

Indicators of indiscriminate violence

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last updated: June 2022

The common analysis regarding the degree of indiscriminate violence taking place in the different regions of Somalia combines quantitative and qualitative elements in a holistic and inclusive assessment.

The indicators applied are formulated in reference to the ECtHR judgment in *Sufi and Elmi*:



[...] first, whether the parties to the conflict were either employing methods and tactics of warfare which increased the risk of civilian casualties or directly targeting civilians; secondly, whether the use of such methods and/or tactics was widespread among the parties to the conflict; thirdly, whether the fighting was localised or widespread; and finally, the number of civilians killed, injured and displaced as a result of the fighting.

ECtHR, *Sufi and Elmi*, para.241

These indicators are further developed and adapted in order to be applied as a general approach to assessing the element of 'indiscriminate violence', irrespective of the country of origin in question.

The security situation in the respective states is assessed by taking into account the following elements.

Presence of actors in the conflict

This indicator looks into the presence of actors in the conflict in a region, including the presence of state and non-state armed groups. Furthermore, information regarding the territorial control of the region, to the degree possible, is included in the respective COI summaries.

Nature of methods and tactics

The methods and tactics used in the armed conflicts ongoing in Somalia differ according to the actors involved. All actors are reported to engage in activities which may (indiscriminately) affect civilians. However, some acts are by their nature more indiscriminate than others and create a more substantial risk for civilians.

The actions by the Somali security forces tend to be of a more targeted nature; however, they may also (indiscriminately) affect civilians, such as in the case of battles.

Al-Shabaab is particularly known to use methods which are of indiscriminate nature, such as improvised explosive devices (IED, S/VBIED), which continues to be its most used type of attack/weapon. Person-borne improvised explosive devices or suicide vests remain a concern. Target locations include public places, such as public roads, hotels and restaurants. It has also engaged in armed clashes or hit-and-run attacks with federal and state forces as well as with international actors and armed clan militias. Large-scale complex attacks, mortar attacks and targeted assassinations have also been reported. [[Actors](#), 4.2.3]

ISS has also adopted methods which are of indiscriminate nature, like IED attacks [[Actors](#), 6.3].

Clan militias have been mostly involved in clashes. Security incidents related to clan conflicts do not always receive local media attention and hence might go under-reported in Somalia. [[Actors](#), 3.4.2; [Security 2021](#), 2.1.1.3, 2.1.3.3]

AFRICOM has also conducted airstrikes in Somalia causing both militant and civilian fatalities [[Security 2021](#), 1.4.1].

For more information on the nature of methods and tactics used by the actors involved in armed conflicts, see also [Actors of persecution or serious harm](#).

Frequency of incidents

The frequency of incidents is a useful indicator to assist in the assessment of the risk of indiscriminate violence. Based on available COI, derived from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) database, this indicator looks in particular at incidents reported as ‘battles’, ‘violence against civilians’, and ‘explosions/remote violence’, which are found to be of relevance in terms of their potential to indiscriminately affect civilians.

ACLED codes security incidents as follows:

- **Battles:** violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battles can occur between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. Sub-events of battles are armed clashes, government regains territory and non-state actor overtakes territory.
- **Violence against civilians:** violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. It includes violent attacks on unarmed civilians such as sexual violence, attacks, abduction/forced disappearance.
- **Explosions/remote violence:** events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device was used to engage in conflict.

ACLED recorded 3 663 such incidents in Somalia, and provided for the following breakdown: 2 212 battles, 812 explosions/remote violence and 639 instances of violence against civilians [[Security 2021](#), 1.4.1]. However, it should be highlighted that ACLED data with regard to incidents should be regarded as merely estimates and indications of trends in violence, due to limitations in the reporting of incidents. See clarifications in [Security 2021](#), Methodology.

In order to provide an indication of the relative intensity of incidents, the number of security incidents is furthermore presented as a weekly average for the reference period (1 January 2020– 30 June 2021).

Geographical scope

This element looks into how widespread the violence within each region is, highlighting the areas (districts) which are particularly affected by indiscriminate violence and/or the areas (districts) which are relatively less affected, where relevant information is available.

Where the conflict severity varies within an area, the place of origin of the applicant would constitute an important element to consider in the assessment. The higher the level of indiscriminate violence in the respective place, the less additional individual elements would be required in order to apply [Article 15\(c\) QD](#).

The individual assessment should also take into account the accessibility of a certain territory.

Civilian casualties

The number of civilian casualties is considered a key indicator when assessing the level of indiscriminate violence and the associated risk for civilians in the context of [Article 15\(c\) QD](#).^[20]

As no comprehensive data with regard to civilian deaths and injuries at the level of the regions in Somalia has been identified, this analysis refers to ACLED records regarding the overall number of fatalities. The data used for this indicator reflects the number of fatalities in relation to reported 'battles', 'violence against civilians' and 'explosions/remote violence', as defined above with reference to the ACLED Codebook. Importantly, it does not differentiate between civilians and combatants and does not additionally capture the number of those injured in relation to such incidents. While this does not directly meet the information needs under the indicator 'civilian casualties', it can nevertheless be seen as a relevant indication of the level of confrontations and degree of violence taking place.

It should further be mentioned that ACLED data are regarded as merely estimates, due to limitations in the reporting of incidents, and especially with regard to the number of fatalities. For incidents which, according to the original source, had led to an unknown number of fatalities, ACLED codes the number of fatalities as 10 in 'a significant attack in an active warzone' or 'a significant attack outside of a warzone', and as 3 in 'an attack of more limited scope, in an active warzone' or 'an attack outside of a warzone. See clarifications in [Security 2021](#), Methodology.

ACLED recorded 4 820 estimated fatalities in Somalia in the reference period [[Security 2021](#), 1.4.1]. The data on fatalities per region is provided for the period 1 January 2020 – 30 June 2021. The reported number of fatalities is further weighted by the population of the state, as estimated in 2014, and presented as 'number of fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants', rounded to the nearest whole

number. In cases where the number of fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants is less than one, this is specifically indicated.

[20] See also CJEU, *CF and DN v Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, paras. 31-33.

Displacement

This element refers to conflict-induced (internal) displacement from the region in question.

For the number of newly internally displaced persons (IDPs), the COI summaries reflect data from UNHCR - Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN), covering the period between January 2020 – May 2021.

As of 1 January 2021, the number of IDPs in Somalia was estimated at more than 2.9 million. Based on PRMN, between January 2020 and May 2021, there were in Somalia a total of 1 786 000 newly displaced persons: 1 336 000 in 2020, and 450 000 in 2021. About 32% of these, or 572 000 people, were displaced due to conflict/insecurity reasons. [[Security 2021](#), 1.4.3]

It should further be highlighted that, in the Somali context, someone is considered an IDP when he or she settles on land particularly designated for displaced people. Therefore, people who join relatives or live in rented accommodations are not represented in the IDP numbers. [[Socio-economic 2021](#), 1.2.3]

In addition to the indicators above, where available, some examples of further impact of the armed conflicts on the life of civilians (e.g. existence of checkpoints, infrastructure damage, obstacles to humanitarian aid and other disruptions to civilian life) are mentioned and taken into account in the assessment.



None of the indicators above would be sufficient by itself to assess the level of indiscriminate violence and the risk it creates for the civilian population in a particular area. Therefore, a holistic approach has been applied, taking into account all different elements.

It should, furthermore, be noted that the COI used as a basis for this assessment cannot be considered a complete representation of the extent of indiscriminate violence and its impact on the life of civilians. Concerns with regard to underreporting, especially pertinent to the quantitative indicators above, should be taken into account.