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# 3.11.1. Gender-based violence (GBV)

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This profile refers to women and girls at risk of GBV. For more specific forms of GBV see sub-profiles below 3.11.2. Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) and 3.11.4. Child marriage and forced marriage.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.2.1.; Targeting 2021, 2.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Gender equality and women's empowerment remain among the most significant challenges in Somalia. Somalia's hybrid legal system -comprising of formal, Sharia, and *xeer* (clan-based) laws- further restricts women's access to justice. Under the *xeer* system, women are not considered as responsible individuals and require a male guardian, such as a husband, father, brother, or uncle, to access traditional justice mechanisms.

## Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which women and girls could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, women and girls in Somalia have reportedly been subjected to rape, sometimes combined with homicide and with lack of accountability for the perpetrators, harmful traditional practices, domestic violence and (conflict-related) - particularly rapes and gang rapes combined with, including Intimate Partner Violence. Besides family members, unidentified perpetrators, Al-Shabaab fighters and state actors are mentioned as actors of sexual violence. Sexual slavery and abductions by Al-Shabaab have been also reported.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that women and girls could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be considered Women generally face institutionalised legal, judicial, social, and economic discrimination. More specifically, victims of GBV in Somalia face significant barriers in accessing services, due to a combination of limited availability, restricted access, stigma, and fear of reprisals from perpetrators, family members, and the broader community. Access to justice is further constrained by systemic delays, and perpetrators are rarely held accountable, largely due to a weak rule of law and prevailing discriminatory social and cultural norms. Women and girls were further impacted by lack of access to protective shelter and adequate specialised services for GBV. Moreover, a consistent pattern of online attacks, including 'gendered disinformation' and

hate speech, has been reported both in mainstream and social media were reported, with women with a presence in public and political life.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for women and girls, in the whole of Somalia, including South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as:

- **Age**: Young adult women and underage girls are among the most vulnerable targets of GBV. In the first half of 2024, over 500 cases of sexual violence against children were reported. UNICEF noted that 70% of cases of GBV involved individuals under the age of 18. In Somaliland, the 2020 law on Rape, Fornication and Other Related Offences does not provide any details on legal age of a minor.

- **Home area and actor in control of the area**: Women run a higher risk of conflict-related sexual violence in conflict affected areas, in South-Central Somalia. However, it is noted that GBV is pervasive and widespread in whole of Somalia and domestic violence is described as rampant.

- **Visibility of profile**: Women in public and political roles in Somalia, elected officials, activists, leaders, and journalists have been targeted due their public profile.

- **Being from a displaced or nomadic community**: Women from displaced communities and/or from weak clans were more likely to experience SGBV. Girls and women with disabilities also faced a heightened risk of SGBV. Vulnerability to GBV increases due to multiple displacements, difficult living conditions and overcrowded IDP camps.

## Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, in relation to GBV, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**[8]. For example, survivors of sexual violence may be subjected to persecution because of their common background (past sexual abuse) and their distinct identity in Somalia (stigmatisation by their communities and families due to perceived dishonour associated with sexual violence). Additionally, persecution of women in public roles, may also be for reasons of political opinion. In case of targeting by Al-Shabaab religion may also be a relevant ground.

- [8]

CJEU, *WS v Intervyuirasht organ na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite pri Ministerskia savet*, case C-621/21, Judgment of 16 January 2024, https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=281302&pageIndex=0&doclan

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