

Please cite as: EUAA, '3.7.1. Individuals (perceived as) contravening Sharia law in Al-Shabaab controlled areas' in *Country Guidance: Somalia*, October 2025.

3.7.1. Individuals (perceived as) contravening Sharia law in Al-Shabaab controlled areas

Common analysis
Last update: October 2025

This sub-profile refers to individuals (perceived as) contravening Islamic laws, including apostates, converts, blasphemers and individuals (perceived) as having committed *hudud* crimes, in Al-Shabaab controlled areas. Members of religious minorities are also included. For an overview of Al-Shabaab controlled areas see 2.3.1. Al-Shabaab under section 2. Actors of persecution or serious harm.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.3.; Actors 2021, 2.3.; Targeting 2021, 3.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

A wide range of behaviours may be perceived by Al-Shabaab as contravening Islamic laws, such as illicit sexual relations (*zina*, see also persons with diverse SOGIESC), stealing and robbery, consumption of alcohol, drugs, blasphemy, apostasy, and conversion to non-Muslim faiths, smoking, being influenced by foreign values in acts, behaviour, social relations or appearance, etc. In Al-Shabaab controlled areas, men are not allowed to have a fluffy haircut, wear trousers, have a moustache or shave their beard, while women cannot wear a bra because perceived as a Western creation. Also, people travelling to Al-Shabaab controlled areas have to abide by these rules.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which individuals (perceived as) contravening Islamic laws could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. Al-Shabaab imposes a ‘harsh’ interpretation of Islamic law with hudud punishments for adultery and Illicit sexual relations (zina), theft and highway robbery, alcohol consumption, and apostasy. The group’s armed morality police force, *jaish al-hisba*, also enforced compliance and punished individuals failing to adhere to the imposed rules. Punishments imposed by Al-Shabaab through its own courts include detentions, public beatings, abductions, amputations and executions. Arrest and detention, often exposing civilians to torture and beatings were also reported.
Non-Muslim faiths and converts from Islam and blasphemy are sanctioned with execution and

death. Social sanctioning and attacks against converts were also reported.
Theft falls under the *hudud* category of *hiraba* and is harshly punished by amputations.

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

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated in the case of individuals perceived by Al-Shabaab as contravening Islamic laws **in areas under its control in South-Central Somalia** as they are widely targeted by the group.

With regard to **areas outside of the control of the group**, including in South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, see 3.7.2. Individuals (perceived as) contravening Islamic and customary tenets outside Al-Shabaab controlled areas.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Persecution for an applicant under this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** as Al-Shabaab perceives such behaviours as crimes committed ‘against the rights of God’, labelling the individual as an apostate.

In case of persons perceived by Al-Shabaab as influenced by foreign values in their acts, behaviour, social relations and appearance, persecution may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**, based on their common background which cannot be changed (the perceived act or behaviour) and/or a shared characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that they should not be forced to renounce it (opposition to cultural, social or religious norms and the unwillingness to comply with them) and the distinct identity that these individuals may have in the Somali society.

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