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3.11.3. Women and girls who have left Al-Shabaab

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This profile refers to women and girls who had been wives of Al-Shabaab members or who were actively engaged in the group's activities and who have left Al-Shabaab.

For the treatment of adult males and boys who had been actively involved in the group, especially as fighters, who desert or defect, see 3.3. Deserters and defectors from Al-Shabaab. The present subsection should be read in conjunction with the subsection mentioned above.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.2.1.; AS Deserters 2023, 1.2.5., 2.2.1., 2.2.2., 2.2.4.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which women and girls who have left **Al-Shabaab** could be exposed by the group are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, once they have left the group, going back to Al-Shabaab territory is not an option for women, who would 'most probably face execution as traitors'. Women from minority clans face execution and imprisonment, as well as certain forms of physical violence, including sexual violence and torture. Women reportedly face challenges in their new location, such as sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, women and girls may have a well-founded fear of persecution by the **community** and the **government** in individual cases. Former female members of Al-Shabaab could get 'raided' by government security forces as well as stigmatised and excluded from the community, being highly vulnerable to extreme poverty.

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. Poverty, stigma and mistrust from the hosting community or the family circle, and fear of Al-Shabaab have been also reported. Rehabilitation centres for women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab have closed. Being a child is to be taken into account in the assessment on whether an act reaches the threshold of persecution.

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

In South-Central Somalia well-founded fear of persecution by Al-Shabaab would in general be substantiated in the case of women and girls who have left the group.

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. Therefore, a well-founded fear of persecution for women and girls who have left Al-Shabaab in **Somaliland would in general not be substantiated**.

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

- **Past role in Al-Shaabab**: The risk may be higher for women and girls who had voluntarily joined Al-Shabaab and depending on the prominence of the roles they had within the group.

- **Clan affiliation and protection**: The vulnerability of women and girls depends highly on the level of family or clan support they can rely upon. Women coming from minority clans (e.g. Bantu/Jareer) or who are displaced without access to clan protection reportedly end up without any protection and resources.

- **Displacement situation**: The integration of women and girls largely depends on the locations to which they settle, with displacement significantly increasing their vulnerability.

- **Participation in a rehabilitation programme**: Women and girls who have successfully completed the government's rehabilitation programmes and receive a 'non-criminal certificate' from the Criminal Investigation Department run a lower risk. As of 2022 information, due to lack of funding, women residing in Mogadishu do not have access to any form of rehabilitation programme.

There is no information about the treatment of women who have left Al-Shabaab by the government or the community in Somaliland.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, persecution of this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion** and/or **religion**, as leaving Al-Shabaab would be considered as opposition to its political and/or ideological stance. Persecution of women who have left Al-Shabaab marriages may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** based on their common background which cannot be changed (past marriage to an Al-Shabaab member) and distinct identity in Somalia (in relation to stigmatisation).



Exclusion considerations are relevant to this profile, as women who have left Al-Shabaab may have been involved in excludable acts, particularly those that joined voluntarily and were actively engaged in the group's activities. See 7. Exclusion.

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