

Former Somali Presidents Unite against Hassan Sheikh Over Illicit Land Deals, PFCS Violations

By Abdullahi A. Nor

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Somalia's political landscape was jolted this week after three former presidents issued a rare joint statement accusing President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of illegally seizing public land in Mogadishu and violating the country's constitutional safeguards.

Presidents, Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo — who collectively led Somalia between **2000 and 2022** — alleged that the current administration is engaged in a “systematic abuse of power” by unlawfully transferring government-owned land into private hands, often at the expense of displaced families.



The former Somalia Presidents Abdiqasim, Sheikh Sharif and Farmaajo

Constitutional Safeguards Ignored

The former leaders accused President Hassan Sheikh's government of deliberately bypassing Articles. 25, 26 and 43 of Somalia's Provisional Constitution and Articles 50,51 of Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and articles 6 and 22 of law number 41. Under these laws, the sale or transfer of public assets must be publicly justified, overseen by the National Procurement Authority, and all proceeds deposited into the national treasury.

“None of these constitutional and legal safeguards have been followed,” the statement read. “Instead, President Hassan Sheikh's administration has chosen to flout the law, displace vulnerable families, and enrich a select few.”

The ex-presidents also expressed condolences to families who lost loved ones in violent clashes during forced evictions, where armed security forces have reportedly used live fire to suppress protests.

Forced Evictions Spark Public Anger

In recent months, Mogadishu has witnessed a surge in demolitions and mass evictions. Rights groups estimate that hundreds of thousands of families and small businesses have been driven from their homes on public lands. Residents report that some eviction operations were carried out under the cover of gunfire, leaving communities traumatized.

Private lands disputes remain especially combustible in Somalia. With property registries destroyed during decades of conflict, elites and politically connected businessmen have often claimed prime real-estate with little accountability. Mogadishu's rapid urbanization has only intensified competition, turning land ownership into one of the country's most volatile political and social flashpoints.



A young student returns to find her house demolished

With public trust in state institutions deeply eroded, many private land disputes bypass government courts — widely perceived as corrupt — and instead end up in Al-Shabaab-run shadow courts, where the militant group exploits grievances to expand its influence.

A Long History of Land Politics

Land ownership has been one of Somalia's most contested issues since the collapse of the central government in 1991, when militias and clans carved up public and private properties. Successive transitional governments struggled to reverse the trend.

- **Abdiqasim Salad Hassan (2000–2004)** led Somalia's first Transitional National Government at a time when Mogadishu remained under the grip of warlords.
- **Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (2009–2012)**, backed by African Union forces, attempted to reassert state authority, though weak institutions and insecurity prevented real oversight of land disputes.
- **Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo (2017–2022)** built and professionalized the national army, didn't manipulate the PFCS nor election commission and never sold or grabbed even an inch of public land.

President Hassan Sheikh himself faced similar allegations during his first term (2012–2017), when opposition groups accused his administration of irregular land transfers. The renewed controversy has reignited those concerns, captured in a Somali proverb: "*Qabyo ninkeeda ayaa dhamaystira*" — "Only the owner of an unfinished work can complete it."

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Warning to Business Community

The former presidents also directed a warning at Somalia's business elite, many of whom are accused of buying illegal public plots. "Entrepreneurs must not be complicit in the plunder of public assets," they said, warning that any such transactions could be overturned by future administrations.

The following list identifies 40 key public properties illegally sold or transferred to private Business elite, undermining the rule of law, public interest, and Somalia's sovereignty.

A glimpse of the President Hassan's run away land grab

Milk Factory	Pharmaceutical factor	Air Defense Site	Zone K	Fire Brigade HQ
Public Works Land – 6 Piano	Tobacco and Cigarette Factory	Steel Factory	Pasta Factory	Taleex Hotel
Taleex – National Fairgrounds	Tarabuun – Deva Hospital Zone	Bangala Military Camp	Disabled Persons' Camp	Army Officers Residences (Shirkole)
Towfiiq Fence Land	Airport Hangars (Bangariyo)	Blood Bank	Ministry of Interior compound (Buulo Xuubay)	Shoe Factory
Casa Italia	Police School Cemetery	Eveko Zone	Ministry of Fishery staff residence	Buulo Wiikiyo Port area
Lanzareti Hospital	Open Land of Xamar Weyne	Jubba Hotel	Curuuba Hotel	Dayniile Square
Steel/Iron Factory	Ministry of Livestock (Ex-Control Compound)	Ministry of Health – Boondheere	Airport Security Zone (Jayga)	Galmudug – Wadajir
Siinay Market	Bayhani Market	Central Bankers Houses	Military Barrack	Somali National University Compound

A Rare Display of Unity and International Community ‘s Silence

The joint statement is remarkable not only for its accusations but also for the unity behind it. The three former presidents — often bitter rivals — rarely agree on political matters. Their decision to confront Hassan Sheikh together underscores the gravity of the allegations.

“This is not just about land,” said a Mogadishu-based political analyst. “It’s about corruption, legitimacy, and misuse of public office. When three past leaders with different constituencies unite against a sitting president, it signals a political crisis of national proportions.”

Yet, despite the seriousness of the allegations, international actors — including the United Nations, African Union, and key donor nations — have remained conspicuously silent. Analysts warn that such indifference risks emboldening abuses while weakening Somalia’s fragile institutions.

“When the international community looks the other way as leaders engage in illegal land seizures, manipulate the constitution, and deploy security forces against relatively stable federal member states — instead of focusing on Al-Shabaab, which has retaken dozens of towns liberated just two years ago — it sends a dangerous message,” said a regional observer.

Broader Implications

The accusations come as President Hassan Sheikh faces mounting criticism for centralizing power, sidelining federal member states, and stacking key posts with loyalists. Opposition figures argue his governance style undermines Somalia’s fragile federal system.

For ordinary Somalis, however, the crisis is personal. “We are being pushed out of our homes with nowhere to go,” said one resident of Mogadishu’s Hodan district. “This land belongs to all Somalis, not just the president’s friends.”

Analysts caution that the land dispute could inflame clan grievances and deepen Somalia’s political fractures. “The Somali state rests on fragile legitimacy,” noted one regional analyst. “If the government is perceived as selling off public land illegally, it risks losing both citizen trust and international support.”

Government Yet to Respond

As of Wednesday, Hassan Sheikh's administration had not issued an official response. But silence, critics warn, may only reinforce perceptions of wrongdoing and strengthen opposition voices.

For now, the rare alliance of three former Somali presidents has placed Hassan Sheikh Mohamud under intense scrutiny — raising urgent questions about governance, accountability, and the future of Somalia's fragile democracy.

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