

## RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 1 MARCH 2024

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### DISCLAIMER

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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### COI QUERY RESPONSE - SOMALIA – INFORMATION ON FORCED RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG BOYS BY AL-SHABAAB. INFORMATION ON TREATMENT OF YOUNG BOYS BY AL-SHABAAB.

In February 2024 the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)* states that “On 1 January, Ethiopia and “Somaliland” announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which reportedly grants Ethiopia a 50-year lease of 20 kilometres of coastline in exchange for certain political and economic benefits to “Somaliland.” The full details of the MOU are not available, but public pronouncements have generated strong hostile public reactions in Somalia. It is also worrying to see Al-Shabaab exploiting this situation as a tool for recruitment.”<sup>1</sup>

“I’m concerned about the high number of children casualties due to explosive remnants of war and crossfire incidents which have had a particular impact on children. I remain gravely preoccupied by the number of violations attributed to Al-Shabaab as well as the group’s continued abduction of children for the purposes of recruitment and use. I call on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease and prevent violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.”<sup>2</sup>

A report from February 2024 from *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)* states “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.”<sup>3</sup>

In September 2023, the *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime* reports that “Al-Shabaab also participates in these practices, particularly in recruiting child soldiers and orchestrating sexual slavery and forced marriage.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) (19 February 2024) Statement by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Catriona Laing to the Security Council on the Situation in Somalia (February 2024)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (15 February 2024) The World Factbook 2024 - Somalia

<sup>4</sup> Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (26 September 2023) 2023 Global Organized Crime Index - Somalia

In April 2023 *Stimson Center* states that “During the year there were reports that the SNA and its allied militias, as well as alShabaab, unlawfully recruited and used child soldiers.”<sup>5</sup>

The *US Department of State* in March 2023 points out that “Al-Shabaab continued to recruit and force children to participate directly in hostilities, including suicide attacks. According to UN officials, al-Shabaab accounted for most child recruitment and use.”<sup>6</sup>

A report issued by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* in March 2023 states “Sources note that al-Shabaab forcibly recruits children (Crisis Group 2022-06-21, 8; Bacon 2022-03, 93; Felbab-Brown 2020-04-14, 120). According to Crisis Group, citing interviews with people who “lived under the Al-Shabaab administration,” “typical[ly],” the group demands local clans and families provide “one of every two to three boys younger than 13 per family” (2022-06-21, 8). Bacon states that the requirement for clans to send “a certain number” of children to indoctrination institutes was described by interviewees, including a think tank analyst and a former government official, as a “principal” recruitment method (2022-03, 93). The UNSC panel of experts report notes that interviews with “displaced community leaders” in May 2021 indicated that al-Shabaab “demanded” that rural villages in the Hudur [Xuddur], Bakool region volunteer children aged 12 to 15 (UN 2021-10-06, para. 123). The same source further states that reports indicate that al-Shabaab also abducts children from Islamic schools, noting that 35 boys were abducted from schools in the Hiraan and Bay regions (UN 2021-10-06, para. 124).”<sup>7</sup>

## References:

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<sup>5</sup> Stimson Center (7 April 2023) 2022 Human Rights Reports: Insights Into Global Child Soldier Recruitment & Use

<sup>6</sup> US Department of State (20 March 2023) 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Somalia

<sup>7</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (7 March 2023) *Somalia: Al-Shabaab [Al-Shabab], including leadership, structure, objectives, activities, areas of operation, ability to track persons of interest, and individuals who are targeted (2021–March 2023)*

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Minority Rights Group International

New Humanitarian

Online Newspapers

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

Reliefweb

United Kingdom Home Office

United States Department of State

UNHCR Refworld

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