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3.5. Humanitarian workers

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This profile refers to employees of humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies and focuses on their risk of persecution by Al-Shabaab.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.6.4.; Security 2025, 1.6., 2.1.1., 2.2.2., 2.4., 2.7.1.; Targeting 2021, 6.4.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which humanitarian workers could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, humanitarian workers have been subjected to life threats, physical violence, abductions, arbitrary arrests, attacks with IEDs, and killings mainly by Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab is highly suspicious of espionage (see also 3.1.4. Civilians perceived as 'spies' by Al-Shabaab) and religious proselytism (see also 3.7. Individuals (perceived as) contravening social or religious laws/tenets). NGOs accused of spying or seeking to convert individuals to Christianity are especially targeted. Al-Shabaab allows limited humanitarian work only under strict control, and non-compliance with its rules can result in serious threats or attacks. Humanitarian workers have been also affected as collateral damage in the context of the armed conflict in Somalia.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

In South-Central Somalia well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated in the case of humanitarian workers , in view of, the ban on the operation of most international NGOs and the strict vetting of the activities of Somali and local NGOs or CSOs in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, the high suspicions on espionage, as well as the overall Al-Shabaab's pervasive presence in South-Central Somalia.

In **Puntland,** Al-Shabaab has lower operational capacity, with stronger presence in the northern parts (see map). Therefore, the home area of the applicant should be taken into account as a risk-impacting circumstance.

In **Somaliland,** Al-Shabaab has very limited operational capacity and in the reference period no incidents against humanitarian workers were reported. Therefore, **a well-founded fear of persecution** for humanitarian workers **in Somaliland would in general not be substantiated.**

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** and/or **political opinion**, as being a humanitarian worker would be perceived by Al-Shabaab as promoting foreign religious agendas or opposing their ideological and political views.

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