

South and Central Somalia

*Security situation, forced
recruitment, and conditions for
returnees*



Ministry of Immigration
and Integration

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Immigration Service

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Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
COI	Country of Origin Information
CPU	Child Protection Unit
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EUTM	European Union Training Mission in Somalia
ICG	International Crisis Group
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
HI	Hiraal Institute
HIPS	the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies
JSF	Jubaland Security Forces
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
NISA	the National Intelligence and Security Agency
PB-IED	Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
PGN	Political Geography Now
PSF	Puntland Security Forces
SNA	Somali National Army
SPF	Somali Police Forces
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
SVIED	Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device

1. Executive summary

This brief report provides an update of the control and security situation in South and Central Somalia with attention to the conditions for civilians.

The political structures and governmental institutions in Somalia are still underdeveloped and fragile. In recent years, the political divide has primarily been between the federal government and the regional states.

The overall control situation remains mostly unchanged, and al-Shabaab maintains control over large parts of South and Central Somalia, whereas the Federal Government and its allies limit their control to urban centers.

The security situation in South and Central Somalia is still volatile. 2019 saw a total of 1,154 civilian casualties, of which al-Shabaab accounted for almost 70 per cent. Despite these numbers, al-Shabaab primarily targets high profiled government officials and law enforcers.

In addition, al-Shabaab is able to carry out sophisticated attacks and collect taxes in areas not under their control, such as Mogadishu.

The Somali National Army (SNA) is being trained by international forces, notably the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) but is still underfunded and lack structure and discipline. AMISOM's mandate in Somalia expires in August 2020, and this is a cause of concern among some experts.

Most actors in the conflict, including SNA, recruit civilians by force, but al-Shabaab remains the main perpetrator. This is also true for child recruitment. The government seeks to combat the forceful recruitment of civilians through various initiatives, but with little success so far.

The fragile situation in South and Central Somalia impacts the conditions for people returning to Somalia. In the absence of a functioning state apparatus, people turn their attention to non-state actors such as clan and family networks or al-Shabaab for services such as security and financial support. In these conditions, notions of culture, social capital, and commercial influence play a crucial role in shaping the future for returning Somalis.

2. Introduction, Methodology and Disclaimer

This brief report is part of a series on the development of the security situation in South and Central Somalia. So far, the following reports have been published: *South and Central Somalia – Security Situation, al-Shabaab Presence, and Target Groups, Report based on interviews in Nairobi, Kenya, 3 to 10 December 2016* (March 2017) and *Somalia: Den generelle sikkerhedssituation 2017-2018* (September 2018). As such, this report seeks to bring forward updated information on the security situation in South and Central Somalia with focus on forced recruitment of civilians into armed groups (state and non-state) and conditions and challenges faced by Somalis returning to Somalia.

The report is the product of research into available open source information from a number of written sources, including reports from human rights organisations, academic publications, COI-reports, and news articles. Furthermore, three sources with updated knowledge on forced recruitment and conditions for returned people from Europe were consulted; an academic researcher, a representative of an international humanitarian organisation, and a journalist. Statements from interviewed sources are used in the report and all statements are referenced.

The interviewed sources were briefed about the purpose of the gathered information and informed that their statements would be included in a publicly available report. The draft minutes from the meetings were forwarded to the respective source for approval. The approved statements are included in their full extent in Appendix 1. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included at the end of the report (Appendix 2). For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency, and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes in Appendix 1 have been given consecutive numbers which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The intention hereby is to make it easier to find the exact place of a statement in the meeting minutes.

Attention should be called to the changeable situation in Somalia, including the impact which the coming national election may have on the security situation.

The report does not include any policy recommendations or analysis. The information in the report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS). Furthermore, it is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. The terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The report has been peer reviewed by the Finnish Immigration Service, in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology.¹ The research and editing of this report was finalised on July 17th 2020.

The report can be accessed from the website of DIS, www.newtodenmark.dk, and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the general public.

¹ EASO, Country of Origin Information (COI), *Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

3. Political developments

Somalia has been without a well-functioning central government for three decades², and the government in Mogadishu struggles to assert power and control over large parts of the country.³ In an effort to tackle this issue, a federal structure has been established. However, this has led to internal power struggles between the Federal Government in Mogadishu and the member states.⁴

3.1 Federalism versus centralism

In August 2012, the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia officially ended, and a Federal Government with six member states was established⁵. The official division of the member states came into effect in 2016.⁶ This political structure was created, in part, in an effort to expand the control of the Federal Government, thus combatting the influence of non-state actors such as al-Shabaab.⁷ Since then, power struggles between the Federal Government in Mogadishu and the member states has dominated the political scene in Somalia.⁸

In September 2018, leaders of five member states⁹ temporarily suspended all cooperation and relation with the central government, as disagreements emerged around the constitutional review process.¹⁰ In the same year, unrest sparked in the South-West state, as the Federal government arrested the popular former al-Shabaab leader, Mukhtar Robow, who was running for regional president.¹¹ Throughout 2019, elections for regional presidents were held across the country. The elections were marked by struggles between the Federal Government and the member states.¹² During the first months of 2020, this dispute has led to clashes between the federal forces and Jubaland forces.¹³

² For a brief introduction to modern history of Somalia, see DIS, *Somalia: Den generelle sikkerhedssituation 2017-2018*: September 2018, [url](#)

³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p.33; Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 10; House of Commons Library, *Briefing paper: Somalia – January 2019 update*, [url](#), p.10-12

⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p.35; VOA News, *Somali Regional States Suspend Ties With Federal Government*, 3. September 2018, [url](#)

⁵ Puntland, Jubaland, South West State, Hirshabelle, Galmudug and self-declared independent Somaliland, House of Commons Library, *Briefing paper: Somalia – January 2019 update*, [url](#), p.10-11

⁶ CR, *Legitimacy and peace processes – from coercion to consent*, April 2014, [url](#), p.60; Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p.11; EASO, *Country of Origin Information report, Somalia Security situation*, 20 December 2017, [url](#), p. 18

⁷ Brookings, *The problem with militias in Somalia: Almost everyone wants them despite their dangers*, 14. April 2020, [url](#); UN, *Sanctions in Place to Help Somalia Government Confront Terrorism, Restore Stability, Speakers in Security Council Stress*, 27. February 2020, [url](#)

⁸ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 12-13

⁹ Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Puntland and South-West States

¹⁰ VOA News, *Somali Regional States Suspend ties with Federal Government*, 8 September 2018, [url](#); Garowe Online, *Somalia: Federal States suspend relations with FGS as it seeks audit report*, 8 September 2018, [url](#)

¹¹ ICG, *Somalia's South West State: A New President Installed, a Crisis Inflamed*, 24 December 2018, [url](#); Garowe Online, *Turkey and Qatar urged to halt funding and training Somali troops*, 9 September 2020, [url](#)

¹² HIPS, *State of Somalia Report 2019, 2020*, [url](#), p. 3-6

¹³ UNSC, *June 2020 Monthly Forecast*, 29 May 2020, [url](#); Garowe Online, *More Jubaland forces dispatched to Gedo hours after Farmajo, Uhuru phone call*, 5 March 2020, [url](#); ICG, *Crisis Watch Somalia*, 2020, April 2020, [url](#)

These tensions between the federal government and the member states have been exploited by foreign powers. As such, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Ethiopia, Qatar, and Turkey have managed to trigger disputes between the federal government and the member states.¹⁴

3.2 National Elections

Somalia is not an electoral democracy. Previous presidential and parliament elections were voted in by clan delegates. Currently, the seats in the Somali parliament are based on the so-called 4.5 formula, which allocates one in four seats to each of the major clans¹⁵, and half of one seat to minority groups.¹⁶ This clan-based power-sharing model is a temporary system to support preparations towards one-person, one-vote.¹⁷ Somalia is preparing to hold its first one-person, one-vote elections in 50 years. The scheduled parliamentary elections in November 2020 and presidential elections in 2021 have been postponed.¹⁸

4. Actors in the conflict – capacity and capability

There are a range of actors engaged in Somalia's complex and on-going conflict.¹⁹ In the below section, the three main actors in the South and Central Somalia are presented. In DIS's report on the general security situation of September 2018, the presence of Islamic State (IS) in Somalia was addressed. However, IS has not established itself in South and Central Somalia and continues to have its geographical domicile in the northern parts of country, namely Puntland.²⁰

4.1 Somali Federal Government and its armed forces

The Federal Government of Somalia's national forces constitute the Somali National Army (SNA), the Somali National Police and the National Intelligence and Security Agency. These are backed by various regional forces, mostly composed of clan militias, including Jubaland, Galmudug, Puntland, and Southwest forces.²¹ With large international support, the government has rebuilt its armed forces²² and regained control over areas in South and Central Somalia.²³ According to a recent report by the African Union, Somalia has more than 20,000 pro-government fighters operating within the five federal member states.²⁴

A case study published by the UN University in 2020 stated that the Somali national forces lack cohesion, relevant equipment and administration structures. Only a small number of its fighters are actually capable of military operations against al-Shabaab. In addition, the same report described the SNA as a

¹⁴ Memo, *How the Gulf crisis is destabilising Somalia*, 31 July 2018, [url](#); ICG, *Somalia and the Gulf Crisis*, 5 June 2018, [url](#);

¹⁵ The four major clans in Somalia: Darood, Dir, Hawiye and Digil-Mirifle, Austria, ACCORD, *Clans in Somalia*, December 2009, [url](#) p.

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¹⁶ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 17; Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report – Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p.11

¹⁷ UN News, *Political consensus critical ahead of Somalia election: UN mission chief*, 21 November 2019, [url](#); Netherlands, *COI Report on South and Central Somalia*, March 2019, [url](#), p.9

¹⁸ ICG, *COVID-19 in Somalia: A Public Health Emergency in an Electoral Minefield*, 8 May 2020, [url](#); HIPS, *State of Somalia Report 2019, 2020*, [url](#), p. 1; Garowe Online, *Somalia's international partners fail to push for time elections*, 4 July 2020, [url](#)

¹⁹ UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p. 117

²⁰ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p.19

²¹ UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*, 4, March 2020, [url](#), p. 3

²² The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) security forces constitute the Somali National Army, the Somali national police and the National Intelligence and Security Agency, UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*, 4 March 2020, [url](#), p. 3

²³ Rift Valley Institute, *Stabilization, Extraversion and Political Settlements in Somalia*, [url](#), pp.17,37

²⁴ AMISOM, *AMISOM hands over to Operational Readiness Assessment findings to the Somalia government*, 26 Feb 2019, [url](#);

conglomeration of militias rather than a coherent army. It is further stated that SNA forces have strong ties to the dominant clans of their home areas. Thus, when deployed outside of their territories, SNA forces often tend to prey on civilians and feed into the cycle of violence and propagation of armed actors.²⁵

4.2 African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

In 2007, the African Union, with a mandate from the UN Security Council, deployed soldiers for a peacekeeping mission to Somalia, officially known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The initial mandate of AMISOM was to protect and keep the peace after the civil war. However, the mission quickly progressed into a counter-insurgency mission as al-Shabaab gained control over large part of South and Central Somalia. Onwards, AMISOM has actively supported the SNA and conducted offensive operations against al-Shabaab and other armed groups.²⁶ AMISOM is currently present with more than 22,000 soldiers and non-uniformed personnel from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone.²⁷ In June 2020, the UN Security Council announced to extend the mandate of AMISOM until August 2020.²⁸ The plan is that AMISOM will hand over security provisions to SNA. According to some experts, withdrawal of AMISOM's forces from Somalia would be catastrophic for Somalia's stability and security.²⁹

4.3 Al-Shabaab

Since 2006, al-Shabaab has controlled large parts in South and Central Somalia.³⁰ The organisation aims to overthrow the Western-backed Somali government and establish an Islamic state in Somalia.³¹ Al-Shabaab is engaged in military operations and the spread of propaganda throughout Somalia and to some extent Kenya and other parts of East Africa. The organisation performs a variety of roles and tasks, including administration of justice through Sharia courts, meetings with clan leaders, and provision of aid. Al-Shabaab runs an extensive tax system (*zakat*³²) within its areas of control and also in government controlled territories.³³

Despite its territorial loss since 2011, the organisation retains control over significant parts of South and Central Somalia and regularly takes over major towns and conducts attacks on civilian and military targets

²⁵ UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p. 117-19

²⁶ AMISOM, *AMISOM Background*, 2020, [url](#); UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p. 117

²⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p. 6; AMISOM, *AMISOM Military Component*, 2020, [url](#); Lifos 2019, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 17

²⁸ UNSC, *Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia until 31 August, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2527 (2020)*, 22 June 2020, [url](#); UNSC, *Chronology of Events, Somalia June 2020*, 6 July 2020, [url](#)

²⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p. 6; ICG, *The Regional Risks to Somalia's Moment of Hope*, 22 February 2017, [url](#); CFR, *Al-Shabaab*, January 2020, [url](#)

³⁰ DIIS, *Somalias al-Shabaab og al-Qaeda – mellem national og oprørsbevægelse og international terrorisme, DIIS Report 2012:11*, [url](#)

³¹ CFR, *Al-Shabaab*, January 2020, [url](#)

³² *Zakat* constitutes one of the five pillars of Islam, and it dictates that practicing Muslims with the financial means to do so are obliged to give a certain percentage of their wealth. Often, *zakat* is defined as a form of charity, almsgiving, donation, or contribution but to Muslims, however, *zakat* is more than a mere financial transaction. It connotes the path toward purity, the comprehension of material responsibility, and an enhanced sense of spirituality, Oxford Islamic Studies, [url](#)

³³ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 19; Rift Valley Institute, *Tax and the State in Somalia*, May 2020 [url](#), p.4; Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*, p. 45-46; EASO, *Country of Origin Information report, Somalia Security situation*, 20 December 2017, [url](#), p. 37; The Horn Observer, *Al-Shabaab summons more than 70 Mogadishu businesses owners over unpaid taxes*, 15 May 2020, [url](#); Garowe Online, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab expands tax empire in Mogadishu under gov't control*, 16 February 2020, [url](#)

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in Mogadishu and across the border in Kenya.³⁴ Al-Shabaab has an extensive network of informants through whom the organisation gathers very detailed information and instills fear amongst the local population.³⁵ Also, the organisation runs large and effective training facilities and remains mobile and well organised.³⁶ Al-Shabaab continues to target military employees and civil servants working in the government (see more in section 5.2.1)³⁷. Al-Shabaab has presence in government controlled areas and has free rein to move and operate.³⁸ The organisation is also considered to have infiltrated several governmental institutions and sectors, including police, SNA, and Federal Ministries.³⁹ The size of al-Shabaab is unknown but the organisation is estimated to have 5,000 – 10,000 members and control roughly 20 per cent of Somalia.⁴⁰

³⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 1; UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p.120

³⁵ EASO, *Country of Origin Information report, Somalia Security situation*, 20 December 2017, [url](#), p. 37; Norway, Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 3

³⁶ UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p. 121

³⁷ Norway, Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 8

³⁸ Norway, Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 3

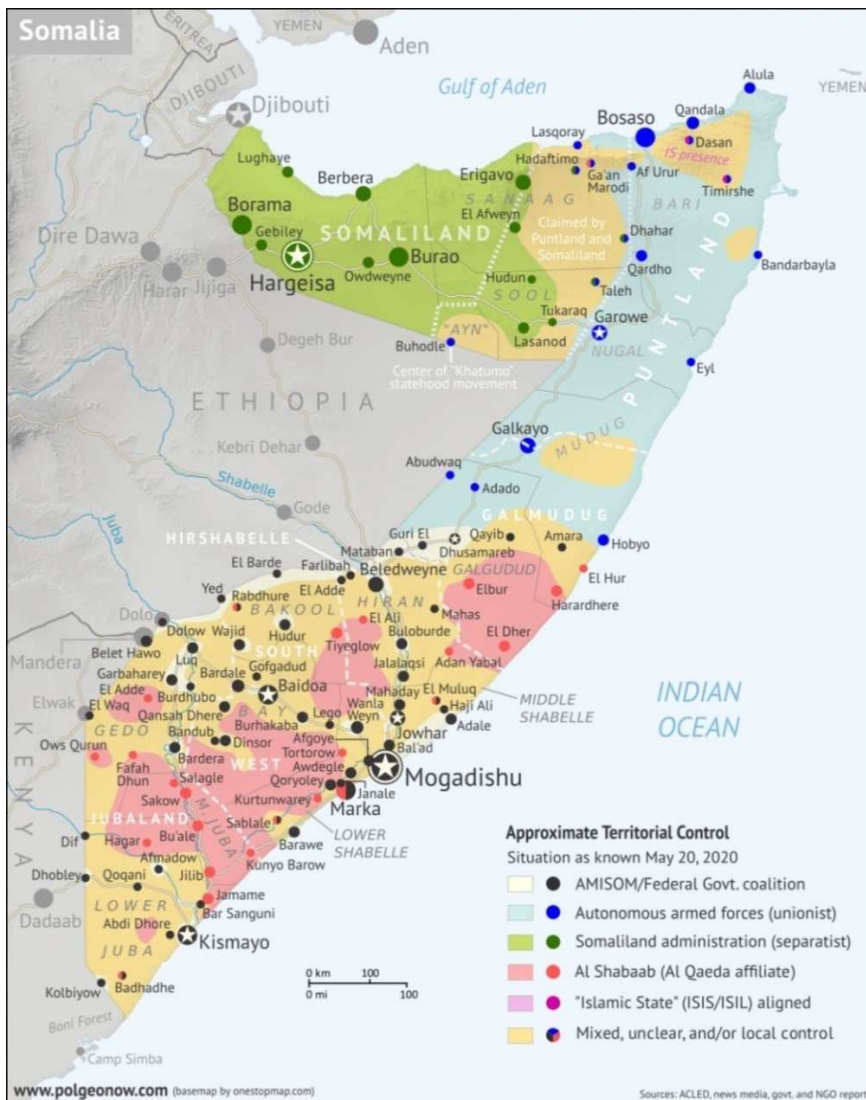
³⁹ Norway, Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 3; EASO, *Country of Origin Information report, Somalia Security situation*, 20 December 2017, [url](#), pp. 31, 33; Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2020 Country Report — Somalia*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, [url](#), p. 7; UN University, Centre for Policy Research, *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace, The Problem with Militias in Somalia*, 2020, [url](#), p. 119

⁴⁰ UNSC, *August 2019 Monthly Forecast*, 31 July 2019, [url](#);

5. Territorial control and security situation

5.1 Control situation

The present Somalia control map of May 2020 is developed by Political Geography Now (PGN).⁴¹



Source: PGN 2020

The overall control situation in South and Central Somalia remains unchanged. As illustrated in the map above, al-Shabaab maintains control over large parts of South and Central Somalia. Since December 2019 PGN has reported a slight change in the control situation in the Lower Shabelle region of South-West State.

⁴¹ PGN control maps are based on a detailed monitoring of local and international news media. The latest control map of Somalia is from May 2020. The map does not give a complete and comprehensive picture of the control situation; the territorial limits are relative, but approximate, PGN, *Somalia Control map*, 20 May 2020, [url](#)

The Federal Government and its allies have regained control over Janale and Lego in Lower Shabelle region from al-Shabaab.⁴²

5.2 Security situation

The overall security situation in Somalia remains volatile. All actors in the conflict commit violations against the civilian population; however, al-Shabaab continues to be the main perpetrator in South and Central Somalia. In 2019, a total of 1,154 civilians were killed or injured, of which 67 per cent were attributed to indiscriminate and targeted attacks, mainly by al-Shabaab.⁴³ Furthermore, clan violence, often over control of land and revenge killings, has led to civilian casualties and displacement.⁴⁴ Since December 2019, according to data from International Crisis Group, inter-clan violence has killed more than 300 people in South and Central Somalia.⁴⁵

5.2.1. Attacks by al-Shabaab – targets and trends (2019-20)

In 2019, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) stated that al-Shabaab has stepped up its military operations.⁴⁶ Similarly, Hiraal Institute (HI) reported that the frequency and lethal attacks by al-Shabaab have increased in the last part of 2019.⁴⁷ According to a report by UN Security Council of August 2019, the number and frequency of attacks by al-Shabaab in Mogadishu is a dangerous development for the country's security.⁴⁸

In December 2019, a truck bomb exploded in Mogadishu, killing more than 80 people. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack which is believed to be the deadliest in two years.⁴⁹ In January 2020, six more people were killed in Mogadishu by al-Shabaab. In March, the group attacked and killed 22 security forces in several regions in South and Central Somalia. Later same month, six people were executed by al-Shabaab for alleged espionage. In April and May 2020, al-Shabaab continued its attacks on security forces and civilians.⁵⁰

⁴² PGN Somalia, control map, May 2020, [url](#)

⁴³ AI, *Human Rights in Africa: Review of 2019 – Somalia*, 8 April 2020, [url](#); HRW, *World Report 2020 – Somalia*, 14 January 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴ HRW, *Somalia Events of 2019, 2020*, [url](#)

⁴⁵ ICG, *Crisis Watch Somalia*, 2020, 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁶ ACLED, *ACLED Resources: Al Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya*, 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁷ HI, *The war in Somalia in 2019*, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸ UNSC, *August 2019 Monthly Forecast*, July 2019, [url](#)

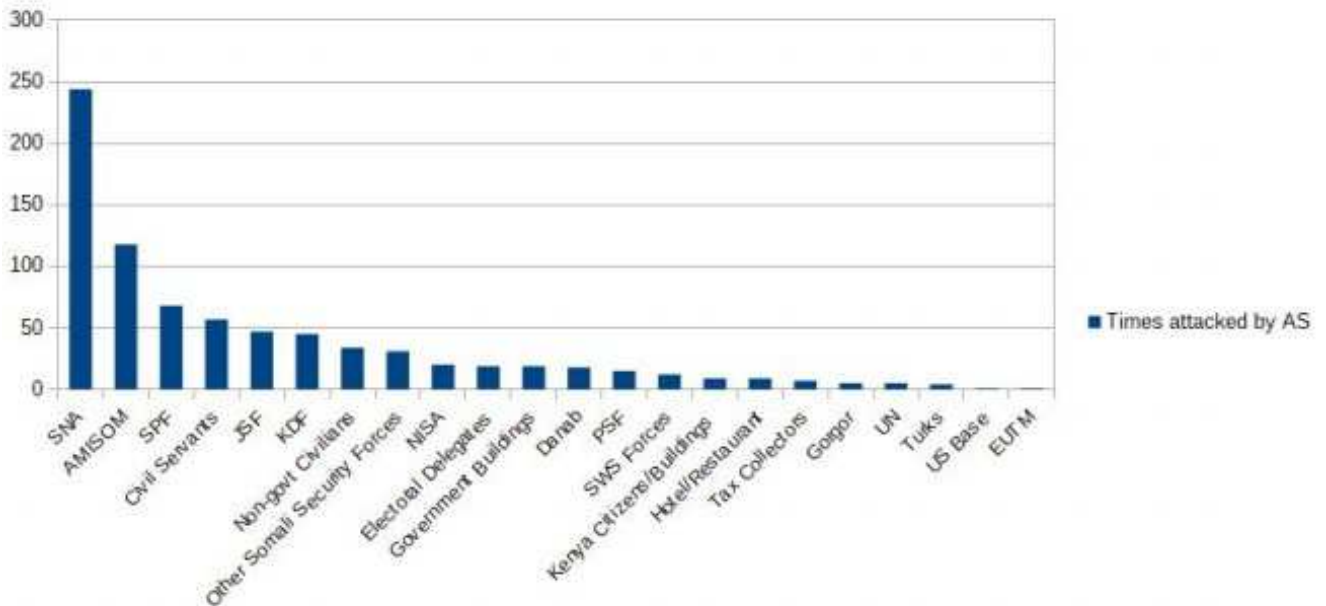
⁴⁹ Al Jazeera News, *Al-Shabab claims deadly attack in Somalia's Mogadishu*, 31 December 2019, [url](#); ICG, *Crisis Watch Somalia*, 2020, 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁰ ICG, *Crisis Watch Somalia*, 2020, 2020, [url](#)

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The following graph outlines entities targeted by al-Shabaab in 2019.

Graph 1: Entities targeted by al-Shabaab (2019)



Source: Hiraal Institute (HI)⁵¹

As shown on the graph above, the majority of the reported attacks by al-Shabaab in 2019 were attacks on military targets, according to Hiraal Institute (HI). Al-Shabaab, for instance, targeted the SNA almost 250 times while the group targeted non-government civilians less than 50 times. However, HI stressed that this is an indication of the complexity of the attacks conducted by al-Shabaab in the major cities, rather than the group's sensitivity towards civilian casualties.⁵² Similarly, data from the first quarter for 2020 shows that al-Shabaab's main target continues to be the SNA and AMISOM. The group's second priority is the Somali police force and civil servants working for the Federal Government and the member states.⁵³

According to HI, al-Shabaab has given increased priority to small-scale military operations in Mogadishu and other urban centres during 2019.

⁵¹ HI, *The war in Somalia in 2019*, [url](#), p. 6

⁵² HI, *The war in Somalia in 2019*, [url](#), p. 5-6

⁵³ HI, *Security in Somalia Q1 2020*, May 2020, [url](#) p.3

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As illustrated in the table below, al-Shabaab has used Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and assassinations throughout 2019 as means of attack while direct military raids were applied less.⁵⁴

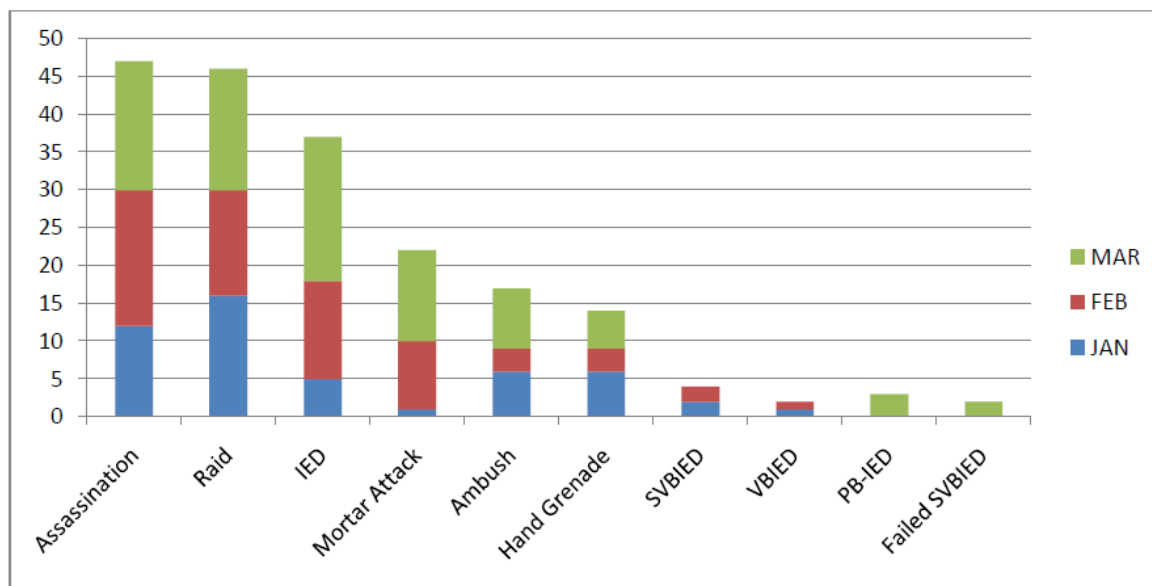
Table 1: Breakdown of al-Shabaab attacks by month (2019)

Incident	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
IED	22	16	36	17	26	24	14	14	29	28	16	18
Assassinations	18	3	12	4	26	9	9	9	8	17	14	11
Raid	12	13	16	7	24	20	22	17	28	11	9	30
Hand grenade	8	3	4	2	11	11	12		6	2	3	2
Ambush	4	3	2	0	5	4	6	6	7	2	6	6
VBIED	2	1	1	1	4	2	2					
Failed VBIED/SVBIED		1			1							
SVBIED		3	3	1				2	3			2
SVBIED-Supported Raid	1	1							2			
HBIED							2					

Source: HI⁵⁵

In the first quarter of 2020, assassinations and IEDs remain the most typical attack types used by al-Shabaab, although the use of mortars, hand grenades, and ambushes are increasing.⁵⁶ This ability to carry out complex attacks is exemplified by the attack on the ceremony marking the reopening of the Mogadishu Stadium on June 30th 2020 where mortar shells were used as means of attack. The ceremony was attended by the President.⁵⁷

Figure 1: Type of attacks by month (2020)



Source: HI⁵⁸

⁵⁴ HI, *The war in Somalia in 2019*, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵ HI, *The war in Somalia in 2019*, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁶ HI, *Security in Somalia Q1 2020*, May 2020, [url](#) p.2

⁵⁷ ABC News, *Mortar shells hit after Somalia celebrates reopened stadium*, 30 June 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁸ HI, *Security in Somalia Q1 2020*, May 2020, [url](#) p.2

6. Forced recruitment of civilians by armed actors (state and non-state)

Both al-Shabaab and the government forces recruit civilians in an effort to bolster their ranks. Clan-based militias primarily recruit on a voluntary basis as this is regarded as an obligation amongst the clan members.⁵⁹ Forced recruitment and the recruitment of children occur throughout South and Central Somalia as well as parts of Puntland.⁶⁰

6.1 Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab employs a wide range of tactics in order to recruit civilians, ranging from forced recruitment to indoctrination through qur'anic schools (madrassas) and monetary offers. The organisation mainly recruits civilians from its own territories, but recruitment from government controlled territories does occur.⁶¹

Al-Shabaab frequently requests locals to join or give up younger family members to the organisation, and although this may not include elements of force per se, the reputation of the group leaves little room for civilians to refuse the offer to join.⁶² People who reject al-Shabaab are threatened and labelled as infidels who reject Islam and the Sharia law. In some cases the person who rejects the offer is killed in order to set an example for the rest of the community. Moreover, a source mentioned several cases where defected women return to al-Shabaab after their families were threatened.⁶³

Many join the organisation for financial reasons.⁶⁴ These promises are rarely kept, however, but according to a source, al-Shabaab is still more consistent than the government in terms of paying out wages, and they generally pay more.⁶⁵ Fighters recruited by the organisation earn between \$50 and \$200 a month and this incentivises some to join al-Shabaab in order to provide for their family.⁶⁶

As mentioned above, al-Shabaab finances its operations primarily through collecting tax (*zakat*) from households and local businesses and from fees at checkpoints.⁶⁷ Families who are not able to meet the *zakat*-obligation are often forced to give up their children for recruitment⁶⁸ or pay the organisation in some other way.⁶⁹ People who refuse to pay *zakat* risk having their shop burned down or even being killed.⁷⁰

⁵⁹ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 35

⁶⁰ Sweden, Lifos Säkerhertssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 45

⁶¹ Mary Harper: 10

⁶² Mary Harper: 3; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 34

⁶³ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 34

⁶⁴ Mary Harper: 10

⁶⁵ Mary Harper: 10

⁶⁶ FIS, Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 12

⁶⁷ FIS, Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 13; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 31

⁶⁸ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 33

⁶⁹ FIS, Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁰ FIS, Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

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Although young men are the primary target, al-Shabaab recruits from all age groups as well as among women. Variables such as age, gender, educational background, or prior professions influences for what purpose one is recruited.⁷¹ A source interviewed people, who were recruited into the organisation's transport sector, working as a mechanic or with logistics.⁷² The organisation needs people with other skills than just fighting skills as they govern the areas they control.⁷³ One sources mentioned that al-Shabaab often seeks to recruit people returning to the organisations territories, as these people can often carry out tasks like information gathering and armed attacks since the locals and the authorities are less suspicious of these people.⁷⁴

Women are often recruited for domestic care and house hold tasks, as well as for sexual purposes and as wives for the fighters. Women are also used for intelligence and transfer of weapons since women can cross check points without being checked, and their apparel allows them to hide weapons. One source further explained that in some cases women plan and carry out attacks.⁷⁵ According to another source, al-Shabaab denies that they recruit women.⁷⁶

Recruitment of people from outside al-Shabaab territories does take place, notably in Mogadishu.⁷⁷ One source advised that this recruitment from outside the organisations own territories often involves elements of coercion.⁷⁸ According to the Finnish Immigration service, al-Shaabab's recruitment videos can be bought at the Bakaara Market in Mogadishu.⁷⁹ People recruited from outside their areas are often recruited as informants due to their knowledge of their local area.⁸⁰

6. 1. 2 Child recruitment

According to a report by the UN Security Council of 2019, Somalia remained the country with the highest number of cases of recruitment and use of children⁸¹ in the world. A total of 2,300 children were registered in 2019 of which 80 percent of the cases where attributed to al-Shabaab; SNA and the Somali police account for the remaining cases.⁸²

Recruitment of children into al-Shabaab is often undertaken when the organisation suffers losses in battle⁸³ and the organisation primarily recruits children from amongst the rural population.⁸⁴

Throughout the fall of 2017 and 2018, al-Shabaab launched a number of recruitment campaigns targeting children.⁸⁵ In October 2017, al-Shabaab started to enforce their curricula in schools thereby seeking to

⁷¹ Mary Harper: 6

⁷² Mary Harper: 6

⁷³ Mary Harper: 6; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 33

⁷⁴ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 27

⁷⁵ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 35

⁷⁶ Mary Harper: 8;

⁷⁷ Mary Harper: 7; Landinfo, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab-områder i Sør-Somalia*: 21 May 2019, [url](#), p. 3

⁷⁸ Mary Harper 7

⁷⁹ FIS, *Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018*: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 13

⁸⁰ Mary Harper: 7; Interview with a representative of an international organization: 34

⁸¹ UN defines children as being under the age of 18: Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia (version 1.0)*: 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 47

⁸² UNSC, *Children and armed conflict*, 20 June 2019, [url](#), p. 2; UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*: 4. March 2020, [url](#), p. 5

⁸³ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 49; Mary Harper :11

⁸⁴ FIS, *Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018*: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 14

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 13; Sweden, Lifos *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 49

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recruit children from the schools.⁸⁶ Al-Shabaab also demands children from local clan leaders and from families living within their territory.⁸⁷

According to one source, once a child is recruited, a process of indoctrination begins where they are persuaded to fight in the name of Islam.⁸⁸ The source elaborated that one defector described this form of indoctrination as if al-Shabaab had changed the sim-card in his mind and that it was a challenge to get the sim-card out of his mind again.⁸⁹

The organisation considers anyone above the age of 15 to be an adult, and therefore, it is acceptable to be recruited as a fighter if you are older the age of 15.⁹⁰ Al-Shabaab mostly recruits young males between the age of 12 and 24, but there have been cases of children as young as eight years old being recruited.⁹¹

6.1.2.1 Federal Government of Somalia security forces and regional forces

Since 2012, the Federal Government has sought to combat the recruitment of children through the Child Protection Unit (CPU).⁹² Although the CPU screens Somali bases for child soldiers and seeks to raise awareness, the initiative has had little success.⁹³ Between 2016 and 2018, both the federal security forces and the regional forces increased their recruitment of children; in 2019, the number decreased slightly.⁹⁴ As such, both the federal security forces and the regional forces faces challenges in terms of discipline.⁹⁵

Many children have been recruited by the SNA to replace their deceased fathers and uncles while others were used as guards or escorts.⁹⁶ UN notes that the Somali police has increased its use of children for various support roles such as cooks, cleaners, escorts, or guards at checkpoints. Most of these children were reportedly enlisted by their parents after dropping out of school. The UN has noted one case where a boy dropped out of school and enrolled with Jubbaland security forces after being promised a salary.⁹⁷

7. The situation for returnees

A variety of factors influence how a person returning to Somalia will resettle into society. As such, notions of network, socio-economic status, as well as geography all play key roles in shaping a future in Somalia for returnees. Furthermore, there are many reasons as to why people return to Somalia and these also influence how people are able to resettle. The consulted sources had no information about the number of people who return to Somalia from Europe.⁹⁸

⁸⁶ FIS, *Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018*: 5. October 2018, [url](#), p. 14;

⁸⁷ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), pp. 48-49; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 31

⁸⁸ Mary Harper: 9

⁸⁹ Mary Harper: 9

⁹⁰ Mary Harper: 6

⁹¹ Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 45; FIS, *Somalia: Fact-finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, January 2018*: 5 October 2018, [url](#), p. 14; Interview with a representative of an international organization: 32

⁹² Sweden, Lifos, *Säkerhetssituationen i Somalia, version 1.0*, 3 July 2019, [url](#), p. 51

⁹³ USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Somalia*: 11 March 2020, [url](#)

⁹⁴ UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*: 4 March 2020, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁹⁵ Mary Harper: 12

⁹⁶ UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*: 4 March 2020, [url](#), p. 6

⁹⁷ UNSC, *Children and armed conflict Somalia*: 4 March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

⁹⁸ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 17; Markus Höhne: 37;

7.1 Network

Patrilineal kinship, or clans, occupies a central role in Somali society. In the absence of a functioning state, Somalis are dependent on this kinship lineage for security and protection, responsibilities and rights, as well as economic support.⁹⁹ The authority and influence of the clan determines how well positioned an individual is within society. These social ties are strong, and they prevail across borders and continents. Therefore, network is of utmost importance for returnees as it is the network which provides the foundation upon which the returnee can build a future in Somalia.¹⁰⁰

This kinship solidarity means that the network will provide for the returning members of the clan depending on their social and economic status.¹⁰¹ One source stated that the broader clan network is often of little meaningful help as they themselves often live difficult lives. Members of the same clan will look favourably on the returnees, but they seldom have the financial capacity to help returned family members resettle into society.¹⁰² The source argued that in many cases it is only the close relatives who will help returnees.¹⁰³

Returnees without a network, either in form of immediate family or clan, are in a vulnerable position. In this relation, one source explained that a nuclear family returning to Somalia without any other network does not constitute a meaningful network for each other.¹⁰⁴ However, there is often less stigma or suspicion associated with families compared to individuals returning to Somalia.¹⁰⁵ The three consulted sources explained that there are no support structures in place regarding returnees returning to Somalia from Europe without a network. This means that these vulnerable groups are often exposed as soon as they arrive in Somalia.¹⁰⁶

One source spoke to people who had returned to Somalia without a network. Their only option was to resettle in an IDP or squatter camp, but as these camps are often controlled by gatekeepers who charges a fee for newcomers, they could not afford to enter the camp. Hence, they were left to themselves.¹⁰⁷

7.2 Reasons for return

Another important factor is the cause of the return and whether it is intended or not. Many Somali families provide financial support to the travelling person, in the hopes that the migrant eventually establishes themselves abroad and sends home remittances.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, a person who unwillingly returns from Europe will be perceived as a failure and a disappointment upon return and this can lead to stigmatisation.¹⁰⁹ However, it is important to note that a failure to meet the expectations regarding remittances does not result in isolation from the rest of the clan upon return.¹¹⁰

⁹⁹ Austria, ACCORD, *Clans in Somalia*: 15 December 2009, [url](#), p. 7; Landinfo, *Somalia: Klan, familie, migrasjon og bistand ved (re)etablering*: 25. June 2020, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰⁰ Mary Harper: 13, 14 and 15; Interview with a representative of an international organisation, 28-29; Markus Höhne: 45- 46

¹⁰¹ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 26; Markus Höhne: 46, 48

¹⁰² Mary Harper: 13; Landinfo, *Somalia: Klan, familie, migrasjon og bistand ved (re)etablering*: 25. June 2020, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁰³ Mary Harper: 13

¹⁰⁴ Markus Höhne: 56

¹⁰⁵ Mary Harper: 15

¹⁰⁶ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 29; Markus Höhne: 53; Mary Harper: 14

¹⁰⁷ Mary Harper: 14

¹⁰⁸ Mary Harper: 2

¹⁰⁹ Mary Harper: 13-15; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 18, 21-22; Markus Höhne: 41, 44, 46-47

¹¹⁰ Landinfo, *Somalia: Klan, familie, migrasjon og bistand ved (re)etablering*: 25. June 2020, [url](#), p. 8

On the other hand, if the returnee has managed to establish a life abroad and accumulate capital, they will be perceived as a success upon return as they are able to invest in the surrounding society.¹¹¹

7.3 Allegiance to Somali culture

People returning to Somalia after living abroad often bring with them habits unfamiliar to Somalia society. These habits often involve a behaviour which in Somali or Islamic culture is viewed as moral transgressions.¹¹² According to three sources, the degree to which the returnee is willing to give up these unfamiliar habits determines the treatment they will receive from their families or clan in Somalia.¹¹³

One source stated that the clan or family will seek to assess the behaviour of the returnee internally and although the kinship solidarity will be tested among the patrilineal group, it is rare the returnee will be ousted as such.¹¹⁴

Another source noted that some Somalis dislike people who have returned from the diaspora because they feel that those returning have lost their Somali culture. Furthermore, the source has spoken to people who returned to Somalia with perceived bad habits. Some ended up in the mental hospital because they were thrown out by their network due to their actions in Europe.¹¹⁵ In this relation, another source advised that for some, the societal pressure can lead to abuse of substances and they will end up in religious rehabilitation centres. The conditions in these centres are harsh and the admitted people are subjected to physical and emotional abuse as part of the treatment.¹¹⁶

7.4 Geography

The geographical setting of one's family or clan dictates where the returnee is resettling. As such, people returning to al-Shabaab controlled territories must display caution and they are obliged to change their lives fundamentally and adapt to al-Shabaab's rules.¹¹⁷ According to one source, al-Shabaab themselves have said that they welcome people returning from Europe to al-Shabaab controlled areas as long as they abide by their rules and do not display or spread Western behaviour.¹¹⁸

Another source advised that al-Shabaab often views people returning from Europe or the West in two ways: As mentioned above, they are viewed as an asset as they are easily recruited. At the same time, al-Shabaab is wary of people returning from the West as they are perceived as potential spies.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Markus Höhne: 42; Mary Harper: 13

¹¹² Markus Höhne: 46

¹¹³ Markus Höhne: 48; Mary Harper: 13; Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 23

¹¹⁴ Markus Höhne: 46

¹¹⁵ Mary Harper: 13

¹¹⁶ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 21

¹¹⁷ Markus Höhne: 52

¹¹⁸ Mary Harper: 16

¹¹⁹ Interview with a representative of an international organisation: 27

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Appendix 1: Meeting minutes

Mary Harper, Author and Africa Editor, BBC News

Skype meeting, 9 June 2020

Mary Harper is the Africa Editor at BBC News. She has reported on Africa and from its conflict zones for a quarter century, especially on Somalia. She has authored a number of books on Somalia, including *Everything You Have Told Me Is True: The Many Faces of Al Shabaab*, and has served as an adviser for the European Commission on the Horn of Africa and many other bodies related to the region.

Forced recruitment of civilians into state and non-state actors

Al-Shabaab

1. The source stated that forced recruitment by al-Shabaab still takes place, mainly in the areas controlled by al-Shabaab. People are recruited not just for fighting purposes, but also to work in other roles such as informants or for cleaning and carrying things or to be educated by them.
2. Sometimes al-Shabaab will be going to a community and ask them to contribute a number of people, either to fight or to join to be educated in their special schools or to be sent to training camps.
3. In March, the source spoke to people who recently defected from al-Shabaab. Most of them said that they were not recruited by force, although some said they were pressured to join. An example was given in which a young man who was studying science and health was asked by al-Shabaab to join them as a health worker. He felt as if he could not say no, even though they were not threatening him in an overtly aggressive way.
4. Sometimes, the community or individual approached by al-Shabaab are so fearful of the consequences of a rejection that they will join without being forced as such.
5. A lot of people interviewed by the source said that they joined al-Shabaab because they were paid. Others said they joined for religious reasons but became disillusioned when they discovered that, in their view, al-Shabaab was not fighting for a 'good' version of Islam. Some who joined in the group's early years did so for nationalist reasons, following an Ethiopian invasion in 2006.

What determines for what purpose a person is recruited by al-Shabaab?

6. A variety of factors determines what the recruited person has to do for al-Shabaab. The organisation considers anyone above the age of 15 to be an adult, and therefore, it is acceptable to be recruited as a fighter. Others are recruited to certain tasks based on their skills or educational background. The source interviewed people, who had been deemed too old for fighting. They were instead recruited into, for example, al-Shabaab's transport sector working as a mechanic or with logistics. The organisation needs people with other skills than just fighting skills as they govern the areas they control.
7. According to the source, recruitment by al-Shabaab in areas not controlled by the organisation, such as Mogadishu, does take place, although, this rarely happens. Regarding the methods used by al-Shabaab, the source stated that the recruitment is not always conducted by force per se.

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However, the source had come across cases in which al-Shabaab threatens somebody by saying that they will kill the person if he does not join them. The group has also threatened family members of individuals it is trying to recruit. People recruited outside al-Shabaab areas can be recruited as informants due to their knowledge of the area. The organisation both recruits people by showing up at their doorstep demanding specific people to join or by targeting young men in public areas. It also asks people to join or threatens people by sending letters and making phone calls.

Recruitment of women

8. This is a debated topic. The source has previously asked members of al-Shabaab whether they recruit women and al-Shabaab themselves deny this but people who have defected from al-Shabaab ranks claim that the organisation indeed does recruit women – sometimes for sexual reasons. The latter claim is backed by reports from international organisations, but the source stressed that she cannot verify this. The source has interviewed women who say al-Shabaab has asked them to carry or hide weapons for them. The source further elaborated that wives of recruited men often become informants for al-Shabaab. This form of recruitment is characterised as more ‘loose’ and this often allows the women to stay in their home village.

Rejection of recruitment by al-Shabaab

9. According to the source, it is difficult to reject al-Shabaab’s offer to join the organisation as they are persistent. They will keep coming back, and the longer the person in question rejects the offer or makes excuses, the more threatening al-Shabaab becomes. This can lead to the person’s family being threatened. This way al-Shabaab wears down the person in question over time. Oftentimes, al-Shabaab turns up at the person’s property, sends letters, or makes phone calls as a way to recruit. Another way al-Shabaab recruits people is through indoctrination at the local mosque (in areas it controls), persuading the young men to fight in the name of Islam. One defector who the source spoke to in March described this form of indoctrination as if al-Shabaab had changed the sim-card in his mind and that it was a challenge to get the sim-card out of his mind again.
10. Many join al-Shabaab on the basis of financial promises. These promises are rarely kept, however, at least in terms of the amount paid. One defector told the source that he was promised \$ 200 a month but some months he only received \$70 and other months he did not receive any payment at all. But according to the source, al-Shabaab is still more consistent than the government in terms of paying out wages and they often pay more than the government.
11. The source stated that according to her knowledge, there still is a fairly steady flow in terms of people being recruited by al-Shabaab to this day. According to her knowledge, al-Shabaab increases their recruitment activities when they are under pressure on the battlefield, but at the moment, it is harder for al-Shabaab to move around due to US drone attacks and more aggressive Somali military activity, especially through the use of the US-trained ‘Danaab’ special forces who are more effective at not only seizing areas from Al Shabaab but holding onto them over time. This does not mean, however, that al-Shabaab is going away.

AMISOM/SNA

12. Asked about whether AMISOM or SNA still recruits civilians into their ranks, the source stated that SNA has been known to recruit civilians and underage people previously, but they have become more disciplined in recent times. She has not heard of the SNA forcibly recruiting people in recent times, but this does not mean it does not happen. This is also true for AMISOM which has never, to the source's knowledge, recruited civilians or children in Somalia as it is a foreign intervention force. There are still challenges when it comes to making SNA into a proper disciplined army. According to the source, the recruitment of civilians by means of intimidation into pro-government forces is typically done by regional forces or clan militias as these have not yet been fully integrated into SNA and as they are more loosely organised. The source said it would be safe to say that clan militias recruit civilians but not the SNA. This lack of integration between federal and regional forces can lead to internal conflict.

General conditions for failed asylum seekers in Somalia returning from Europe

13. The challenges faced by returnees are many including destitution, violence from state and non-state actors, extortion, unemployment, and being shunned by community. If they have close family to help them they are much more likely to establish themselves. The source also stated that in this relation, broader clan network is of little meaningful use as they often live a difficult life themselves. Members of the same clan will look favourably on the returnees, but they seldom have the financial capacity to help returned fellow clan members resettle into society. Furthermore, the source noted that the returnees' behaviour in the diaspora as well as in Somalia often determines the treatment they receive in Somalia. For instance, if people returning to Somalia from Europe have acquired what are considered 'bad' and/or criminal habits in Europe, this will be known by the network in Somalia. People in Somalia know a lot about what is going on in the diaspora due to the strong networks. The amount of time spent in Europe is also a factor as people who lived outside Somalia for a longer period of time often find it more difficult to resettle, according to the source. This is because they are unfamiliar with how best to avoid danger, have often adopted what are considered to be 'bad' Western habits of dress, character and demeanour, do not pray, and have been involved and may try to continue to be involved with the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. Language is often an issue for people returning and their different behaviour is often looked down upon. The source has spoken to people in Mogadishu who dislike people who have returned from the diaspora because they have lost their Somali culture. Furthermore, the source has spoken to people who returned to Somalia with perceived bad habits. Some ended up in the mental hospital because they were thrown out by their network due to their actions in Europe. Thus, some people returning from Europe can find themselves in a really vulnerable situation.
14. The source stated that there are no support structures in place regarding returnees returning to Somalia from Europe without a network. This means that these vulnerable groups are often exposed as soon as they arrive in Somalia. The source spoke to people who had returned to Somalia without a network. Their only option was to resettle in an IDP or squatter camp, but as these camps are often controlled by gatekeepers who charges a fee for newcomers, they could not afford to enter the camp. Hence, they were left completely to themselves.
15. Asked whether it is easier for families to resettle in Somalia compared to individuals given the same network, the source stated that there is often less stigma or suspicion associated with families compared to individuals returning to Somalia. A young, lone man can be associated with al-Shabaab or criminal activity unless he has a strong existing network in Somalia, ideally consisting of close relatives.

Conditions for failed asylum seekers from Europe to al-Shabaab controlled areas

16. According to the source, al-Shabaab themselves have said that they welcome people returning from Europe to al-Shabaab controlled areas as long as they abide by their rules and do not display or spread Western behaviour. In this relation, however, the source stressed that she has not heard of any such cases. On this subject, the source noted that there are examples of Somali families in Kenya sending relatives to al-Shabaab controlled parts of Somalia because areas controlled and policed by al-Shabaab were perceived as being the safest option, especially during times when the Somali community is targeted in Kenya.

Representative of an international organisation based in Somalia

Skype meeting, 4 June 2020

General conditions for returned persons from Europe

17. There are no official statistics available on the number of persons who returned from Europe to Somalia.
18. The source explained that there is a stigma attached to persons who return from Europe to Somalia. The returned person will try to keep a low profile to avoid attracting attention.
19. In addition, the source stated that persons, who initially migrated out of Somalia, left the country due to either poor living conditions or life threatening conditions such as being forced to take up arms and fight for clan militias, al-Shabaab, or other groups. Therefore, coming back poses a risk for the person who returned – both in economic and security terms.
20. Moreover, the source mentioned cases where returned persons have left the country upon arrival for neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia. Asked about the reasons for leaving upon return, the source informed that some persons leave for security reasons and further explained that “*nothing is secret in Somalia*” meaning that information about who returns from where, when, and why will spread quickly. Therefore, if a person who left Somalia in bad standing with a group or a clan the risk is that the person will be traced and risk persecution.
21. Furthermore, the source described that families provide financial support during the migration to Europe. Some families have sold their land and other properties to bail out their family members who during their travels through Libya and Sudan were taken hostage by human-traffickers. Thus, returning back is associated with shame. The expectation is that they make it to Europe and send financial support (remittances) back to their relatives in Somalia. The source stated that this group of returnees are considered as complete failures upon return to Somalia. For some persons the societal pressure can lead to abuse of substances and they will end up in the so-called religious rehabilitation centres. The source informed that the conditions in these centres are harsh and the admitted persons are subjected to physical and emotional abuse as part of the treatment.
22. The source explained that a person cannot be expelled from the clan, but rather it’s about their status and reputation within the clan. Are they a productive member of the clan, do they have important connections or affiliations within the government, academia, NGOs etc. Given that Somalis have an oral community and are very open, someone’s life or lifestyle abroad is known back home, and thus, stigma could rise in cases where one is engaged in activities viewed as

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contrary to the Somali culture or religion, also, when one cannot meet their family and clan expectations once they are back. It also depends how one can make connections that would enable them have access to work etc.

23. Reintegration into the society imposes challenges. The source informed that successful integration depends on how well-off your clan and family network is. The returnees are usually dumped in Mogadishu without immediate support for them to re-establish. For voluntary returnees, who are brought to Mogadishu, there is no follow up, or tracing whatsoever. UNHCR and IOM do not handle or get involved in such cases, and such cases are common, for example, a few months back, about 200 people were deported from the US. The only hope for them to get support from UNHCR, IOM, or the government is to get in touch with these entities prior to the deportation decision being made. The Somalia government do not play any role in the provision of security or livelihood. All depends on what each individual is able to get from their family networks and clan members.
24. However, the source stated that UNHCR and IOM are involved when it comes to voluntary returnees from Libya, Dadaab, Europe, or America.. UNHCR confirms their refugee's status and submits their details to the Somali embassy in that respective country for verification and screening. The Somali embassy coordinates with UNHCR and issues "go-home letters" as documentation. IOM facilitates the logistics, flight booking etc., and upon arrival in Mogadishu connects the returnee with their family, hands out a sim card and phone, and provide medical check-ups. They are also given a USD 2,000 reintegration package and in-country travels to various destinations beyond Mogadishu. There is a national committee composed of various ministries (social affairs, labour, human rights etc.) led by the Deputy PM who meet on a quarterly basis to follow up on the status of the returnees, do tracing, medical support for those in need, facilitate employment either in government departments or SNA.
25. Upon return, the group of persons who have stayed abroad or in Europe for a longer period can be better off than those who return after a short period. As these persons have had access to resources for a longer period and have been able to support their families financially, thereby positioning themselves socially and economically, the logic is that the more support you provided abroad, the more support you will get upon return.
26. Asked whether cultural norms can be a challenge for people who have lived for a longer period abroad, the sources stated that yes, clashes happen due to lack of understanding the context by the returned people. Access to social networks (beyond clan) like making friends or connecting to community groups can be difficult for them. This varies for the young and older generation. Younger people who grew up in Europe or the US have become used to a certain way of interacting and living life. For example, I met a young woman in Hargeisa from the UK who had gotten married to a man who had never left Somalia. They had a baby, and eventually, divorced because, according to her, she could not keep up with the pressure from her in-laws and her own relatives about cultural expectations on how she should live or day to day routines. She got into arguments often with her husband as he took sides with his family and she felt alone. Another dynamic is related to employment. Again, it is clan based and having someone of your clan in an important position to call for back-up or to vouch for you is critical to get a job as well as the issue of guarantor. Traditional elders and clan elders play an important role as well. So, if one is not in their good books (i.e. financially), then it is hard to get employed. So, navigating within such unfamiliar dynamics creates frustrations for the returned and causes clashes

Conditions for persons who return from Europe to al-Shabaab-controlled areas

27. Asked about the conditions for persons who return from Europe to al-Shabaab-controlled areas, the source stated that people arrive to Mogadishu, and from there, no registration or follow-ups are made. However, if the returnees' family network is in areas controlled by al-Shabaab, then the person is forced to live there. Furthermore, the source mentioned that al-Shabaab will perceive the returnee as westernised by default, and hence, the person will be a person of interest to al-Shabaab. The source elaborated that Al-Shabaab views this in two ways; either the returned person could be a spy for the west forces in Somalia and hence a threat to al-Shabaab or they are viewed as an important asset, especially the young persons are considered a "high at risk group" that can be indoctrinated and recruited easily to carry out al-Shabaab activities, information gathering, combat i.e. There has been a number of suicide attacks carried out by young people who had returned from abroad, and as reported, local communities or security forces are less suspecting of such persons.

The role of family network during resettlement

28. Family in the Somali context goes beyond the nuclear family. Family consists of an extensive network of people. Generally speaking, the family network, depending on their economic and social capacity, will provide support for its members.
29. According to the source, the role of the network is critical for survival in Somalia. Therefore, family network is significant during the resettlement and integration back into Somali society. During the initial phase of the resettlement, the family will provide for the returnee, depending on what capacity and resource each family network holds. Persons, especially young men with poor family network or from minority groups, will be forced to take up arms and join different armed groups to provide for themselves and/or their families.

Conditions for resettlement for families (nuclear family) and single persons

30. The source stated that families have more responsibilities and demand more resources. Thus, the success rate for a family is lower than a single person. Here, the capacity and resource of the individual family network also determines how well a person or family can resettle.
31. Asked if there are any facilities or structures in place to help returnees without a network to resettle into society, the source informed that there are no official programmes. Furthermore, the source mentioned that the International Migration Organisation (IOM) and UNHCR run programmes in Lower Shabelle for refugees voluntarily returning from Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya. The source further stated that IDP camps are internal displaced persons fleeing from al-Shabaab or droughts. As explained above, no government sanctioned programmes exist for returnees who have come as a result of forced deportation.

Forced recruitment of civilians by state and non-state actors*Al-Shabaab*

32. According to the source, al-Shabaab still recruits civilians. The source further stated that the SNA and AMISOM have advanced in al-Shabaab's stronghold areas in the recent years. Therefore, the source expects an increase in forced recruitment by al-Shabaab in order to make up for their losses.
33. Asked about al-Shabaab's recruitment strategy, the source informed that al-Shabaab applies different recruitment tactics: House-by-house, demanding families to send their young boys to join al-Shabaab, propaganda and indoctrination through school and madrassas, and finally, the source informed that al-Shabaab collects the Islamic tax *zakat*, and families who are not able to meet the *zakat*-obligation are forced to give up their children for recruitment.
34. Asked which age group is at risk of being forced to join al-Shabaab, the source stated that al-Shabaab recruit people of all ages, the youngest being as young as 7-8 years old.
35. The source elaborated on the different tasks performed by the different age and gender groups. For instance, young persons do not participate in direct combat. They do other types of work such as logistics and information gathering whereas older men go combat. The women are assigned to domestic care and house hold. Women are also used for intelligence gathering and transfer of weapons as women are less suspected and can easily cross check points without being detected or checked, and also, their dress code (the full garment) allows them to hide weapons easily. In some cases, women also plan and carry out attacks. In one case, I recall from last year around Bakara market, a woman was caught by the local police as she was orchestrating and coordinating the assassination of a government official in a nearby coffee shop.

Rejection of recruitment to al-Shabaab

36. According to the source, persons who reject al-Shabaab are, in the first instance, being threatened and labelled as infidels who rejected Islam and the Sharia law. In some cases, the person who rejected the recruitment is killed in order to set an example for the rest of the community. Moreover, the source mentioned several cases where defected women return to al-Shabaab after their families were threatened.

Does al-Shabaab recruit persons living in areas controlled by AMISOM and SNA?

37. Yes. Al-Shabaab undertakes active recruitment, especially in newly liberated areas that are now controlled by AMISOM and SNA. These recruitments are for spying on AMISOM and SNA, intelligence gathering, where SNA socializes, i.e. restaurants where they frequent etc.

Recruitment of civilians into other armed groups

38. The source explained that clan militias recruit from all age groups and their tactics are based on emotional clanship. The majority of the combatants join the clan militias voluntarily to protect their families and maintain control over their territories. There are no active clan militias per se, but these groups are formed on an ad-hoc basis depending on the situation, i.e. when two clans are fighting for revenge or land related disputes.

Recruitment of civilians into SNA/AMISOM

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39. The source did not have any information on forced recruitment into AMISOM and explained that SNA had improved its registration process and the source was not aware of any forced recruitment. The source also informed that another main recruiter is the Turkish military base in Mogadishu where about 200 young men and women (high school and university graduates) have been recruited on voluntary basis covering all clans throughout Somalia, including Somaliland.

Dr. Markus Höhne, University of Leipzig, Institute of Social Anthology

Skype meeting, 3 June 2020

Makurs Höhne wrote his dissertation on identity and state formation and the dynamics of conflict in northern Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland). In his current research, he is examining transitional justice in protracted conflict in Somali territories in the Horn of Africa. More specifically, the research focuses on the conception of retributive and restorative justice between the Sharia law and the customary and human rights law amongst local and diaspora Somalis.

What are the conditions for a failed asylum seeker who returns from Europe?

40. The source informed that there is no data available on the number of failed asylum seekers returning to Somalia from Europe.
41. According to the source, a person who returns to Somalia from Europe is generally viewed as a failure. This will affect the returned person and his or her family regardless of the reason for leaving Somalia. It is the hope of many that when a person travels to Europe, he or she will be a successful migrant that will be able to send back financial remittances to his or her relatives. The source further explained that the remittance economy and its impact on life in Somalia is well-documented. Therefore, a person who unsuccessfully returns from Europe will be perceived as a failure and a disappointment upon return.
42. The source informed that for many people migration is costly. Families and relatives do not consciously pour money or willingly give financial support to persons migrating out of Somalia. Oftentimes, however, migration is more unstructured and chaotic.
43. Moreover, the source mentioned that many young Somalis migrate without the consent of their relatives, parents, or other important family members. However, once a person has started the migration process, families are often obliged to provide financial support to save their lives.
44. The source stated that in recent years, Somali migrants have travelled through Sudan, Libya, and across the Mediterranean to reach Europe. The source further elaborated that on their way to Europe, the migrants may encounter human traffickers, be subjected to abduction etc. Often times, this result in families having to mobilise large amounts of capital, ranging from USD 1000-5000, in order to save the lives of the young migrants and enable them to continue their travel towards Europe. The expectation from the family and relatives is that this kind of involuntary investment must be paid back at some point. Thus, a person who has returned to Somalia from Europe is perceived as a failure and this will have an impact on how this person is received in Somalia.
45. In addition, the source stated that, particularly for young persons, life in Somalia is - if not life-threatening – then extremely challenging. However, some parts of Somalia are harder to return to than others. It is well-known that there are still substantial risks attached to life in Mogadishu and other parts of South and Central Somalia, even if a person decides to reside in a more stable part of

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the country such as the north. Due to the structural conditions, a young person without a strong family background or strong educational background will not be able to live a stable life. Young people who do return face a high degree of hopelessness upon their return to Somalia. Hence, returning back to Somalia is not acceptable by most Somalis.

46. According to the Somali family logic, members of the family will protect a person from external factors, such as social stigma and shame. Relatives, or the immediate family, may be disappointed in the returnee within the confines of the family but the family will avoid the spread of the shameful news.

Does the duration of the stay in Europe have an impact on how a returned Somali is received in Somalia?

47. The source stated that a person who has lived in Europe for several years with a legal status, access to education, a job, that sent money back to relatives, and also managed to save money will be in a better situation upon a return to Somalia compared to a person who has been kept in legal limbo without access to these resources. The source further explained that how a person positions him or herself upon return will determine his or her success in resettling. For instance, the source stated that if a person has not learned or earned anything that person will be perceived as a clear failure and that cannot be negotiated away by family members.

Are people who return from the West perceived as being 'un-Somali'?

48. Generally speaking and on the basis of how the Somali society functions, the answer is twofold: Firstly, there is always kinship solidarity among the patrilineal relatives in Somalia. A returnee will almost by default be received by close patrilineal relatives. The source mentioned that there are of course cases where people have lost all immediate family which makes life in Somalia more difficult. But in cases where patrilineal relatives exist, the kinship solidarity will come into effect and the person will be received by close patrilineal relatives and will be provided for. This does not mean that the person who returns is safe from criticism; there are limits to the solidarity but the person will be received and accepted as family. Secondly, the source explained that the behaviour of the person will be assessed, for example, if the person who returns violates Islamic provisions by drinking alcohol, not praying, using drugs, impregnating women before marriage etc., or commits other moral transgressions. The kinship solidarity among the patrilineal group will be tested. Depending on what resources the person has, the solidarity can end and the person will be put out on the street and be isolated. However, the source stressed that this situation is rare. The source further informed that family and relatives will oftentimes try to cover up the problems and negotiate with the person who has been 'westernised'. They will advise the person to end the bad behaviour and return to Somali culture and Islamic values.
49. According to the source, quite a few people return from Europe with drinking habits. These people will not display their drinking habits publicly and will consume alcohol secretly inside their houses. Furthermore, the source explained that family members will have knowledge of this and will likely not approve of the habit, but as long as the drinking is kept secret to others, the family will tolerate the behaviour to some degree. This will also be weighed against how beneficial the person is to the family.

Reintegration

50. The source stated that the patrilineal relatives will try to reintegrate the returnee and deal with their behaviours acquired in the West. Compromise is expected from the person who has returned; they are expected to follow Somali cultural norms and avoid bringing shame on their family. But if the returnee persistently violates the moral norms of the Somali culture, he or she will be isolated and eventually thrown out of the solidarity network.
51. Asked if persons who return from Europe are automatically perceived as westernised, the source stated that the behaviour of the person determines how the person is perceived upon return to Somalia. For instance, if a person is tattooed from head-to-toe, chain smokes, does not pray, and drinks alcohol, the person will be perceived as strongly westernised and immoral. However, if the person adheres to Somali norms, for example as a male by covering his body with long trousers and long sleeves, not having tattoos, praying regularly, the person will not be perceived as westernised. The source informed that a person may not be fluent in the Somali language but this will not be seen as a problem. Normally, he or she can catch up with Somali language within a year or so.

Conditions and implications for people returning to al-Shabaab controlled areas

52. Returning to al-Shabaab controlled areas is a very sensitive issue. People will avoid returning to areas controlled by al-Shabaab if they are able to.
53. The source further explained that usually people will return to Mogadishu where there are districts not effectively controlled by al-Shabaab. The source informed that al-Shabaab is present in Mogadishu and is able to instil fear and kill civilians but they do not have a visible day-and-night control over Mogadishu. Therefore, if a person manages to keep a low profile and is correctly advised by relatives, the person will manage to get out of al-Shabaab's ways to some degree when living in Mogadishu.
54. The source stated that if a person returns to al-Shabaab controlled territories in the Somali hinterlands, such as Jamame, Lower Juba, and the areas between Mogadishu and Kismayo, the person must be very careful. The source elaborated that people living in al-Shabaab controlled areas are obliged to change their lives fundamentally and adapt to al-Shabaab's rules. If a person does not follow the strict provisions by al-Shabaab that person is in danger.

Conditions for people returning to Somalia without a family network

55. Life in Somalia without a family network (immediate family or extended family) is difficult and it is almost impossible to survive under these circumstances. A person who returns to an area without a family network is therefore forced to seek protection and shelter in an Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. The conditions in the IDP camps are harsh, which is well-documented.
56. The source also stressed that family network is not always confined to one area. Therefore a person might be able to find extended family members in a different part of Somalia. However, if a person's entire family network resides in al-Shabaab controlled area, the decision is 'between a rock and a hard place'; surviving without a family network is difficult and living in an al-Shabaab controlled area is also difficult.

Conditions for resettlement for families versus individuals

57. The source informed that during resettlement, families returning might face more complications due to their demands compared to an individual. They need more physical space and resources. Children also need to be provided for in terms of school, food, clothes etc. Therefore, the demands and economic challenges for families are more expensive, thereby making it more challenging to resettle. Children will also be exposed to challenges, especially young girls, who might face Female Gender Mutilation (FGM).
58. Asked whether a nuclear family counts as a meaningful network in Somalia, the sources stated no, definitely not. Network in a Somali context will consist of the extended family, patrilineal group, the mother's patrilineal group and so forth which can comprise several hundred persons, of which maybe some 20 people will be responsive in relation to resolving problems of the returnee. In any case: The family network extends way beyond the nuclear family.

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Introduction, methodology and delimitation

2. Background

- History
- Political Developments

3. Security and control

- Actors in the conflicts - Focus on the capacity and capability of al-Shabaab
- Control situation
- Civilian casualties

4. Forced recruitment

- Al-Shabaab
- Somalia National Army (SNA)/African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)
- Child recruitment

5. Conditions for returnees from Europe

- Access to services
- Mobility