# UK faces critical decision on recognising Somaliland after landmark election



The call for the United Kingdom to recognise Somaliland approaches an urgent crossroad, heightening in relevance following its recent presidential election in which Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, a former opposition leader, claimed victory with over 50% of the vote. This election highlights Somaliland's steadfast democratic process and its ongoing quest for international recognition—something vital for its survival, yet perpetually undermined by inaction from the UK government.

In an insightful opinion piece, a former MP articulates a strong case for Britain to extend recognition to Somaliland, drawing attention to its notable political stability and effective governance. This starkly contrasts with Somalia’s chronic instability, plagued by militant attacks that have continually derailed any semblance of order. As the new Labour government takes its place, one must critically question their commitment to supporting such significant democratic strides. Do they have the vision to support alliances that genuinely advance stability in the region, or will they instead focus on appeasing outdated narratives?

The reflections from a parliamentary delegation led to Somaliland in 2007 reveal a troubling trend of neglect. During that visit, the delegation sought to engage the African Union on Somaliland's right to recognition, only to face pushback rooted in fears of secession. This reluctance from the government remains a significant barrier, disregarding the fact that Somaliland is a self-declared state that has methodically established democratic institutions and economic growth, seemingly in vain as recognition remains elusive.

Given the ongoing political achievements in Somaliland, these are not mere historical anecdotes but critical indicators of the future. The legacy of the civil war in Somalia and the oppressive dictatorship of Siad Barre remind us of the necessity to act decisively. With many Somalilanders having built successful communities in the UK, especially in cities like Cardiff, there is a compelling moral obligation for Britain to rethink its approach to recognition and demonstrate solidarity through action rather than inaction.

The recent diplomatic overtures by Somaliland, particularly its potential agreements with Ethiopia, signal a proactive strategy to reshape its global standing. Such moves, coupled with its established democratic credentials, pose a challenge to a government that has often prioritised political expediency over genuine relationships based on shared values of democracy and stability.

Scholarly commentary on this issue further emphasizes the geopolitical implications of Somaliland’s recognition. Its quest for observer status in the African Union encapsulates a desire for legitimacy that could alter the dynamics of the Horn of Africa. The functioning governance structures and defined territory of Somaliland can no longer be dismissed by a government preoccupied with traditional alliances instead of bold, transformative policy.

As the UK reflects on its historical ties and contemporary responsibilities in the region, the imperative remains: will this new Labour administration take the bold and necessary steps to recognise Somaliland? The argument posits that this recognition is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic move aimed at reinforcing stability and democracy in a region fraught with disorder. By aligning with Somaliland’s aspirations, Britain could send a powerful message of solidarity, advocating for a governance model that genuinely prioritises peace, security, and democratic engagement in the Horn of Africa.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/03/britain-must-stand-ready-to-recognise-somaliland> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/03/britain-must-stand-ready-to-recognise-somaliland> - In this opinion piece, Alun Michael, former MP for Cardiff South and Penarth, argues that Britain should be prepared to recognise Somaliland as an independent state. He highlights Somaliland's democratic achievements, including peaceful presidential transitions and its capacity to build democratic institutions, contrasting it with Somalia's ongoing instability. Michael recalls his 2007 parliamentary delegation to Somaliland and the African Union, where he advocated for recognition, noting that an internal report recommending recognition was stalled due to concerns about encouraging secessionist movements elsewhere.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/736f65dc3c4a4474ede1db990e57db7f> - This article reports on the inauguration of Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi as Somaliland's new president following the November 2024 election. Abdullahi, a former opposition leader, secured over 50% of the vote, underscoring the region's democratic process. In his speech, he emphasised the pursuit of international recognition for Somaliland, which declared independence from Somalia over 30 years ago but remains unrecognised. The article also discusses Somaliland's relative stability compared to Somalia's ongoing struggles with militant attacks.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somaliland-votes-with-leaders-seeing-international-recognition-reach-2024-11-13/> - Reuters covers Somaliland's presidential election, highlighting the region's aspirations for international recognition after over three decades of self-governance. Despite declaring independence from Somalia in 1991, Somaliland's sovereignty remains unrecognised, limiting its international engagement. The article details the election process, the candidates' positions on a potential diplomatic deal with Ethiopia involving coastal land in exchange for recognition, and the broader implications for regional relations.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/6a2abc5c16162dea0bffc46333f343bc> - This piece reports on the victory of opposition leader Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi in Somaliland's presidential election, defeating incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi. Abdullahi's win, securing over 50% of the vote, marks a significant moment for Somaliland's push for international recognition. The article notes the peaceful transfer of power and contrasts Somaliland's stable political environment with the instability in Somalia, also touching upon the region's recent agreement with Ethiopia.
6. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2011-11-29/debates/11112951000041/Somaliland> - This transcript from the UK House of Commons features a debate on the recognition of Somaliland. Alun Michael, then MP for Cardiff South and Penarth, questions the government's progress towards resolving Somaliland's status. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr Henry Bellingham, reiterates the UK's position on recognising Somaliland and acknowledges the aspirations of the Somaliland people, while urging them to play a full role in the Somali peace process.
7. <https://informereastafrica.com/index.php/east-africa/somaliland-a-democratic-beacon-deserving-african-union-observer-status> - This article argues that Somaliland, with its stable political environment and commitment to democracy, deserves observer status in the African Union. It highlights Somaliland's peaceful elections, high voter engagement, and its status as a functioning democracy in a region often marked by instability. The piece also discusses the legal and political case for Somaliland's recognition, noting its permanent population, defined territory, and effective governance.