

Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: Safeguarding the protection of refugees affected by Al-Shabaab-related conflicts in Somalia

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Al-Shabaab, properly known as the Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin, are an extremist Islamic terrorist organisation operating primarily within the boundaries of Somalia, Kenya and Uganda and have furthermore pledged obedience to the cause of al-Qa'ida. Al-Shabaab was founded as the militant wing of the Somali Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in the 1990s, shortly after the outbreak of the ongoing Somali Civil War in 1986, violently forcing their ideology of an arbitrary and oppressive Islamic Sharia law system across Somalia. Despite the United Nations (UN) sponsored Ethiopian eradication of the ICU in December of 2006, Al-Shabaab continues its malevolent ambition of overthrowing the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and establishing a fundamentalist Islamic state whilst expelling all foreign presence in Somalia. Al-Shabaab attempts to impose and enforce their Islamic dogma through means of undemocratically destabilising the FGS and executing its officials, civilian mass exterminations, persecution of foreign peacekeepers such as those of the African Union (AU) and hate crimes against religious groups aside from that of Sunni Islam. The Somali Refugee Crisis arises from constant terror-oriented insurgency from Al-Shabaab against the Federal Government of Somalia, effectively prolonging the civil war causing mass displacements, mostly internal.

Individuals residing inside regions under de facto control of Al-Shabaab flee to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the country's capital Mogadishu, Kenya and Djibouti mostly due to starvation. Somalia is geographically predisposed to extreme droughts, causing the country to be exceptionally reliant on foreign aid to secure the population's food needs. As foreign aid does not resonate with the ideals of Al-Shabaab, areas under their unofficial administration suffer from an acute deficiency of food leaving several individuals to emigrate and seek basic needs in internationally-supported IDP camps in Mogadishu or neighbouring states. Additionally, Al-Shabaab forcefully recruits young male adults and underage boys into their militia,¹ further intensifying emigration. The greatest threats to the protection of refugees caused by Al-Shabaab-related conflicts remain migration rights under Sharia Law, reprisals for defecting, the sanctioning

¹ Human Rights Watch. No Place for Children: Child Recruitment, Forced Marriage, and Attacks on Schools in Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 20 Feb. 2012, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/02/20/no-place-children/child-recruitment-forced-marriage-and-attacks-schools-somalia>

of the right to free movement, conditions in IDP and refugee camps in Mogadishu and neighbouring states, and most crucially; food security.



Figure 1: People walk amidst destruction at the scene of a double car bombing at a busy intersection, a day after the attack, in Mogadishu, Somalia, Oct. 30, 2022.²

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Counterterrorism

An entourage of policy, intelligence efforts and military operations targeted at predicting, averting and responding to the terrorist menace. Counterterrorism is often a key aspect and focus of peacekeeping missions in Somalia.³

Displacement

² VOA News. People Walk Amidst Destruction at the Scene of a Double Car Bombing at a Busy Intersection, a Day After the Attack, in Mogadishu, Somalia, Oct. 30, 2022. 1 Nov. 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/death-toll-rises-in-somalia-al-shabab-attacks/6815098.html>.

³ National Museum of American Diplomacy. "What Is Counterterrorism?" U.S. Department of State, 7 May 2025, <https://diplomacy.state.gov/teacher-resources/what-is-counterterrorism-video/>

A pattern of individuals who have fled their homes and hence relocated elsewhere in order to access better living conditions or evacuate poor ones.⁴

Food Insecurity

A phenomenon where individuals do not have guaranteed social or economic access to food due to underlying reasons which may be social, political, economic or environmental.⁵

Foreign Aid

The donation of necessary resources such as food, medical supplies and capital to nations in need of relief with the scope of improving humanitarian conditions in the country. Can create dependency as a government outsources its citizens' needs to foreign donors and can additionally be exploited by insurgents.⁶

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

A refugee who has not crossed any international boundaries and has remained within their home state. IDPs remain within the boundary of their own state, therefore they are not protected under any international convention or treaty and remain under the jurisdiction of their country's migration laws.⁷

Islamic Terrorism

Religiously motivated acts of unjustified violence to forcefully and inhumanely promote Islamic values, faith and Sharia Law as justified by a more extreme interpretation of the act of 'Jihad', the physical and bloody struggle against the infidels (Individuals of faith other than Islam). Instrumentalises fear as a mechanism to prove the self-decided superiority of Islam.⁸

Marginalisation

The process of actively and arbitrarily excluding refugees and IDPs from the same social, economic, political and humanitarian support that locals are entitled to. Occurs because a

⁴ International Council of Voluntary Agencies. Forced Displacement. ICVA Network, <https://icvanetwork.org/page/forceddisplacement>

⁵ World Food Programme. "Food Security – What It Means and Why It Matters." World Food Programme, 7 July 2025, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/food-security-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters>

⁶ Aliprandini, Michael, and Alexander Stingl. "Foreign Aid: Overview." EBSCO Research Starters: Diplomacy and International Relations, EBSCO Information Services, 2016, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/diplomacy-and-international-relations/foreign-aid-overview>

⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Internally Displaced People. UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people>

⁸ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz). Islamist Extremism and Islamist Terrorism. Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/islamist-extremism-and-islamist-terrorism/islamist-extremism-and-islamist-terrorism_node.html

government is unwilling or lacks the capabilities to support such individuals, often intentionally as a means to discourage unnecessary migration and target minority groups.⁹

Peacekeeping Operation

International military operations with the objective of maintaining or restoring peace in an area heavily affected by instability or conflict. Are often organised by supranational organisations such as the UN or the AU.¹⁰

Refugee

An individual forced to flee their home due to conditions that endanger their life. Legally protected under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, granting them amongst other rights shelter in a secure country.¹¹

Refugee Camp

Designated installments and settlements where individuals forced to flee their homes due to dangerous conditions reside in. Are often managed and operated either by national governments, international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or a hybrid of both. Residents are supposedly offered and entitled to shelter, protection, and basic necessities such as food, water and medical attention.¹²

Regional Instability

Several factions constantly engage in armed conflict and socio-political tension often accompanied by the prolonged lack of an authority able to govern a given territory. Presents itself as a hazard to day to day life and reduces accessibility to economic, social and political resources. Furthermore regional boundaries are often modified, leading to a state of uncertainty and chaos.¹³

Sharia Law

An oppressive law system derived from the broader Sharia which sets the societal framework for an Islamic way of life dictated directly by the Quran. Aside from regulating an individual's relationship with its fellow citizens and the state as traditional legal systems such as common or

⁹ Rawat, Naman. "Anti-refugee Violence and Social Marginalization of Refugees: Evidence from Germany." International Migration Review (2026): 01979183251414101.

¹⁰ UNESCO. Peacekeeping. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, <https://www.unesco.org/en/query-list/p/peacekeeping>

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Refugees. UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees>

¹² USA for UNHCR. What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics. USA for UNHCR, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>

¹³ TRT World Research Centre. Regional Instability. TRT World Research Centre, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/dictionary/regional-instability/>

civil law do, Sharia Law furthermore commands an individual's own conscience and their relationship with God. A law system drawn from religious text rather than merit adopted by both the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Al-Shabaab in a more extreme form.¹⁴

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Present Day Al-Shabaab-related Conflict in Somalia

The ongoing Somali Civil war is not a simple struggle between the FGS and Al-Shabaab but rather a much more complex conflict involving several other factions and clans. The struggle for control between the FGS and Al-Shabaab is nonetheless the primary conflict causing the greatest threat to peace today in southern and central Somalia. Despite Al-Shabaab's parent organisation, the ICU, being driven out of Somalia in 2006, they continue to contest the FGS's authority in a violent fashion over differences in ideology. Al-Shabaab continue their insurgency against the FGS today in hopes of establishing a fundamental Islamic state, setting Sharia Law as the default legal and social system in the country, expelling all foreign forces and ridding the country of any Christianity.¹⁵ While the agenda and motifs of Al-Shabaab are in no way standardised, the aforementioned appear to be the leading factors behind their uprising and attacks. Al-Shabaab seek to implement their vague and vastly undecided agenda by directly occupying territory in Somalia, attempting not to coup the government (FGS) but rather defeat them in war. Al-Shabaab does so by assassinating FGS officials and carrying out guerilla attacks on FGS forces.¹⁶ Furthermore, Al-Shabaab employ terror tactics such as suicide bombings and small arms attacks on civilian populations, which they claim are in the name of Jihad, in order to press down on the population and challenge the dwindling security offered by the FGS.¹⁷ In short, Al-Shabaab consolidates power over territory by destabilising the local FGS government and forces and assists this by insinuating fear into local populations to further fuel instability and panic.

¹⁴ Robinson, Kali. "Understanding Sharia: The Intersection of Islam and the Law." Council on Foreign Relations, 17 Dec. 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/understanding-sharia-intersection-islam-and-law>

¹⁵ Keating, Michael, and Matt Waldman, eds. *War and peace in Somalia: National grievances, local conflict and Al-Shabaab*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

¹⁶ National Counterterrorism Center. "Al-Shabaab." Terrorist Groups, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Apr. 2026, https://www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/al_shabaab.html

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia. United Nations, 2024, <https://undocs.org/S/2024/748>

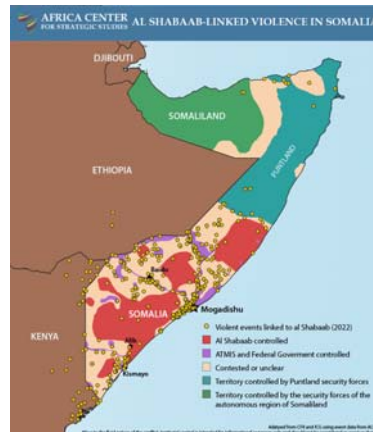


Figure 2: Al Shabaab-linked Violence in Somalia¹⁸

Aside from being clearly engaged in civil war with the FGS, Al-Shabaab is able to carry out terror attacks across almost the entire country, predominantly contested regions or ones still under control of the FGS. Al-Shabaab and the FGS have been involved in this conflict since the destruction of the ICU and no side seems to be prevailing as territory is constantly contested and boundaries modified even daily. The assistance of African Union peacekeepers through the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) has proved rather redundant in aiding the FGS defeat Al-Shabaab. According to AUSSOM's very own mandate, their mission is one of support and humanitarian support, engaging directly with Al-Shabaab remains the responsibility of the FGS even if AUSSOM is able to support the FGS when they do so.¹⁹ AUSSOM has not alleviated the stalemate and civil war persists.

Conditions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Of the 555,000 internal displacements recorded in Somalia in 2024, 53% of them were caused by conflict.²⁰ IDPs flee from contested areas where Al-Shabaab and the FGS are actively engaged in battle, forcing individuals to migrate. IDPs in Somalia face trouble associated with physically migrating to relatively stable FGS controlled areas and their refugee camps due to Al-Shabaab blockades and are additionally volatile to poor conditions in camps such as sexual violence, low supply of basic necessities and lack of legal representation. Al-Shabaab can be held accountable for several of the issues associated with IDP camps in Somalia, for instance Al-

¹⁸ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Al Shabaab-Linked Violence in Somalia." Africacenter.Org, 27 Mar. 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/reclaiming-al-shabaabs-revenue/>.

¹⁹ African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia. AUSSOM Mandate. <https://au-ssom.org/aussom-mandate/>

²⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Somalia Annual Results Report 2024. UNHCR, June 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/somalia-annual-results-report-2024>

Shabaab's idea of no tolerance for foreign intervention leads to intentional obstructions of foreign aid through both targeting workers in attacks and disallowing the passage of aid.

Al-Shabaab Blockades and their Repercussions on the Freedom of Movement and Food Security

One of Al-Shabaab's memorable tactics to enforce its sparse agenda is through blockades. The al-Qa'ida affiliate is known to set up decade-long road blockades at key chokepoints granting access or exit into territory they control.²¹ These blockades are especially significant to the protection of refugees as they severely limit free movement and the passage of aid. Al-Shabaab actively restricts locals' right to free movement as they consider it a deliberate act of desertion and hence a violation of Sharia Law. The blockades that have been set up make it near impossible for many refugees to flee. In the past, Al-Shabaab has detained, arrested and even killed individuals who violate Sharia Law, beheading them in public.²² The terrorist organisation even goes as far as to conduct reprisals on the families of those who attempt to flee and collective summary executions, further discouraging displacements.²³ Al-Shabaab deliberately confines individuals within the borders of territory under their control, a blatant violation of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state".²⁴ The issue is further aggravated by the second and arguably more concerning use of these blockades; the so-called 'economic blockades'. As previously stated, Al-Shabaab's irreverence for foreign intervention applies to foreign aid as well. Foreign aid is absolutely crucial in Somalia. The extreme meteorological conditions and droughts of Somalia make subsistence agriculture, the former main food source in the country, not agriculturally viable. Somalia is incredibly reliant on foreign aid to import food donated by the international community and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). As of 2026, 6.5 million Somalis risk crisis levels of food insecurity,²⁵ an absurd number considering the population of Somalia is 20.3 million. Al-Shabaab actively persecutes foreign aid

²¹ International Crisis Group. New Chapter, Same Stalemate: Somalia's War with Al-Shabaab. Crisis Group, 30 June 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/brf/africa/somalia/b212-new-chapter-same-stalemate-somalias-war-al-shabaab>

²² Human Rights Watch. "You Don't Know Who to Blame": War Crimes in Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 14 Aug. 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/08/14/you-dont-know-who-blame/war-crimes-somalia>

²³ Human Rights Watch. Harsh War, Harsh Peace: Abuses by al-Shabaab, the Transitional Federal Government, and AMISOM in Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 19 Apr. 2010, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/04/19/harsh-war-harsh-peace/abuses-al-shabaab-transitional-federal-government-and>

²⁴ United Nations. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations, 10 Dec. 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

²⁵ World Food Programme. Somalia's Humanitarian Crisis Worsening with 6.5 Million People Facing High Levels of Hunger, Federal Government and United Nations Warn. 24 Feb. 2026, <https://www.wfp.org/news/somalias-humanitarian-crisis-worsening-65-million-people-facing-high-levels-hunger-federal>

workers and convoys at such blockades, even going as far as planning lethal attacks on them.²⁶ The hindering of foreign aid contributes to dangerous levels of food insecurity which not only affects Al-Shabaab controlled territory but the rest of Somalia as well as the transit of foreign aid, for example to refugee camps, is obstructed.

Conditions in Mogadishu Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps

Under international law, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are not granted a special status as Asylum Seekers and international refugees are. This means that under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), IDPs reserve the same rights as any other citizen and while they do enjoy protection under basic provisions of IHL in times of conflict and under national law,²⁷ their rights are much harder to safeguard. The most concerning violations of the rights of IDPs take place in IDP camps, located mostly in the FGS controlled capital city, Mogadishu.

²⁶ Amnesty International. Fatal Insecurity: Attacks on Aid Workers and Rights Defenders in Somalia. Amnesty International, 6 Nov. 2008, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr520162008en.pdf>

²⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross. "Refugees and Displaced Persons Protected under International Humanitarian Law." International Committee of the Red Cross, 29 Oct. 2010, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/protected-persons/refugees-displaced-persons>



Figure 3: Somalia - IDP Camps Map²⁸

Internally Displaced Persons residing in such camps, known as camp dwellers, suffer from an array of human rights violations. According to Human Rights Watch the gravest violation in these camps is sexual violence and sexual assault. In a Human Rights Watch investigation, witnesses reported that the risk of rape towards women and girls is “significant” and that it is common for armed personnel of the FGS and FGS-recruited “camp security militias” to carry out these assaults, proving that not even the national government is able to safeguard the protection of refugees. Another serious violation of IDP rights in these camps is the diversion and theft of international relief aid intended for them. Somalia’s food insecurity is so extreme that even corrupt FGS officials and camp personnel diverted the little aid that did arrive for their own gain, leaving countless starving despite having fled conflict areas. IDPs were also reportedly taken “hostage”

²⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Somalia: IDP Camps Map (25 May 2025). OCHA, 25 May 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/map/somalia/somalia-idp-camps-map-25-may-2025>

as by leaving they would be renouncing their tent and effectively offering it to another IDP by the rules imposed by camp militias and the FGS.²⁹ Naturally, due to the fact that IDP camps are managed by the FGS, little to no statistics and reports are available on matters such as sexual misconduct and improper behaviours of camp personnel. Due to this, it is highly problematic to instill preventative measures as the true nature of the issue cannot properly be investigated and understood. The aforementioned incidents are rarely reported out of fear of reprisal as the FGS is ultimately responsible for IDP camps.

Moreover, a firm clan presence further worsens conditions in IDP camps. Access to the few resources that are not pocketed by camp officials and FGS-affiliated militias can only be guaranteed through clan association. The vast majority of IDPs are evidently not from the Mogadishu area, meaning that they find themselves in a completely new social hierarchy even if they were once in a reputable position within major clans in their home rural areas.³⁰ These clans, aside from only setting conditions for their adherents and members to be offered resources, furthermore make use of IDP camps in Mogadishu as forced recruiting ground. Many clans are in powerful positions with the FGS, granting them the status of camp militias, and therefore unrestricted access to such camps. These clans disguised as righteous militias take advantage of largely undocumented and under-legally represented individuals to forcefully recruit them.³¹ This is especially true for young men and underage boys. On the other hand, young girls are enslaved and subject to sexual violence and forced marriage within Al-Shabaab social groups. Al-Shabaab themselves are often found recruiting such individuals in areas with predominant camps.³²

²⁹ Human Rights Watch. Hostages of the Gatekeepers: Abuses against Internally Displaced in Mogadishu, Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 28 Mar. 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/03/28/hostages-gatekeepers/abuses-against-internally-displaced-mogadishu-somalia>

³⁰ European Union Agency for Asylum. COI Report – Somalia: Displacement in Mogadishu: Displacements, Evictions, Prison Conditions, and Access to IDs. European Union Agency for Asylum, 29 May 2026, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/coi-report-somalia-displacement-mogadishu>

³¹ Human Rights Watch. No Place for Children: Child Recruitment, Forced Marriage, and Attacks on Schools in Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 20 Feb. 2012, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/02/20/no-place-children/child-recruitment-forced-marriage-and-attacks-schools-somalia>

³² European Union Agency for Asylum. Country Guidance: Somalia – 3.12.2 Child Recruitment by Al-Shabaab. EUAA, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-somalia/3122-child-recruitment-al-shabaab>



Figure 4: Children recruited by the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab, at a training camp in the Afgooye Corridor, west of Mogadishu, southern Somalia, in February 2011.³³

Marginalisation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

While a smaller issue compared to the plainly substandard conditions in IDP camps, the marginalisation of IDPs is an area of adequate concern. Certain IDPs tied to non-dominant discriminated clans are arbitrarily targeted in IDP camps, where they are frequently unjustly detained and likely to suffer from torture and gender-based violence.³⁴

More notably, underage IDPs affiliated with Al-Shabaab either via clan affiliation or forced recruitment are regularly tried in FGS military courts as if they were adults. Throughout such trials, defendants as young as fourteen are deprived of legal counsel and representation. Underage Indictees undergo coerced confessions and can be imprisoned anywhere from six years to life.³⁵ Actions of this nature conducted by the Federal Government of Somalia are in violation of the

³³ Children recruited by the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab at a training camp in the Afgooye Corridor, west of Mogadishu, southern Somalia, February 2011. © 2011 Private. Reproduced from No Place for Children: Child Recruitment, Forced Marriage, and Attacks on Schools in Somalia (Human Rights Watch, 2012)

³⁴ European Union Agency for Asylum. COI Report – Somalia: Displacement in Mogadishu: Displacements, Evictions, Prison Conditions, and Access to IDs. European Union Agency for Asylum, 29 May 2026, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/coi-report-somalia-displacement-mogadishu>

³⁵ Human Rights Watch. "It's Like We're Always in a Prison": Abuses Against Boys Accused of National Security Offenses in Somalia. Human Rights Watch, 21 Feb. 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/02/21/its-were-always-prison/abuses-against-boys-accused-national-security>

1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 37 which mandates that children are to be given adequate legal representation and Article 40 which specifies due process and the presumption of innocence apply to the trials of underage individuals as well.³⁶

Conditions for Refugees

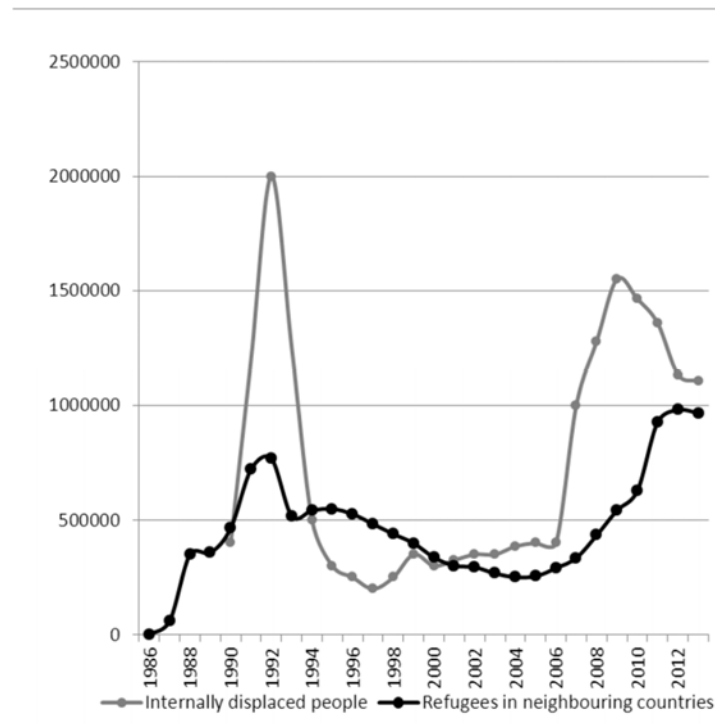


Figure 5: Somalia Displacement Estimates

While the number of individuals fleeing Al-Shabaab-related conflicts remaining in Somalia as IDPs is consistently greater than those who emigrate to neighbouring countries, the protection of refugees is noticeably less delicate as international law grants special status to refugees who cross international boundaries. Despite this, international legislation and frameworks regarding refugees such as the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees are not always abided by. It is important to note however that the vast majority of refugees fleeing Somalia are not from Al-Shabaab-related conflicts but rather

³⁶ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. 20 Nov. 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

tied to the ongoing conflict between the self proclaimed Somaliland and the FGS, in the north of the country.³⁷

Host Country	Somali Refugee Pop. as of 30 Sept. 2013
Kenya	474,602
Ethiopia	245,068
Yemen	231,064
Djibouti	20,000
Uganda	20,000
Total	1,021,200

Figure 6: Current Somali Refugee Populations in the Main Host Countries³⁸

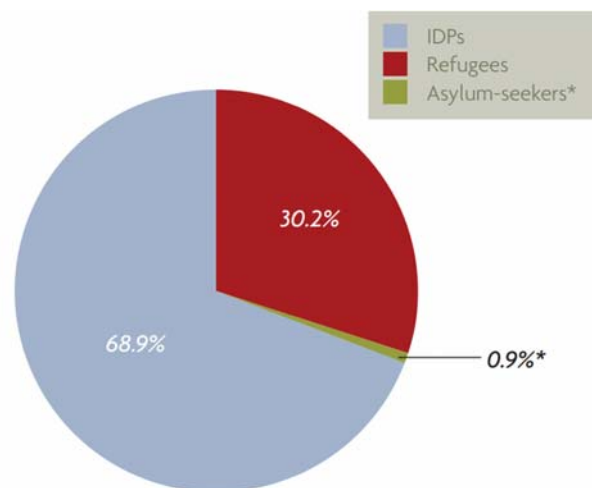


Figure 7: Persons of Concern from Somalia, 2009³⁹

The refugees fleeing from Al-Shabaab related conflicts mostly settle in camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, as the two states are geographically more accessible from the areas of southern and central Somalia. Conditions are modestly better than those of IDP camps within Somalia, nevertheless integration becomes an even larger issue as the refugees find themselves in new countries with no connections whatsoever. Additionally, the majority of the Somali population and

³⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing Southern and Central Somalia. UNHCR, 17 Jan. 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/research/unhcr/2014/en/84529>

³⁸ Lindley, and Hammond. "Somalia Displacement Estimates." Histories and Contemporary Challenges of Somali Crisis and Mobility, 2014.

³⁹ ---. "Persons of Concern from Somalia, 2009." A Profile of Somali Refugees and Asylum-Seekers, 2009, <https://www.unhcr.org/in/sites/en-in/files/legacy-pdf/4ce532309.pdf>.

therefore Somali refugees do not hold an ID or any form of documentation which legally proves their existence.⁴⁰ As a consequence of this, it is near impossible for refugees to access social, economic and political resources in their host country. Somali refugee camps are found at great distances from urban areas,⁴¹ further exacerbating the lack of means to claim the benefits granted to them under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Ethiopia

Ethiopia has signed a memorandum of understanding destined for Somaliland,⁴² an insurgent to the eyes of the Federal Government of Somalia. Relations between the two states are poor, hence the 360,865 Somali refugees in the country are at greater risk of further marginalisation and discrimination.⁴³ While the two states have restored diplomatic ties, the protection of Al-Shabaab-related refugees in Ethiopia is highly dependent on the geopolitical relationship between the two.

Kenya

Kenya is the most affected nation by Al-Shabaab-related conflicts after Somalia. Kenya is home to 325,744 Somali refugees as of 2026,⁴⁴ despite the strain this presents to the country, Kenya actively collaborates with UN Agencies and NGOs to facilitate the lives of Somali camp dwellers. Kenya is also prone to Al-Shabaab attacks and thus has taken part in regional security efforts against the Islamic terror group. Despite Kenya's efforts to regional security, allegations have been made pointing that Kenya has forcibly recruited Somali refugees to fight Al-Shabaab.⁴⁵ Tensions between Kenya and Somalia have risen over the past decade regarding sovereignty

⁴⁰ European Union Agency for Asylum. COI Report – Somalia: Displacement in Mogadishu: Displacements, Evictions, Prison Conditions, and Access to IDs. European Union Agency for Asylum, 29 May 2026

⁴¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing Southern and Central Somalia. UNHCR, 17 Jan. 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/research/unhcr/2014/en/84529>

⁴² Amani Africa. Situation between Ethiopia and Somalia. Amani Africa, 17 Jan. 2024, <https://amaniafrica-et.org/situation-between-ethiopia-and-somalia/>

⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Dadaab Refugee Camps. UNHCR Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/horn/location/160>

⁴⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Somalia Situation. UNHCR Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/horn/location/9922>

⁴⁵ Burns, Avery. "Feeling the pinch: Kenya, Al-Shabaab, and East Africa's refugee crisis." Refuge 27 (2010): 5.

infractions carried out by Kenya when conducting counterterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab near the border of southern Somalia.

Somalia

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), while consistently ineffective at securing IDP camps and preserving IDPs' rights, has been at the forefront of the armed conflict against Al-Shabaab for the past fifteen years. While the conflict still finds itself at a stalemate seeing as the FGS must also devote resources to combating other insurgents such as in Somaliland, the UN-recognised FGS remains the single most effective long-term opposer of Al-Shabaab. Despite the FGS determination to defeat Al-Shabaab and end the terrorist menace, their very own government is weak and prone to corruption. The FGS' inability to secure the Somali nation under one authority and guarantee the safety of all its citizens has led many Somalis to be unfavorable of the FGS, preferring other factions such as Al-Shabaab. In fact, the FGS' severe lack of reputation, platform and awareness campaign on the threats of radical Islam has left the country polarised in regards to views and the perception of Al-Shabaab.⁴⁶ Public trust in the Federal Government of Somalia is reportedly so low that many Somalis tolerate or actively support Al-Shabaab as they are of the opinion that their governance is predictable, their courts functioning and are overall better administered than the Federal Government of Somalia.⁴⁷ Overall, while the direction and intent of the Somali government is clear but poorly executed the local population remains polarised due to a lack of stability and potential concrete results offered by the FGS. The FGS has nonetheless proved cooperative with supranational organisations, namely the UN and AU.

Uganda

Uganda, aside from hosting a large number of Somali refugees, is one of the largest contributors to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) which contributes to minimising instability in Somalia. Uganda was recently commended by AUSSOM's Head, Ambassador El-Hadji Ibrahima Diene, for their selfless dedication to pursuing peace and stability in Somalia.⁴⁸ Uganda is an integral part of the international peacekeeping and counterterrorism effort against Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

United States of America (USA)

⁴⁶ Keating, Michael, and Matt Waldman (eds), War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflict and Al-Shabaab (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 June 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190947910.001.0001>

⁴⁷ Kluijver, Robert. "Al Shabaab Governance: Illiberal Modernization?" Canadian Journal of African Studies, vol. 59, no. 3, 2025, pp. 567–588.

⁴⁸ African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia. SRCC Praises Uganda's Sacrifice in Advancing Peace in Somalia. African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, 8 Feb. 2026, <https://au-ssom.org/srcc-praises-ugandas-sacrifice-in-advancing-peace-in-somalia/>

The United States of America (USA) had historically been a major aid contributor to Somalia, totaling 765 million US Dollars in Fiscal Year 2024 through USAID.⁴⁹ Importantly, the second Trump administration which assumed office in 2024 has completely cut off all humanitarian assistance and USAID funds to Somalia.⁵⁰ The USA has been involved militarily in the country since the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu. The USA has since then continued airstrikes and to a lesser extent ground raids on Al-Shabaab targets in Somalia.⁵¹ While the United States of America does not remain particularly committed to humanitarian assistance, it does to eradicate the terror menace in Somalia.

African Union (AU)

The African Union has mandated peacekeeping missions in Somalia since 2007 with the introduction of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), aimed at countering the threat of Al-Shabaab and stabilising the nation under the newly formed Transitional Federal Government. The mission saw only limited success as evidently the threat of Al-Shabaab remains. The AU had initially planned to permanently withdraw peacekeeping troops from Somalia under a project named the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in 2022. The intention was to gradually transition peacekeeping duties from the AU to Somali Security Forces (FGS). This strategy failed seeing as the FGS stirred up major opposition and called for the establishment of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) in 2025, which is still in order to this day.⁵²

Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM Cluster) Somalia

According to themselves, CCCM Cluster is an “Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism that supports internally displaced persons (IDPs) to live in safe, dignified, and appropriate settings.”⁵³ In essence, CCCM Cluster Somalia is an organisation that strives to improve the conditions of IDP camps and the protection of IDPs in Somalia by coordinating efforts between different agencies, local and international. Somalia’s high instability and the FGS’ deficiency of a uniform presence and policy means that agencies involved in the operation of

⁴⁹ USAFacts. How Much Foreign Aid Does the US Provide to Somalia? USAFacts, <https://usafacts.org/answers/how-much-foreign-aid-does-the-us-provide/countries/somalia/>

⁵⁰ Ibrahim, Abdirahman Moallim, and Mohamed Osman Mohamed. “Navigating Independence: The Short-Term and Long-Term Impacts of USAID Dismantling on Somalia’s Humanitarian and Development Landscape.” BMJ Global Health, vol. 10, no. 5, 2025, article e019330, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2025-019330>

⁵¹ Bergen, Peter, David Sterman, and Melissa Salyk-Virk. “The War in Somalia.” America’s Counterterrorism Wars, New America, 17 June 2021, <https://www.newamerica.org/insights/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/>

⁵² van Emmerik, Corine. The African Union Stabilization Mission: African Mission, Somali Rules, Western Wallets. Danish Institute for International Studies, 7 Oct. 2025, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/the-african-union-stabilization-mission>

⁵³ Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster. Global CCCM Cluster. CCCM Cluster, <https://www.cccmcluster.org/about-us/global-cccm-cluster>

Somali IDP camps are often poor at collaborating with each other, despite having similar motives and goals. CCCM Cluster Somalia bridges this gap by bringing several agencies together, such as for instance improving collaboration between the FGS and UNHCR.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has collaborated closely with the FGS, their priorities include: “strengthening legal and policy frameworks for citizenship rights, enhancing absorption capacity in areas of return and local integration, and ensuring the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in national social protection systems through relevant ministries.”⁵⁴ The UNHCR additionally provides extensive reports on the Somali Refugee Crisis and most crucially coordinates together with Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM Cluster) Somalia with the mutual intent of improving IDP camp conditions, strengthening displaced people’s access to information and reducing marginalisation through multi-sectorial services.⁵⁵

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
January 26, 1991	The Somali Government collapses, intensifying the still ongoing civil war, and several factions enter a bitter struggle for power. Displacements increase exponentially.
March 26, 1993	The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations deploys the second peacekeeping force to Somalia during the harshest stages of the civil war; UNOSOM II. ⁵⁶
October 3-4, 1993	The United States of America commences their intervention in Somalia with the Battle of

⁵⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Somalia. UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/somalia>

⁵⁵ Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster. Somalia. CCCM Cluster, <https://www.cccmcluster.org/where-we-work/somalia>

⁵⁶ United Nations. United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II): Background. United Nations Peacekeeping, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unosom2backgr2.html>

	Mogadishu. The US deploys troops to protect foreign aid and capture warlords responsible for destabilising Somalia. ⁵⁷
January 19, 2007	African Union peacekeeping forces deployed through AMISOM, beginning its mandate.
July 20, 2011	The East Africa drought intensifies the food security situation, triggering the United Nations to declare a famine in Somalia caused by the intense 2011 East Africa Drought. ⁵⁸
October 14, 2011	Kenya launches operation Linda Nchi, intervening with military force. Kenya violates the territorial sovereignty of Somalia to suppress Al-Shabaab due to attacks on Kenyan soil, claiming to be invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter. Operation Linda Nchi is relatively successful and the UN and AU invite Kenya to incorporate it into AMISOM. ⁵⁹
August 20, 2012	The Federal Government of Somalia is officially established after the transitional phase is complete.
April 1, 2022	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) replaces AMISON with the aim of withdrawing AU peacekeepers in favour of FGS-ensured security.
January 1, 2025	ATMIS is cancelled and AUSSOM is extended. The AU continues to bear responsibility for peacekeeping in Somalia.

⁵⁷ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. "Somalia, 1992–1993." Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: 1993–2000, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/somalia>

⁵⁸ World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. "UN Declares Famine in Somalia." WHO EMRO, 20 July 2011, <https://www.emro.who.int/press-releases/2011/un-declares-famine-in-somalia.html>

⁵⁹ Ministry of Defence – Kenya. Kenya in AMISOM. Government of Kenya, <https://www.mod.go.ke/kenya-in-amisom/>

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

*1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*⁶⁰

The 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees entered into force on the 4th of October 1967. The protocol dictates that refugees are to be given certain rights, for example the right to non-refoulement, which is the prohibition of repatriating refugees to their home state should conditions be dangerous. This protocol applies to Somali refugees in neighbouring states, not IDPs. The 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees is a legally binding framework, meaning that should a state fail to apply the rights and norms provided to refugees under the protocol, the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) has theoretical jurisdiction over ensuring its appropriate application, although it has to this day never done so.⁶¹

Nonetheless, the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees is a less significant aspect of Al-Shabaab displacements in Somalia as the vast majority of cases are internal displacements. Additionally, despite the ICJs theoretical jurisdiction over the application of the protocol, the enforcement of the ICJs very own rulings remains trivial.

*United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/168*⁶²

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16 2005, the resolution calls for UN Member States to protect and assist IDPs. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not legally binding, therefore the resolution is unenforceable. Nevertheless, it provides a basic international starting point for the protection of IDPs. Primarily, UNGA Resolution 60/168 recognises the vulnerability of IDPs under existing frameworks that cannot be applied. The resolutions reaffirms state responsibility towards the legal and humanitarian protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). A significant and one of the few aspects of this resolution where practical measures were implemented is the request to the United Nations Secretariat to continue monitoring the situation for IDP protection globally. Aside from the request to the Secretariat for the continued monitoring of IDP protection, UNGA resolution 60/168 fails to apply its other clauses due to an evident lack of enforcement mechanisms for the suggested measures.

⁶⁰ United Nations. Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 31 Jan. 1967, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/protocolrefugees.pdf>

⁶¹ Skordas, Achilles. "The Missing Link in Migration Governance: An Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice." *EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy*, 12 July 2018, <https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/the-missing-link-in-migration-governance-an-advisory-opinion-by-the-international-court-of-justice/>

⁶² United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 60/168: Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons. United Nations, 7 Mar. 2006, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/60/168>

Resolutions passed within the General Assembly are effective at promoting intra-UN measures however generally do not see practical success.

African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)⁶³

Adopted by the Special Summit of the African Union on the 23rd of October 2009, the convention sets the framework for the processing and rights of IDPs in Africa. The convention requires African states to prevent arbitrary displacement, protect IDPs during displacements and provide them with humanitarian assistance. The convention additionally takes measures to prevent the marginalisation of IDPs. While the convention has been ratified by all 55 Member States of the African Union, its application and enforcement is feeble as the African Court of Justice and the African Court of Human Rights lack any proper authority. Cooperation between member states of the African Union is volatile and its application in this situation is even more complicated as several states have ongoing disputes with Somalia such as Kenya.⁶⁴

United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2776⁶⁵

Adopted by the Security Council at its 9872nd meeting, on the 3rd of March 2025, this resolution seeks to minimise Al-Shabaab's near unrestricted access to weapons through an arms embargo. Security Council resolutions are legally binding, meaning that the arms embargo is international law. The resolution moreover calls for the disruption of Al-Shabaab's financing, and an embargo on materials that can be used for the assembly of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). S/RES/2776 is aimed at depleting Al-Shabaab access to weapons through international measures, mostly provisions to regulate trade with Somalia. Namely, S/RES/2776 renews the maritime enforcement of inspections targeted at vessels suspected of transporting weapons that could possibly come into the possession of Al-Shabaab. Such inspections furthermore apply to vessels suspected of transporting possible components of weapons, such as IEDs. In terms of exports, inspections are also applicable to vessels speculated of transporting charcoal out of Somalia. The renewal of such inspections mandated by this resolution are shaped to reduce Al-Shabaab's access to weaponry and sever a major source of income for the terror organisation; charcoal.

⁶³ African Union. African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Adopted 23 Oct. 2009. African Union, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-treaty-kampala_convention.pdf

⁶⁴ Al-Iriani, Abdulaziz. "Diplomatic Crisis between Somalia and Kenya: Motivations and Likely Trajectories." Emirates Policy Center, 23 Dec. 2020, <https://epc.ae/en/details/scenario/diplomatic-crisis-between-somalia-and-kenya-motivations-and-likely-trajectories>

⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2776 (2025): Adopted by the Security Council at Its 9872nd Meeting, on 3 March 2025. United Nations, 3 Mar. 2025, [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2776\(2025\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2776(2025))

Naturally, while the resolution encompasses noteworthy measures against Al-Shabaab's supply of weapons and income, the resolution does not address the Somali Refugee Crisis in any manner. S/RES/2776 offers no new directives or remedies to alleviate the poor status quo of human rights for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Somali refugees.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

International Military Efforts Against Al-Shabaab

While there have been no attempts at directly repatriating Somali IDPs and refugees as the conflict is still raging in the region, attempts to end the Somali Civil War have been made. As described previously, several international entities have founded and voluntarily took part in peacekeeping operations. The most notable missions that have had the greatest outcome towards limiting Al-Shabaab-related displacements are the African Union peacekeeping missions: AMISON, ATMIS and AUSSOM.

Other attempts at bringing security and stability to the region were taken by the United States of America and the United Nations throughout the 1990s. These missions were however targeted at the defense of foreign aid, rather than actively conducting counterterrorism operations as the African Union missions do.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Humanitarian Response

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been the single most involved party in coordinating the humanitarian response towards the protection of refugees derived from Al-Shabaab related conflicts. The UNHCR has provided and organised the installment of several IDP camps within Somalia, securing IDPs right to shelter and protection from armed conflict. The UNHCR has furthermore tightly cooperated with Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCCM Cluster) Somalia in order to ideally operate such camps and uphold the rights of IDPs within these camps. The UNHCR has additionally provided extensive reports and research on the displacement situation in Somalia, enabling supranational organisations and NGOs to refine their involvement in the country.⁶⁶ Lastly, the UNHCR has equipped Somalia with a noteworthy degree of financial support. In 2026, the UNHCR coordinated the contribution of 110 million United States Dollars from various state and non-state entities such as private donors in the United Arab Emirates.⁶⁷ These funds are allocated towards the improvement of the general humanitarian crisis in Somalia.

⁶⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Somalia. UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/somalia>

⁶⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Somalia Funding Update - 2026. UNHCR, 2026, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/somalia-funding-update-2026>

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Strengthening the Legitimacy, Influence and Presence of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) throughout the Nation

Due to the delicate nature of international cooperation, especially concerning the protection of IDPs and refugees, the most plausible chance of maintaining order and stability rests with the national government of Somalia, the FGS. With the assistance of supranational organisations such as the African Union and the United Nations, the role of the Federal Government of Somalia can be redefined into a more meaningful entity in the country. The FGS needs international commitment towards continuing peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab. Cooperation between the FGS and UNHCR needs immediate strengthening in the name of constructing a single joint response to the ongoing crisis. The FGS's failure to maintain stability has often led it to be sidelined during the programming of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in their very own nation. The international community needs to solidify ties with the FGS to promote its governance. The FGS has constantly shown to be unable to resolve the situation without external support, indicating that while external support is crucial it must be blended and fully integrated within the FGS' activities. The FGS may be required to renounce part of its sovereignty to allow organisations with greater capabilities to stabilise the nation, teaching practices to FGS and ensuring its eventual ability to govern a hopefully stable nation.

International Criminal Court Arrest Investigations and Arrest Warrants for Al-Shabaab-affiliated Individuals and Perpetrators of IDP and Refugee Rights Violators

While it is fundamental to acknowledge that the International Criminal Court (ICC) is not a United Nations organ and is in no way affiliated with the United Nations, the ICC can work in close collaboration with the African Union and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to commence formal investigations into the Al-Shabaab group and exercise arrest warrants through AU peacekeepers. The ICC can prosecute terrorists of Al-Shabaab should they have allegedly committed any of the following crimes as per the Rome Statute: crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. Terrorism is by extension a war crime and a crime against humanity.⁶⁸ However, the ICC cannot prosecute individuals affiliated with the FGS who violate the rights of IDPs unless there is suspicion of one of the aforementioned crimes, if not this matter is to be prosecuted domestically.

⁶⁸ Galingging, Ridarson. "Prosecuting Acts of Terrorism as Crimes Against Humanity Under the ICC Treaty." Indonesian Journal of International Law, vol. 7, no. 4, 2010, article 6, pp. 745–766. DOI: 10.17304/ijil.vol7.4.245.

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Children recruited by the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab at a training camp in the Afgooye Corridor, west of Mogadishu, southern Somalia, February 2011. © 2011 Private. Reproduced from No Place for Children: Child Recruitment, Forced Marriage, and Attacks on Schools in Somalia (Human Rights Watch, 2012)

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