

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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**COI QUERY**

Country of Origin	Somalia
Question(s)	Information on forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab in the government-controlled areas, methods of recruitment, recruitment procedure, profiles of the recruited, consequences of refusal to join the group. 1. Prevalence and territorial scope of Al-Shabaab recruitment 2. Profiles of the recruited 3. Methods of recruitment 4. Consequences of refusal to join the group
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The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 25 October 2019. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Prevalence and territorial scope of Al-Shabaab recruitment

Several sources note that in the areas under its control¹, Al Shabaab commits forced recruitment of children and adults.²

According to a 2018 fact-finding mission report by Finnish Immigration Service (FIS), 'Al-Shabaab recruits fighters both voluntarily and by force'.³ The same source found that the number of voluntarily recruited fighters was decreasing; however, they were still enrolled, with the highest number of volunteers in Middle Jubba, Lower Jubba and Lower Shabelle.⁴ In the capital city of Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab had difficulties to find new voluntary recruits, but the group was nevertheless able to secure income by collecting taxes from individuals and business in the city.⁵

FIS further explained that the civil population has been feeling safer in government-controlled areas. For example in Kismayo, people are fearing less forced recruitment and forced marriages, abductions and payment of compulsory religious tax exaction [*zakat*] than in the areas under al-Shabaab control. People were running away to 'safer' areas controlled by the government but, as reported by the source, 'even there security is not guaranteed, because anything can potentially happen'.⁶ Al-Shabaab were described as one of the main reasons pushing people to fly from southern regions of Somalia. As a result, the population of Kismayo with 70 000 new inhabitants has increased by 30% in a 'short period of time', according to an employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia interviewed by FIS.⁷ An UNHCR report dated September 2019 stated that 'more than 5 000 Somalis have sought refuge in Ethiopia' this year so far, coming mostly from Lower Juba region, which is about four times the total number of those who crossed the border in 2018.⁸

¹ A Landinfo report from May 2019 states that Al-Shabaab controls district capitals Rabdhure and Tieglow in the region of Bay, El Bur and El Der in Galgudud, Buale, Jilib and Sakow in Middle Juba, Adan Yabal in Middle Shabelle, Haradhere in Mudug, Badhadhe and Jamame in Lower Juba and Kurtun Warey and Sablale in Lower Shabelle. See: Norway, Landinfo, Somalia: Al-Shabaab areas in Southern Somalia, 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 2

² HRW, World Report 2019 - Somalia, 17 January 2019, [url](#), UN Security Council, Letter dated 15 January 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, 15 January 2019, [url](#), para. 46; FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [source: Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

³ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [source: Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 12

⁴ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [source: Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 12

⁵ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

⁶ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; UNHCR], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 15

⁷ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 20

⁸ UNHCR, As drought compounds security woes, Somalis flee to Ethiopia, 20 September 2019, [url](#)



A 2016 survey conducted by the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies [a think tank based in Mogadishu] across seven cities in Somalia (Kismayo, Baidoa, Mogadishu, Galkayo, Beledweyne, Bosaso and Burco) found that reasons pushing young people to migrate included fear of bad treatment by armed groups such as al-Shabaab.⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that in June 2018, local militia forces killed members of the Rahanweyn clan near Galkayo in the Mudug region. The local militia was suspecting the clan of providing recruits to Al-Shabaab.¹⁰

As stated in a May 2019 Landinfo report on Al-Shabaab areas in Southern Somalia, al-Shabaab is still having capacity to influence the areas where they do not have a permanent presence, paying particular attention to persons paying *zakat* and to those who are not cooperating with the government. The report finds that 'Al-Shabaab may also subject the population in these areas to recruitment pressure'.¹¹

A UN Security Council report explains that al-Shabaab has recently adopted a strategy of carrying out 'sustained, frequent and eventually daily multiple attacks'. Many fighters and commanders have moved from Lower Shabelle region to the areas surrounding Mogadishu in order to enhance the organization's operational capacity and to carry out assaults. Similarly, forced recruitment, radicalisation and training activities have continued with reportedly 200 fighters recruited and trained to take positions in Middle Juba region. In addition, Al Shabaab has reinforced its ranks with former security staff members dismissed in early 2019.¹²

2. Profiles of the recruited

UN Security Council informed that at the end of 2018, 'the movement of foreign terrorist fighters slowed, as the group changed its recruitment tactics to target locals and cross-border communities who have a home-ground advantage to operate and find safe havens in the communities to avoid detection'. The source added that Al-Shabaab intensified forced recruitment 'through threats to families with members aged between 20 and 30 within Somalia and across the border'.¹³ The FIS report added that many of foreign fighters were coming also from Kenya and Arab countries.¹⁴

⁹ HIPS, Youth Migration in Somalia: Causes, Consequences and Possible Remedies, April 2018, [url](#), pp. 1, 16

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch; Tracking Conflict Worldwide; June 2019, [url](#), accessed 11 October 2019

¹¹ Norway, Landinfo, Somalia: Al-Shabaab areas in Southern Somalia, 21 May 2019, [url](#)

¹² UN Security Council, Letter dated 15 July 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, 15 July 2019, [url](#), para 37, 38, 40

¹³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 15 January 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, 15 January 2019, [url](#), para 46

¹⁴ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Somali expert on administration and security circumstances], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14, Global Humanitarian Assistance programme (Development Initiatives), Towards an improved understanding of vulnerability and resilience in Somalia, June 2019, [url](#), p. 23



Although there are multiple factors, including religious and ideological reasons, which lead people to join Al-Shabaab, many are recruited for ‘pragmatic reasons’, mainly to secure financial resources that are necessary for them and their families, even if they know the risk of such an engagement.¹⁵

A study that examined how different people responded to and survived ‘the recurrent shocks’ during the 2011–2016 period marked by famine and drought concluded from interviews with young people conducted in Baidoa [Bay region] and Kismayo [Lower Juba] that by joining armed forces, including Al-Shabaab, they searched to find a secure source of income and livelihood.¹⁶

The 2018 fact-finding mission report by FIS explained that for many, joining Al-Shabaab was a question of financial and physical security. As members of the group, people feel protected against raids and looting by other armed groups, as well as against theft of land and property from raiders operating in the region. The source indicated that Al-Shabaab could provide a better position for its community members and supporters in their conflicts between clans.¹⁷

Money is an important driver that motivates and encourages people to join Al-Shabaab. The group is able to give its members a regular payment, which is enough to support their families.¹⁸ According to the FIS fact-finding report, fighters’ wages vary between USD 50 and USD 200 per month.¹⁹ The wages may be higher than those of soldiers and police staff who often do not receive salaries on time. Additionally, family members of Al-Shabaab fighters who die in battle reportedly receive support and compensation arranged with a kind of an insurance, even if widows of fighters remarry within al-Shabaab.²⁰

For example, *zakat* revenue represented about USD 120 000 – 150 000 per year in the Berdale district [Bay region] from 2014 to 2017. Head of the *zakat* collection in the district received a salary of USD 120 per month, while each of his local staff received USD 50 per month on a regular basis.²¹

¹⁵ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A; Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁶ Global Humanitarian Assistance programme (Development Initiatives), Towards an improved understanding of vulnerability and resilience in Somalia, June 2019, [url](#), pp. 22, 23

¹⁷ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A; UNHCR], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁸ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), pp. 13, 14; Global Humanitarian Assistance programme (Development Initiatives), Towards an improved understanding of vulnerability and resilience in Somalia, June 2019, [url](#), pp. 22, 23

¹⁹ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

²⁰ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), pp. 13, 14; International Crisis Group, Women and Al-Shabaab’s Insurgency, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 8

²¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, 9 November 2018, [url](#), p. 117

3. Methods of recruitment

3.1 Propaganda

According to sources interviewed by FIS during their fact-finding mission, al-Shabaab uses ideological and religious propaganda for recruitment purposes. For example, good-quality recruitment videos aiming at young people facing social, political and financial exclusion can be purchased at the Bakaara Market in Mogadishu. A Somali researcher living in Mogadishu explained that the group is 'good at talking to youngsters'.²²

3.2 Targeting of IDPs

A REACH Initiative assessment of key protection concerns experienced by IDPs living in formal and informal sites in Somalia across Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia conducted between January and February 2018 observed that men generally reported 'to feel safe in and around the IDP site', while outside site premises, especially in South Central Somalia, they could face forced recruitment. However, some respondents mentioned that forced recruitment took place also in Mogadishu and Afgoye. The same source mentioned areas where forced recruitment by armed forces occurred, namely Midnimo and Kurtuunwaarey in Banadir, and Shabelow and Boodaan in Baidoa, referring to 'armed insurgent groups' as main perpetrators of insecurity. The source added that in some cases, both boys and girls were targeted, 'boys as soldiers, and girls to assist in activities that support the armed group, such as cooking and cleaning, and occasionally, as wives.'²³

3.3 Recruitment of minority clan members

During and following the 2011 famine and 2016 drought crisis, Al-Shabaab was attracting many people from minority clans or groups which found Al-Shabaab 'being fair' because it applied the same rules and standards to people from different ethnic groups or clans. This approach managed to find more new recruits among ethnic minorities in Kismayo and Baidoa, where they lacked opportunities and protection in traditional Somali clan system.²⁴

3.4 Recruitment of women

Women's participation in the movement has been expanding, with performance of tasks such as cooking and offering medical aid, participating in propaganda and indoctrination, intelligence

²² FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Somali researcher living in Mogadishu], 5 October 2018, [url](#), pp. 13-14

²³ REACH Initiative, Somalia: Drought and Protection Concerns in IDP sites - Joint Partner Assessment (April 2018), April 2018, [url](#), p. 24

²⁴ Global Humanitarian Assistance Programme (Development Initiatives), Towards an improved understanding of vulnerability and resilience in Somalia, June 2019, [url](#), p. 11

gathering, arms smuggling, fundraising and fighting. Al-Shabaab does not include women in its command or decision-making bodies, and combat forces.²⁵

While there were reports of forced marriages, most alliances with Al-Shabaab members appear to be voluntary. Nevertheless, choices by women are made under great pressure from their families or clans. Many married girls are less than eighteen years old, some of them were reported to be only twelve. In areas under militants control or influence, marriage to an al-Shabaab fighter can be 'a matter of survival'.²⁶

According to the 2018 FIS report, women and girls were forced to marry Al-Shabaab fighters in areas under its control, while no forced marriages were reported in Mogadishu.²⁷ Referring to an employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia, the same source noted that 'girls have been forced not only to marry al-Shabaab fighters, but also to take part in combat'.²⁸

An ICG report dated June 2019 notes that for al-Shabaab, marriage is 'a tool for recruitment' and helps the group to promote its social and political interests, promising fighters better access to wives and social status improvement. Al-Shabaab allows men from minor clans to marry women from larger or stronger clans. 'Many militants marry two to three wives from different clans', which has increased the number of mixed marriages between dominant and minority clans.²⁹

3. 5 Recruitment of children

In Somalia, recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups is not prohibited by law.³⁰

Sources reported an increase of cases of forced recruitment of children since 2017.³¹ Forced recruitment of children occurs in areas under the group's control in Southern and Central Somalia, including in the town of Aad, Mudug Region, as well as in some areas of Puntland.³² In 2018, Al-

²⁵ ICG, Women and Al-Shabaab's Insurgency, 27 June 2019, [url](#), pp. 3, 7; Jamestown Foundation, Asset or Victims: A Portrait of Women Within al-Shabaab, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

²⁶ ICG, Women and Al-Shabaab's Insurgency, 27 June 2019, [url](#), pp. 3-8; Jamestown Foundation, Asset or Victims: A Portrait of Women Within al-Shabaab, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

²⁷ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [International development organisation A; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

²⁸ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

²⁹ International Crisis Group, Women and Al-Shabaab's Insurgency, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 8

³⁰ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), p. 3

³¹ TNH, Reporter's Diary: Heal Somalia's former child soldiers, heal a nation, 22 October 2018, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7; UN General Assembly, Children and armed conflict, 30 July 2019, [url](#), para. 138

³² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7; USDOS, 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Somalia, 21 June 2019, [url](#)

Shabaab intensified campaign of forced recruitment of children. An UN report stated that the group recruited 1 865 children during the year.³³

According to the UN-led Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting on grave violations against children, '612 children (seven girls and 605 boys) were recruited and used by armed groups in Somalia in the first quarter of 2019', compared to 448 children recruited in the same period in 2018 and 398 in 2017. Al-Shabaab was accountable for 77 % of the reported cases.³⁴ The same source specified that recruited children were between 13 and 17 years old, more than 50 % of them became fighters and less than 20 % were employed 'in support roles such as escorts, at checkpoints, and as cooks and messengers'. Occupation activities of a third of the recruited children remains 'unknown'. During the same period, a third of verified recruitment cases occurred in 'Middle Juba (169), followed by Bay (119), Bakool (62), Galguduud (57), Mogadishu, Banadir (49), Nugal (40), Lower Shabelle (35), Lower Juba (25), Gedo (24), Hiraan (18), Middle Shabelle (13) and Mudug (1)'.³⁵

In its fact-finding mission report, FIS observed that al-Shabaab continued with forced recruitment of children, both boys and girls. The youngest recruit was as young as 8 years old.³⁶ However, a Reuters article from January 2018 reported that the group denied that it was forcibly recruiting minors in Somalia.³⁷ The 2018 USDOL report informed that abducted children were used to plant explosive devices, as human shields, to conduct assassinations and suicide attacks, for intelligence gathering, as well as for working as cooks, porters, domestic servants, and informers.³⁸ The USDOS report added that the movement also abducted young girls and abused them sexually.³⁹

USDOS noted that Al-Shabaab's techniques used to recruit minors included raids on schools, infiltration of madrassas and mosques, and intimidation of clan elders.⁴⁰ Al-Shabaab was carrying out abductions of children on their way to school or directly in school. The group conducted attacks on over 60 schools in 2018. During these incidents, the group abducted and threatened teachers who refused to implement the group's teachings in class lessons.⁴¹ The Oxfam International report, published in June 2018, observed that families displaced in urban centers have described schools as unsafe places for boys in Somaliland (39%) and to a lesser extent in Puntland (28%).⁴²

³³ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), accessed 11 October 2019, p. 2; UN General Assembly, Children and armed conflict, 30 July 2019, [url](#), p. 22

³⁴ UNOCHA, Somalia Humanitarian Bulletin, 1 - 30 April 2019, 30 April 2019, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵ UNOCHA, Somalia Humanitarian Bulletin, 1 - 30 April 2019, 30 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 2,3

³⁶ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International organisation B; International development organisation A; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

³⁷ Reuters, Somalia's al Shabaab denies forcibly recruiting children to fight, 18 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁸ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), p. 2

³⁹ USDOS, 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Somalia, 20 June 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰ USDOS, 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Somalia, 20 June 2019, [url](#)

⁴¹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7

⁴² Oxfam International, Drought, Displacement and Livelihoods in Somalia/Somaliland; Time for gender-sensitive and protection-focused approaches, June 2018, [url](#), p. 9

During 2018, the group continued to force clan elders, communities and families to hand over their children or to face reprisals, with cases reported from the Galgaduud and Middle Shabelle regions⁴³. In September 2017, the group forced families with more children than one to give one to Al-Shabaab in the Bay area.⁴⁴ In a case from July 2018, local communities in the Middle Shabelle and Galgaduud regions tried to resist and took up arms to oppose forced recruitment.⁴⁵

Clashes between communities and Al-Shabaab have caused deaths and significant civilian displacement, including of hundreds of children, many of them unaccompanied, escaping from Galmudug and South West State.⁴⁶

Children from minority clans or marginal groups, street children and orphans are reportedly in high risk of being forcibly recruited by military groups.⁴⁷

USDOL report informed about 36 rescued children from al-Shabaab captivity in Middle Shabelle in January 2018.⁴⁸

4. Consequences of refusal to join the group

To oppose or to leave Al-Shabaab is assessed as difficult. People who oppose the group or who refuse to pay fees to it may face subsequent reprisals including financial sanctions and in some cases, death.⁴⁹

According to a 2019 report by Lifos, deserters who escaped Al-Shabaab can be tracked down and if captured, they are at 'a great risk' of execution. There is a smaller chance for those who escaped to Mogadishu to be found by Al-Shabaab, however, family members of a deserter might face consequences in such case.⁵⁰

The same report indicates that persons not willing to join Al-Shabaab may be seen as having 'an opposing opinion' to the group.⁵¹

⁴³ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), p. 2; UN General Assembly, Children and armed conflict, 30 July 2019, [url](#), para. 139; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁴ FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [UNHCR], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

⁴⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Somalia, 5 - 31 July 2018, 31 July 2018, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁶ HRW, World Report 2019 - Somalia, 17 January 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), accessed on 11 October 2019, p. 2; FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia], 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 34

⁴⁸ USDOL, 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Somalia, 27 September 2019, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7; FIS, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018, [UNHCR; International development organisation A], 5 October 2018, [url](#), pp. 13-14

⁵⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Lifosrapport: Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0), 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 7

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