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1.6.4. Other individuals opposing or perceived as opposing Al-Shabaab

For specific background information on the rationale and the reasons behind the targeting of individuals opposing or perceived as opposing Al-Shabaab, please see the EASO COI Report Somalia: Targeted profiles (September 2021).636

Business people. In 2023, the Somali Government ordered all businesses in the main markets of Mogadishu to install CCTV cameras for security purposes.637 Al-Shabaab opposed the decision threatening to target anyone complying with the government's instructions.638 ACLED kept track of 26 of such events, which involved targeted killings and bombings, with instances taking place in various districts across Mogadishu (Benadir). These events resulted in at least 16 estimated fatalities and an unspecified number of casualties.639 Businessmen were left facing two undesirable alternatives: while the government remained unable to protect them they were still liable to arrest if they did not comply.640

In general, in the reference period, businessmen and businesswomen have been subject to various attacks and forms of targeting, among others, for mobilising clan militia, for being affiliated with the government, of for unknown or unspecified reasons. ACLED kept track of 14 of such events, mostly shooting and killings, but also IED and hand grenades, with instances taking place in various regions across South-Central Somalia notably Benadir, but also Lower Shabelle, Gedo, and Bay. These events resulted in at least 30 estimated fatalities and an unspecified number of casualties.641 For other forms of targeting linked to other motives see relevant chapters including on 1.10. Individuals who have to pay 'taxes' to Al-Shabaab or other groups and militias.

Spies. Civilians and businesspeople accused of spying for US forces, regional and federal security forces, regional and federal intelligence agencies, were targeted and executed on various occasions during the reference period. ACLED kept track of 18 of such events, mostly public executions, with instances taking place in various regions across South-Central Somalia, notably Middle Juba and mostly Jilib, but also in Lower Shabelle, Gedo, Lower Juba, Bay, and Bakool. These events resulted in at least 69 estimated fatalities.642 On various occasions victims were also abducted in various locations across Somalia and then transported to Jilib (Middle Juba), including from Puntland and Mogadishu,643 from Jamame (Lower Juba),644 and from Jilib itself (Middle Juba).645

Humanitarian workers. Most international NGOs are not allowed to operate in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab,646 however some do so depending on their own policies, and after being vetted by the militant group, whose main concern remains preventing spying and intelligence gathering.647 Once received clearance, these organisations can carry out humanitarian work provided that Al-Shabaab rules and procedures are fully respected, including taxation of projects' outputs, deliverables, and activities. Among other rules, for instance, the use of mobile phones is not allowed. In some cases, international organisations find a viable approach to navigate this environment. For instance, the ICRC operates in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab but without showing its 'red cross' symbol. The UN organisations and agencies instead, being associated with the FGS, rely on international and local NGOs, as well as contractors, in order to operate.648

The same type of vetting mentioned above applies as well to Somali and local NGOs or CSOs. 649 More in general, people in south-central Somalia, outside of Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, are able to join local CSOs with different specialisations.650

According to the Aid Worker Security Database, in Somalia 9 aid personnel were killed in 2024 and 5 in 2023, 2 were kidnapped in 2024 and 10 in 2023, 7 were wounded in 2024 and 11 in 2023.651 According to UNOCHA, 5 humanitarian staff were killed, 8 kidnapped, and 16 injured in the course of 2024.652 However, UNOCHA indicates that, while violence against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities significantly increased in 2024 compared to the previous year – with 47 reported incidents in 2023 and 67 in 2024 – the killing of aid workers is not linked to their status but rather collateral to hostilities.653

Within this context, in the reference period of this report, ACLED kept track of the following incidents involving Al-Shabaab on the one hand and humanitarian/aid workers on the other:

- on 7 June 2023, Al-Shabaab abducted five medical workers and six civilians on a road between Farlibaax village and Belet Weyne (Hiraan);654
- on 24 June 2023, Al-Shabaab abducted two local NGO workers near Bansoole village (Buur Hakaba, Bay);655
- on 4 April 2024, Al-Shabaab targeted with a planted IED the convoy of the Verenel Association, a Turkish aid agency, while passing in Garasbaaley area in Mogadishu - Daynile (Benadir), causing the death of two aid workers including a Turkish national, and injuries to seven others;656
- on 1 June 2024, overnight, an IED planted by Al-Shabaab targeted the premises of a local NGO renting from the Southwest Minister of Water and Energy, in Baidoa (Bay);657
- on 21 June 2024, Al-Shabaab abducted the Head of Somali Red Crescent Office near Luuqjelow village, Beletweyne (Hiraan).658

According to humanitarian groups, 'Al-Shabaab typically harasses secular and faith-based humanitarian aid organisations, threatening the lives of their personnel and accusing them of seeking to convert individuals to Christianity'.659 For more information about civilians abducted in the context of humanitarian operations see section below.

Civilians. In the reference period Al-Shabaab abducted numerous civilians on various grounds,

such as for collaborating with the government security forces or for refusing to collaborate with the group, for seeking or facilitating humanitarian assistance in the local context beyond the group's control, for breaching the groups' rules, as well as for other reasons, including unknown or unspecified motives. Victims were often taken to Jilib. In the reference period, ACLED kept track of 50 such incidents, which resulted in at least 180 individuals abducted, excluding profiles already addressed elsewhere in the report.660 Some illustrative examples include:

- abductions linked to trade and commercial vehicles: on 31 May 2023, ten civilian commercial drivers along with their vehicles on the road between Balcad and Jowhar (Middle Shabelle);661 on 7 February 2024, an unknown number of civilians in the periphery of the Kismayo along with eleven vehicles carrying milk;662 on 1 March 2025, two civilians in the vicinity of Yaaq Shinile village near Kismayo (Lower Juba), who were accused of transporting multiple bags of charcoal;663 within this context, trade that might be beneficial of government controlled areas can be further taxed, sanctioned, or prevented;664
- abductions linked to lack of cooperation with or opposition to the group: on 30 May 2024, four civilians in Balad-ul-Amin village, near Jamaame (Lower Juba), accused of collaborating with government security forces;665 on 3 June 2024, two civilians accused of working with Jubaland security forces in Jamaame (Lower Juba);666 on 20 October 2024, three civilians near Jana Cabdalle, Afmadow (Lower Juba), because of their lack of cooperation with the group;667 on 4 November 2024, two civilians suspected to be affiliated with Jubaland security forces in Beerhani, near Kismaayo (Lower Juba);668
- abductions linked to control over humanitarian operations: on 3 October 2023, around forty civilians accused of traveling to Diinsoor to receive humanitarian assistance in the vicinity of Gurbaan village (Diinsoor, Bay);669 on 10 January 2024, 6 civilians in Xaabow village, near Ceel Buur (Galgaduud), after a UNSOS contracted helicopter carrying personnel and medical supplies made an emergency landing in the Al-Shabaab-controlled area;670 on 13 February 2025, the Wadajir district officer and camp leader, who was also killed, near Dhobley, Afmadow (Lower Juba), while the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) was distributing NFI and hygiene kits within the camp;671
- abductions linked to other reasons, including religious aspects, land tenure rights, and unknown or unspecified reasons (notably of children): on 7 June 2024, more than 30 Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa and quranic teachers members in Laantabuur village near Afgooye (Lower Shabelle);672 on 25 August 2024, eight civilians from Marehan and Bartire clans in Saakow (Middle Juba) after crossing to the grazing land of the Auliyan clan;673 children, for unknown or unspecified reasons, notably in Galgaduud, Middle Shabelle, Bay, Bakool, and Lower Juba.674

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