



## Politics

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### **Somalia SITUATION UPDATE: Lower House of Parliament passes resolution extending President Farmajo's mandate for two years on April 12**

#### **Executive Summary:**

- On April 12, the Lower House of Parliament, allied to President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, voted to extend the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) mandate following months of failed dialogue with Federal Member States (FMS) and opposition leaders in an effort to resolve protracted electoral disputes.
- Apart from the complete breakdown of FGS-FMS dialogue, that the Lower House extended Farmajo's term without consensus from all electoral stakeholders and the resolution of protracted electoral disputes, which leaves Somalia increasingly vulnerable to political and security threats.
- Despite overwhelming international condemnation of the FGS's action, given that Farmajo has demonstrated resolve to hold on to power despite the immense risks to Somalia's stability, the political and security situation in Somalia is poised to remain highly volatile over the coming days.

#### **Please be advised:**

- On April 12, the Lower House of Parliament voted to extend the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo's mandate by an additional two years, with 149 out of 275 deputies voting in favor of the resolution.
- In a statement, President Farmajo praised the resolution and claimed that the term extension will provide the FGS time to implement a universal suffrage electoral model facilitating the participation of all Somali citizens in the next elections.
- The Upper House of Parliament released a separate communique claiming that the mandate extension is unconstitutional on the grounds that President Farmajo's term ended on [February 8](#).
- Additional reports from April 12 indicate that Mogadishu's Police Commissioner Sadak John was replaced after he attempted to suspend the parliamentary session, stating that the Lower House's mandate had expired in December 2020. Police were reportedly reinforced in Mogadishu on April 12 and closed roads leading to the Parliament buildings in Villa Somalia.
- In a statement on April 13, the US State Department denounced the resolution and threatened to directly sanction individuals responsible for undermining democracy and to re-evaluate bilateral relations with Mogadishu.
- The EU Delegation in Somalia released a similar statement, calling for the immediate resumption of talks between the FGS and Federal Member States (FMS) to resolve electoral disputes.
- Separate reports from April 13 indicate that Major General Mohamud Mohamed Koronto, the head of security for the opposition [\\_\\_\\_](#) and a former Somali National Army (SNA) commander, threatened to take control of the Aden Adde International Airport and other strategic locations in Mogadishu if the FGS goes ahead with its term extension.

## Assessments & Forecast:

1. The Lower House's resolution to extend the FGS mandate was relatively anticipated as 15 opposition MPs were temporarily suspended from the body in March after attempting to block the initial proposal of the bill. Regardless, the mandate extension is highly notable, and further amplifies the dissonance between the two Houses of Parliament as the Lower House, allied to Farmajo, continues to act unilaterally. Despite the Upper House's rejection of the vote and claims of unconstitutionality, it appears that Farmajo's approval has sanctioned the bill, allowing the FGS to avoid any further debate on the resolution at the Upper House level. Furthermore, the dismissal of a senior police commander amid the vote illustrates Farmajo's resolve to control institutional procedures and to sack those in opposition to his mandate.
2. **FORECAST:** While this is not the first time that Farmajo has taken advantage of the Parliament's disjointed functions to unilaterally pass bills in the Lower House, the extension of his mandate will likely deepen existing rifts across federal institutions and weaken public trust in the government system as a whole. Furthermore, despite backlash from the Upper House, the opposition Presidential Candidates Union (PCU), and some FMS, namely Jubaland and Puntland states, condemnation by these actors will likely have a minimal impact on the political landscape. Moreover, the departure of Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe and Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni from Mogadishu on April 13 after a month of failed negotiations with the FGS indicates that opposition leaders are unwilling to continue dialogue with Farmajo under these new conditions, regardless of international pressure.
3. While Farmajo's opponents may have been unable to secure concessions from the FGS to settle electoral grievances over the past few months of negotiations, certain players such as Jubaland authorities and opposition security officials may perceive the Lower House resolution as an escalated threat and a trigger for the use of force to achieve their political aims. This scenario is exemplified by the latest threats from former Major General Koronto who claims to have the ability to take control of strategic locations in Mogadishu, primarily the airport.
4. This is notable as the PCU has consistently maintained support for dialogue over violence amid the electoral impasse, which suggests that Koronto's threats do not represent the PCU's position. This stance is further underscored by the PCU statement which did not call for any violence or even protests. Given this, as a retired SNA commander, it's unlikely that Koronto has the means to carry out his threats. While his background as a former SNA leader may attract a few soldiers who support his cause, the numbers for the same are unlikely to be enough to capture major strategic locations. Additionally, as political and security stakeholders remain preoccupied with the country's political crisis, al-Shabaab may also take advantage of the situation to conduct further attacks in Mogadishu.
5. Ultimately, although the FGS has pledged to implement a universal suffrage electoral model during its two-year term extension, a policy that international partners have long supported as a means of strengthening Somalia's democratic practices, the overwhelming international condemnation of the Lower House resolution was expected. The resolution leaves Somalia, negates the September 2020 electoral agreement reached by the FGS and FMS, and directly dismisses the expectations of international partners.
6. — : Though Farmajo previously claimed to be committed to the electoral agreement and the pursuit of dialogue with the FMS, his refusal to comply with international demands could result in direct sanctions by the US and EU alike, as well as the suspension of Somalia from multilateral institutions like the African Union. Additionally, partners may freeze financial assistance to Somalia, which would significantly impact the country's already weak economic, security, and social welfare structures. However, given that Farmajo has demonstrated resolve to hold on to power despite the immense risks to Somalia's stability, means the political and security situation in Somalia is poised to remain highly volatile over the coming days.

## Recommendations:

1. We advise against all travel to Somalia with the exception of the Somaliland region and the Puntland cities of Bosaso, Garowe, and Galkayo North due to the threat of militancy, inter-clan violence, and crime.
2. If travel to Mogadishu is unavoidable, we advise remaining in the confines of the Aden Adde International Airport complex.
3. We advise to exercise vigilance and adhere to stringent security precautions in Hargeisa and Berbera, while avoiding nonessential travel to the outlying areas of Somaliland due to the risks of crime.