sharif's guards of attacking its forces

11 October 2026

Sharif denies the claims and describes a siege of his home

31 October 2026

UN report on AUSSOM's future due

31 December 2026

AUSSOM mandate expires

A Mandate in Dispute

Somalia's political crisis moved onto the streets of Mogadishu this week. The opposition says President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's four-year term ended on 15 May 2026, while the government maintains that his mandate runs until May 2027. On 8 October, former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed called for a broad, united national front 'to save Somalia', warning that the dispute over the constitutional mandate of the country's institutions cannot be resolved through force or unilateral measures. On 11 October, the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) accused armed men acting on Sharif's orders of attacking its forces in Wadajir district and forcing their way into homes, adding that its forces had not returned fire.

Sharif categorically denied the allegations. He described roads closed around his residence, supplies blocked, staff abducted and troops deployed nearby, and warned that the agency's claims could not be used to justify bloodshed against opposition politicians. Unverified reports circulating in Mogadishu alleged a plan to target his residence; neither side's claims have been independently verified.

Abroad, Mogadishu has declared itself neutral in the Ethiopia-Eritrea crisis, despite signing the El Alamein declaration with Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan on 4 October, and says it has had no official notice of Ethiopia's reported plan to withdraw more than 3,000 troops, most of them in South West State, as the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) nears a funding cliff in December. An investigation published this week, citing Puntland security officials, found that a January 2025 drone strike in Bari region, which they attributed to the UAE, killed four members of one family; the UAE did not respond to requests for comment.

Over the coming weeks to months, Somalia is likely to face one of the following trajectories:

- A** The Mogadishu standoff hardens into armed clashes, as in April 2021, diverting forces from the fight against al-Shabaab.
- B** Ethiopia quietly thins its presence in Bay and Bakool, and al-Shabaab exploits both the security gap and the division in Mogadishu.
- C** Partners broker government-opposition talks on an electoral timetable, easing tensions before AUSSOM's mandate expires.

Recommendation

The AU, the UN and Somalia's partners should urgently convene talks between the government and the opposition on an agreed electoral timetable, while the government lifts restrictions around opposition residences and keeps its forces apart from opposition guards.

4

Red Sea / Bab el-Mandeb

Key dates

7 October 2026

Government offensive on al-Waziiya, Taiz

10 October 2026

Missile strike on Riyadh's King Khalid airport

11 October 2026

Houthis claim a second strike on the airport

11 October 2026

Government warns of a health collapse in Taiz

Missiles on Riyadh

The war in Yemen reached the Saudi capital this week. On 10 October, a missile struck a passenger terminal at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, killing 12 people and wounding 309, according to Saudi authorities; the dead included Saudi, Bangladeshi, American, Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Palestinian and Sudanese nationals. The Houthis claimed the attack the following day and struck the airport again that evening, after earlier strikes targeting Khamis Mushait, Jizan, Najran and Abha. The Saudi-led coalition described the attack as a war crime, Riyadh vowed a firm response, and the US President suggested that Washington could join Saudi operations.

On the ground, Operation Yemen Dawn continued. Government forces opened an offensive on al-Waziiya district in Taiz on 7 October, which controls access to Mokha. The government claims control of Dhubab, its airport and the Bab el-Mandeb coast, as well as Mokha; the Houthis deny these losses, and control of Mokha remains contested. The Houthi-run health ministry claimed that 83 civilians were killed in the first days of the offensive. Taiz, cut off since the Houthis took At Turbah on 4 October, faces acute shortages of fuel and medicine, and on 11 October the government warned of an imminent health and humanitarian catastrophe there. For the Horn of Africa, the escalation raises shipping costs and risks for Djibouti, Eritrea's coast and Somaliland's port of Berbera, and sharpens the dispute over who should govern the Red Sea.

In the coming weeks, the conflict is likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** A heavy Saudi air campaign follows the Riyadh strike while the coast from Dhubab to Mokha stays contested and Houthi missile fire continues.
- B** Direct US strikes alongside Saudi Arabia, linked to the wider confrontation with Iran, push the Houthis into renewed attacks on merchant shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb.
- C** Back-channel mediation, building on Riyadh's long-standing preference for de-escalation, restores a partial truce.

Recommendation

Djibouti and the other IGAD states should press for a humanitarian corridor into Taiz and for maritime deconfliction in the Bab el-Mandeb as an urgent priority, since the economies of the Horn depend on safe passage through the strait.

5

South Sudan

Key dates

7 October 2026

Kiir meets Ramaphosa in Pretoria

9 October 2026

Attackers briefly seize Rumbek

22 December 2026

General elections scheduled

Pretoria Backs the Polls

President Salva Kiir sought regional backing for the 22 December elections this week. Meeting President Cyril Ramaphosa in Pretoria on 7 October, Kiir was urged to uphold and fully implement the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), and to pursue an inclusive electoral process built on trust among political stakeholders. South Africa chairs the AU's high-level committee on South Sudan, which oversees the agreement. According to Kiir's office, he reaffirmed the election date and said more than 20,000 election workers were being recruited and more than 25,000 security personnel trained. He asked South Africa for ballot boxes, training for electoral commission staff, security uniforms and digital identity cards for election officials, and Ramaphosa agreed to support all four requests, with work to begin through the National Elections Commission.

Security remains the most serious risk to the vote. On 9 October, attackers briefly seized Rumbek, the capital of Lakes State, before government forces drove them out; the government said about 71 people were killed, including four soldiers, a toll that has yet to be verified. The main opposition, the SPLM-IO, continues to boycott the government's pre-election dialogue, while its leader, Riek Machar, remains under house arrest and on trial. The Nala Center could not verify a published voter-registration timetable as at 13 October. Pretoria's call for inclusion and its pledge of technical support pull in different directions: the assistance will help the vote take place, but not necessarily make it credible.

As the 22 December polls approach, the following trajectories are likely:

- A** An SPLM-dominated vote proceeds on schedule with South African technical support, but without the SPLM-IO, producing an election of limited legitimacy.
- B** Localised violence of the kind seen in Rumbek spreads to Upper Nile, Jonglei and other contested areas, disrupting registration and campaigning.
- C** Regional pressure, led by the AU committee, secures concessions on Machar's status and opposition participation, opening the way to a more inclusive vote.

Recommendation

South Africa, as chair of the AU's high-level committee on South Sudan, should link its technical election support to concrete inclusion steps, including the SPLM-IO's participation and a resolution of Machar's status, so that assistance strengthens the credibility of the vote rather than only its logistics.

6

DR Congo

Key dates

6–7 October 2026

Numbi, in northern Kalehe, changes hands twice

9 October 2026

Kabila warns that 'Congo is in peril'

12 October 2026

New front launched in Goma; AFC declared dissolved

Kabila Takes the Helm

The conflict in eastern DRC took a political turn this week. On 12 October, after two days of closed meetings in Goma, former President Joseph Kabila was proclaimed president of a new movement, the Front for the Refoundation of the Nation (FRN), with Corneille Nangaa, Bertrand Bisimwa and General Sultani Makenga, the leaders of the Congo River Alliance (AFC) and M23, as vice-presidents. The founding declaration ends the existence of the AFC and claims the right to use force; it is not yet clear whether M23's military structure has been formally dissolved. Kabila, who was sentenced to death in absentia in September 2025 for treason and complicity with the AFC/M23, a role he denies, had warned on 9 October that 'Congo is in peril'.

On the ground, pro-government forces took Numbi and nearby localities in northern Kalehe, South Kivu, on 5–6 October, before M23 reportedly retook them on 7 October, and clashes continued near Minembwe in the South Kivu highlands. Kabila's open leadership turns a rebellion widely reported to have Rwandan backing, which Kigali denies, into a direct challenge to Kinshasa's legitimacy. It also complicates both peace tracks: the Washington framework between the DRC and Rwanda, and the Doha roadmap agreed with the AFC/M23 in August, which now faces a renamed and re-structured counterpart.

In the coming weeks, the conflict is likely to take one of the following paths:

- A** Kinshasa refuses to deal with the FRN, the Doha track stalls, and fighting continues in Kalehe and the South Kivu highlands.
- B** The FRN uses its new political cover to push towards Uvira or Walikale, widening the war.
- C** Qatar and the United States bring the FRN into the Doha process under its new name, in exchange for prisoner releases and ceasefire steps.

Recommendation

The Washington and Doha mediators should agree a single, joint position on who the FRN represents at the negotiating table, so that the rebrand does not undo the sequencing of both peace processes.

Also on our radar: Kenya

President William Ruto congratulated Abiy Ahmed on his second term on 6 October, but Nairobi has not commented publicly on the Ethiopia–Eritrea rupture. Its ties with Addis Ababa, and its record as a regional mediator, place it well to host the Ethiopia–Eritrea border verification talks recommended in this issue.

About the Nala Center

The Nala Center is a youth-led, nonpartisan policy and research think tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. More about its work is available at www.nalacenter.org.

About Nala Weekly

Nala Weekly is a weekly product of the Nala Center. Each issue offers concise analysis of key developments, the trajectories they are likely to take and, where relevant, recommendations for policymakers. The analysis in this issue reflects information available as at 13 October 2026. Scenarios describe plausible trajectories and are not predictions. Casualty figures and territorial claims attributed to parties to a conflict have not been independently verified.

Sources

This issue draws on reporting and analysis from AFP, Al Jazeera, CNN, France 24, Reuters, Jeune Afrique, The New Arab, Sudan Tribune, Radio Tamazuj, Addis Standard, the Ethiopian News Agency, Horn Diplomat, Garowe Online, Hiiraan Online, Somali Guardian, FTL Somalia, Dawan Africa, Shabelle Media, Kaab TV, Puntland Post, Drop Site News, Eastleigh Voice, People Daily, Chimp Reports, The Rio Times, Wazema, The Long War Journal, the International Crisis Group, the Critical Threats Project, the Europe External Programme with Africa (EEPA), ISS Africa, Security Council Report, the Council on Foreign Relations, the International Organization for Migration, the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the United Nations.

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