Researched and compiled by the refugee documentation centre of Ireland on 25 July 2024

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COI QUERY RESPONSE

SOMALIA – RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG MEN BY AL-SHABAAB

The *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* reported on an attack against Al-Shabaab in July 2024 stated that: "There is also a high risk of forced recruitment by AS, as a form of retaliation should the counterattack occur."[1]

It further reports that: "The displaced people have voiced concern that the risk of AS forcibly recruiting men and boys including children from the conflict-affected areas as a form of retaliation is very high."[2]

A report from July 2024 from *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)* states that: "A lack of educational and job opportunities is a major source of tension for Somalia's large youth cohort, making them vulnerable to recruitment by extremist and pirate groups."[3]

A news report by the *Conversation* in June 2024 commented that: "…while al-Shabaab's true strength remains unknown, the militants have consistently replenished their losses through forcible recruitment and attracting new supporters."[4]

In June 2024 the *US Department of State* reported: "The dire security situation and restrictions on movement of humanitarian and human rights actors continued to hamper comprehensive efforts to address the unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers. Al-Shabaab continued to commit the vast majority of violations…"[5]

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[1] UNHCR (24 July 2024) UNHCR Somalia Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) Flash Alert #14
[2] Ibid.
[3] Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (14 July 2024) The World Factbook 2024 - Somalia
[4] The Conversation (19 June 2024) Somalia army vs al-Shabaab: as African Union troops leave, which is the stronger military force?)
[5] US Department of State (24 June 2024) Trafficking in Persons Report 2024: Somalia, p.4

In April 2024 the *US Department of State* reported: "Al-Shabaab recruited and forced children to participate directly in hostilities, including suicide attacks. According to UN officials, al-Shabaab committed most abuses related to the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Al-Shabaab raided schools, madrassas, and mosques and harassed or coerced clan elders and family members to recruit and use children in direct combat and support roles."[6]

Bertelsmann Stiftung reported in March 2024 that: "It has been reported that Al-Shabaab has systematically kidnapped children from minority groups, incorporating them into its army. In addition, the group has resorted to violence in order to coerce communities and elders to hand over young recruits from their villages and clan groups."[7]

A report from February 2024 by the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* states that: "Boys and young men from minority groups have also been reported to be at higher risk of forced recruitment and use by armed forces as they have lower levels of clan protection networks and support." (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The *European Union Agency for Asylum* published a report in 2021 stating:

"…the most important target groups for recruitment have been boys and young men between the age of 12 and 24." (EUAA (September 2021) *Country of origin information report | Somalia: Targeted profiles*, p.17)

It also stated:

"…the organisation has stepped up recruitment efforts among unemployed young men since 2017…" (Ibid, p.17)

It further stated:

"…young men are the main target for recruitment." (Ibid, p.18)

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[6] US Department of State (22 April 2024) 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Somalia, p.9
[7] Bertelsmann Stiftung (19 March 2024) Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024 Country Report – Somalia, p.15

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023).This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

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