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Country report 71

Somalia: Fact Finding Mission

General situation

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Abstract

This report deals with the current political, economic, human rights and humanitarian situation in Somalia. It is based on interviews conducted in Nairobi as a part of a fact-finding mission carried out by the Country of Origin Information Unit (Division 62F) of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in cooperation with the German Embassy in Nairobi from 4 December 2023 to 8 December 2023. It focuses on the security situation (especially the situation of al-Shabaab), the economic and humanitarian situation with a special focus on gender-based violence and the situation of internally displaced persons.

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List of abbreviations

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATMIS	African Transition Mission in Somalia
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EAC	East African Community
EU	European Union
FFM	Fact Finding Mission
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-based Violence
ICC	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IIDA	Women's Development Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAW	Legal Action Worldwide
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIRA	National Identification Registration Authority
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SNA	Somali National Army
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USDOS	United States Department of State

Introduction and methodology

This report is the product of a Fact Finding Mission (FFM) of the Country Analysis Unit (Division 62F) of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) to Nairobi, Kenya, between 4 and 8 December 2023. The aim of the FFM was to collect and evaluate country of origin information (COI) and new findings on the situation in Somalia. Due to the tense security situation in Somalia, the FFM was conducted in neighbouring Kenya. Furthermore, the German embassy responsible for Somalia is based in Nairobi and a large number of humanitarian organisations active in Somalia are located in Kenya.

This report provides an overview of the key issues of security, the economic and humanitarian situation, as well as the situation of women and internally displaced persons.

Of particular interest in this context were

- The current security policy situation.
- The offensive against al-Shabaab and forced recruitment by the terrorist group.
- Humanitarian and economic development after years of drought and the floods of autumn 2023.
- The spread of gender-based violence.
- The situation of internally displaced persons.

Furthermore, relevant questions and topics from various BAMF work units were collected in preparation in order to close gaps in the COI research on site. These included questions on the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM), forced and early marriages, forced recruitment and economic livelihoods.

To compile this report, the three-person delegation interviewed a wide variety of sources such as international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and EU employees. The interviews were conducted on site in Nairobi and online in English during the above-mentioned period. Current reports and news on Somalia were incorporated into the topics to supplement the statements of the interviewees.

All sources consulted were selected by the country analysis team in cooperation with the German Embassy in Nairobi on the basis of their expertise on the topics covered in this report. Prior to the interviews, all participants were informed in detail about the purpose of the mission and the fact that their statements would be included in a publicly accessible COI report. The sources are presented and quoted according to their wishes. Individuals are not named in this report.

The report is a synthesis of the statements made by the interviewees. Care has been taken to present the views of the interviewees as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should therefore not be held responsible for the content of the report.

1. Security situation

1.1 Current political developments

The political situation in Somalia is unstable. There is a weak central government that is fighting for control over large parts of the country.¹ In 2012, the term of office of the transitional government ended and federal structures were to be created with the establishment of a federal government and the introduction of six constituent states (Somaliland, Puntland, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South West State and Jubaland). The process of constituting the federal system was officially completed in 2016.² Since then, there have been repeated political tensions and power struggles between the federal and state governments, particularly in the regions of Puntland and Jubaland.³ Internal divisions at national level and within the constituent states are exacerbating the instability. Tensions and competition for power and resources intensify, especially in the run-up to elections.⁴ In 2019, there were disagreements over the national parliamentary elections.⁵ There were also clashes between the federal government's armed forces and Jubaland's regional armed forces in 2020.⁶ Despite a new electoral law passed in 2020, the conditions for free elections are not in place. The new electoral law is intended to enable the Somali people to directly elect their parliamentary representatives. The last presidential and parliamentary elections were again held with a considerable delay in an indirect clan-based procedure. In May 2022, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was Somali president from 2012 to 2017, was elected head of state.⁷

In March 2024, the parliament adopted a proposal to amend the constitution to democratise electoral law and change it to direct elections. Accordingly, the president would be directly elected and would be responsible for appointing the prime minister. A direct election of the president is planned for the first time in 2026. With the implementation of the new electoral system, the Somali electorate would have significantly more decision-making power, as the head of state, the presidents of the individual states, the national parliament and regional and local parliaments would be directly elected. An independent national electoral commission would manage all elections and keep the electoral register. The proposed constitutional amendment has not yet been fully approved by parliament and is also attracting dissenting voices, particularly from the opposition.⁸ Compared to the five constituent states in southern and central Somalia, Somaliland, which proclaimed its independence in 1991 and considers itself an independent state, has been able to establish reasonably functioning administrative structures.⁹ The democratisation process is also more advanced there than in other states; the last parliamentary and local elections in 2021 were assessed as largely free and fair by international observers. However, the region is not yet recognised by either the Somali central government or the international community.¹⁰ Presidential, parliamentary and local council elections are scheduled for November 2024 in Somaliland. The incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi is running for a second five-year term.¹¹ Regional conflict situations occur particularly in the disputed border region between Somaliland and Puntland. In the city of Las Anod, in the Sool region, violent clashes between Somaliland forces and the Dhulbahante clan militia and its affiliated militias have been on the rise since the beginning of 2023. Al-Shabaab is less active in this region and is not involved in the conflict over Las Anod. For detailed information, see: BAMF: Country Report 59 Somalia. Security situation in Las Anod since the beginning of 2023, July 2023.

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung: BTI 2024 Country Report. Somalia, 2024, pp. 34-35.

² Bertelsmann Stiftung: BTI 2020 Country Report. Somalia, 2020, pp. 11, 35.

³ Ibid, pp. 35, 42; Höhne, Markus and Bakonyi, Jutta: Somalia: Al-Shabaab and security situation; situation of internally displaced persons and returnees; protection by state and non-state actors, in: Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz/Accord, 31/05/2021, pp. 4, 29; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED): A turbulent run up to elections in Somalia, 07/04/2021.

⁴ International Crisis Group: Somalia: Making the Most of the EU-Somalia Joint Roadmap, 30/01/2024, p. 3.

⁵ Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS): State of Somalia Report 2019, 2020, pp. 3-6.

⁶ Security Council Report: June 2020 Monthly Forecast. Somalia, 29/05/2020.

⁷ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ): State-building efforts being jeopardized by power struggles, terrorist attacks and corruption, 16/08/2022; Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS): Expanded Participation Model: Alternative for Somalia's 2020 One-Person One, May 2020, p. 1.

⁸ Somali Dialogue Platform: Addressing contentious issues on elections in the constitutional review process, March 2024, p. 5 ff.; Voice of America (VoA): Somalia's Parliament Approves Parts of Election Overhaul Plan, 30/03/2024.

⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung: BTI 2024 Country Report. Somalia, 2024, p. 4.

¹⁰ BMZ: State-building efforts being jeopardized by power struggles, terrorist attacks and corruption, 16/08/2022; International Crisis Group: Building on Somaliland's Successful Elections, 12/08/2021.

¹¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies: Somaliland: November 13, 17/01/2024.

In early 2024, Somaliland announced that it would lease a section of coastline to Ethiopia if Ethiopia recognised Somaliland's independence. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed by both sides. Ethiopia's aim is to gain access to the sea via Somaliland in order to use the port for economic and military purposes. In return, Somaliland is to receive, among other things, shares of Ethiopian Airlines as well as recognition of its independence. Somalia's central government classified the memorandum as a threat to its own sovereignty and signed a law to annul the MoU. Observers fear that the current political developments could plunge the region into crisis.¹²

1.2 Current security situation: al-Shabaab

The security situation in the country remains tense. Numerous conflict hotspots have led to hundreds of civilian casualties and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons. In addition to the precarious humanitarian situation, clashes between government troops and al-Shabaab as well as violent clashes between rival clans threaten the security situation. In August 2022, a broad-based military offensive was launched against al-Shabaab. The Somali National Army (SNA) allied itself in part with local clan militias that had previously fought independently against al-Shabaab. Support is also being provided by international partners, including the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) as well as the USA and Turkey, who are providing air support in particular. The special forces Gorgor and Danab are also involved.¹³ While the government was initially successful in recapturing numerous towns and villages, the offensive stalled as it progressed, allowing al-Shabaab to adapt to the strategy pursued by the government. Al-Shabaab then increasingly relied on guerrilla tactics, making it difficult for the government to maintain and operate the front lines. At the same time, the group exploits clan dynamics for its own purposes and benefits from the competition between minority groups and majority and minority clans, among other things. Clans position themselves differently in the fight against al-Shabaab – sometimes certain clans and regions are fully committed to the group, sometimes clans take action against al-Shabaab and ally themselves with the government.¹⁴

As part of the offensive, the government was largely able to hold the areas it had conquered so far. However, in regions where al-Shabaab has a strong presence, such as southern Galmudug (see Figure 1), the government troops were pushed back, allowing the group to expand its positions. Moreover, it is difficult to establish government structures in areas conquered by the government. This means that neither sufficient basic services nor local security standards can be provided.¹⁵

ATMIS, which has been operating since April 2022 and emerged as a transitional mission from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which was active between 2007 and 2022, is to gradually hand over security tasks to the national security forces. The mandate also includes containing the threat posed by al-Shabaab and other militant groups, building the capacity of national security and police forces and supporting peace efforts.¹⁶ The handover of security tasks and the withdrawal of ATMIS troops, which at their peak comprised up to 22,000 security forces from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya, are to take place in four phases with completion by the end of 2024. In April 2024, around 14,000 ATMIS soldiers and 850 police officers were still stationed in Somalia.

¹² Cf. in detail: International Crisis Group: The Stakes in the Ethiopia-Somaliland Deal, 06/03/2024; Deutsche Welle: Ethiopia and Somalia in dispute over a port deal, 08/01/2024.

¹³ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA): Somalia: Security Situation, February 2023, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group: Somalia: Making the Most of the EU-Somalia Joint Roadmap, 30/01/2024, p. 2; Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹⁵ International Crisis Group: Somalia: Making the Most of the EU-Somalia Joint Roadmap, 30/01/2024, p. 2.

¹⁶ African Union: African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) transitions to African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), 05/04/2022; The East African: Somalia enters transition as Amisom gives way to ATMIS, 06/03/2022.

The withdrawal is being delayed - mainly due to the threat posed by al-Shabaab.¹⁷ Observers assume that the national forces will not yet be able to take over the tasks independently and that a far-reaching withdrawal will have a negative impact on the security situation, especially with regard to al-Shabaab.¹⁸ According to reports, the Somali government has already asked for a postponement due to fears of a "potential security vacuum".¹⁹

The presence of al-Shabaab severely restricts the work of (non-)governmental organisations on the ground in some cases. There are reports of security-related restrictions, as there is no extensive freedom of movement in areas controlled by al-Shabaab. Organisations are sometimes among the targets of attacks and cannot move or can only do so with heavy security precautions.²⁰ However, this does not apply equally to all organisations, as al-Shabaab sometimes also benefits from services provided by certain organisations.²¹

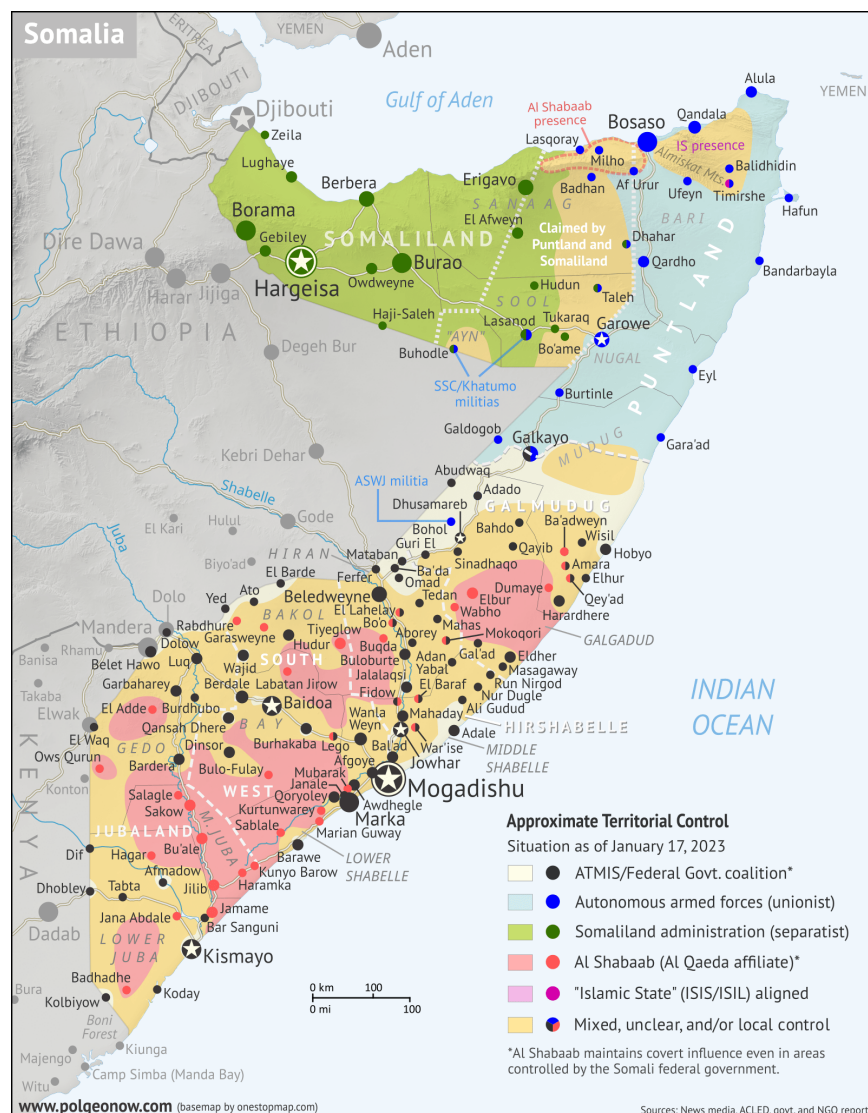


Fig. 1: Territorial control in January 2023.²²

¹⁷ Muibu, Daisy: Somalia's Stalled Offensive Against al-Shabaab: Taking Stock of Obstacles, in: CTC Sentinel, Vol. 17, Issue 2, February 2024; UN Security Council: Resolution 2710. S/RES/2710 (2023), 15/11/2023.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group: Somalia: Making the Most of the EU-Somalia Joint Roadmap, 30/01/2024, p. 3.

¹⁹ Sheikh, Abdi; Ross, Aaron; Paravicini, Giulia: Exclusive: Somalia asks peacekeepers to slow withdrawal, fears Islamist resurgence, in: Reuters, 20/06/2024.

²⁰ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023; Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

²¹ Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

²² Centanni, Evan and Djukic, Djordje: Somalia Control Map & Timeline. Al Shabaab in Retreat. January 2023, in: Political Geography Now, 18/02/2023.

1.3 (Forced) recruitment by al-Shabaab

Recruitment by al-Shabaab - including of minors and women - is widespread in Somalia. Factors such as age, gender, educational background and previous employment are decisive for recruitment. As there are also tasks outside of combat operations, for example in administration, fighters are not the only ones needed.²³ Al-Shabaab uses various recruitment methods and recruitment is possible in all areas of Somalia, provided there is a corresponding network.²⁴ In addition to voluntary recruitment, which is often motivated by external circumstances, there is also forced recruitment, whereby voluntary and forced recruitment often go hand in hand. Economic and religious reasons play particularly a role here.²⁵

Al-Shabaab also creates incentives upon joining, for example in the form of promotion opportunities within the organisation and marriage prospects.²⁶ For members of minority clans or minorities, membership is sometimes tantamount to social advancement and is seen as promising. The prospect of marriage in particular is a pull factor for women and men alike. Marriage can provide women with social advancement and security, while men find recognition in the group and hope to start a family through marriage. The group also attracts numerous foreign fighters, most of whom marry Somali women.²⁷ As al-Shabaab has emerged from out of Somali society, the group enjoys widespread support and acceptance and has penetrated all areas of society, politics and the economy.²⁸

The children's aid organisation UNICEF reports hundreds of forcibly recruited children. In 2023, there are said to have been around 500 forced recruitments between the months of January and September.²⁹ Information on the age at which minors join varies. They are often recruited between the age of 11 and 25.³⁰ However, there are also reports of children aged nine or younger being recruited. In occupied areas, al-Shabaab often requires families to release a certain number of children as recruits. False promises are often made to parents and families, including the prospect of education and income. Little is known about the recruitment process and training under al-Shabaab. One organisation reported that the training of minors includes one and a half years of religious training at a Quran school and two years of military training. The latter is to be carried out from the age of 14 to 15. Younger members would remain in the Quran school for longer. One of al-Shabaab's strategies is to deploy recruits away from their regions of origin in order to cut social and emotional ties. For this reason, orphans in particular are considered a target group for al-Shabaab, as they have few social connections and social dependency is built up through membership. Some organisations express concern about the extreme radicalisation through al-Shabaab. Such radicalisation is particularly evident in regions where the group has a strong presence, such as Jubaland and South West State.³¹

Due to al-Shabaab's deep roots in Somali society, it is difficult to distinguish between active al-Shabaab members and non-members. Although the government is trying to identify members, there is an increasing number of suspected cases among the civilian population. Desertions occur rarely, but are generally possible, especially in the context of religious training. According to one organisation, the monitoring of recruits is rather weak during this period.³² The terrorist organisation's good network enables it to track down wanted persons, such as deserters. High-ranking members of the organisation who have fled are usually of particular interest. Deserters with relevant knowledge of the group's organisation or logistics are also systematically tracked.³³

²³ Danish Immigration Service: South and Central Somalia. Security situation, forced recruitment, and conditions for returnees, July 2020, p. 14.

²⁴ Danish Refugee Council: South and Central Somalia - Security Situation, al-Shabaab Presence, and Target Groups, March 2017, pp. 20-21.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 20; Botha, Anneli and Abdile, Mahdi: Radicalization and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia, in: The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, September 2014, p. 5.

²⁶ Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

²⁷ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

²⁸ Interview with ICRC, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

²⁹ Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

³⁰ Danish Refugee Council: South and Central Somalia - Security Situation, al-Shabaab Presence, and Target Groups, March 2017, pp. 21-22.

³¹ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Danish Refugee Council: South and Central Somalia - Security Situation, al-Shabaab Presence, and Target Groups, March 2017, p. 22.

³² Interview with ICRC, Nairobi 04/12/2023; Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

³³ Ibid.

Some reintegration programs exist for deserting minors. In cooperation with the families and communities, the aim is to reintegrate those affected into their families. According to UNICEF, the families usually react with understanding to the return, as it is a matter of forced membership.³⁴ Deserters are initially taken in by (supranational) state authorities, such as the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), ATMIS or other agencies that transfer those affected to the relevant organisations. According to an organisation representative, dealing with deserters who are often severely traumatised is a challenge due to the lack of psychosocial support on the ground. Mental illness is considered a taboo subject in Somali society and there is a lack of psychosocial services and long-term therapy places. In some cases, rehabilitated and reintegrated children return to al-Shabaab, as they are usually returned to the regions of origin where they were recruited, according to one source. It also happens that parents of deserters send their children abroad in order to distance themselves from the terrorist group.³⁵

For further information see: BAMF: Country report 40 Somalia. Al-Shabaab: Overview, recruitment and desertion, July 2021.

2. Economic situation

Recurring and diverse shocks, such as periods of drought and flooding, the unstable security situation and global events, have a massive impact on the Somali economy. GDP growth fell from 2.9% (2021) to 1.7% (2022) but is expected to rise again in the following years: from 2.8% (2023) to 3.5% (2024). The initial decline is due to the problems surrounding the drought and the security situation as well as global shocks such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The latter could further increase global energy and food prices, which will also have an impact on Somalia.³⁶ The cumulative factors are exacerbating inflation in the country and affecting consumption. As the impact of the shock subsides, the economic outlook for the country is also improving, albeit to a limited extent.³⁷ The economy is currently recovering gradually, thanks in part to extensive debt relief and the country's admission to the East African Community (EAC). The latter is mainly due to Somalia's regional economic integration into the region.³⁸ Economic links are also being established with Asia and the Gulf States. However, a lack of control mechanisms, a lack of sustainable reforms and a lack of administrative structures are hampering economic recovery.³⁹

Somalia's economy is predominantly based on the informal sector, which relies largely on agriculture and services as well as remittances from abroad. Obstacles to significant economic growth include low productivity in the agricultural sector due to climatic shocks, a weak infrastructure, a lack of technology and a lack of investment. In this context, remittances are a cornerstone of the Somali economy, enabling investment and maintaining the budget. A large part of the population is dependent on remittances from the Somali diaspora. According to estimates, remittances account for over 26% of GDP (as of 2022).⁴⁰ However, payments in the form of remittances only reach small sections of the population, resulting in inequality.⁴¹ Diaspora Somalis and returnees often drive investment and take leading positions in politics and business. However, the different perspectives and ideas can sometimes lead to tensions between the (returning) diaspora society and the local population.⁴² The productive sector around livestock farming, agriculture and fishing is currently experiencing a slight upturn - primarily due to government investment and livestock exports.⁴³

³⁴ Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

³⁵ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

³⁶ African Development Bank Group: Somalia Economic Outlook, 2023.

³⁷ The World Bank: Somalia's Economy Resilient Amid Climatic and Global Shocks: Water Management Key to Sustainable and Resilient Development, 30/11/2023.

³⁸ Cf. East African Community (EAC): Somalia finally joins EAC as the bloc's 8th Partner State, 04/03/2024; HIPS: State of Somalia 2023 report, May 2024, p. 7.

³⁹ Interview with EU, online 07/12/2023.

⁴⁰ Federal Republic of Somalia: National Economic Council. State of the Economy Report 2023 - Volume 1, November 2023, pp. ix, 8, 10-11.

⁴¹ UNICEF: UNICEF Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 01 - 31 January 2024, 27/02/2024, p. 2; Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI): BTI 2024 Country Report Somalia, 2024, p. 31.

⁴² Interview with EU, online 07/12/2023.

⁴³ Federal Republic of Somalia: National Economic Council. State of the Economy Report 2023 - Volume 1, November 2023, pp. ix, 8, 10-11.

Overall, the private sector, especially the financial, telecommunications and transportation sectors, is also currently developing.⁴⁴ According to the EU, however, the government's reluctance to register companies as a result of a *business registration reform*⁴⁵ is an obstacle. According to one interviewee, Somalia's federal structure is also an obstacle to sustainable economic growth, as there is a high level of competition between the constituent states. Puntland, for example, organises its own registration.⁴⁶ Another economic obstacle is the widespread corruption – Somalia currently ranks last on the Corruption Perceptions Index (as of 2024).⁴⁷

The state also tries to maintain the budget through tax revenue. However, revenue collection suffers from competition with other traditional and religious taxes.⁴⁸ Al-Shabaab, for example, demands a tax, resulting in a kind of double taxation in some cases. Al-Shabaab's levy system is used in particular in areas controlled by the group, but also in Mogadishu and other areas controlled by the government, including Bosasso, Jowhar, Baidoa and Kismayo. Revenues generated through extortion, import, checkpoint or real estate taxes are used to finance the group, among other things. The system is described as a comprehensive "tax apparatus", in which one-off payments are usually made at checkpoints, which enable the passage of further checkpoints controlled by al-Shabaab upon presentation of proof of payment. In addition, livestock, agricultural produce, irrigation and religious levies (*zakat* and *sadaqa*) are taxed. According to the EUAA Country Guidance, government employees may also be required to pay taxes in order to avoid being targeted by the group. Non-compliance with the demands can lead to violence and intimidation.⁴⁹

Non-payment of levies is regularly followed by attacks on those affected, including a bomb attack on the headquarters of Hormuud Telecom, the largest telecommunications provider in the country. The refusal to pay taxes was suspected to be the cause. The demands, which are made under threat of violence, affect official economic sectors such as financial service providers and companies as well as local individuals and small businesses.⁵⁰

According to a representative of the EU, state measures are currently in place to combat the transfer of protection money to the terrorist militia, and a slight decline can be observed in this context in Mogadishu. Nevertheless, al-Shabaab is causing losses to XX amounting to millions. The payments to the government, al-Shabaab and even clan militias depend on location and are often made at certain checkpoints. In rural areas in particular, there is little government control and access is difficult (due to security-related actors, roadblocks, etc.), which also makes economic development more difficult. Urban areas, such as Mogadishu, Kismayo, Berbera, Hargessa and Garowe, are therefore more attractive for investors and also for the civilian population, for example to take advantage of better employment opportunities.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

⁴⁵ In 2019, the establishment and registration of companies was formalised. In 2022, the Somalia Business Registration System was officially introduced, through which license permits and company registrations are to be issued. This is intended to standardise the registration process, set license fees and penalties and prevent corruption; USDOS: 2023 Investment Climate Statements: Somalia, 30/03/2022.

⁴⁶ Interview with EU, online 07/12/2023.

⁴⁷ Transparency International: Our Work in Somalia, 2023.

⁴⁸ Rift Valley Institute: Tax and the State in Somalia, May 2020 , p. 1.

⁴⁹ EUAA: Country Guidance Somalia 2023. 3.5 Individuals refusing to pay 'taxes' to Al-Shabaab, August 2023; Interview with ICRC, Nairobi 04/12/2023; see in detail: Bahadur, Jay: Terror and Taxes. Inside al-Shabaab's revenue-collection machine, in: Global Initiative. Against Transnational Organized Crime, December 2022.

⁵⁰ Kochan, Nick: Somalia: Battle for Al-Shabaab's \$150m, in: The Africa Report, 16/01/2024.

⁵¹ Interview with EU, online 07/12/2023.

Even before the drought period between 2020 and 2023, 54% of all households were estimated to be living below the national poverty line of USD 2.15/day.⁵² Due to massive income losses caused by the loss of job opportunities and the loss of livestock, the percentage rose to 70% in 2024. Somalia is a low-income country with an annual per capita income of around USD 600.⁵³ Food prices have been at a high level since the severe drought in 2022: "The most vulnerable households spend more than 70% of their income on food, limiting their ability to afford services such as healthcare or education, or critical items such as mattresses and soap."⁵⁴ A large proportion of the population is in debt and alternative sources of income, such as the sale of livestock, have also been exhausted.⁵⁵

According to a study from 2021, in which seven million Somalis were surveyed, the unemployment rate is 21% overall and as high as 37% for young people up to the age of 24. Finding work is particularly difficult for those with academic qualifications. A lack of job opportunities and the prevalence of nepotism are obstacles to accessing the labour market.⁵⁶ The economy is heavily influenced by clan and religious relationships. In this sense, jobs are distributed via kinship or clan groups and religious associations.⁵⁷

Furthermore, there is no safety net of the state. In the event of job loss, those affected are dependent on remittances from family and friends, traditional safety nets and measures provided by NGOs. For the majority of employees working in the informal sector, there is no labour law.⁵⁸ Returnees cannot rely on state support either in urban or rural areas but are dependent on kinship networks. Members of more influential clans have an advantage if the relationships have been maintained beyond their stay abroad. In urban areas, it is easier to open small businesses with financial support – also for women. According to UNHCR, women may be able to improve their economic situation despite massive discrimination in the country. Female professionals in higher positions are generally treated equally and accepted by society.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, there is massive gender inequality overall and women have more difficulty in accessing employment opportunities, start-up capital and education.⁶⁰ Women are economically disadvantaged, especially in areas controlled by al-Shabaab, because economic activities are seen as contrary to religious beliefs.⁶¹

The economic situation in Somaliland looks alike, with a similarly high unemployment rate, especially among young people, and a population that works predominantly in the informal sector. Although Somaliland also plays a role as an international hub between Ethiopia and Southwest Asia, the economy is mainly based on livestock farming and remittances. Factors such as the lack of a legal framework, lack of access to credit and the lack of recognition as an independent state make it difficult to exploit the economic potential.⁶²

⁵² The World Bank: Somalia, 2023, p. 2.

⁵³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 9; World Data: Somalia, undated.

⁵⁴ OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD): ecoinet dossier on Somalia: Humanitarian situation, 12/01/2024.

⁵⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung: BTI 2024 Country Report. Somalia, 2024, p. 25.

⁵⁸ United States Department of State (USODS): 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 23/04/2024, p. 51.

⁵⁹ Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

⁶⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI): BTI 2024 Country Report Somalia, 2024, p. 31.

⁶¹ USODS: 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, 23/04/2024, p. 38.

⁶² Danish Refugee Council: Labor Market Analysis Somaliland, February 2024, pp. 2, 4, 8-9.

3. Humanitarian situation

Somalia is in the midst of an ongoing humanitarian crisis. In particular, the humanitarian situation is characterised by ongoing conflicts, climate-related environmental problems, the frequency of which is increasing, and the economic situation. According to UNICEF, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance currently stands at 6.9 million (2024). In 2023, this figure was still at least 8.25 million. Despite the decline, almost 37% of the population⁶³ are dependent on humanitarian aid.⁶⁴ Among other things, flooding is currently a challenge. According to OCHA, vulnerable groups (women, children, IDPs, minorities) in the areas of Shabelle, Jubaland, Banadir and South West State are the most affected.⁶⁵ Although organisations such as OCHA offer medical care programs or compensation services for flood victims, there is a lack of staff on the ground to cover the needs of the population holistically. An additional difficulty concerns access to those affected. Especially in areas controlled by al-Shabaab, the security situation is extremely tense and access to humanitarian aid is limited or not possible at all. In addition to security concerns, donations to al-Shabaab and the government are also having a negative impact on humanitarian aid, according to one source. The factors determining the current humanitarian situation are subsequently leading to an increased number of internally displaced persons (IDPs, see Chapter 4), rising cases of gender-based violence (GBV, see Chapter 5) and food insecurity.⁶⁶

Somalia has been on the brink of famine for several years. Around 4.3 million people are currently affected by food insecurity. The number has been declining since 2022 (6.7 million), but still affects a quarter of the population. In the Banadir, Bay, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle and Lower Juba areas, a further increase in food insecurity is predicted in the future. More than half of the population is also affected by water scarcity. Reduced access to drinking water due to drought is one of the main reasons for the internal exodus. In addition, the majority of the population does not treat the water before consumption, which leads to an increase in waterborne diseases and consequently to increased morbidity. There has already been an increase in diarrhoea, cholera and measles outbreaks in recent months. Children and IDPs in particular need help. UNICEF estimates that at least 1.7 million under-fives will be classified as malnourished in 2024, 430,000 of whom are considered severely malnourished. Food insecurity is mainly concentrated in the southern regions of Somalia.⁶⁷ Acute flooding has also caused the destruction of water and sanitation facilities and the contamination of water points.⁶⁸

One of the main reasons for the difficult food situation are the extreme climatic conditions that have prevailed in the country for decades. The seasonal dry and rainy phases are becoming increasingly extreme, with the drought that lasted from 2020 to 2023 being the most severe in decades. The rainy season (*Gu*) at the beginning of 2023 and humanitarian support initially averted a famine, but 43,000 people are said to have died in 2022, partly due to the climatic conditions.⁶⁹ However, the population was unable to recover from the effects even after the end of the drought phase, as heavy rainfall triggered by the El Niño weather phenomenon⁷⁰ and the second rainy season (*Deyr*) caused flooding in October and November 2023.⁷¹

⁶³ Based on a population of 18.7 million people; OCHA: Southern and Eastern Africa: Somalia, 2024 .

⁶⁴ UNICEF: Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 01 - 31 January 2024, 27/02/2024 , p. 1.

⁶⁵ Interview with OCHA, online 05/12/2023 ; The East African: Flash floods hit Somalia's capital, 24/06/2024.

⁶⁶ Interview with OCHA, online 05/12/2023.

⁶⁷ UNICEF: Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 01 - 31 January 2024, 27/02/2024, p. 2; OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 12.

⁶⁸ OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 12.

⁶⁹ International Rescue Committee: IRC: 43,000 feared dead as drought continues to ravage Somalia, 04/04/2023 .

⁷⁰ This is a "periodically occurring weather phenomenon" that "triggers extreme weather events such as droughts and heavy rainfall in many regions of the world". More on its origins and consequences: Welthungerhilfe: El Niño - Origin & Impact of the Weather Phenomenon, no date.

⁷¹ OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 8.

The extreme water masses, which occurred in particular in November 2023 in areas around the Juba River, caused the destruction of critical infrastructure - including the loss of bridges, cultivated land, crops, livestock and water systems. As a result, around 2.3 million people left their homes due to extreme climatic conditions, and there are currently 3.8 million internally displaced people across the country.⁷² Aid organisations assume that the civilian population will be slow to return to flooded areas due to the destroyed infrastructure.⁷³ The floods are still continuing in parts of Somalia. There are still deaths due to flooding and the destruction of critical infrastructure (as of May 2024).⁷⁴

The humanitarian crisis is having a particular impact on the situation of minors. According to UNICEF, 3.6 million school-age children are not receiving any form of education. Up to 2.6 million school-age children would need humanitarian aid to give them access to education, among other things. The education situation has also been hit hardest in the south-west as a result of the severe flooding due to the destruction of educational facilities and the reduction in teaching staff. The children's charity estimates that one in eight children under the age of ten has inadequate reading comprehension. The absence of educational facilities can also lead to increased protection risks, including an increase in child labour and forced recruitment by armed groups.⁷⁵

Aid organisations are confronted with difficult access conditions, largely due to interventions by armed groups. In some cases, the organisations are subject to restrictions or have to deal with entire areas being sealed off.⁷⁶ There are repeated attacks on organisation employees, which means that many people (an estimated 580,000, mainly women and children) cannot be reached.⁷⁷ The insecurity is increasingly affecting minors. Somalia is said to have the highest number of serious injuries among children in the world.⁷⁸

⁷² World Food Programme (WFP): From drought to floods: climate extremes drive Somalia hunger crisis, 14/11/2023; OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, p. 12.

⁷³ Interview with OCHA, online 05/12/2023.

⁷⁴ OCHA: Somalia Situation Report, 07/05/2024.

⁷⁵ UNICEF: UNICEF Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 01 - 31 January 2024, 27/02/2024, p. 4; Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

⁷⁶ UNICEF: UNICEF Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 01 - 31 January 2024, 27/02/2024, p. 3.

⁷⁷ OCHA: Somalia 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 30/01/2024, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

4. Situation of IDPs and refugees

4.1 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

According to official UNHCR figures, there are almost 3.9 million internally displaced persons in Somalia.⁷⁹ According to observers, the number of IDPs will remain high or continue to rise due to various factors. Internal conflicts, food insecurity and extreme climatic conditions remain among the biggest challenges.⁸⁰ Due to the ongoing shocks, many people are affected by multiple displacements.⁸¹ There are few countries where so many people have been and continue to be displaced over such a long period of time. Many IDPs settle in urban regions, e.g. around Mogadishu and Baidoa. This often leads to an increasing rate of urbanisation and overcrowding, which in turn can lead to renewed displacement. In this context, the demand for basic foodstuffs and health services in the urban centres increases.⁸²

The living conditions in the camps are described as catastrophic, with few support structures in place. The chances of achieving better living conditions mostly depend on the individual and family background and the place of accommodation. Some camps or villages have more comprehensive facilities, for example, in the areas of education and healthcare.⁸³ Many camps are currently affected by heavy rainfall and flooding and some are uninhabitable. Jubaland, Hirshabelle and South West State in particular are currently affected. There is sporadic support from various humanitarian organisations but this cannot reach all those affected equally.⁸⁴

There are no official figures on the number of IDP camps. Sources estimate that there are around 2,400 to over 3,000 IDP camps in the country, most of which are inadequately equipped.⁸⁵ Many of them are unregistered, informal camps that are often privately managed. This increases the risk of the residents being displaced again, for example due to forced evictions.⁸⁶ Dealing with those affected and their long-term accommodation poses challenges. Proven approaches, such as repatriation, would not provide lasting solutions due to deteriorating economic, humanitarian and climatic conditions in the original place of residence.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Somalia Operational Update. January 2024, 25/02/2024.

⁸⁰ International Organization for Migration (IOM): Somalia. East and the Horn of Africa, January 2024.

⁸¹ Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru; Miller, Sarah: No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia, in: Refugee International, 25/05/2023.

⁸² IDMC: Somalia, 12/05/2023; Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru; Miller, Sarah: No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia, in: Refugee International, 25/05/2023.

⁸³ Bertelsmann Stiftung: BTI 2024 Country Report. Somalia, 2024, p. 31.

⁸⁴ Cf. e.g. OCHA: Somalia Situation Report, 07/05/2024, p. 2.

⁸⁵ UNHCR: Operational Data Portal, 2022 ; ACCORD: ecoinet dossier on Somalia: Humanitarian situation, 12/01/2024; Impact Initiative; REACH: Detailed Site Assessment - Kismaayo, Somalia, February 2024 Kismaayo Somalia, 11/04/2024, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru; Miller, Sarah: No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia, in: Refugee International, 25/05/2023.

⁸⁷ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023.

According to the IOM, the identification and registration of IDPs is difficult due to migration movements between different camps and a lack of government registration. In particular, departures cannot be adequately registered and monitored. In addition, according to the IOM, the number of people who identify themselves as IDPs – but are not counted as such by definition – is increasing, making it difficult to differentiate between them. The IOM is currently pursuing a registration campaign among IDPs in cooperation with the National Identification Registration Authority (NIRA). 100,000 households are said to have been registered so far. The aim is to register the biometric data of five million people by 2026. Among other things, the registration is intended to avoid future double registrations.⁸⁸ From a legal perspective, the government is endeavouring to improve the situation of IDPs. For example, the *Registration Authority Bill* was passed in March 2023, the *National Policy on Refugees and Internally Displaced Person Policy* was introduced in 2019 and the *Registration and Identification Policy* was introduced in 2018. Among other things, this is intended to facilitate registration and access to support services. However, there has been little direct impact on the situation of IDPs since implementation.⁸⁹

Due to the precarious situation in the camps, a large number of IDPs are crossing the national borders and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya. According to observers, border crossings between Kenya and Somalia are possible at any time. It is a *no-border zone* ("green border") that can be crossed by air and land, according to an organisation representative. According to various sources, there are only five checkpoints on the Kenyan side (Garissa County) and none on the Somali side (Jubaland), which makes it easier to cross the border.⁹⁰ This freedom of movement results in lively movement between Somalia and Kenya. Depending on the security situation and the capacity of the camps in Somalia, refugees move between camps and cities on the Kenyan and Somali sides.⁹¹

There has been an increase in GBV and mental health problems within and near the IDP camps. According to observers, this is particularly the case in improvised camps where there are no boundaries and therefore no privacy, no sanitary facilities and in some cases no electricity. Local security forces, who exploit or abuse camp residents in exchange for financial or other benefits, pose a danger.⁹² The situation is particularly risky for women who leave the reception camps to collect resources such as firewood. According to the report, there are inadequate security measures, especially outside the camps.⁹³ In some cases, it is also difficult for IDPs to seek help from organisations, as access is limited and offices are only available in isolated cases. The risky security situation and cases of corruption also make access difficult.⁹⁴

4.2 Situation of refugees inside and outside Somalia

Somalia has been a refugee country of origin and host country for decades. At the beginning of 2024, there were almost 38,900 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Somalia. Their main countries of origin include Ethiopia, Yemen and Syria. The majority are in the north and north-east of the country, in the regions of Woqooyi Galbeed and Bari.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023.

⁸⁹ Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru; Miller, Sarah: No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia, in: Refugee International, 25/05/2023.

⁹⁰ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023; Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

⁹¹ Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023; UNHCR: Protection and Return Monitoring Network. Somalia. Internal Displacement, 2024.

⁹² Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023; Interview with ICRC, Nairobi 04/12/2023 .

⁹³ Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023 .

⁹⁴ Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru; Miller, Sarah: No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia, in: Refugee International, 25/05/2023.

⁹⁵ UNHCR: Somalia. Registered Refugees and Asylum Seekers. March 2024, 11/04/2024.

Somaliland pursues its own strategies in dealing with refugees and introduced the "*Somaliland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Law*" in June 2023 in cooperation with the UNHCR. The law was the first of its kind to be developed together with the Somaliland government. However, it has not yet come into force.⁹⁶ In Puntland, the Refugee Protection Act of 2017, which was also developed with the UNHCR, forms the legal framework for the recognition of refugee status.⁹⁷

Around 755,000 Somali refugees are currently living in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Yemen. Ethiopia and Yemen are therefore both host countries and countries of origin. A large number of Somali refugees have been living in camps for decades and are therefore in a so-called *protracted refugee situation*. This means that a group of at least 25,000 refugees of one nationality have been living in a host country for at least five consecutive years.⁹⁸ More than half of all refugees are in Kenya, most of them in the Dadaab complex in eastern Kenya on the border with Somalia. Almost 371,000 Somali refugees and asylum seekers live in the Dagahaley, Ifo and Hagadera camps.⁹⁹ Due to the established school and economic system and the relatively stable situation compared to many Somali cities, Dadaab is being considered by many Somalis as a long-term base and place of residence, according to a UNHCR representative. In the camp itself, there are economic opportunities for the residents, including economic exchange and opportunities to establish their own businesses. In the long term, this could make some groups of people independent of aid deliveries. However, issuing identification papers for refugees poses a major challenge. Registration in biometric form is currently only carried out by the UN in the Dadaab camp. Movements between Kenya and Somalia and within Kenya have increased significantly again in recent years.¹⁰⁰

5. Gender-based violence (GBV)

5.1 General

The high level of impoverishment to which the Somali population is exposed due to the climatic conditions and food insecurity leads to a high number of cases of gender-based violence, with women and girls being particularly affected.¹⁰¹ Somalia has one of the highest rates of GBV and officially reported cases have been increasing for years – an extremely high number of unreported cases can be assumed. GBV can take various forms, including domestic violence, sexualised violence, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM). The extent of GBV is due to current humanitarian conditions on the one hand and social factors on the other.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023; UNHCR: Somalia, December 2023.

⁹⁷ UNHCR: Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report, October 2020, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Operational Data Portal: Horn of Africa Somalia Situation, 2024 ; USA for UNHCR: Somalia Refugee Crisis Explained, 17/07/2023.

⁹⁹ UNHCR: Kenya Statistical Package, March 2024, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with UNHCR, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Somalia. GBV Advocacy Brief. January – March 2023, 01/05/2023, p. 2; UN Somalia: UN Somalia Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025, 01/09/2022, p. 3; UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022 , p. 3, 5.

¹⁰² Dahie, Abdullahi Hassan, et al: Prevalence, patterns, and determinants of gender-based violence among women and girls in IDP camps, Mogadishu-Somalia, in: Journal of Migration and Health, 2023; Directorate of National Statistics, Federal Government of Somalia. The Somali Health and Demographic Survey 2020, April 2020, pp. 192-193; BAMF: Country Report 61. Somalia. Gender-based violence, August 2023, p. 17ff.

The current humanitarian conditions are partly leading to a shift in the understanding of roles in Somalia. Loss of income due to crop failures or loss of livestock, among other things, is affecting the ability of the usually male heads of household to secure the basic needs of the family. As a result, more women and girls have to generate income in addition to their existing tasks, such as caring for family members.¹⁰³ The risk of being exposed to gender-based violence increases for them, for example, when looking for casual work or when staying at distribution points to receive relief supplies.¹⁰⁴

There is an additional risk, especially when walking long, unguarded distances, for example when searching for water and collecting firewood¹⁰⁵ or on the way to school, health services and sanitary facilities.¹⁰⁶ Intentions to secure a livelihood can sometimes lead to an increase in FGM, since young women marry early, sometimes at the request of their families, in order to secure a livelihood (through their spouse) so that the women's families no longer have to support them.¹⁰⁷ As FGM is largely seen as a prerequisite for marriage, early and forced marriages and FGM have developed into negative coping mechanisms (see also Chapter 5.2).¹⁰⁸ It also happens that girls and young women sell goods on the street to support their families. These situations can lead to them being forced to exchange sex for food.¹⁰⁹

In addition, nomadic farmers sometimes have to leave their wives and families behind in search of grazing land, leaving them to run the household alone. Without the protection of their family or male family members, they are even more vulnerable to GBV.¹¹⁰ Increasing hostilities caused by communal violence and the struggle for scarce resources, such as water and land, also increase this risk.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ Amnesty International: Somalia 2022, 29/03/2023; UN Somalia: UN Somalia Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025, 01/09/2022, p. 3; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Somalia. GBViE Brief. April-June 2022, 19/07/2022, p. 2; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Amidst the worst drought crisis experienced in a decade, the need for GBV services is greater than ever, 18/05/2022.

¹⁰⁴ UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 5; UNFPA: Somalia. GBViE Brief. April-June 2022, 19/07/2022, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Amnesty International: Somalia 2022, 29/03/2023; UN Somalia: UN Somalia Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025, 01/09/2022, p. 3; UNFPA: Somalia. GBViE Brief. April-June 2022, 19/07/2022, p. 2; UNFPA: Amidst the worst drought crisis experienced in a decade, the need for GBV services is greater than ever, 18/05/2022; Agency for Minority Rights and Development (AMARD) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): GBV Rapid Assessment. Waajid District, Bakool Region, South West State of Somalia, 19/04/2022, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹⁰⁸ UNFPA: Somalia. GBV Advocacy Brief. January - March 2023, 01/05/2023, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023; UNFPA: Somalia. GBViE Brief. April-June 2022, 19/07/2022, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Amnesty International: Somalia 2022, 29/03/2023; UN Somalia: UN Somalia Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025, 01/09/2022, p. 3; UNFPA: Somalia. GBViE Brief. April-June 2022, 19/07/2022, p. 2; UNFPA: Amidst the worst drought crisis experienced in a decade, the need for GBV services is greater than ever, 18/05/2022; UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 12; AMARD and UNFPA: GBV Rapid Assessment. Waajid District, Bakool Region, South West State of Somalia, 19/04/2022, pp. 10, 15.

¹¹¹ UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 12; AMARD and UNFPA: GBV Rapid Assessment. Waajid District, Bakool Region, South West State of Somalia, 19/04/2022, p. 10, 15.

Women are still strongly associated with their "reproductive capacity": according to the UNFPA, the value of a family goes hand in hand with its reproductive capacity. The insecure (humanitarian) situation in the country, FGM and early marriages are therefore mutually dependent. Domestic violence and IPV (intimate partner violence) are also widespread.¹¹² Those affected often avoid officially reporting cases of GBV. There are many reasons for this. People affected by GBV generally prefer to report the assaults within the community¹¹³ and clarify them, as there is a lack of trust in the security apparatus and the legal system, also because there are often no visible results in the form of charges and convictions. Those affected run the risk of being socially stigmatised after reporting an incident or being subjected to police violence. Security staff are often male, which is why a detailed description of the circumstances is often avoided (tabooing of GBV), according to observers. The accessibility of reporting centres is a challenge for victims from remote, rural areas.¹¹⁴ In addition, GBV and mental health are highly taboo in society despite their widespread prevalence.¹¹⁵ If at all, GBV cases are often only reported verbally, but not formally.¹¹⁶ The Somali legal system does not provide adequate protection for victims of sexual and sexualised violence. For this reason, a high number of unreported cases of violence can be assumed.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, there are support services in the country. Since 2017, the organisation Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) has received around 1,700 reports of violent crimes in the area of GBV, 400 of which have been recorded by the police, and charges have been brought against 235 people in this context. According to the organisation's findings, the perpetrators are mostly "unidentified men in uniform" - meaning they may be members of the security apparatus, al-Shabaab or other militias.¹¹⁸

In addition to the humanitarian situation, the ongoing conflict and the unstable security situation also increase the risk of gender-based violence.¹¹⁹ IDPs in particular are exposed to an increased risk of GBV in (improvised) camps.¹²⁰ Factors such as overcrowding, lack of privacy due to non-existent limitations of private space, inadequate infrastructure within the shelters, lack of sanitary facilities and power outages all contribute to the threat to women and children.¹²¹ For example, the distances to the nearest water points are long. There is insufficient lighting and there are no adequate sanitary facilities separated by gender.¹²² Most sanitary facilities lack lockable doors or windows, separate toilet compartments, sufficient lighting and secure locks on the latrine doors.¹²³ In some camps, there are no latrines, making women and girls even more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.¹²⁴ Long distances to the nearest police station are also a risk factor for GBV.¹²⁵ According to observers, there is also a risk from local security forces who exploit or abuse camp residents in exchange for financial or other benefits.¹²⁶ In Somalia, there are isolated facilities for those affected by GBV, particularly in the Mogadishu region, Puntland and Somaliland. Some of these are guarded shelters.

¹¹² Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹¹³ Somali society relies on a three-tier system consisting of Xeer, Sharia and state structures to deal with sexual offenses such as rape. See in detail : BAMF: Country Report 61. Somalia. Gender-based violence, August 2023 , p. 13ff.

¹¹⁴ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹¹⁵ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023.

¹¹⁶ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹¹⁷ Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹¹⁸ Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹¹⁹ World Health Organization (WHO): In the face of an alarming increase in conflict-related sexual violence, WHO scales up response for prevention and elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, 19/06/2023.

¹²⁰ UNHRC: Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia. A/HRC/51/65, 19/08/2022, para. 40; Freedom House: Somalia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report, March 2023; Dahie, Hassan Abdullahi, et al: Prevalence, patterns, and determinants of gender-based violence among women and girls in IDP camps, Mogadishu-Somalia, in: Journal of Migration and Health, 2023; UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 9.

¹²¹ UNFPA: Somalia. GBV Advocacy Brief. January - March 2023, 01/05/2023, p. 4; UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, pp. 3, 5, 9; AMARD and UNFPA: GBV Rapid Assessment. Waajid District, Bakool Region, South West State of Somalia, 19/04/2022; Interview with ICRC, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

¹²² UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 3, 5, 9; UNFPA: Somalia. GBV Advocacy Brief. January - March 2023, 01/05/2023, p. 4.

¹²³ Ibid; AMARD and UNFPA: GBV Rapid Assessment. Waajid District, Bakool Region, South West State of Somalia, 19/04/2022.

¹²⁴ UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 9.

¹²⁵ Dahie, Hassan Abdullahi, et al: Prevalence, patterns, and determinants of gender-based violence among women and girls in IDP camps, Mogadishu-Somalia, in: Journal of Migration and Health, 2023.

¹²⁶ Interview with IOM, online 04/12/2023.

Most of the facilities offer initial medical assistance, childcare, support with reintegration programs and assistance with legal proceedings if official charges are filed.¹²⁷

Gender-specific violence is also widespread against boys and men in Somalia and is a taboo in society. According to one organisation, sexual abuse is particularly widespread among young men in al-Shabaab.¹²⁸

For more information on this topic, see: BAMF: Länderreport 61: Somalia. Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt, August 2023.

5.2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - Challenges

Female genital mutilation is defined as any procedure that involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.¹²⁹ Three different forms of FGM can be observed in Somalia:

- Type I Sunna: Removal of the clitoral hood, with or without removal of part or all of the clitoris;
- Type II Intermediate: Removal of the clitoris with partial or complete removal of the inner vulval lips (*labia minora*);
- Type III Pharaonic circumcision/infibulation: Removal of part or all of the external genitalia and suturing/constriction of the vaginal opening.¹³⁰

FGM is systematically practised in Somalia, it is deeply rooted in society and has largely positive connotations. According to the *Somali Health and Demographic Survey*, a total of 99% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone FGM in Somalia (as of 2020). The country therefore has the highest FGM rate in the world.¹³¹ The performance of FGM is celebrated ceremonially and places the focus on those affected. The majority of girls and young women between the ages of 5 and 14 are subjected to FGM. In Somaliland, however, the procedure is predominantly carried out on three to five-year-olds. Social and societal pressure has a considerable influence on the decision to perform FGM. FGM occurs indiscriminately throughout the country, including in areas controlled by al-Shabaab.¹³² Type III FGM, the most severe form, is practiced most frequently (64%). In recent years, however, there has been a shift from type III to type I.¹³³

According to UNFPA representatives, there are currently no signs of a downward trend in FGM and the tense humanitarian situation means that the practice continues. Young women who have lost their livelihoods due to the current situation are trying to secure their livelihoods through (early) marriage so that they are no longer a burden on their families. In many cases, FGM is a prerequisite for marriage.¹³⁴ The lack of communication between men and women is cited as a further reason for the continuation of the practice. Within many clans, the assumption that FGM is necessary and "noble" is also widespread. Failure to carry out FGM would be sanctioned in the clans, according to observers. Only a few clans do not consider FGM to be necessary.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023; Interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023.

¹²⁸ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹²⁹ For detailed information on the definition, prevalence, forms, implementation, reasons and embedding in the legal system, see: BAMF: Country Report 61: Somalia. Gender-based violence, August 2023, p. 19ff.; WHO: Female genital mutilation, 31/01/2023.

¹³⁰ Directorate of National Statistics of the Federal Government of Somalia and UNFPA: The Somali Health and Demographic Survey, April 2020, p. 212.

¹³¹ UNFPA: Overview of Gender-Based Violence Situation in Somalia, 22/04/2022, p. 13; Directorate of National Statistics of the Federal Government of Somalia and UNFPA: The Somali Health and Demographic Survey, April 2020, p. 213; Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023.

¹³² Interview with UNICEF, Nairobi 04/12/2023; Finnish Immigration Service (FIS): Somalia. Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi. January 2018, 05/10/2018, pp. 29-30.

¹³³ Directorate of National Statistics of the Federal Government of Somalia and UNFPA: The Somali Health and Demographic Survey, April 2020, p. 213; Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹³⁴ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹³⁵ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

In East Africa, there are various approaches to combating FGM.¹³⁶ In Somalia, however, these are only having a limited impact. In addition to the lack of communication within the population, the UNFPA identifies the following as current challenges in the fight against FGM:

- lack of awareness for FGM as a bodily and human rights violation;
- the shift from the private sphere to the medicalisation of FGM (performed in health facilities/with the help of health personnel);
- the shift from type III to type I/"Sunna", as this type is considered more harmless (nonetheless, any form of mutilation is still possible);¹³⁷
- lack of support in politics, also due to the strong influence of clans.

Organisations such as the UNFPA try to sensitise women and young mothers, especially through social workers, and to convey acceptance of the female body - this includes anatomical and religious education as well as education about the birth process with and without FGM. In order to educate society as a whole, men and entire family groups and clans are also addressed. This can sometimes make the work of organisations more difficult. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, employees are often confronted with threats or similar.¹³⁸

Some aid organisations are actively campaigning for a legal ban on FGM in Somalia. To this end, they are working closely with the Somali government to develop a draft law for the/a "*zero-tolerance for FGM*" approach. Cooperation with the government has been mixed. For example, the Somali draft law initially used the wording "*zero-tolerance for pharaonic circumcision*", which only covers type III. The amendment on FGM in general was subsequently obtained by human rights organisations.¹³⁹ The draft is still being worked on. For more information on the legal framework, see BAMF: Länderreport 61: Somalia. Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt, August 2023.

The IIDA highlighted Galmudug as a region with a particularly high prevalence of type III (infibulation). The practice is mainly carried out by traditional circumcisers, who often use unhygienic instruments and are unable to provide adequate medical care for those affected. Deaths are therefore possible as a result of FGM, according to the organisation.¹⁴⁰

In some cases, girls and women are threatened with undergoing FGM again. Such a "re-excision" can be carried out in order to achieve a more comprehensive FGM than the original one. This is carried out if the existing FGM - usually type I or II - is not considered sufficient. The timing of the procedure varies; for example, re-excision is performed shortly after FGM, before marriage or after childbirth.¹⁴¹ In the case of extreme narrowing of the vaginal opening, which is particularly common in type III FGM, it is often necessary to re-open or widen the vaginal opening - known as deinfibulation - to enable sexual intercourse and/or childbirth. This can be followed by re-infibulation, the re-closure of the genital tissue. Rape can also be a reason for re-infibulation, as some girls and women are forced to undergo it by their families in order to restore the honor of the victim and the family. Repeated opening and closing increases the risk of short and long-term consequences. Re-infibulation after childbirth is said to be more common in rural areas than in urban areas.¹⁴² No reliable statistical data is available on the prevalence of re-excision and re-infibulation in Somalia.

¹³⁶ Cf. among others: Arabahmadi, Amirbahram: Combating female genital mutilation in Northeast (Horn) Africa and its challenges, in: African Health Sciences, December 2020, GIZ: Overcoming female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa, March 2024.

¹³⁷ See also interview with LAW, Nairobi 06/12/2023. On the different types of FGM see: BAMF: Country Report 61: Somalia. Gender-based violence, August 2023, pp. 20-21.

¹³⁸ Interview with UNFPA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹³⁹ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with IIDA, Nairobi 05/12/2023.

¹⁴¹ Crawford, Sheena and Ali, Sagal: Situational analysis of FGM/C stakeholders and interventions in Somalia, in: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 30/01/2015, pp. 58, 73.

¹⁴² WHO: Female genital mutilation, 31/01/2023; Crawford, Sheena and Ali, Sagal: Situational analysis of FGM/C stakeholders and interventions in Somalia, in: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 30/01/2015, pp. 73, 76; FIS: Somalia. Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi. January 2018, 05/10/2018, p. 29.

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7. Appendix

Interviews used for the report, which were conducted during the FFM in Nairobi from 05/12/2023 to 08/12/2023:

Organisation representation International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Nairobi on 04/12/2023

Organisation representation International Organization for Migration (IOM), online on 04/12/2023

Organisation representation United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nairobi on 04/12/2023

Organisation representation Women's Development Organization (IIDA), Nairobi on 05/12/2023

Organisation representation United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), online on 05/12/2023

Organisation representation United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Nairobi on 05/12/2023

Organisation representation United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Nairobi on 05/12/2023

Organisation representation Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), Nairobi on 06/12/2023

Representation European Union (EU), online on 07/12/2023

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