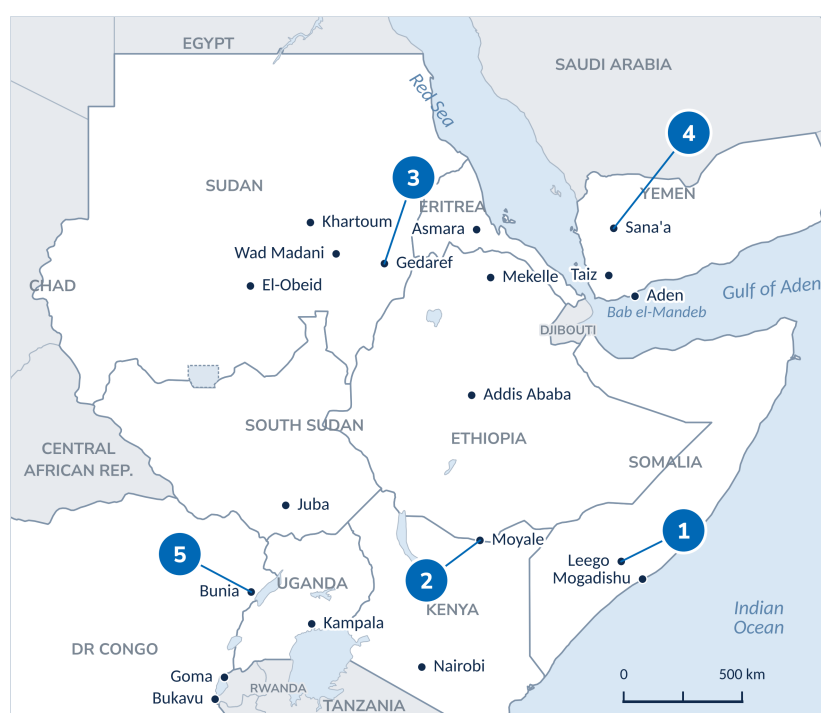


Nala Weekly

A weekly product of the Nala Center

This week, ambushes, drones and disease tested governments across the region. A federal army column suffered heavy losses near Leego, days into Somalia's new offensive in South West State. Clashes in Moyale between Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions drove thousands into Kenya. RSF drones cut power across eastern Sudan, Egypt's parliament authorised support for Saudi Arabia, and DR Congo's Ebola outbreak passed 9,900 confirmed cases.



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.

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1

Somalia

Key dates

24 October 2026

Army launches Operation Banooda in South West State

25 October 2026

President invites the opposition to talks in November

26 October 2026

Federal column attacked near Leego and Jameeco

26 October 2026

President meets Museveni in Entebbe

27 October 2026

Cabinet called to an extraordinary session

Ambush on the Baidoa Road

The federal army's push into South West State suffered a heavy setback in its first days. On 24 October, the Ministry of Defence launched Operation Banooda to clear al-Shabaab and what it calls 'al-Shabaab-aligned forces', its term for fighters loyal to the ousted state president, Abdiiaziz Laftagareen, from the state. A column of about 2,000 troops and more than 200 vehicles, led by Danab special forces, set out from the Bale-dogle area towards Buurhakaba, which Laftagareen's forces have held since 15 October. It stalled at Leego, on the Mogadishu-Baidoa road near the boundary between Bay and Lower Shabelle, as troops checked the route for mines. On 26 October, the column came under attack between Leego and Jameeco. Reports from the area describe roadside bombs, heavy gunfire and strikes by explosive-laden drones on government positions, with several armoured vehicles burned.

The scale of the losses is contested. In a statement issued the same day, al-Shabaab claimed to have killed 321 soldiers, wounded many more, taken prisoners and seized large quantities of weapons, and said Turkish F-16s and drones had tried to support the troops. The group has a record of inflating such figures, and its claims have not been independently verified. Opposition-leaning media reported that dozens of vehicles had been lost and several officers were missing. The government has not published a casualty figure; on 27 October, the Ministry of Defence said its forces had killed about 75 al-Shabaab fighters in the Bay fighting. Who operated the drones that struck government positions has not been established. On 26 October, federal troops and forces loyal to Laftagareen also clashed at Burjed, on the outskirts of Baidoa, which remains under federal control. The federally backed state president, Aden Mohamed Nur 'Madobe', has been working from Mogadishu.

The setback came a day after President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud set out his political path. In a national address on the night of 25 October, he said 'the door to dialogue remains open at all times' and invited opposition parties to national consultations in Mogadishu from 14 to 18 November. The opposition, including the Somali Future Council and the leaders of Puntland and Jubaland, holds that his mandate expired on 15 May 2026, while the government says constitutional amendments extended it to May 2027. On 27 October, the Council of Ministers was called to an extraordinary session on the security situation. Some reports said ministers would consider measures affecting relations with certain foreign states, amid allegations by officials of foreign involvement in the fighting, but no decision had been announced at the time of writing.

The President spent 26 October in Entebbe, where he met President Yoweri Museveni and, according to Ugandan media, expressed hope that Ugandan troops would stay in Somalia longer. Museveni urged Somali leaders to unite against al-Shabaab, and the two discussed trade. Uganda is one of the largest contributors to AUSSOM, the African Union mission in Somalia. Its military high command warned in February that it would withdraw if the mission's funding problems were not resolved, and the army chief, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, said on 28 August that Ugandan forces would leave completely by 1 August 2027.

The Baidoa road

Operation Banooda set out from the Baledogle area towards Buurhakaba along the main road linking Mogadishu and Baidoa. The column came under attack between Leego and Jameeco on 26 October. Positions and the road alignment are approximate.



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

After Leego, the federal offensive in South West State is likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** The army regroups and retakes Buurhakaba, but holding the Mogadishu–Baidoa road ties down troops drawn from other fronts, giving al-Shabaab room to strike elsewhere.
- B** The offensive stalls and Laftagareen’s forces press on Baidoa, turning the dispute between federal and state forces into a prolonged war that al-Shabaab exploits.
- C** The losses push both sides towards a ceasefire in Bay and talks on South West State, folded into the November consultations on the electoral process.

Recommendation

Mogadishu should publish a credible account of its losses and separate the fight against al-Shabaab from its dispute with Laftagareen’s forces, since fighting on two fronts divides the forces facing the militants. The AU and AUSSOM’s partners should press for a ceasefire in Bay and use the 14 to 18 November consultations to agree an inclusive way forward for South West State and the elections.

What to watch

- An official casualty figure, and the outcome of the extraordinary cabinet session.
- Whether federal forces reach Buurhakaba or pull back, and the fighting around Baidoa.
- The opposition’s answer to the November consultations, and whether voter registration opens on 1 November.

2

Ethiopia

Key dates

18 October 2026

Somali region raises its flag in a disputed part of Moyale

21 October 2026

Heavy fighting between regional forces in Moyale

22 October 2026

Federal forces take Abiy Addi and Zana in Tigray

23 October 2026

At least nine dead as Ethiopians cross into Kenya

26 October 2026

Kenyan officials put arrivals at about 35,000

Fighting on the Kenyan Border

Ethiopia's south has become a second source of concern. On 18 October, the Somali Regional State opened an administrative office in Moyale and raised its flag in Kebele 02, a part of the border town claimed by both the Somali and Oromia regions. A 13-year-old girl was killed. Oromia officials in Moyale said people from the Somali side had crossed the boundary and planted the flag inside Oromia. From 21 October, Oromia militia and Somali regional police exchanged heavy fire, and federal forces intervened. A hospital official in Ethiopian Moyale said that at least nine people had died by 23 October and that about 30 had been admitted, most with wounds from heavy weapons. Fighting was later reported across seven districts. Neither regional government had issued a statement at the time of writing.

The violence has spilled into Kenya. Ethiopians crossed into Kenyan Moyale at several points, and official estimates have risen quickly. The Marsabit County Commissioner said on 23 October that at least 2,500 people were sheltering in Moyale, and on 26 October put the number at about 35,000, with some 15,000 in camps and 20,000 staying with host communities. Local MPs have given a figure of more than 14,000. The Kenya Red Cross has begun a response. The clashes revive a long-running dispute over the Oromia–Somali boundary, which displaced hundreds of thousands of people in 2017 and 2018, and they test a federal government already stretched by war in the north.

Inside Tigray, fighting continued after federal forces stepped back from the Eritrean border between 17 and 19 October. Tigrayan forces re-entered Rama, near the border north of Adwa, by 22 October, while federal forces took Semema on 20 October and Abiy Addi and Zana on 22 October. Tigrayan and Amhara Fano fighters reportedly took Abergele by 23 October, and fighting by Fano halted traffic on the main Woldia–Bahir Dar road on 22 October. A federal drone strike in Finarwa killed four civilians on 21 October, according to conflict monitors. On 22 October, state television in Benishangul-Gumuz claimed that TPLF fighters had crossed in from Sudan's Blue Nile State and accused Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan of backing them; the claim has not been verified. Flights to Axum and Shire remained suspended.

Politically, Addis Ababa is pressing ahead with its plan for an interim administration in Tigray and regional elections within six months, while Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has kept up his warnings to Eritrea. The Russia–Africa summit in Moscow on 28 and 29 October, where Russia has offered to mediate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, is the next diplomatic test.

With crises in both the south and the north, Ethiopia's coming weeks are likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** Federal mediation and joint security arrangements calm Moyale and allow people to return, though the boundary dispute is left unresolved.
- B** Clashes spread along the Oromia–Somali boundary, pushing more people into Kenya and drawing federal forces away from Tigray and Amhara.
- C** The northern war widens as Tigrayan and Fano forces coordinate along the Tigray–Amhara boundary, cutting key roads and isolating towns.

Recommendation

The federal government should deploy neutral forces to Moyale and bring both regional governments together to settle the status of contested kebeles through the House of Federation. Kenya and IGAD should support registration and assistance for new arrivals in Marsabit County, and press for humanitarian access on both sides of the border.

What to watch

- Registration figures for new arrivals in Marsabit County, and any joint statement by the Oromia and Somali regional governments.
- Control of the roads linking Tigray and Amhara, and the reopening of flights to Axum and Shire.
- Contacts on Ethiopia and Eritrea at the Russia–Africa summit on 28 and 29 October.

3

Sudan

Key dates

18 October 2026

Repeat drone strike on a truck in Dibab, West Kordofan

23 October 2026

UN says drones killed at least 306 people in three weeks

26 October 2026

First anniversary of the fall of El Fasher

26 October 2026

RSF drones hit five power stations

26 October 2026

United Kingdom sanctions 15 commanders

A War on the Grid

Sudan's drone war turned on the country's infrastructure this week. On 26 October, RSF drones struck five power stations in army-held territory, two in Gedaref and one each in Sennar, White Nile and Gezira, according to the state electricity company, causing a complete outage across the south-eastern grid in four states. Air defences reportedly shot down drones near fuel depots outside Wad Madani. Blackouts on this scale cut water pumping and hospital services in cities far from the front lines, and add to pressure on the millions of displaced people sheltering there.

The human cost is rising. On 23 October, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said drone strikes had killed at least 306 people in the first three weeks of October, and that drones now cause most conflict-related civilian deaths in Sudan. His office attributed strikes to both sides. It recorded a repeat strike on a truck in Dibab, in RSF-held West Kordofan, on 18 October that killed at least 139 people; an alleged RSF strike on 9 October on displaced people mining gold near Abu Shendi in Blue Nile that killed at least 31, most of them women and children; and alleged army strikes on shelters for displaced people in Ghubeish and El Nuhud between 6 and 10 October that killed at least 25. The office counted more than 80 dead in the 19 October strike on Amiet market in Abyei, fewer than the local administration's figure of at least 153, and the UN Security Council has condemned the Abyei strikes.

The week also marked one year since the RSF captured El Fasher on 26 October 2025, ending an 18-month siege. The UN Human Rights Office documented more than 6,000 killings by RSF fighters in the three days after they entered the city. On the anniversary, the United Kingdom sanctioned 15 commanders from both the RSF and the army over abuses including conflict-related sexual violence, with asset freezes and travel bans. Those named include RSF Colonel Hussein Abu Jalak, linked to atrocities during the siege, and Al-Nour Ahmed Adam, known as Al-Qubba, a former RSF commander who has since joined the army. London also announced £5 million for survivors of sexual violence and £10 million for humanitarian work around Tawila and El Obeid. Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband said that 'rape and starvation are still being weaponised against the people of Sudan' and that 'support from all external backers to the warring parties must end'. A coalition of states working on atrocity prevention in Sudan issued a separate statement calling for accountability, including through the International Criminal Court.

As both sides target infrastructure, the coming weeks are likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** Strikes on power, water and fuel infrastructure escalate on both sides, deepening the humanitarian crisis in army-held cities and in RSF-held Kordofan and Darfur.
- B** Sanctions and the anniversary bring new diplomatic moves by the Quad and the AU but no truce, as both sides seek gains in Kordofan before any talks.
- C** Outrage over civilian deaths opens the way to a narrow deal to protect civilian infrastructure and aid routes, short of a nationwide ceasefire.

Recommendation

Sudan's partners should press both sides to commit publicly to sparing power stations, water systems, markets and aid convoys, with monitoring by the UN Fact-Finding Mission. The AU and IGAD should coordinate with the United Kingdom, the EU and the United States so that targeted sanctions reach commanders on both sides and those who supply them with drones.

What to watch

- The restoration of power in Gezira, Gedaref, Sennar and White Nile, and the effect of the outages on water and hospitals.
- Further sanctions by the EU or the United States, and any response from the army or the RSF.
- Follow-up by the Security Council and UNISFA on the Amiet market strike.

4

Red Sea /
Egypt

Key dates

17 October 2026

Sisi asks parliament for a mandate

18–19 October 2026

Parliament adjourns the debate twice

26 October 2026

Parliament authorises support for Saudi Arabia

Cairo Authorises a Saudi Mission

Egypt has taken a formal step towards the war between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia. On 26 October, after two adjournments, the House of Representatives authorised President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to ‘take the necessary measures to support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’. The vote was held in closed session; the constitution requires a two-thirds majority to send forces into combat abroad, and no tally was published. The Egyptian Social Democratic Party abstained, calling for diplomacy. A regional official said Egypt would deploy air defence systems and aircraft. Sisi has said the mission is purely defensive, and members of parliament said no Egyptian soldier would be sent to Yemen. No Saudi request for Egyptian forces has been made public.

The decision follows a month of Houthi drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, including strikes on three airports that killed at least 19 people and injured hundreds, and damage to oil and energy facilities. Houthi officials have warned that any Egyptian participation, direct or indirect, would be treated as complicity in what they call aggression against Yemen, and a senior figure in the Houthi-run parliament in Sanaa said involvement would threaten Egypt’s own security and stability. Cairo’s calculations are also economic. Egyptians make up about one in ten foreign residents of Saudi Arabia, Egypt has reportedly been negotiating the renewal of \$5.3 billion in Saudi deposits at its central bank, and Suez Canal revenues depend on calm in the Red Sea.

For the Horn of Africa, the stakes are direct. An Egyptian deployment would put Egyptian forces on the Red Sea opposite Sudan and Eritrea at a time of tension between Cairo and Addis Ababa, and any widening of the war threatens shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb, past Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia. Calls for restraint have come from within Egypt: the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar has proposed a mediation and de-escalation committee drawn from the Arab and Muslim world.

With Egypt now authorised to act, the Red Sea conflict is likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** Egypt deploys air defence units and aircraft to Saudi Arabia, and the Houthis widen their targets to Egyptian interests and Red Sea shipping.
- B** The mandate is held in reserve as a deterrent, while Cairo uses it as leverage for mediation and continued Saudi financial support.
- C** Mediation by Oman and other regional states produces a partial halt to Houthi strikes on Saudi territory, easing the pressure for a deployment.

Recommendation

Cairo should keep any deployment strictly defensive and time-bound, and publish its terms. IGAD and the Red Sea states of the Horn, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan, should seek a voice in regional security talks, since the shipping lanes and ports at risk are theirs as well.

What to watch

- A formal Saudi request, or the first Egyptian deployment.
- Houthi threats or attacks against Egyptian interests or shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.
- Mediation through Oman and the proposed Arab and Muslim de-escalation committee.

5

DR Congo / Uganda

Key dates

20 October 2026

Nigeria reports a case linked to the region

23 October 2026

Ebola vaccine trial launched in Bunia

24 October 2026

DR Congo passes 9,900 confirmed cases

25 October 2026

Uganda orders 21-day quarantine for returnees

Ebola Tests the Region's Borders

The Ebola outbreak in eastern DR Congo has become the largest in the country's history. By 24 October, DR Congo had recorded 9,964 confirmed cases and 4,851 deaths across eight provinces, from Ituri, the epicentre, to North and South Kivu, Tshopo and the Uélé and Ubangi provinces. The outbreak, declared in May 2026, is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, against which no vaccine has yet been approved. It has crossed borders. Kenya has confirmed nine cases, including two deaths, and Nigeria reported a case on 20 October in a person who had travelled from Uganda, a link Ugandan authorities dispute. Uganda declared its own outbreak over on 28 July.

On 23 October, a vaccine trial began in Bunia. It uses ring vaccination of contacts to test several candidates, including Ervebo, which is licensed against a different Ebola species, to see whether any protect against Bundibugyo. Launching it, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the trial 'will help us understand whether any of the vaccine candidates designed for Bundibugyo virus work'. Two days later, Uganda tightened its border. Health Minister Chris Baryomunsi announced that Ugandans returning with a history of travel to DR Congo must quarantine for 21 days at their own cost, that non-essential travellers from DR Congo would be turned back, and that travellers who had been in DR Congo could not transit Uganda, including on charter flights.

The outbreak is spreading through the same provinces as the war. In South Kivu, fighting between the FRN, the movement that has taken over from the AFC/M23, and the army and allied Wazalendo militias has continued for two weeks in the Walungu highlands and spilled into the Ruzizi Plain near Uvira. A round of the Doha talks expected in late October may not take place, and the UN envoy for the Great Lakes, Huang Xia, told the Security Council on 14 October that the 'window of opportunity' for peace 'does not remain open indefinitely'. Insecurity hampers contact tracing and vaccination, while displacement carries the virus to new areas.

As the outbreak grows, the coming weeks are likely to follow one of these paths:

- A** Cases keep rising in Ituri and the Kivus as fighting and displacement hamper the response, and more neighbouring countries confirm imported cases.
- B** Other neighbours copy Uganda's measures, slowing the spread but disrupting the cross-border trade and movement on which border communities depend.
- C** Early trial results and more funding slow transmission in Ituri, while local pauses in fighting allow health teams into conflict areas.

Recommendation

The EAC and Africa CDC should agree common, evidence-based border health measures in place of unilateral restrictions, and fund screening and isolation at major crossings. Kinshasa, the FRN and their mediators should agree humanitarian pauses so that health teams can reach affected areas in Ituri and the Kivus.

What to watch

- The next WHO and Africa CDC updates, and any confirmed cases in Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan or Tanzania.
- Contact tracing in Kenya and screening at its border crossings with Uganda.
- Whether the next Doha round goes ahead, and the fighting around Uvira.

Also on our radar

Kenya

On 23 October, a high-rise building under construction collapsed on 9th Street in Eastleigh, Nairobi's busy commercial district and a hub of Somali and regional trade. Reports put its height at up to 18 storeys. By 26 October, rescue teams led by the Kenya Defence Forces had pulled six survivors from the rubble, and the search for others continued. Nairobi's governor said the building had county approval for a change of use but no approved architectural plans or occupation certificate. The Director of Public Prosecutions has ordered a criminal investigation into the developer, the contractors and county officials, and said the county had never forwarded an inquiry file on the building. An audit last year found that 87% of the buildings inspected nationally failed to meet standards or lacked approvals, putting enforcement in Kenya's fast-growing cities under scrutiny.

South Sudan

The deadline for parties and coalitions to register for the 22 December elections passed on 22 October, but the National Elections Commission has yet to register any voters. SPLM-IO leader Riek Machar remains on trial and under house arrest.

Coming up

Leaders from across Africa are due in Moscow for the Russia–Africa summit on 28 and 29 October. In Tanzania, 29 October marks one year since the 2025 general election, which was followed by deadly unrest.

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 27 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, AP, Reuters, Xinhua, Al Jazeera, Africanews, Anadolu Agency, Arab News, The National, New Lines, CGTN, Addis Standard, Hiiraan Online, Garowe Online, Somali Guardian, Horseed Media, Kaab TV, The Somali Digest, Shabelle Media, Somalia Today, FTL Somalia, WardheerNews, Axadle Times, Nile Post, Daily Monitor, ChimpReports, Military Africa, Sudan Tribune, Radio Tamazuj, Radio Dabanga, Radio Yei, The Guardian, Le Monde, Eastleigh Voice, Kenyans.co.ke, People Daily, The Star, Daily Nation, The Standard, The Kenya Times, the Critical Threats Project, ACLED, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the UK Government, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa and Amnesty International.

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