

Security and conflict

Africa's wars were discussed in side meetings with no money attached, while African armies grew and the African Union mission in Somalia ran short of cash.

IN BRIEF

- At the UN in September, Sudan, Somalia and eastern Congo were discussed only in side meetings, which ended with demands and no money.
- In 2025 African governments added about \$4.6 billion to their military budgets, yet left the African Union mission in Somalia about \$70 million a year short.
- The UN office that supplies that mission closes by the end of 2027, and an armed group now holds the Yemeni shore of the Red Sea, so African governments must plan for both.



A Ugandan police officer with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on foot patrol near the seaport in Mogadishu, Somalia, 2012.

Photo: AMISOM Public Information, [CC0](#), via [source page](#).

\$58.2bn

What African governments spent on their armed forces in 2025, 8.5% more than in 2024

Source: sipri.org

23,968

Deaths linked to armed Islamist groups in Africa in 2025, up 24% on 2024

Source: africacenter.org

\$70m

Yearly gap in the budget of the AU mission in Somalia: \$190m needed, \$120m promised

Source: somaliguardian.com

33.7m

People in Sudan who need aid in 2026, more than in any other country

Source: reliefweb.int

43%

Share of the UN's \$2.87bn aid appeal for Sudan in 2026 that had been paid by 30 September

Source: fts.unocha.org

12%

Share of world trade that passes the Bab al-Mandeb strait, whose Yemeni shore the Houthis now hold

Source: aljazeera.com

01

HOW SURE WE ARE: OBSERVED

What happened at the UN

Every September, heads of state and ministers meet in New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly. In his opening speech, the UN Secretary-General named the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar as places where ceasefires had failed to protect civilians. On the third day, the President of Comoros warned that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz threatened food and fuel supplies in countries that import them. Apart from Sudan, Africa's own wars barely reached the main hall.

Sudan received its most serious attention at a side meeting on 23 September. It was the first joint meeting of two groups working on Sudan, the Quad and the Quintet, chaired by the African Union and the United States. Leaders from the AU Commission, the United States, the European Union and IGAD, the bloc of states in the Horn of Africa, called for a truce. They also asked for an end to outside arms supplies and a wider UN arms ban. IGAD's Workneh Gebeyehu said that "the Sudanese people cannot wait for another round of promises". The meeting produced no ceasefire and no money, so Sudanese civilians gained nothing from it.

Eastern Congo came up only as a dispute between two governments. Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) gave opposing accounts of the war. Peace talks between the DRC government and the M23 rebel group, held under a plan agreed in Doha, had settled two of their eight parts by September. The decision that will shape Somalia was taken in Washington. On 18 September the United States agreed that the UN office that supplies the African Union troops in Somalia will shrink over 12 months from January 2027 and then close. Those troops will soon need another way to get fuel, food and transport.

Sources for this section (5)

- [UN News: the Secretary-General names the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar](#)
- [UN News: the President of Comoros on the Strait of Hormuz, day three of the debate](#)
- [Sudan Tribune: the joint Quad and Quintet meeting on Sudan](#)
- [Security Council Report: the DRC, Rwanda and the Doha talks](#)
- [Dawan: the United States agrees to close the UN support office in Somalia](#)

02

HOW SURE WE ARE: OBSERVED

What is really going on

Governments everywhere are spending more on their armies. World military spending reached almost \$2.9 trillion in 2025, the eleventh rise in a row. African spending rose 8.5% to \$58.2 billion. Algeria alone spent more than all of Africa south of the Sahara together. African states can find money for their own forces, which makes the gaps in shared African missions harder to explain.

Violence is rising faster than spending. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies counted 23,968 deaths linked to armed Islamist groups in Africa in 2025. It also recorded more violent events than in any earlier year. Deaths in Somalia almost doubled, to 8,813. The Sahel, Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin together account for 98% of these deaths, so a few regions carry almost all of the killing.

The UN is shrinking its own peace missions at the same time. Its peacekeeping budget for 2026 to 2027 is \$5.1 billion, a tenth lower than the year before. Missions are sending home a quarter of their soldiers and police. The United States pays about 27% of peacekeeping costs, and by April it had paid nothing for the current year. UN missions in the Central African Republic, the DRC and South Sudan now patrol less and protect fewer civilians.

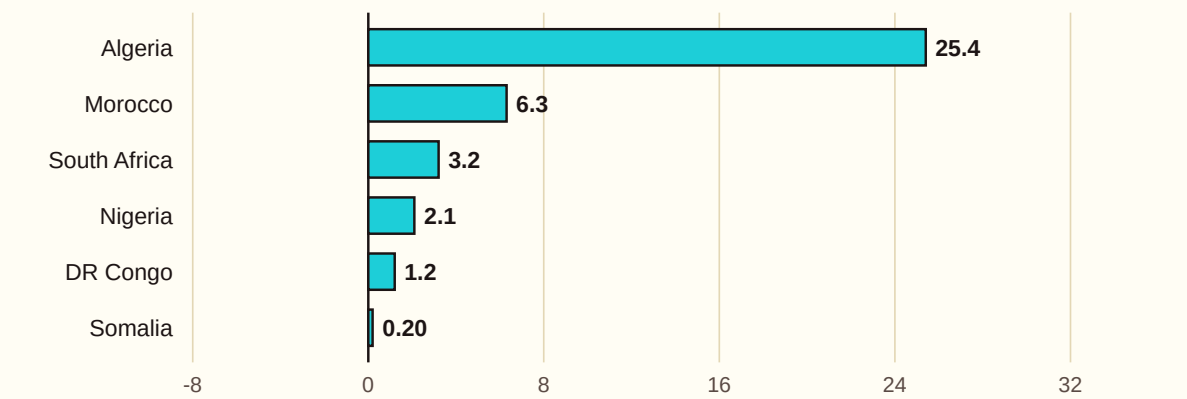
In December 2023 the Security Council agreed Resolution 2719. It allows the contributions that all UN members must pay to cover up to 75% of a mission led by the African Union. It has never been used, because the United States blocked its first use, for Somalia. In February 2026 AU leaders discussed raising their own Peace Fund from \$400 million to \$1 billion, and decided nothing. Africa has a legal route to UN money and no agreed plan for paying its own share.

Aid for people caught in these wars is also short. By 30 September, donors had paid 43% of the UN's appeal for Sudan this year and less than a third of the appeal for Somalia. Mali, Burkina Faso and

Niger had received a quarter or less. Families who fled the fighting in these countries will get less than half the help planned for them.

Algeria alone spends more on its military than all of sub-Saharan Africa

US\$ billion, current prices, 2025

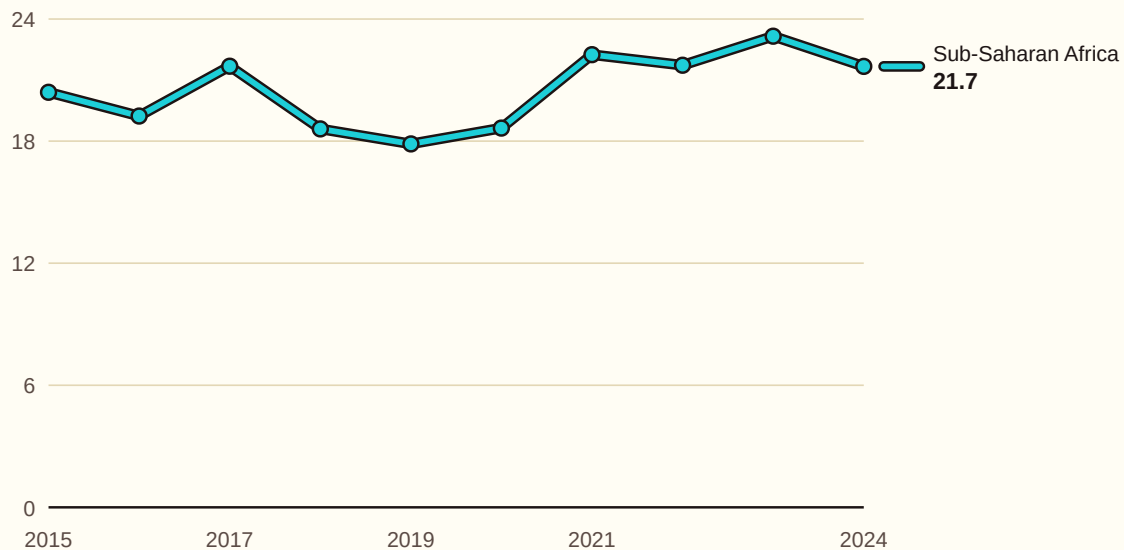


Only countries named with 2025 figures in the SIPRI fact sheet text are shown; this is not a full ranking (Egypt, for example, is not given in the text). Sub-Saharan total for comparison: \$23.3bn; North Africa \$35.0bn; Africa \$58.2bn (+8.5% real terms). SIPRI's Africa total excludes Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan.

Source: [SIPRI, Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025 \(Fact Sheet, April 2026\)](#)

Sub-Saharan military spending has hovered around \$20 billion for a decade

US\$ billion, current prices



Current US dollars, so swings partly reflect exchange rates rather than real cuts or increases. 2025 not yet in the World Bank series; SIPRI puts 2025 sub-Saharan spending at \$23.3bn.

Source: [World Bank WDI, indicator MS.MIL.XPND.CD \(data sourced from SIPRI\), region Sub-Saharan Africa \(SSF\)](#)

Sources for this section (6)

- [SIPRI: world and African military spending in 2025](#)
- [Africa Center for Strategic Studies: deaths linked to armed Islamist groups in 2025](#)
- [Security Council Report: cuts to UN peacekeeping and US payments](#)
- [Institute for Security Studies: Resolution 2719 has never been used](#)
- [ISS PSC Report: the AU summit notes the Peace Fund proposal](#)
- [UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service: funding for the 2026 aid appeals](#)

03

HOW SURE WE ARE: OBSERVED

Country by country

In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces have been at war with the army since April 2023. In October 2025 they took the city of El Fasher after an 18-month siege. A UN inquiry found that the attack bore the

hallmarks of genocide, and Amnesty International called the killings ethnic cleansing. By July 2026 about 500,000 people were trapped in the city of El Obeid, under drone attack for months. Sudan now has 33.7 million people in need of aid, more than any other country.

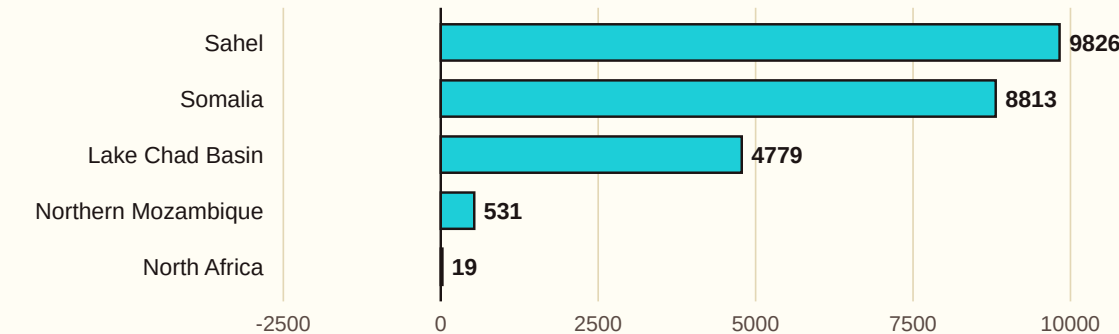
In the eastern DRC, the M23 has held the cities of Goma and Bukavu since 2025. In December 2025 it took Uvira, shortly after peace accords were signed in Washington, and then withdrew under US pressure. On 3 March 2026 the United States placed sanctions on Rwanda's army and four senior officers for directly supporting the M23. More than seven million people have been forced from their homes. The DRC is also fighting Ebola, which had killed 3,799 people by 23 September.

In Somalia, the African Union force has shrunk from about 22,000 troops in the mid-2010s to about 12,000. Somalia said about 14,000 of its own soldiers were ready in August. Yet some districts handed to them have fallen back to al-Shabaab, the armed Islamist group that holds much of rural southern and central Somalia. The International Crisis Group reports that Burundi and Djibouti may leave without more support. Uganda hopes others will pay for its troops. A dispute over when and how Somalia holds elections also distracts its leaders. If the troops leave before Somali forces can hold the ground, al-Shabaab will gain.

In Mali, on 25 April 2026, the al-Qaeda group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) attacked six towns. It acted with the Tuareg-led rebels of the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA). The attacks reached Bamako's airport and Kati, where the defence minister, Sadio Camara, was killed. Russian forces known as the Africa Corps gave up positions, including in Kidal. JNIM then blockaded Bamako. In late 2025 about 120 containers a day bound for Mali were held at the port of Dakar. Mali buys 26.5% of Senegal's exports, so Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana also pay for Mali's war.

The Sahel and Somalia account for most deaths linked to militant Islamist groups

fatalities, 2025

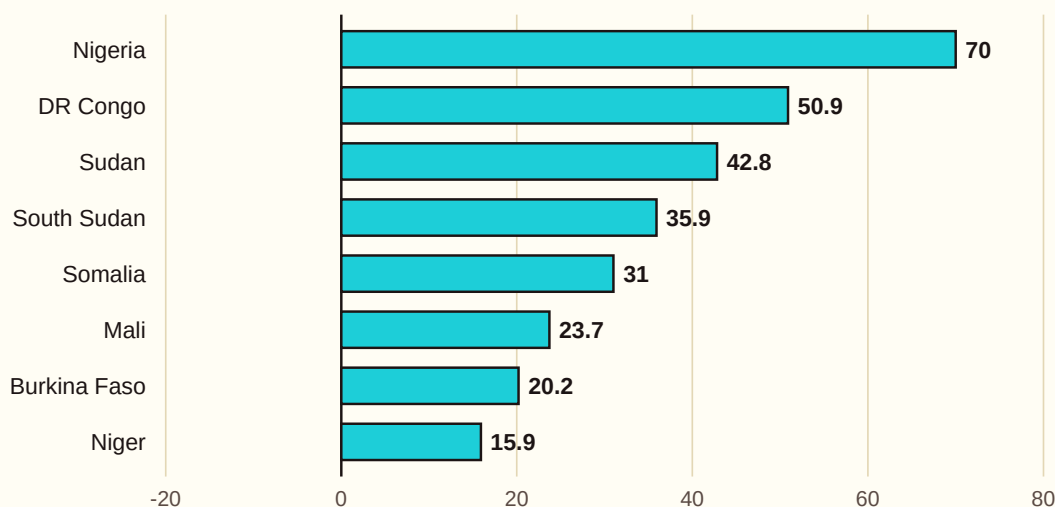


Continental total 23,968, up 24% on 2024. Somalia rose 93% (from 4,561), Lake Chad Basin 28% (from 3,734), northern Mozambique 51% (from 352). Coastal West Africa is not shown separately in the source.

Source: [Africa Center for Strategic Studies, The Widening Scope of Africa's Militant Islamist Threat \(6 April 2026\)](#)

Aid appeals for Africa's conflict zones are badly underfunded

% of 2026 humanitarian plan requirement funded, as at 30 September 2026



Requirements in US\$ million: Sudan 2,866; DR Congo 2,133; South Sudan 1,463; Somalia 852; Niger 676; Burkina Faso 658; Mali 578; Nigeria 516. Plan IDs 1514, 1509, 1512, 1516, 1513, 1499, 1511, 1508. Figures change daily as funding is recorded.

Source: [UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service, 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans \(funding against revised requirements\)](#)

Sources for this section (8)

- [Al Jazeera: El Fasher, El Obeid and the Rapid Support Forces](#)
- [ReliefWeb: people in need in Sudan in 2026](#)
- [Al Jazeera: US sanctions on Rwanda's army over the M23](#)
- [WHO: Ebola deaths in the DRC by 23 September 2026](#)
- [Somali Guardian: troop numbers and districts lost to al-Shabaab](#)
- [International Crisis Group: troop-sending countries and Somalia's election dispute](#)
- [Al Jazeera: the April 2026 attacks in Mali](#)
- [Institute for Security Studies: the cost of the Bamako blockade to coastal states](#)

Why this matters

Missions paid for by others run on others' rules and timetables. The Somalia mission now depends on a closing date set in Washington. Its \$70 million gap is about 0.12% of what African states spend on their own armed forces. Closing it is a question of political will and of how African governments share the bill.

The largest security change of the month got almost no attention from African leaders. On 11 and 12 September the Houthis, who control much of Yemen, took the port of Mocha and Perim island. They now sit about 20 kilometres from the African coast, beside the Bab al-Mandeb strait. Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia all lie on this route, yet no African leader raised it at the Assembly. Djibouti took in more than 2,000 Yemeni refugees in 24 hours. Egypt had already lost about \$7 billion in Suez Canal income in 2023 and 2024.

Shipping costs follow the danger. After the Houthis declared a blockade on 21 July, traffic through the strait fell by 30% the next day. Insurance against war damage cost 0.5% of a ship's value, five times the rate on routes that avoid the Yemeni coast. Traders in East Africa pay these costs in the price of every imported good.

The same holds in West Africa, where the blockade of Bamako hurts the ports of Dakar and Abidjan. Insecurity has become a cost of trade. Finance ministers and chambers of commerce therefore have as much at stake as defence ministers.

Sources for this section (5)

- [Somali Guardian: the \\$70 million gap in the Somalia mission](#)
- [SIPRI: African military spending in 2025](#)
- [Al Jazeera: the Houthis take the Yemeni shore of the Bab al-Mandeb](#)
- [Al Jazeera: traffic and war-risk insurance after the July blockade](#)
- [Institute for Security Studies: the Bamako blockade and coastal ports](#)

The case against this view

Most African military spending pays salaries. Much of it is in North African states that do not pay for missions further south, so it cannot simply be moved to Somalia. The AU Peace Fund has grown to \$400 million from members' own payments, which is a real achievement for a body whose yearly running budget is about \$600 million. Outside money also brought outside checks. A mission paid for only by its neighbours, each with its own border interests, might answer less to Somali civilians. A mission funded through the UN has its accounts checked in New York.

- [ISS PSC Report: the Peace Fund and the AU budget](#)

BY AUDIENCE

What you can do

Governments

DO THIS

Pay your full share into the AU Peace Fund before the February 2027 summit, and promise part of the money the Somalia mission lacks.

WHY

Africa can ask the UN to pay for African missions only once it pays for its own main mission.

AU and regional bodies

DO THIS

Publish a costed plan for the Somalia mission after UN supplies end, before the Security Council decides in December.

WHY

The UN supply office closes by the end of 2027 and nobody has costed a replacement.

AU and regional bodies

DO THIS

Ask ECOWAS and the Sahel states to agree a joint plan to protect the roads from Dakar and Abidjan to Bamako.

WHY

The blockade is hurting coastal economies that have no say in the Sahel talks.

Business and investors

DO THIS

Build the cost of Red Sea detours and war insurance into contracts, and share the figures with port authorities.

WHY

Insurers abroad set these costs, and African shippers have no shared evidence to bargain with.

NGOs and civil society

DO THIS

Record harm to civilians in districts of Somalia handed from AU troops to Somali forces.

WHY

Some of these districts have already fallen back to al-Shabaab, and no one tracks the cost to civilians.

Philanthropy

DO THIS

Fund Sudan's local emergency response rooms and aid that crosses the border from Chad and South Sudan.

WHY

Less than half of Sudan's aid appeal had been paid by the end of September.

Researchers and media

DO THIS

Publish a yearly count of what each African state spends on its army and what it pays to AU peace missions.

WHY

The difference between the two figures is the clearest measure of each government's commitment.

Young people and citizens

DO THIS

Ask your members of parliament to publish defence budgets line by line during budget debates.

WHY

Military spending rose 8.5% in 2025 with little public debate.

OCTOBER 2026 TO DECEMBER 2027

Dates to watch

OCTOBER 2026

Planning meeting of the DRC, Rwanda and the United States under the Washington accords

It shows whether Rwandan forces pull back and whether armed groups hostile to Rwanda are disarmed. [Source](#)

DECEMBER 2026

Security Council decision on the Somalia mission and the closing of the UN supply office

It fixes how and when UN supplies to the African troops end. [Source](#)

20 DECEMBER 2026

The mandate of MONUSCO, the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, ends

The Security Council must decide whether the mission can watch over a ceasefire in South Kivu. [Source](#)

JANUARY 2027

The UN supply office in Somalia starts its 12-month wind-down

The African mission must replace about \$500 million a year of UN supplies before the office closes. [Source](#)

FEBRUARY 2027

African Union summit of heads of state, Addis Ababa

Leaders can decide on the plan to raise the Peace Fund from \$400 million to \$1 billion. [Source](#)

Recommendations

100 DAYS · BY EARLY JANUARY 2027

CONTINENTAL

Close the Somalia mission's funding gap with African money before UN supplies stop

Leads: The AU Peace and Security Council with IGAD; Somalia and the six troop-sending countries as first movers

1 YEAR · BY SEPTEMBER 2027

REGIONAL

Share ship-tracking data and create African war-risk insurance for Red Sea trade

Leads: IGAD and the African signatories of the Djibouti Code, with ATIDI and the African Development Bank; Djibouti and Kenya as first contributors

Dig deeper

The Widening Scope of Africa's Militant Islamist Threat

Africa Center for Strategic Studies

April 2026 analysis of 2025 fatalities by theatre, with maps and trend data.

Somalia Awaits a New Security Order as Mission Drawdown Looms

International Crisis Group

September 2026 commentary on the UNSOS closure, troop contributors' positions and what Mogadishu must do.

Two years on, UNSCR 2719 on peace operations remains at a crossroads

Institute for Security Studies

Why the UN-AU financing resolution has not been used and what African leadership could change.

JNIM's blockade tactics threaten West Africa's trade corridors

Institute for Security Studies

The cost of the Bamako blockade to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Democratic Republic of the Congo, September 2026 Monthly Forecast

Security Council Report

Status of the Doha framework, the Washington accords and the MONUSCO mandate.

Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026

OCHA Financial Tracking Service

Live record of funding received against Sudan's \$2.87bn appeal.

Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025

SIPRI

April 2026 fact sheet: world spending \$2,887bn, Africa \$58.2bn, with regional and country detail.

ACLED: Africa

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)

Regional hub for conflict and protest event data and analysis across Africa, including the Sahel, Sudan and Somalia.

Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Uppsala University

Long-running dataset of armed conflicts and battle-related deaths worldwide, with country dashboards.

Peace and Security Council

African Union

The AU's standing decision-making organ on conflict prevention, management and peace operations.

Words used on this page

African Union (AU)

The organisation of 55 African states, based in Addis Ababa. Its heads of state meet each February. It can suspend members after a coup. [Glossary](#) · [Source: au.int](#)

UN General Assembly

The meeting of all 193 UN member states, each with one vote. It meets every year from September. It can make statements, elect members of other bodies and approve the UN budget, but most of what it says does not bind governments. [Glossary](#) · [Source: un.org](#)

UN Secretary-General

The head of the UN's staff and its main public voice. The Security Council recommends a candidate and the General Assembly appoints them, usually for five years. António Guterres's term ends on 31 December 2026. [The UN and diplomacy briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

African Union Commission

The African Union's secretariat. It prepares decisions for heads of state and carries them out. [Glossary](#)

European Union (EU)

A union of 27 European countries with shared laws, a single market and a large aid budget. [Glossary](#)

IGAD

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a bloc of eight states in the Horn of Africa and East Africa. [Glossary](#) · [Source: igad.int](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Africa's second-largest country by area, in central Africa. Its east has seen armed conflict for three decades, and it holds much of the world's cobalt. [Glossary](#)

M23

A rebel group fighting the army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu. The United States says Rwanda's army supports it. [Glossary](#) · [Source: securitycouncilreport.org](#)

UN peacekeeping budget

A separate UN budget, approved each June, that pays for UN peace missions. It is paid through assessed contributions, and its largest payers are the United States and China. [Glossary](#) · [Source: peacekeeping.un.org](#)

UN Security Council

The 15-member UN body that decides on war and peace. It can impose sanctions and send peacekeepers, and its decisions bind all UN members. Five permanent members can each block any decision. [The UN and diplomacy briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: un.org](#)

Resolution 2719

A Security Council decision of December 2023. It allows UN member states' regular contributions to help pay for peace missions led by the African Union, decided case by case. It lets the UN pay up to three-quarters of such a mission's budget. It has never been used: the United States blocked its first use, for Somalia. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: issafrica.org](#)

AU Peace Fund

A fund paid for by African Union members to finance African peace work and missions. [Glossary](#) · [Source: au.int](#)

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

A paramilitary group that has been at war with Sudan's army since April 2023. It took the city of El Fasher in October 2025. [Glossary](#) · [Source: aljazeera.com](#)

Al-Shabaab

An armed Islamist group in Somalia that fights the Somali government. It controls large parts of rural southern and central Somalia. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: crisisgroup.org](#)

JNIM

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, the branch of al-Qaeda in the Sahel. It is the most active armed group in the region.

Glossary · Source: [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com)

AUSSOM

The African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia. About 12,000 troops from Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Djibouti and Burundi help Somali forces against al-Shabaab. [Our recommendation on this](#) · Glossary

The Houthis

An armed movement that controls much of Yemen, including most of its Red Sea coast. It has attacked ships in the Red Sea since 2023. [Glossary](#)

Bab al-Mandeb

The narrow strait between Yemen and Djibouti and Eritrea at the southern end of the Red Sea. Before 2023, about a tenth of world sea trade passed through it. [Glossary](#)

War-risk insurance

Insurance that covers ships against war, piracy and terrorism. A committee of London insurers, the Joint War Committee, lists the sea areas where extra cover must be bought, and its list includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. [Our recommendation on this](#) · Glossary · Source: lmalloyds.com

UN support office in Somalia

A UN office that supplies food, fuel, transport and medical care to the African Union mission in Somalia. The United States agreed in September 2026 to a 12-month drawdown from January 2027, followed by closure. [Our recommendation on this](#) · Glossary · Source: unsos.unmissions.org

ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger left it in January 2025. [Politics and governance briefing](#) · Glossary

Alliance of Sahel States

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, each ruled by a military government after a coup. They formed their own alliance and left ECOWAS in January 2025. The African Union has suspended them. [Politics and governance briefing](#) · Glossary

MONUSCO

The UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Security Council must renew its mandate for it to continue. [Glossary](#) · Source: securitycouncilreport.org