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2.3. Non-State actors

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

2.3.1. Al-Shabaab

Last update: October 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.1.1., 1.2., 1.3.1., 1.6., 1.7., 1.10.; Security 2025, 1.1., 1.2.2., 1.4.1.; Actors 2021, 4.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Al-Shabaab is an Islamist Salafi-jihadist armed group and designated Al-Qaeda affiliate seeking to establish a 'Greater Somalia' under strict Islamic rule. It is structured with a military wing (Jabahaat), an intelligence wing (*Amniyat*) and administrative networks. Relatively recent estimates indicate that Al-Shabaab had between 7 000 and 12 000 fighters at the end of 2023, however Al-Shabaab's true strength remains unknown, as the group continually refills the losses by forced recruitment or by deals with clans. The group remains the most potent security threat in Somalia, controlling large rural areas in South-Central Somalia, especially in Hiraan, Galgaduud, and southern regions and maintained influence across key routes and towns, including areas near Mogadishu. Jilib town serves as its de facto headquarters. Al-Shabaab has limited presence in Somaliland and northern Puntland. See also map above.

Human rights violations committed by the group are extensive. The group maintains military capabilities despite counter-insurgency efforts. It uses improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, ambushes, and complex attacks targeting government, ATMIS, civilians, and infrastructure across southern and central Somalia. The group exploits clan dynamics and uses clan grievances and loyalty for recruitment

and leverage, while publicly claiming Islam transcends clan divisions. Al-Shabaab continues widespread recruitment of children and is responsible for abductions, executions, and sexual violence. It also enforces a strict interpretation of Sharia through *Hisbah*, its morality police, imposing punishments such as flogging, amputations, and executions, operating also mobile courts enforcing the Sharia. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab sustains its operations by extracting revenue through coercive taxation, forced seizure of resources, and the strategic restriction of humanitarian assistance.

○ 2.3.2. Clans and clan militias

Last update: October 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.5.; Security 2025, 1.2.3.; Actors 2021, 3.2.1., 3.4., 3.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Clan rivalries and competition over political power, land, and resources remain key sources of conflict across Somalia. Violence often stems from revenge killings, unresolved grievances, or competition for representation. Clan militias, numbering over 100, are self-organised and often act with impunity. Clashes between and within clans are frequent, leading to high numbers of casualties and displacement. The **Macawisley militia**, originally Hawadle-led, was reportedly operating in the Lower Shabelle region and their number was estimated at between 8 000 and 10 000 members across Hirshabelle and Galmudug, as of September 2023. Similar forms of clan based, self-organised and self-styled protection forces against Al-Shabaab were also set-up in Gedo, Hirshabelle, Middle Shabelle, and in Galmudug at different times in recent years. **Ahlu Sunna Wal-Jama'ah (ASWJ),** the multi-clan (Ayr, Dir and Marehan clans) armed Sufi group, re-emerged in Galmudug in 2021, clashing sporadically with the SNA and the Galmudug State's forces.

Clan militias have committed grave human rights violations, including killings, torture, sexual violence, abductions, and attacks on civilian infrastructure, also engaging in arms trafficking. Child recruitment by clan-based militias has also been documented.

Violations of human rights have also taken place under the *xeer* system.

2.3.3. Other non-State actors

Last update: October 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: Country Focus 2025, 1.10.; Security 2025, 1.2.3., 1.3., 1.5., 2.2.3., 2.6.2.; Actors 2021, 6.; COI Update 2025, 2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The **Islamic State in Somalia (ISS)** formed in 2015 and aligned with IS since 2017, operates primarily in Puntland. Recent estimates place its strength between 600 and 1 600 fighters, about half of whom are foreign nationals, including from Ethiopia, Tanzania, North Africa, Yemen, and Sudan. The group has established operational bases in four districts of Bari but controls no population centres. ISS lost ground to Puntland forces during operations in 2024-2025. By the end of July 2025, in the context of the Hilaac offensive only a few scattered ISS fighters remained in the area. (See also map above). It has also become a significant logistical and financial hub for the global IS network, funding operations through extortion, taxation, and gold mining. ISS has been involved in numerous attacks, including suicide bombings and IEDs, and has caused civilian casualties. Its activities have led to business closures and hospital shutdowns in Bossaso due to extortion. The group is also substantially involved in arms trafficking.

In March 2022 the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) transitioned into the **African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)**, with a mandate to continue supporting Somali security institutions and combating Al-Shabaab. In January 2025, ATMIS was replaced by the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) with 12 626 authorised personnel, including 1 040 police, contributed by Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Egypt. By 25 April 2025, the Kampala Summit called for increasing AUSSOM troops by at least 8 000 to address Somalia’s security challenges, but the mission still faces significant funding shortfalls, despite officially starting on 1 July 2025. While human rights compliance reportedly improved, concerns remained: ATMIS forces were implicated in civilian deaths in Lower Shabelle in July 2024, and other incidents involving crossfire and mortars caused civilian harm.

As of May 2022, the U.S. redeployed 450–500 troops to Somalia under **United States Africa Command (AFRICOM)** to support Somali and African Union forces, primarily against Al-Shabaab and ISS. AFRICOM also trains Danab special forces and provides operational support. Between April 2023 and March 2025, AFRICOM conducted 62 air and drone strikes, reportedly killing 381 people, including civilians. Independent sources reported fewer strikes. While no direct human rights violations were attributed to U.S. forces during this period, concerns about civilian casualties persist. The U.S.

military role remains significant amid Somalia's security challenges and ongoing counter-terrorism efforts.

Besides the actors mentioned above, the (extended) **family and community members** can be actors of persecution or serious harm, such as in the case of domestic violence, violence against persons with diverse SOGIESC, forced and child marriage, female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), etc. FGM/C practitioners, including traditional circumcisers and healthcare professionals, are another potential example of non-State actors of persecution or serious harm.



For further information on human rights violations committed by different State and non-State actors and their relevance as potential exclusion grounds, see 7. Exclusion.

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