

## 2.11.2. Violence by Al-Shabaab

### COMMON ANALYSIS

Last updated: June 2022

#### COI summary

[Main COI reference: [Targeting](#), 2.2, 2.3, 3.1]

Women are commonly recruited by Al-Shabaab through marriage, including forced and child marriage. Women are often left without choice due to family and clan pressure. Al-Shabaab has abducted and forced girls aged 14 to 20 to marry fighters, while threatening their families with violence. Furthermore, wife inheritance remains common, and widows of Al-Shabaab husbands can be married-off to any Al-Shabaab member. Especially in the case of Bantu/Jareer girls and women, marriage to Al-Shabaab fighters has been described as sexual and domestic slavery. However, 'some women members do express strong support for the movement and its goals and regard themselves as full-fledged members'. Additionally, some women who have grown up in environments beset with insecurity and gender-based violence may see marriage into Al-Shabaab, and the protection that comes with it, as a better alternative to being raped by a militiaman. For more information on the recruitment and use of women and girls by Al-Shabaab, see sub-profile [2.2.1 Persons fearing forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab](#).

Many women and girls who managed to escape from these marriages were subjected to threats and, in some cases, sexual exploitation in displacement settings where they had found refuge. Militants' former wives also faced stigma. Some female deserters also face danger to be recaptured by Al-Shabaab after leaving the group.

Al-Shabaab further limits women's rights and movement in public in a severe manner. Women are forced to adhere to a specific dress code and be accompanied by a male guardian. The group also enforces a strict gender division in public transportation and in public interactions [[Actors](#), 4.4]. See also profile [2.6 Individuals \(perceived as\) contravening social or religious laws/tenets](#).

## **Risk analysis**

Forced and child marriage by Al-Shabaab amount to persecution. Furthermore, women and girls could be exposed to acts by Al-Shabaab which are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. killing, abduction, sexual violence, domestic slavery). Additionally, women and girls who have escaped from Al-Shabaab marriages could be exposed to acts which are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. sexual exploitation). When the acts in question are (solely) of discriminatory nature (e.g. restrictions of women's freedom of movement, dress code), the individual assessment of whether discrimination could amount to persecution should take into account the severity and/or repetitiveness of the acts or whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures.

Not all women and girls would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution in relation to violence by Al-Shabaab. The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: age, area of origin and presence of Al-Shabaab, clan affiliation, family/community perception, etc.

## **Nexus to a reason for persecution**

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of race (e.g. in the case of Bantu women) and/or religion (see also profile [2.6 Individuals \(perceived as\) contravening social or religious laws/tenets](#)).

Additionally, persecution of women who have left Al-Shabaab marriages may also be for reasons of membership of particular social group based on their common background which cannot be changed (past marriage to Al-Shabaab) and distinct identity in Somalia (in relation to stigmatisation).

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See other topics concerning women and girls:

- [2.11.1. Violence against women and girls: overview](#)
  - [2.11.2. Violence by Al-Shabaab](#)
  - [2.11.3. Child marriage and forced marriage](#)
  - [2.11.4. Female genital mutilation or cutting \(FGM/C\)](#)
  - [2.11.5. Women and girls in clan conflicts](#)
  - [2.11.6. Single women and female heads of households](#)
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