



Briefing for 63rd Regular Human Rights Council Session: Somalia – conflict fatalities

This briefing was prepared by Every Casualty Counts and Casualty Recorders Network members IHRO, KAHRDO, and SASDO.

Across Somalia, civilians continue to be killed in armed violence. In one recent incident, on 17 August 2026, federal forces and opposition fighters loyal to former South West State President Abdiiaziz Laftagareen clashed in and around Baidoa. KAHRDO verified through Bay Regional Hospital Emergency Room Trauma records that 94 wounded patients were treated, comprising 65 males and 29 females. Twenty of the patients were children. Thirty-one required hospital admission, including nine who were medically evacuated to Mogadishu, while 63 were treated and discharged. Four additional people, three males and one female, were recorded dead on arrival. These figures demonstrate the consequences of fighting in a populated area and the resulting pressure on local emergency and referral services. We are not aware of any official independent investigation into these casualties.

On 21 January 2026, SASDO documented an incident of reported shelling in Janale, Lower Shabelle. Three civilians, one woman and two men, were killed in the incident and four others, two women and two men, were injured. To date, no party has been held responsible for the attack, underscoring the ongoing lack of effective investigation of, and accountability for, harm to civilians in Somalia. We are not aware of any official independent investigation into these casualties.

IHRO has reported attacks apparently targeting residential areas, destroying civilian property and livestock, as well as killing civilians. Its research identified the use of drones, attack helicopters and mortars, as well as military positions based within civilian areas, as serious protection concerns.



Key gaps

The lack of adequate casualty recording and investigation has both political and institutional causes.

Restricted access for investigators, fear of reprisals among witnesses, weak reporting systems and limited institutional capacity frequently leave casualties under-recorded, particularly in remote areas. Fragmented casualty data and insufficient coordination between civil society and state institutions exacerbate these problems, preventing the establishment of a reliable account of who was harmed and in what circumstances.

The presence of military positions and Al-Shabaab forces in civilian areas creates serious and ongoing protection concerns for civilians. Recent international funding cuts have exposed civilians to increased risk by reducing the field presence and capacities of humanitarian actors, while simultaneously reducing the capacity of local civil-society organisations to respond.

Where investigations have been conducted into the killing or harming of civilians, these have typically lacked transparency and independence. Survivors and their families face barriers to information, justice, psychosocial and material support, compensation and effective remedies. It is difficult for researchers to collect information from remote areas under al-Shabab control, and victims fear retaliation for providing information. In areas under government control the justice system is weak, and investigations are not routinely conducted into civilian casualties especially where these are suspected to have been caused by government armed forces. In addition, many cases are resolved under clan customary law, in which victims are not directly involved. Women, children, internally displaced people, minority communities and persons with disabilities face particular risks.



Recommendations for Human Rights Council members:

- The Somali authorities should be encouraged to establish transparent and coordinated casualty recording mechanisms, in cooperation with civil society, and to conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations into credible reports of civilian harm.
- The Somali authorities should ensure prompt, independent, impartial and transparent investigations take place into all reported or suspected incidents of civilian harm.
- All parties to the conflict should be encouraged to protect civilians and civilian areas and comply with the IHL principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.
- Where civilians are harmed, those responsible should be held accountable. Victims and survivors should receive assistance, compensation and effective remedies.
- OHCHR should be encouraged to strengthen support to national casualty recording and accountability systems, and to directly support independent civil society casualty documentation initiatives.

More:

For further information please contact director@everycasualty.org or consult:

- www.everycasualty.org
- <https://ihrosom.org/>
- <https://kalkalhuman.org>
- <https://sasdosom.org/>