

SOMALIA

During the 2020-2021 reporting period, the UN verified at least 78 attacks on schools in Somalia. In addition, at least 146 male students were abducted from schools, in some cases alongside their teachers. GCPEA observed a decline in the number of reported incidents of attacks on education as compared to prior reporting periods.

Context

Somalia's security context remained volatile during the reporting period due to continued armed conflicts between the non-state armed group Al-Shabaab, other armed groups, and Somali and international forces.¹⁴⁵⁹ Somalia's presidential and parliamentary elections, originally set for 2020 and postponed in 2021, caused tensions to escalate between the Somali National Army, armed clans, and militias, as well as causing mass protests and public upheaval.¹⁴⁶⁰

Attacks on civilians and government workers continued during the reporting period. Al-Shabaab killed and injured civilians with improvised explosive devices and shelling in populated areas or in targeted assassinations of public officials.¹⁴⁶¹ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) reported at least 899 civilian casualties from late November 2020 to late July 2021, with Al-Shabaab responsible for the majority; this constituted a rise as compared the same period the prior year.¹⁴⁶²

Conflict was compounded by other acute crises, including seasonal floods and a locust infestation during the 2020-2021 period.¹⁴⁶³ Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the government's public health measures, further increased economic insecurity and food instability.¹⁴⁶⁴ The UN reported that over 885,000 Somalis were newly displaced between January and August 2020, an increase of nearly 70 percent as compared to the same period in 2019.¹⁴⁶⁵ Approximately 3 million Somalis were internally displaced at the end of 2021, according to the UN.¹⁴⁶⁶

Somali children were particularly affected by the continued conflict and humanitarian crisis in the country during the reporting period. In 2020, Al-Shabaab, government security forces, regional security forces, and clan militias recruited and used 1,716 children, an increase as compared to the prior year.¹⁴⁶⁷ The UN also found that verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence increased by nearly 80 percent in 2020 from 2019.¹⁴⁶⁸

School closures in March 2020 in response to Covid-19 negatively impacted children in Somalia.¹⁴⁶⁹ Before the pandemic, over 3 million children were out of school due to conflict, poverty, and other barriers.¹⁴⁷⁰ After schools closed due to the pandemic, one million more children were left without access to education.¹⁴⁷¹ Save the Children reported that school closures, along with limited awareness-raising activities, particularly impacted girls and may have led to an increased risk of female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic labor, rape, and forced marriages.¹⁴⁷² In March 2021, the Somali government launched an online learning program to support school students who had experienced extended periods of disruptions to their learning.¹⁴⁷³

Attacks on schools

During the 2020-2021 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 84 reports of attacks on schools in Somalia from the UN, media, and ACLED. Several attacks involved the use of explosive weapons at or near schools. Verified attacks on schools declined slightly from earlier years. For example, the UN verified 64 attacks on schools in 2019¹⁴⁷⁴ and 77 attacks on schools and education personnel in 2018.¹⁴⁷⁵

In 2020, the UN verified 53 attacks on schools in Somalia, of which 51 were attributed to Al-Shabaab, one to the Somali Police Force, and one to a clan militia.¹⁴⁷⁶ In addition, GCPEA identified three reported incidents of attacks on schools involving explosive devices but could not confirm whether these three attacks were included in the UN's reporting:

- On June 18, 2020, a roadside explosive device reportedly detonated around 150 meters from a Turkish-run school in the Hodan area of Mogadishu city, Banadir region. A member of the school's board reported to *Daily Sabah* news outlet that the facility was closed due to Covid-19 and that no students or staff were present at the time of attack meaning no injuries.¹⁴⁷⁷
- *Voice of America* reported that on June 23, 2020, a suicide bomber allegedly detonated an explosive device

outside a primary school in Mogadishu city, Banadir region. The primary school was located next to a military training academy and received support from the military academy, though the report did not further explain the relationship between the two institutions.¹⁴⁷⁸

- On November 12, 2020, an IED planted by unknown actors reportedly exploded near 21 October school in Waberi district of Mogadishu, Banadir region. The attack targeted a local government official, according to reports by Garda and ACLED.¹⁴⁷⁹

In 2021, the UN verified 30 attacks on schools.¹⁴⁸⁰ Media sources and the UN also reported an attack on a school in November 2021. On November 25, 2021, a bomb targeting a UN convoy detonated near Mocaasir Primary and Secondary School while class was in session.¹⁴⁸¹ At least 13 students and four educators were injured during the attack and the school building and buses sustained significant damages. One student reported a brick hitting his head during a history lesson.¹⁴⁸²

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

During the 2020-2021 reporting period, GCPEA identified sporadic reports of attacks on school students, teachers, or other education personnel and at least 146 students and educators were abducted. In 2018 and 2019, GCPEA identified over a dozen incidents of attacks on school students, teachers, or other personnel, some of which involved Al-Shabaab militants threatening or killing teachers who refused to use their curriculum.¹⁴⁸³

In 2020, the UN verified that 146 boys were abducted from schools, sometimes along with their teachers.¹⁴⁸⁴ In addition, the UN verified two incidents of direct attacks on education personnel.¹⁴⁸⁵ In addition, GCPEA identified two reported incidents of attacks on school students and teachers:

- Airwars and *Al-Jazeera* reported that on March 10, 2020, an airstrike hit a mini-bus that was carrying a 13-year old student to school in Janaale, Lower Shabelle region. The blast allegedly killed him.¹⁴⁸⁶
- ACLED reported that on May 3, 2020, an armed group shot a Quranic school teacher in Hawo-Cabdi village, Afgooye district, Lower Shabelle region.¹⁴⁸⁷

GCPEA identified one reported incident of attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel in 2021. On October 16, 2021, in Hargeysa town, Woqooyi Galbeed region, students at a secondary school demonstrated against a change in school administration. The local police shot in the air to disperse the group and arrested students after they threw stones at police officers.¹⁴⁸⁸

Military use of schools and universities

In 2020 and 2021, armed forces and armed groups sporadically used schools for military purposes. This trend remained constant with the period covered in *Education under Attack 2020*, when the UN verified only one incident of the military use of a school in 2019.¹⁴⁸⁹

In 2020, the UN reported one case of the military occupation of a school between February and May.¹⁴⁹⁰ In 2021, the UN verified the military use of three schools.¹⁴⁹¹

¹⁴⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2020), Somalia Chapter. Airwars, *Annual Report 2020*, (London: Airwars, 2021), Somalia chapter, p. 21-22.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Andrea Carboni and Mohamed Daud, "A Turbulent Run-Up to Elections in Somalia," ACLED, April 7, 2021.

¹⁴⁶¹ United Nations Security Council, "Letter dated 28 September 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2020/949, September 28, 2020, para. 131-134.

¹⁴⁶² UNSOM as cited in Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2020), Somalia Chapter. United Nations Security Council, "Situation in Somalia, Report of the Secretary-General," S/2020/121, February 13, 2020, para. 49.

¹⁴⁶³ "Highlights of the Noon Briefing By Stephane Dujarric," UN Office of the Spokesperson of the UN Secretary-General, August 20, 2020.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council, "Covid-19: On-the-record update on challenges facing displaced people in Somalia," NRC news release, April 21, 2020.

- ¹⁴⁶⁵ OCHA, “Humanitarian Bulletin, Somalia, August 1-September 3, 2020,” p. 4
- ¹⁴⁶⁶ UNHCR, “EHAGL Internally Displaced Persons - Regional Overview - January-December 2021,” UNHCR, March 16, 2022.
- ¹⁴⁶⁷ United Nations Security Council, “Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict,” S/2021/437, May 6, 2021, para. 136.
- ¹⁴⁶⁸ “Somalia: Call for urgent action following ‘alarming’ 80 per cent rise in sexual violence,” UN news release, August 5, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁶⁹ Schools were initially closed between March and August 2020, and then with periodic closings. See: UNICEF, “UNICEF Somalia COVID-19 Situation Report No. 2 (Reporting Period: 10 April – 24 April 2020),” April 24, 2020, p. 1; “Somalia to reopen schools amid COVID-19 pandemic,” *Xinhua*, August 12, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁷⁰ Save the Children, “Covid-19: School closures put decades of gains for Somali children at risk,” Save the Children news release, July 13, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁷¹ Save the Children, “Covid-19: School closures put decades of gains for Somali children at risk,” Save the Children news release, July 13, 2020. OCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan Somalia 2021*, (Mogadishu: OCHA), February 2021, p. 59.
- ¹⁴⁷² Save the Children, “More girls are being mutilated amidst Covid-19 outbreak,” Save the Children news release, June 11, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁷³ “Somali Government launches an Alternative Learning Option (Online Platform) to help 392,400 amid Covid19 pandemic,” Save the Children news release, March 29, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁷⁴ UN General Assembly and Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/74/845-S/2020/525, June 9, 2020, para. 141.
- ¹⁴⁷⁵ UN General Assembly and Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/75/873-S/2021/437, May 6, 2021, para. 143.
- ¹⁴⁷⁶ UN General Assembly and Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/75/873-S/2021/437, May 6, 2021, para. 140. Information received from a UN respondent on December 29, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁷⁷ “4 civilians killed in bombing near Turkey’s Maarif Foundation school in Somalia,” *Daily Sabah*, June 18, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁷⁸ Harun Maruf, “Civilian Killed in Attack on Turkey Military Training Center in Somalia,” *Voice of America*, June 23, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁷⁹ *Caasimada*, as cited in ACLED, Data ID SOM32436. “Somalia: IED targets District Commissioner’s vehicle in Mogadishu November 12,” *Garda World* news alert, November 12, 2020.
- ¹⁴⁸⁰ Information received from a UN respondent via email on April 21, 2022.
- ¹⁴⁸¹ A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2022_references.pdf
- ¹⁴⁸² Abdi Sheikh, “Islamist bombing near school in Somalia kills 8, wounds 13 children,” *Reuters*, November 25, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁸³ GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020*, Somalia chapter.
- ¹⁴⁸⁴ Information received from a UN respondent on December 29, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁸⁵ Information received from a UN respondent on December 29, 2021.
- ¹⁴⁸⁶ Hamza Mohamed, “US air strike in Somalia killed civilians: MP,” *Al Jazeera*, March 11, 2020. Airwars, “US Forces in Somalia Airwars Assessment,” March 10, 2020 Data ID USSOM293-C.
- ¹⁴⁸⁷ *Radio Dalsan*; Undisclosed Source, as cited in ACLED, Data ID SOM31086.
- ¹⁴⁸⁸ Undisclosed Source, as cited in ACLED, Data ID SOM34973.
- ¹⁴⁸⁹ UN General Assembly and Security Council, “Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/74/845-S/2020/525, June 9, 2020, para. 141.
- ¹⁴⁹⁰ UN Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia,” S/2020/398, May 13, 2020, para. 52.
- ¹⁴⁹¹ Information received from a UN respondent via email on April 21, 2022.