

2.2.2. Child recruitment by Al-Shabaab

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last updated: June 2022

This profile refers to children fearing recruitment by Al-Shabaab. For an overview of other actors recruiting children, see [2.12 Children](#).

For information on the treatment of families refusing to provide younger family members, including children, as recruits to Al-Shabaab, see sub-profile [2.2.1 Persons fearing forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab](#).

COI summary

[[Targeting](#), 1]

Children form most of the new recruits of Al-Shabaab, as the group targets predominantly boys and young men between 12 and 24 years old. Between January and June 2020, Al-Shabaab was responsible for 75% of child recruitment cases in Somalia, with the largest numbers of such incidents documented in Middle Jubba, Lower Shabelle and Bay. Children recruited by Al-Shabaab have been used in combat, including as human shields and suicide bombers, or to plant explosive devices, as well as in auxiliary roles, such as carrying ammunition, water, and food, removing injured and dead militants, gathering intelligence, and serving as guards.

According to reports, the group started recruiting local children following the decrease of the numbers of non-Somali recruits and their loss of territory. Reports further suggest that Al-Shabaab's child recruitment campaigns were targeting communities perceived to be aligned with the government. Children were abducted and forced to join their ranks. Families who were unable to pay

(religious) taxes to Al-Shabaab were often coerced into giving up their children to the group. Al-Shabaab's recruitment efforts have also targeted orphaned children and children in IDP camps.

Children are further indoctrinated in schools set up by the organisation. The use of Islamic institutes and education of children in Al-Shabaab schools with the aim of creating young recruits with a 'Jihadi worldview' has been reported.

Risk analysis

Child recruitment is of such severe nature that it amounts to persecution, including when recruitment is not induced by coercion.

Not all children would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution in the form of child recruitment. 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: gender, age, area of origin and the control or influence of Al-Shabaab, clan affiliation and clan positioning towards Al-Shabaab, socio-economic situation of the family, family status (e.g. orphans), etc.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

The individual circumstances of the child need to be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. For example, in the case of children who refuse to join Al-Shabaab, persecution may be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion and/or religion.



See other topics concerning individuals fearing recruitment by Al-Shabaab and deserters from Al-Shabaab:

- [2.2.1. Persons fearing forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab](#)
- [2.2.2. Child recruitment by Al-Shabaab](#)
- [2.2.3. Deserters from Al-Shabaab](#)

