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President Irro and Israeli FM's Joint Press Conference Heralds New Era of Strategic Partnership and Diplomatic Ties Between Somaliland and Israel

Irro assured full readiness to establish a Somaliland embassy in Israel and support a permanent Israeli diplomatic presence in Hargeisa

By M.A. Egge.

In a moment charged with practical symbolism and optimism, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar arrived in Hargeisa for a landmark joint press conference with Somaliland President H.E. Abdirahman Mohamed Abdilahi Irro.

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The 60-Year Secret: Declassified Files Reveal Somaliland Was Always a Sovereign Nation

Mohamoud Walaaleye

On December 26, 2025, a single video call between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Somaliland President Dr.

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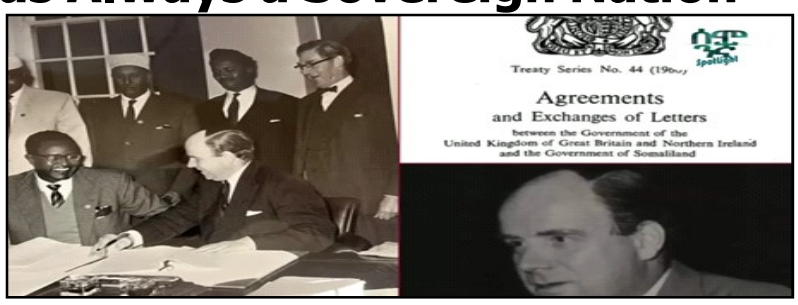

Somaliland's top diplomat in Washington hopes for Jewish support in bid for additional recognition

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Gazan Emigration to Somaliland Not Included in Agreement, Confirms Israeli Foreign Minister

Mohamoud Walaaleye

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar has firmly denied that any plan for the resettlement or emigration of Palestinians from Gaza is part of Israel's recent agreement with Somaliland, amid

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UK's Refusal to Recognize Somaliland 'Unexpected' After 76 Years as British Protectorate, Says Ambassador

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Israeli UN Envoy: More Nations Will Recognize Somaliland – 'The Fact That We Did It'

Mohamoud Walaaleye

Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, has praised his country's historic recognition of Somaliland as an "important decision" and expressed confidence that other nations will soon follow suit.

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Israel and Somaliland Diplomats in France Celebrate New Alliance for Peace and Prosperity

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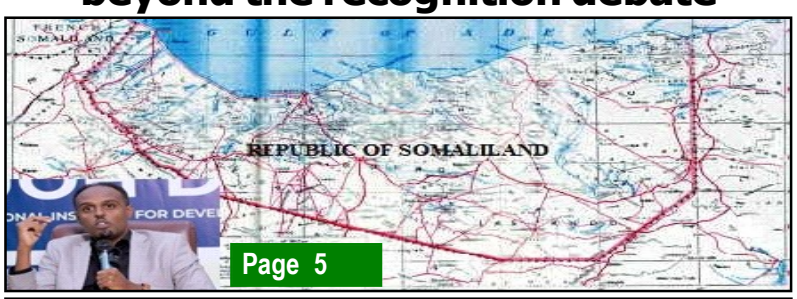
Somaliland: A legal and political case beyond the recognition debate



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Waddani Party Chairman Defends Ties with Israel as 'Political, Not Religious,' Stressing Normalization Not Unique to Somaliland

Mohamoud Walaaleye

Hersi Ali Haji Hassan tells Al Jazeera that Hargeisa had no choice but to seek recognition from Tel Aviv after 34 years of isolation.

Hersi Ali Haji Hassan, chairman of the ruling Waddani party, has fiercely defended the Somaliland's decision to normalize relations with Israel, dismissing widespread condemnation from the Arab and Muslim world as hypocritical.

In a heated interview with Al Jazeera Mubasher on Wednesday, Chairman

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Somaliland's diplomatic representative to the EU speaks to Q Magazine about a historic turning point

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Inside

President Irro and Israeli.....

This visit which happens to be the first one by a high-ranking official from a UN member state since Israel became the world's first country to formally recognize Somaliland's independence on December 26, 2025, underscored the rapid transformation of bilateral relations into a full-fledged strategic partnership.

President Irro opened the event with a warm welcome, describing Sa'ar's arrival as carrying "historic significance" and marking a pivotal step in turning political recognition into a "substantive, forward-looking, and strategic partnership." He emphasized Somaliland's commitment to cooperation in political, security, economic, and development domains, stressing that the relationship would be "practical, institutional, and results-oriented."

President Abdirahman Irro assured full readiness to establish a Somaliland embassy in Israel and support a permanent Israeli diplomatic presence in Hargeisa, declaring today "a historical day we will put in our calendars."

Foreign Minister Sa'ar echoed the sentiment, calling his visit to Hargeisa an "honor" and praising President Irro's "visionary leadership" and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decisive role. He highlighted the December 26 agreement on mutual recognition and full diplomatic relations, including the swift appointment of ambassadors and opening of embassies. Sa'ar spoke of building an "enduring and warm friendship" not just between governments but between the peoples of both nations.

Key areas of cooperation dominated the discussion:

- Water and Agriculture: Israel pledged expertise in water management, a critical sector for Somaliland. A water expert has already surveyed resources, with plans for training Somaliland professionals in Israel and deploying Israeli experts on the ground.
- Health and Education: Sa'ar noted that 49 Somaliland children have received life-saving heart surgeries in Israel in recent years, expressing eagerness to expand medical and educational ties.
- Defense and Security: Both sides committed to a strategic partnership in defense.

Sa'ar also invoked shared history: Israel recognized Somaliland's brief independence in 1960 and was the only nation to condemn the atrocities against its people at the UN during the 1980s civil war. Contrasting Somaliland with other entities, he declared it a "fully functioning country based on the principles of international law"—a stable democracy with peaceful power transitions, including the recent November 2024 elections. "Unlike 'Palestine', Somaliland is not a virtual state," Sa'ar stated firmly, adding that Israel would not be swayed by criticism: "Nobody will determine for Israel who we recognize."

He expressed hope that other nations would follow suit, citing a 2005 African Union report affirming Somaliland's case for recognition, and welcomed Somaliland's intention to join the Abraham Accords as a natural fit among democratic nations in challenging regions.

In a light-hearted closing exchange, President Irro accepted Prime Minister Netanyahu's invitation for a state visit to Jerusalem, joking that a public announcement of Sa'ar's visit might have drawn "more than two million people" to the streets. Sa'ar quipped about preparing security for the next time.

As the leaders concluded amid applause, the message was clear: This is not merely symbolic diplomacy but the start of tangible collaboration for stability, prosperity, and mutual growth. In a region often defined by conflict, the Somaliland-Israel partnership stands out as a bold beacon of possibility. God bless Somaliland. God bless Israel.

Please read the speeches below exactly as they were originally delivered:

Republic of Somaliland President H.E. Abdirahman Mohamed Abdilahi Irro's speech: -

It is with great pleasure and honor that I warmly welcome you to the Republic of Somaliland. Mr. Minister, your visit carries historic significance and marks an important milestone in the evolving relationship between the Republic of Somaliland and the State of Israel. It reflects not only political recognition but also a shared commitment to transform that recognition into a substantive, forward-looking, and strategic partnership.

Somaliland values this partnership highly and approaches it with clarity of purpose and long-term vision. We are committed to building a strategic relationship with Israel that is mutually beneficial and grounded in cooperation across political, security, economic, and development domains. We see this partnership not as symbolic but as practical, institutional, and results-oriented—one that contributes to stability, prosperity, and shared interests.

Your presence here today instills confidence in the future of our relations.

It sends a strong message that Somaliland and Israel are ready to deepen engagement and move decisively toward the establishment of diplomatic infrastructure, including the opening of embassies.

From our side, I wish to assure you of our full readiness and political will to establish our embassy in Israel and to support a permanent and effective Israeli diplomatic presence in Somaliland. END.

Israel Foreign Minister speech: -

It's an honor to be in Hargeisa on this historic visit.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your personal invitation and gracious hospitality.

Over the past year, relations between Israel and Somaliland have taken shape.

I want to thank you for your close partnership and visionary leadership.

I also want to praise Prime Minister Netanyahu for his decision and leadership.

Mr. President, it is a historic journey. I held meetings with you and your team. We had an ongoing and extensive dialogue for many months.

The relations that we build are based on trust and mutual respect.

Eventually, on December 26, Israel and Somaliland signed a historic agreement on mutual recognition and the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

We agreed on the mutual appointment of ambassadors and the opening of embassies. We will get that done soon.

We agreed to work together to promote relations between our countries for the sake of mutual prosperity.

We want to build an enduring and warm friendship not only between governments but also between the people of Somaliland and the people of Israel.

Since December 26, we've seen authentic joy on display in Somaliland and also in Israel. We are truly moved to play a part in Somaliland's bold journey from independence to recognition.

Following my instructions, the foreign ministry is working hard to build our ties across a wide range of fields: economy, agriculture, and much more. We recognize that water supply is a key sector for Somaliland.

Therefore, we're glad to provide our assistance and expertise on this matter.

A water expert was already in Somaliland. He conducted a survey on the natural resources and means of delivery. In the coming months, we'll bring local professionals from Somaliland's water sector to Israel for training.

We'll also send Israeli experts here to help implement the new capabilities. In recent years, 49 children from Somaliland have undergone life-saving heart surgery in Israel. We are eager to help in medicine too and also in education.

We will also cooperate on defense and develop a strategic partnership.

Somaliland first gained its independence in 1960 from British colonial rule. Israel was then among the 35 countries to recognize an independent Somaliland. Later it united with Somalia under Italian rule to form a single federal state. But in the 80s, as we know, this region underwent a brutal civil war. Israel was the only nation to condemn at the United Nations the horrific mass murder of 200,000 of your people. Then we stood by you as we stand by you today.

In 1991, following these atrocities, Somaliland decided to restore its independence. Unlike "Palestine", Somaliland is not a virtual state. It's a functioning state. Somaliland is a fully functioning country based on the principles of international law. Somaliland is and has been a stable democracy for nearly 35 years. It has democratic elections, most recently in November 2024, and peaceful transitions of power. It's pro-Western and friendly to Israel.

Mr. President, Israel is truly honored to be the first UN member state to recognize the Republic of Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state. This is the moral thing to do and this is what we did. We hear the attacks, the criticism, the condemnations.

Nobody will determine for Israel who we recognize and who we maintain diplomatic relations with. I want to remind that the 2005 African Union fact-finding mission stated that Somaliland's search for recognition is self-justified. It listed Somaliland's constitution-defined borders and democratic character. We recognize the simple truth and the existing reality. We hope to see other nations soon follow suit and independent Somaliland rightfully deserves its place among the nations.

I welcome Somaliland's intention to join the Abraham Accords. This is a natural connection between democratic countries both in challenging regions.

Mr. President, in our meeting, I restated Prime Minister Netanyahu's invitation for you to come on a state visit to Israel. We hope to welcome you to Jerusalem very soon.

In the words of Somaliland's national anthem, may your nation live in eternal peace. May these historic days and moments be the beginning of a close friendship between our nations for many years to come.

God bless Somaliland. God bless Israel.

President Irro-Thank you, Mr. Foreign Minister. I thank you very much. I declare that I have accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister. And the letter will come through the diplomatic channels also. I'm glad to say, I'm proud to say, I'm not shy of saying it, that we will open our embassy in Israel. We thank again the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister for signing the declaration and today, as I said, is a different day, is a historical day we will put in our calendars.

for you, Mr. Minister, as the first minister from a member of the United Nations who came here to Hargeisa. for the first time, and so Somaliland is a recognized country. [then the Head of State interjected] 'I'm sure that if we made your visit to Hargeisa public, you would have met more than two million people would have hilariously welcomed you, but maybe the next time we will do that'.

Minister Gideon then ended 'I tell the security this is what will happen next time. So, you should get prepared for that. Thank you'.

Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Gazan Emigration to Somaliland Not Included.....

swirling rumors and allegations following Israel's historic recognition of the Republic of Somaliland.

In an interview on Channel 14 with host Maggie Tabibi, Sa'ar was directly questioned about reports linking Israel's diplomatic outreach to Somaliland with a controversial proposal—originally floated a year ago involving former U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—for encouraging Gazans to emigrate to other countries, with Somaliland allegedly named as a potential destination.

"I can say that this is not part of our agreement with Somaliland, and that is what I can say on this issue," Sa'ar stated. When pressed further by the interviewer—"But not migration of Gazans?"—he repeated with a slight smile: "I'm saying that this is not part of the agreement."

Sa'ar quickly pivoted to emphasize positive aspects of the burgeoning ties, noting: "I think that we have a lot of topics in the field of politics, security, [and] development... and others that we will advance with Somaliland."

Israel's denial follows allegations from Somali officials, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who claimed in an Al Jazeera interview that Somaliland had accepted Israeli conditions, including the resettlement of displaced Palestinians from Gaza, in exchange for recognition. Both Somaliland and Israel have rejected these claims.

Sa'ar, during his visit, highlighted Somaliland's strategic importance and described it as a "functioning state," contrasting it with what he called "virtual" entities.

Israel has stressed that ties with Somaliland focus on political, security, and development cooperation, with plans announced for embassies and deeper relations.

Waddani Party Chairman.....

Hersi argued that Somaliland was forced to look to Israel for legitimacy after being ignored by the international community for decades.

The comments follow a controversial visit by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar to Hargeisa, Somaliland's largest city and capital, earlier this week – the first since Israel recognized the nation's independence in late December.

"We are not in a position to choose," Hassan told Al Jazeera. "We are in a state of necessity for official international recognition" he said.

"There is no choice before us but to welcome any country that recognizes our existential right," he added.

'They ignored us for 34 years'

The visit has triggered a diplomatic firestorm. The federal government in Mogadishu, which wrongly considers Somaliland part of its territory, condemned the move as a violation of sovereignty. The Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also issued statements rejecting the recognition.

Hassan, however, brushed off the criticism.

"We have been an independent state for 34 years," he said. "The rejection of the Arab League does not matter to us at all. They did not accept us as a member … and we did not receive any attention from Arab countries", he said firmly.

When pressed on why Somaliland would ally with Israel, Hassan pointed to other Arab nations.

"Normalization with Israel is not limited to Somaliland," he argued. "Many Arab and Islamic countries have broad political and economic relations with Israel, such as Egypt, Turkiye, Jordan, and the UAE."

The military base question

Regional powers are concerned that the new alliance could lead to an Israeli military foothold at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

When asked repeatedly if Somaliland would allow Israel to establish a military base on its soil, Hassan refused to rule it out explicitly.

"We have started diplomatic relations… This topic [a military base] has not been touched upon now," Hassan said.

Pressed further on whether Hargeisa would accept such a request in the future, he replied: "Ask the question when the time comes… The question is untimely."

He insisted that the relationship is currently diplomatic and economic, aimed at securing international legitimacy.

'Political, not religious'

The interview grew tense when the discussion turned to the war on Gaza. The anchor Ahmed Taha challenged Hassan on the morality of forging ties with Israel,

Hassan sought to separate the political deal from religious solidarity, claiming that the war in Gaza had "stopped" following a US-brokered initiative in October 2025 – a reference to a recent ceasefire deal championed by United States President Donald Trump. Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza since the ceasefire came into effect.

"We deal with Israel politically," Hassan said. "Political dealing is not something religion forbids… Our stance on the Palestinian people is similar to the stance of Arab and Islamic countries.

"We are far from these problems," he added. "We are looking for international recognition… That is the key."

Israeli UN Envoy: More Nations Will.....

In an interview with i24NEWS, Danon highlighted Israel's pride in Somaliland's achievements and anticipation of closer cooperation. "Well, first, I think it was an important decision," Danon said. "I've been meeting representatives from Somaliland over the last few years, including here in the US. We are very proud of what they have achieved, and we are looking forward to working together with them."

He added, "I believe more countries will join and recognize Somaliland. We're not pushing for that, but the fact that we did it—and with Minister Gideon [Sa'ar] visiting Somaliland

and meeting their representatives here in New York—I think others are looking at this for the future. We will see more countries recognizing Somaliland."

Drawing a parallel to Israel's early recognition of South Sudan, Danon continued: "I visited South Sudan, and it reminded me that we were among the first to recognize this young state, and then many others joined us. I think something similar is happening now with Somaliland."

Israel became the first country to formally recognize Somaliland's independence on December 26, 2025, followed by Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar's visit to the nation on January 6, 2026.

The move has sparked international debate, but Danon remains optimistic about growing diplomatic momentum.

The 60-Year Secret: Declassified Files.....

Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro quietly shattered decades of diplomatic fiction. With that conversation, Israel became the first United Nations member state to formally recognize the Republic of Somaliland as an independent, sovereign country—ending more than 30 years of international isolation for a self-governing territory that has maintained peace, democracy, and functioning institutions since 1991.

The information that was published on Semonegna Spotlight Youtube in 7 January 2026, which I wrote, begins with: But the real story isn't the recognition itself. It's the inconvenient truth the world has spent six decades trying to forget: Somaliland is not a "breakaway region" invented in the chaos of civil war. It is the legitimate revival of a fully independent state that already existed—and was internationally acknowledged—long before the Somali Republic was even born.

Five Days That History Tried to Erase

June 26, 1960. The British Somaliland Protectorate achieves full independence. For five historic days, the State of Somaliland stands as a sovereign nation under international law. It has its own constitution, a functioning parliament, a prime minister (Late Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal), a national flag, and a government seated in Hargeisa.

During that brief window of independence, more than 35 countries—including the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Egypt, France, Ghana, Israel, Ethiopia, and Libya—sent formal messages of recognition and congratulations. Queen Elizabeth II personally wished the new state well. Bilateral agreements were signed on the soil of Hargeisa. The world treated Somaliland as what it was: a new sovereign country.

Then, on July 1, 1960, Somaliland voluntarily entered into union with the former Italian-administered Trust Territory of Somaliland to form the Somali Republic. The union was born of pan-Somali idealism, but it was rushed, voluntary, and legally incomplete. The Act of Union passed by Somaliland's legislature on June 27 was never matched by an identical act in the south. No joint parliament ever ratified the merger. No referendum was ever held. The legal foundation was shaky from day one.

The Unity Myth Unravels in Declassified Files

Declassified American intelligence from as early as 1948 already told the story the world later pretended not to know. A CIA assessment of British Somaliland noted that the Somali Youth League—the movement most associated with pan-Somali centralism—had almost no traction in the north. Only about 3–4% of the population engaged with such political organizations. Northerners were described as cautious, locally oriented, and deeply skeptical of distant, centralized authority.

That political DNA never disappeared. When the union descended into repression, clan-based violence, and the near-total destruction of Hargeisa in the late 1980s, Somaliland did not "secede" from a functioning state. It withdrew from a failed and fundamentally unequal partnership, reclaiming the sovereignty it had legally possessed in June 1960.

Why Recognition Matters Now

Israel's decision is not sentimental. It is coldly strategic.

The port of Berbera sits astride the Bab el-Mandeb Strait—one of the world's most critical maritime arteries. With Houthi drones disrupting Red Sea shipping, the ability to monitor and respond from just 500 kilometers away represents a serious force multiplier. The UAE has already poured hundreds of millions into upgrading Berbera's port and airport, quietly anchoring the Abraham Accords in the Horn of Africa.

Somaliland's alignment with Taiwan has also made it a natural counterweight to China's growing footprint in nearby Djibouti. U.S. Senator Ted Cruz has publicly urged Washington to follow Israel's lead as part of the broader contest against Beijing.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia watches closely. Its 2024 memorandum of understanding with Somaliland for secure sea access through Berbera now carries new diplomatic weight. Israel's move provides Addis Ababa with plausible cover: if one UN member state can recognize Somaliland, others can too—without automatically triggering a continent-wide cascade.

The Reckoning the World Fears

The backlash has been fierce. Somalia, the African Union, Turkey, and several Arab states have condemned the recognition as an assault on territorial integrity. Yet the same voices rarely mention the African Union's own 2005 fact-finding mission, which described Somaliland's case as "historically unique and self-justified in African political history" and recommended a special approach that would not open a Pandora's box of secession claims. That report was quietly buried.

For more than half a century, the international community has enforced selective amnesia: celebrating the voluntary union of 1960 while erasing its voluntary dissolution in 1991. Today, the Berbera dagger is unsheathed. The 60-year secret is no longer hidden.

Somaliland is not asking to become something new. It is asking the world to remember what it already was.

Is this the beginning of a long-overdue historical correction? Or merely the latest chapter in the great-power chess game over the Horn of Africa?

The flags are flying in Hargeisa again. History, it seems, has a long memory after all.

Somaliland's top diplomat.....

Bashir Goth hopes Somaliland's story of building itself 'by the bootstraps' will resonate in particular with the GOP

Bashir Goth is in the unusual position of serving as a diplomat from a place that almost no one else in the world considers a country. That changed last month, when Israel became the first state to formally recognize Somaliland as an independent nation.

That gives Goth an opening he has been seeking since he arrived in Washington in 2018: a chance to try to convince the United States to now follow Israel's lead and recognize the independence of Somaliland, a nation restored its independence from Somalia, that has governed itself for 35 years.

"Our friends will be more active now, more vigorous, more encouraged by the Israeli recognition," Goth told Jewish Insider in an interview on Wednesday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar visited Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, for a meeting on Tuesday with Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. Goth is hoping to capitalize on the rare occurrence of Somaliland being in the news, in part by attempting to rally American Jews to his cause.

"We always built very strong relations and engagements with Jewish organizations in Washington, D.C., and they are more active now, more than any time before," said Goth. "I think they will also be very, very helpful in pushing this forward."

Major American Jewish organizations, however, have not weighed in on Israel's decision to recognize Somaliland, except for a post on X by AIPAC that took aim at Qatar for criticizing Israel's actions. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) has urged American recognition of Somaliland, but President Donald Trump said this week that he would not do so.

Goth, ever the diplomat, did a close read of Trump's comments and held tight to one sentence that gave him hope — Trump told The New York Post last month that he would "study" the matter.

"Regarding President Trump, I think if you look at the end, at the last sentence of his statement, with that interview, he said, 'At the end of the day, I study everything,'" Goth said.

Washington considers Somaliland part of Somalia, a policy in keeping with the African Union and the United Nations. And while geopolitics factor into Goth's pitch, he suggests that a Somaliland aligned with Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and the U.S. could be a bulwark to China, Turkey and Somalia , his message to American officials is all about politics.

"The Somaliland story always resonated with the Republican community here in Washington, D.C., and in America, because it's a country that has built itself from ruins, from rivers, to what it is now — its democracy and infrastructure — by its own resources, 'by its bootstraps,' as the Americans say," said Goth. "We will be part of contributing to the prosperity and peace that the current American government is looking for."

News reports last year suggested that Israel had approached Somaliland officials about the prospect of relocating Palestinians from Gaza, which Somaliland has denied. Goth called it a "false statement."

Israel has sought ties with Somaliland in part because of its strategic proximity to Yemen, which could offer Israel a better position from which to attack the Iran-aligned Houthis. Deqa Qasim, the director of the political department in Somaliland's Foreign Ministry, told Israel's N12 on Thursday that Jerusalem and Hargeisa were discussing setting up an Israeli military base in the African territory, contradicting a previous denial that such an agreement was on the table. Goth would not say whether Somaliland had agreed to allow Israel to do so, but he did not deny it.

"There's nothing that says we cannot have a security pact or agreement with Israel, and I can leave it like that," he said.

Israeli recognition of Somaliland, home to 6 million people, also allows Goth to make the case that Israeli prosperity could be a beacon for Somaliland — an example, perhaps, of making the desert bloom.

"We could be the Singapore of the Horn of Africa, if we are given the chance. And there is no better example to look at than Israel. And what you achieved in Israel. To have our recognition from Israel will open that prosperity, I think, for us, in technology [and] agriculture," Goth said. "That would be, actually, a role model for us."

Israel and Somaliland Diplomats..

On Monday, January 5, 2026, a heartwarming diplomatic milestone took place when Israel's Ambassador to France, Joshua L. Zarka, hosted a cordial meeting with Republic of Somaliland's representative in Paris, Abdourahman Yassin.

The two diplomats engaged in inspiring discussions centered on peace, bilateral relations, and enhancing stability in the Horn of Africa. This encounter represents a significant step forward in fostering a brighter future for both nations.

A statement posted on the Israeli Ambassador to France's X account read: "A warm and friendly meeting with Ambassador Abdourahman Yassin, representative of the Republic of Somaliland in Paris, to discuss peace, the development of diplomatic relations between our countries, and regional stability. Mr. Ambassador, it was an honor and a pleasure."

The meeting occurred just ten days after Israel's historic recognition of Somaliland's independence on December 26, 2025—the first such acknowledgment by any country. This groundbreaking decision has sparked hope and excitement, paving the way for emerging strategic ties. The diplomats explored promising opportunities for security cooperation and economic growth, united in their efforts to address regional challenges such as terrorism.

Their shared vision underscores a commitment to building a prosperous and peaceful Horn region. With palpable positive energy surrounding this alliance, plans for future collaboration in areas like trade, technology, and community development are already underway.

Rooted in mutual respect and optimism, this partnership serves as an inspiring example of international friendship. The world watches with anticipation as Israel and Somaliland embark on this remarkable journey together!

UK's Refusal to Recognize.....

Mohamoud Walaaleye

Republic of Somaliland's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Said Hassan Bihi, has hailed the recent international recognition of the Republic of Somaliland as a significant achievement.

Speaking at an event hosted by the embassy and attended by members of the Somaliland community in the UK, Ambassador Bihi highlighted that the State of Israel has taken the lead in granting the recognition Somalilanders have sought for over three decades.

"We say to Israel: thank you very much," he added.

Ambassador Bihi pointed out that the Federal Government of Somalia's efforts were unsuccessful during the UN Security Council meeting it had requested, which was intended to block Somaliland's recognition.

"In the Security Council meeting that Somalia requested—expecting it to halt the recognition of the Republic of Somaliland—Somaliland instead emerged victorious and gained greater prestige. The entire world is now discussing the Republic of Somaliland."

He commended Israel's UN Ambassador, Danny Danon, for effectively advocating Somaliland's case and its legitimacy on the global stage:

"Israel's Ambassador to the UN excellently presented the issue of recognizing the Republic of Somaliland and its legitimacy, making it clear to the international community."

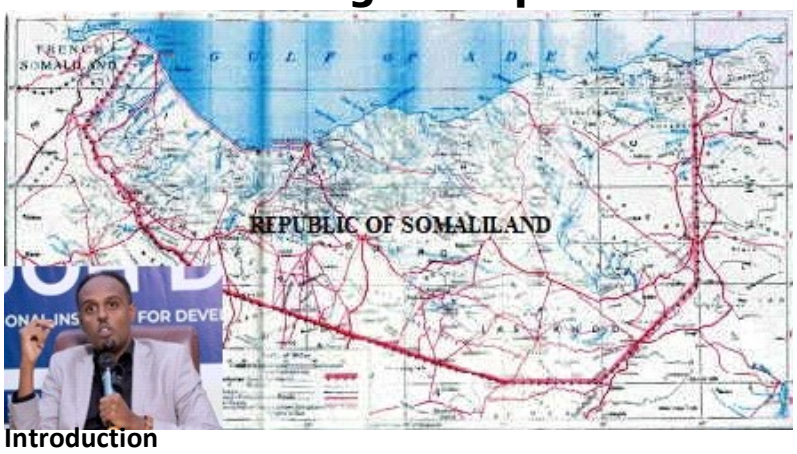
Ambassador Bihi criticized the United Kingdom's stance, calling it unexpected:

"The UK's statement that it does not recognize Somaliland was not something we anticipated, given that Somaliland was a British protectorate for 76 years."

"We expected the UK to lead the effort for Somaliland's recognition—or at the very least, to be the second country to do so. However, the statement by the UK Ambassador to the UN was disappointing."

Finally, Ambassador Bihi urged Somalilanders at home and abroad to safeguard this hard-won recognition through unity, cooperation, understanding their adversaries, and standing together against them

Somaliland: A legal and political case beyond.....



Introduction

For more than three decades, Somaliland has existed in a paradox that continues to puzzle policymakers, diplomats, and scholars alike. It governs itself, controls territory, holds competitive elections, maintains security, issues its own currency, and engages internationally, yet it remained unrecognised as a sovereign state for over three decades. This contradiction raises a fundamental question: what, in legal and political terms, is Somaliland?

Too often, Somaliland is dismissed as a "breakaway region" or reduced to a footnote in discussions about Somalia. Such characterisations overlook both historical context and international legal standards. A closer examination, particularly through the lens of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, reveals that Somaliland's claim to statehood is neither reckless nor unprecedented. Rather, it is grounded in law, history, and sustained political practice.

A brief historical context

Somaliland was not born out of the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, as is sometimes assumed. It was a British Protectorate that gained independence on 26 June 1960. During that brief but legally significant period, Somaliland existed as a sovereign entity and received diplomatic recognition from approximately 30 states. Five days later, it voluntarily entered into a union with the former Italian Somalia (*Somalia Italiana)* to form the Somali Republic.

That union, however, was never properly ratified through a binding legal instrument accepted by both parties. Over the following decades, Somalilanders experienced political marginalisation, repression, and large-scale massacres under the military regime in Mogadishu. When Somalia's central government collapsed in 1991, Somaliland withdrew from the union and declared the restoration, not the creation, of its independence.

Understanding Somaliland's contemporary status requires viewing it not as a secessionist movement, but as a former sovereign entity reclaiming its pre-union status.

Statehood and the Montevideo Convention

The Montevideo Convention (1933) outlines four criteria for statehood: a defined territory, a permanent population, an effective government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. While recognition by other states is politically significant, it is not a constitutive legal requirement under international law.

Measured against these criteria, Somaliland presents a compelling case.

A defined territory

Somaliland claims the same territorial boundaries it held as a British Protectorate. These borders were established through treaties between the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Ethiopia, making them legally defined colonial frontiers.

While Somaliland faces territorial disputes with Somalia, most notably highlighted by the conflict in Las Anod since 2023, international law does not require borders to be undisputed. Many fully recognised states have ongoing border conflicts. What matters is the existence of a defined territory and effective control over substantial parts of it, both of which Somaliland possesses.

Government institutions function across most of this territory, providing security, justice, and public services. The presence of localised conflict does not negate the legal existence of the state any more than it does elsewhere in the world.

***Uti possidetis juris* and the African Context**

One of the most common objections to Somaliland's recognition is the fear that it would undermine Africa's colonial borders and open a "Pandora's box" of secessionist claims. This concern is rooted in the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, which requires newly independent states to respect colonial boundaries.

Ironically, Somaliland's case aligns with this principle rather than violating it. Somaliland does not seek to redraw colonial borders; it insists on them. Its claim is explicitly limited to the boundaries of the former British Protectorate.

This position was acknowledged by an African Union fact-finding mission, which concluded that Somaliland's case is "historically unique and self-justified" and does not threaten continental stability. The mission further observed that Somaliland's claim does not constitute an attempt to dismantle inherited borders but to restore them.

Moreover, international jurisprudence, particularly the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on Kosovo, clarifies that the principle of territorial integrity applies primarily to relations between states, not to internal political transformations or withdrawals from failed unions.

A permanent population

Somaliland is home to an estimated 5.7 million people. It has a citizenship law defining nationality, and despite the presence of nomadic communities that cross borders, there exists a stable population permanently linked to the territory.

The vast majority of Somaliland's population lives under the authority of its government, participates in elections, pays taxes, and identifies with Somaliland as their political community. This satisfies the population criterion without controversy.

An effective and legitimate government

Perhaps Somaliland's strongest claim lies in the effectiveness and legitimacy of its government. Since 1991, Somaliland has pursued a bottom-up state-building model that blends traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with modern constitutional governance.

It has a presidential system with three branches of government. Presidents, parliamentarians, and local councils are elected through one-person, one-vote elections that international observers have repeatedly deemed credible. Courts apply laws enacted by an elected parliament. The state maintains security forces, a taxation system, border and coastal guards, and a functioning central bank.

Unlike many post-conflict societies, Somaliland's institutions were not imposed externally. They emerged through local reconciliation conferences and popular consent, culminating in a constitution approved by referendum in 2001. Internal sovereignty, in both legal and practical terms, is firmly established.

Capacity to enter into relations: Recognition as a political barrier

The most contested criterion is Somaliland's capacity to enter into relations with other states. Critics argue that the lack of recognition itself proves the absence of such capacity. This reasoning, however, conflates legal capacity with political willingness.

Somaliland has demonstrated the competence to conduct foreign relations independently. It has entered into trade, security, and cooperation agreements with countries such as Ethiopia and Seychelles (and business agreements with international companies such as DP World). Western states engage with Somaliland on development, security, and electoral support. Somaliland passports are accepted by several countries, and foreign consulates and liaison offices operate in Hargeisa.

What Somaliland lacks is not capacity, but reciprocal recognition. International law recognises that an entity may fulfil the criteria of statehood even if other states, for political reasons, refuse to acknowledge it.

Importantly, Somaliland is not dependent on a patron state for survival, unlike some other unrecognised entities. Its foreign policy is not outsourced, nor is it militarily sustained by an external power. This autonomy strengthens, rather than weakens, its claim to independence.

Is Somaliland's declaration of independence legal?

International law is often misunderstood as either endorsing or prohibiting declarations of independence. In reality, it does neither. This was made clear by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on Kosovo, which held that international law contains no general prohibition against declarations of independence.

The Court deliberately avoided ruling on recognition or statehood, reinforcing the idea that independence declarations are political acts with legal consequences determined by subsequent state practice, not automatic illegality.

Applied to Somaliland, this means its 1991 declaration does not violate international law. Whether it results in recognition is a political decision for states and international organisations, not a legal verdict predetermined by doctrine.

Beyond the recognition stalemate

There is a growing consensus among scholars that Somaliland fulfils the objective criteria of statehood. The disagreement lies not in law, but in politics. Many states prefer the ambiguity of engagement without recognition, citing regional stability, African Union sensitivities, or relations with Somalia.

Yet this prolonged non-recognition carries its own costs. It restricts Somaliland's access to international finance, limits its ability to formalise security cooperation, and penalises a society that has achieved stability through peaceful, democratic means in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Recognition should not be viewed as a reward, but as an acknowledgement of reality.

Conclusion

So, what is Somaliland?

It is a territory with defined colonial borders, a permanent population, an effective and legitimate government, and the demonstrated capacity to engage internationally. It emerged not from chaos, but from historical sovereignty and voluntary union. It withdrew from that union when it collapsed, and it rebuilt itself without foreign occupation or trusteeship.

Whether or not the international community chooses to recognise Somaliland, the legal and political facts remain. Somaliland functions as a state. The question is no longer whether it meets the criteria of statehood, but how long international politics can afford to ignore a reality that has endured for over thirty years.

Guleid Ahmed Jama

Lawyer and analyst

Somaliland's diplomatic.....

In an exclusive conversation with Q Magazine, Kaysar Maxamed — the diplomat tasked with securing Somaliland's recognition from the EU — described the country's recent breakthrough as a moment that "represents far more than a diplomatic milestone," portraying it as the culmination of decades of self-driven state building, resilience, and democratic commitment.

The ambassador's remarks come at a time of heightened geopolitical tension in the Horn of Africa, where Somaliland's emerging international status has triggered both celebration at home and coordinated pressure from regional actors.

On December 26, Israel formally recognized Somaliland – the self-declared republic that broke away from Somalia – as an "independent and sovereign state," according to a statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel is the first country to extend such recognition.

Netanyahu said Israel and Somaliland's president signed a joint declaration framed "in the spirit of the US brokered Abraham Accords." These accords, a major foreign policy initiative of US President Donald Trump during his first term, were designed to normalize relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan.

Somalia's Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's decision, calling it an attack on Somalia's sovereignty and a threat to regional peace and stability. The foreign ministers of Egypt, Somalia, and Turkey – along with the African Union – also issued statements rejecting the move.

Israel's announcement represents a major diplomatic breakthrough for the region, which has maintained greater stability than Somalia and has attracted significant investment from countries such as Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. These developments have heightened tensions with Mogadishu.

Trump has stated that he intends to expand the number of countries participating in the Abraham Accords during his second term. Meanwhile, Somali citizens remain subject to a US travel ban introduced under his administration.

A Three-Decade Journey Toward Recognition

Asked by Q Magazine to reflect on the significance of the moment, the ambassador emphasized that Somaliland's achievement is grounded in a long and often overlooked history of institution building:

"Somaliland's recognition represents far more than a diplomatic milestone. It reflects over three decades of peace-building, democratic governance, and institutional development achieved without international aid or recognition."

Since reclaiming its sovereignty in 1991, Somaliland has held multiple competitive elections, maintained relative stability in a volatile region, and built functioning state institutions largely through the efforts of its citizens and diaspora. According to the ambassador, recognition "validates long-standing sacrifices" and strengthens public confidence in the rule of law, economic development, and international engagement.

For the wider Horn of Africa, he argued, Somaliland offers "a credible model of bottom-up state-building, stability, and partnership."

A nation celebrating

The ambassador described scenes of nationwide celebration following Israel's recognition of Somaliland: flags raised in the streets, spontaneous gatherings, and newly composed patriotic songs spreading rapidly across the country. These displays, he said, reflect "a strong sense of national unity and spirit."

Yet the festivities have unfolded alongside mounting external pressure.

According to the ambassador, several regional governments – including Turkey, Djibouti, Egypt, and Somalia's federal administration – have intensified efforts to counter Somaliland's recognition. Their motivations, he said, range from protecting strategic investments to maintaining influence over ports, resources, and regional security dynamics.

He noted that in the past 48 hours, reports indicate coordinated attempts to "encourage unrest and destabilization in Somaliland," moves he described as aimed at halting further recognition and undermining governance.

Strategic interests and regional rivalries

The ambassador Maxamed outlined the geopolitical landscape shaping these pressures:

- Turkey's deepening agreements with Somalia's federal government, including infrastructure and resource projects, have positioned Ankara to oppose Somaliland's diplomatic gains.
- Djibouti, concerned about competition from the rapidly expanding Berbera Port, seeks to maintain dominance in regional trade and politics.
- Egypt, pursuing influence and access to natural resources, has aligned with Somalia and Djibouti in countering Ethiopia and Somaliland's growing autonomy.
- Somalia's federal government continues to reject Somaliland's independence, seeking to preserve what the ambassador called its "fake territorial integrity" while leveraging foreign partnerships for strategic advantage.

These dynamics, he argued, are driven by a mix of economic interests, military positioning, and long-term geopolitical calculations.

Despite the pressures, the ambassador expressed confidence in Somaliland's ability to navigate this turning point. He credited the country's resilience to its people, traditional leaders, civil society, and diaspora groups that have sustained Somaliland's progress for more than three decades.

"Somaliland faces the dual challenge of external pressures and internal unity," he said. "The resilience and patriotism of Somaliland's people will be key to safeguarding sovereignty and navigating this critical moment."

As international attention intensifies, Somaliland's next steps — and the global response — may shape the future of the Horn of Africa for years to come.

How Arab countries responded to Israel's recognition of Somaliland

Arab states have strongly condemned Israel's decision to recognize Somaliland, calling it a violation of international law and a direct challenge to Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to reports from Anadolu Agency, several Arab governments issued coordinated statements rejecting the move and reaffirming their support for a unified Somalia.

Saudi Arabia criticized Israel's decision, saying it reinforces "unilateral, separatist measures" that contradict international law. In a statement, the Saudi Foreign Ministry emphasized the kingdom's "full support" for Somalia's sovereignty and the unity of its territory.

Riyadh also rejected any "attempts to impose parallel entities" that could undermine Somalia's stability, stressing its backing for the country's legitimate state institutions.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry also condemned Israel's recognition of Somaliland, describing it as a danger to both Arab and regional security.

The ministry reiterated its full support for Somalia's unity, sovereignty, and political independence, aligning its position with international law, Arab consensus, and resolutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

It warned that legitimizing Somaliland's secession could destabilize Somalia and argued that the move fits into what it called "Israel's broader efforts to destabilize regional and international peace." The ministry also claimed that Israel has previously floated Somaliland as a potential destination for relocating Palestinians, particularly from Gaza.

Egypt announced that it has been working closely with regional partners to oppose Israel's decision. According to a statement from Egypt's Foreign Ministry, Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held phone discussions with his counterparts from Somalia, Türkiye, and Djibouti regarding the "dangerous developments" in the Horn of Africa following Israel's recognition of Somaliland.

The ministers reportedly agreed on a "complete rejection and condemnation" of the move and reaffirmed their collective support for Somalia's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Before his current role, Ambassador Kaysar Maxamed held several senior government posts in Somaliland, including Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Planning, and Commerce and Investment—positions that placed him at the heart of the country's foreign policy and development agenda. He holds an MSc in Security and Development from the University of Bristol and a Bachelor's degree in International Social and Public Policy.

Op-Ed: Somaliland's Path to Peace and Democracy Defined Countries as Friends and Foes

Despite building a stable, functioning democracy with peaceful transfers of power, Somaliland has been largely ignored and unawarded by an international community that remains blind to its state-building success. While the world maintains a wall of diplomatic isolation, three key nations—Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel—stand out for recognizing the strategic and moral importance of Somaliland's sovereignty. Ethiopia, once a historical foe, has transformed into a vital partner by extending a hand of cooperation rooted in a shared future and regional integration. The UAE has matched this commitment with massive infrastructure investments in the Berbera corridor, treating Somaliland as a brave, modern ally in a region often defined by regressive ideologies. Finally, a historic bond with Israel, which was the first to recognize Somaliland's independence in 1960, continues to offer a path toward modernization based on shared democratic values and common civic challenges.

Ethiopia: Past and Present: The state formation as a process of evolution has been historically dissimilar in Ethiopia and the Somali society, and shaped by unique types of circumstances and factors (Ethiopia as a deep-rooted African ancient civilization with early state formation, while in the Somali societies, the nomadic pastoralist reality made the way to progress semi-stagnant). That made them far different from each other and led them to perceive each other as different peoples and diverse types of realities that will never meet. The decisive factors of these dissimilarities have been ethnic and religious antagonism that shaped them apart, belonging to different worldwide alliances of Islam and Christianity. As a result, they have always been antagonistic and divided by violent conflicts, and oceans of suspicion and distrust separated them for centuries.

In modern history, the two parts have one more reason to be far apart: the colonial partition of the African continent, within which the Somali people were divided into five parts. As a result, the gap of divergence between Somali-speaking people and Ethiopia has widened. With the independence of the two Somali parts, the Italian and the British, the slogan of "Greater Somalia" became a central banner for the Somali political elites—not for identity's sake, but as a violent political and ideological weapon for Greater Somali ambition through the oppression of the Somali people and aggression against other neighboring countries, which created new waves of conflict in the entire region of the Horn of Africa. One of the most destructive and bloody conflicts was the aggressive war against Ethiopia by the savage regime of Siyad Barre, with the aim not to liberate Ethiopian Somalis, but to bring them under his domination and oppression.

However, the course of historical events drastically changed from 1981–1991, when the Somaliland people experienced one of the most inhuman destructions, annihilations, and genocides by the Somalia dictatorial regime of Siyad Barre. During that savagery treatment against the peaceful people of Somaliland, the type of relation with Ethiopia drastically turned to changing. When the Siyad Barre regime was exercising extreme hostility against the Somaliland people—destroying the main cities of Hargeisa and Burao and enacting genocidal campaigns by artillery and air bombardment on the refugee people who had been escaping through the border to Ethiopia for a peaceful haven—Ethiopia, as a people and government, extended the Somaliland people a friendly hand of help. As a result, the clarity between friend and foe became crystal-clear.

Therefore, it is only logical for the Ethiopian political leadership to expect from Somaliland a reciprocal approach to building a new type of relation for establishing solid bridges to a common future of peace, cooperation, and regional integration. This has created a conviction that there is no more need to underline the irrelevant ideological rhetoric of outdated Somali irredentism at a time when all types of Somali dictators are united against the rights of the Somaliland Republic for self-determination, and a worldwide coalition is being engaged in an unholy war to put an end to the epoch-making feats of Somaliland's achievements in state-building and democratization.

United Arab Emirates: The UAE is playing an exceptional role in the worldwide combat for building a modern, peaceful, developed, and just world motivated by a clear idea: that the religious de-radicalization of Islam is the most urgent and pivotal engagement as an unavoidable task for all enlightened Muslim leaders and communities, taking decisive steps against dark forces without leaning to compromises, halfway solutions, or tactical approaches. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed's unmitigated combat aims to eliminate the challenges posed by terrorism in order to emancipate humanity from fear.

Moreover, the significant investment projects that are vital for Somaliland's existence as a peaceful democratic nation—investments that continuously increase—further indicate clear strategic thinking behind these investments in Berbera Port developments and the highway corridor to Ethiopia. It is also important to underline that these brave and historical steps taken by the UAE regarding infrastructure development in Somaliland are taking place when most Arab countries are engaged in campaigns against the peace, state-building, and democratic achievements that Somaliland has gained over the years. It is also notable to underline here that these brave steps to invest hugely in an unrecognized country represent an extra-exceptional way of doing things in a calculated, strategic manner. That is why the UAE is seen by the Somaliland public as a very close ally.

State of Israel: The very name of Israel has been demonized in the Arab and Muslim worlds due to prejudiced religious interpretations by Islamic fundamentalism and Arab ultra-nationalists. Under the influence of formidable public opinion of the masses in the Muslim and Arabic worlds, modern-minded Muslim leaders could not dare to raise voices over the darkness of conservatism in the Arab world, and the real picture of Israel as a modern, democratic, viable nation has not been seen by the eyes of most Middle Eastern peoples and the majority of the Muslim world. As a result, Israel has been seen through the perception of an "Evil Foe."

A similar picture remained dominant in the Somali arena too. However, contemporary world forces at work demonstrated to be richer and larger than one-sided, prejudiced story versions. The true story of the Israeli state, as a people and government, continued to be an active force on the world stage. Israel and Somaliland have fundamental commonalities based on democratic values and confront common challenges, as they share a civic democratic system; both countries exercise free and fair elections and the peaceful transition of power. These practices reflect the highest level of what human civilization has achieved through the ages regarding modernization, governance, and moralities.

Therefore, both countries' challenges remain the same, standing against traditional political trends grounded on regressive ideological trends. The recognition of Somaliland by Israel has not been a coincidental action or a matter of fate, but a result of shared principles and common interests. The State of Israel's quest to gain more international cooperation through diplomacy is only natural and legitimate. Israel's intent to have relations with Somaliland started in 1960, resulting in Israel being the first country to recognize Somaliland right after independence in 1960. Furthermore, Israel as a democratic nation has a great attachment to countries with similar commitments like Somaliland. In light of these mutual expressions, broad prospects for cooperation between the two countries started opening up towards the modernization of the socio-economic and political systems of Somaliland and the consolidation of peace and cooperation in the region and the world over.

About the Author

Adam Muse Jibril is a former diplomat and scholar who has served as the Somaliland Representative to the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, and the African Union (AU). A prolific author, he has published numerous articles focusing on Horn of Africa politics, democratization, and regional security.