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Somalia: Al-Shabaab and Female Genital Mutilation are the main drivers of protection needs



The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published updated Country Guidance on Somalia. The findings of this most recent analysis confirm that the ongoing armed conflict between security forces and the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, together with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Somalia continue to substantiate the international protection needs of applicants.

Since the launch of a counter-offensive against Al-Shabaab in August 2022, high numbers of Al-Shabaab fighters have been encouraged to disengage, desert, or defect to the Somali authorities, with limited and sometimes dangerous reintegration options. The assessment of international protection needs of such individuals is at the core of this first update to the EUAA's Country Guidance on Somalia.

The conflict between **Al-Shabaab and national security forces also continues to affect the security situation** in some regions of Somalia, and this has been reflected in the updated assessment of subsidiary protection needs. The analysis points to **high levels of indiscriminate violence**, impacting the civilian

population in several regions, particularly in South-Central Somalia.

Separate and apart from the challenging security situation, **girls and women also continue to face the highly prevalent practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** in the country. The EUAA's guidance incorporates updated findings on FGM, focusing, in particular, on the practice of repeated FGM, and confirms the high international protection needs of women and girls from Somalia.

This analysis represents the joint assessment of EU Member States and is based on recent information on the security situation in the country, the disengagement from Al-Shabaab and the practice of repeated Female Genital Mutilation. In the context of EU support to national asylum authorities, the EUAA Country Guidance on Somalia serves as a key reference document, aiming to assist national decision-makers and to foster convergence in decision practices across the EU.

According to the EUAA's annual overview of asylum trends in 2022, Somalis lodged more than 17?500 applications, which is the most since 2016. As such, Somalis continue to represent a large group among the applicants for international protection in EU+ countries.

Background

The country guidance documents provide country-specific, common analysis and guidance in relation to the assessment criteria of international protection needs established in the Qualification Directive. They are developed together with senior policy officials from EU+ countries and endorsed by the EUAA Management Board.

In accordance with Article 11 of the EUAA Regulation, Member States have the obligation to take into account the guidance notes and common analysis when examining applications for international protection, without prejudice to their competence for deciding on individual applications.

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