



**Please cite as:** EUAA, '[1.4.2. Ethnic minorities](#)' in *COI Report - Somalia: Country Focus*, May 2025.

## 1.4.2. Ethnic minorities

### ○ (a) Bantu/Jareer

Bantu/Jareer, sometimes also called 'Jareerweyne' or 'Gosha', live mainly in southern Somalia, along the Jubba river. They also have a presence in Bay region. They are partly descendants of slaves imported from the area of today's Tanzania to southern Somalia in the 19th century. Many Somali-Bantu still speak their original (Bantu-)languages or a version of them.<sup>431</sup> There are Ki-Zigula speakers and Af/Ki-Mushunguli speakers in Jilib and Jamame districts of Lower Juba, but also in Mogadishu, Kismayu, and Baidoa, because of migration to these urban areas.<sup>432</sup> Lamberti, a linguist known for his extensive research on Somali dialects, found that Mushungul-speakers resided mainly in and around Jamame in Lower Jubba. Af-Mushunguli is a Bantu language. Many Af-Mushunguli speakers also speak Af-Maay, which is a particular dialect of Somali typically not understood by Af-Mahaa speakers.<sup>433</sup> Jareer residing in Bay region also speak Af-Maay.<sup>434</sup> They are also known for specific cultural practices like music, dance, and agriculture festivals.<sup>435</sup>

MEDA estimated that Bantu/Jareer 'number around 1 to 1.5 million people, mostly concentrated in the Lower Shabelle, Juba, and Bay regions.' They live mostly in agricultural areas and work as farmers.<sup>436</sup> They suffered greatly from massive (racialised) discrimination and exclusion throughout the 20th and early 21st century.<sup>437</sup> Somalis often use the derogative term 'jareer' - referring to 'curly hair' - as insult. Members of majority clans distinguish themselves as 'Arabs' or 'high-born', distinct from the 'African'-looking and low-born Somalis. They use also the term 'adoon' meaning 'slave' to define Bantu/Jareer.<sup>438</sup> Bantu/Jareer suffered from dis-appropriation of their farms during the land-reforms in Somalia in the 1970s.<sup>439</sup> In the 1990s their land and storages were looted by clan militias.<sup>440</sup> In the view of the Bantu/Jareer activist Omar Eno, speaking out at a conference in the early 1990s, the Bantu/Jareer were reduced to slave status in Somalia.<sup>441</sup>

Bantu/Jareer primarily engage in agriculture, cultivating e.g., maize, cassava, and rice. 'They are also involved in fishing and livestock herding to a lesser extent. Their agricultural activities have been central to their livelihoods, but they often lack the land

rights and resources enjoyed by more dominant clans.’[442](#)

MEDA recently found that Bantu/Jareer children ‘experience significantly lower school enrolment rates (ranging from 28 % to 40 %). Barriers such as poverty, lack of educational infrastructure in rural areas, and cultural barriers often contribute to these low rates.’[443](#) They are treated as second-class citizens.[444](#) Their population size is likely much larger ‘than that reflected by their representation in government under the 4.5 formula’, which favours the majority clans.[445](#) They still face land grabs and forced displacement due to lack of political influence.[446](#) Discrimination also continues in IDP camps, where Bantu are discriminated and their women lack (clan) protection.[447](#) Lack of societal and political participation and protracted discrimination ‘pushed some Bantu youth into joining al-Shabaab.’[448](#) For further details, see section 4.2. of the [EUAA COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles](#), published in September 2021.[449](#)

#### □ (b) Bajuni

Bajuni are a specific ethnic group residing along the coast around Kismayo and on several islands off the Kismayo coast, such as Koyama, Chovai, and Chula.[450](#) They speak their own language, Ki-Bajuni, which is a Bantu language close to Ki-Swahili.[451](#) Bajuni also reside across the border at the coast of northern Kenya.[452](#) Their culture is influenced by the Swahili and Arab traders.[453](#) Bajuni residing along the coast or on the Bajuni islands engage in fishery. Some also engage in trade and agriculture.[454](#) Bajuni, like other coastal communities practicing fishery, ‘suffer from reduced fish stocks due to environmental degradation.’[455](#)

Bajuni have long been marginalised by the dominant Somali clans in the region.[456](#) Today, some Bajuni reside also in Mogadishu. In urban settings, they enjoy higher levels of healthcare access.[457](#) In general, the Bajuni are a very small ethnic group of around 10 000 to 15 000 people.[458](#) The Somali government recently estimated that Bajuni constitute 0.2% of Somali population.[459](#) As in other cases mentioned above, demographic data in Somalia have, in the absence of reliable and recent census data, to be considered with caution.[460](#) For more details, see section 4.2. of the [EUAA COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles](#), published in September 2021.

#### • [431](#)

Declich, F., Can Boundaries not Border on One Another? The Zigula (Somali Bantu) between Somalia & Tanzania, pp. 170-71, 175

- [432](#)

Mukhtar, Mohamed H., Historical Dictionary of Somalia, 2003, p. 31

- [433](#)

Lamberti, M., Die Somali-Dialekte, 1986, p. 8

- [434](#)

Hassan Deqa, Somali Dialects in the United States: How Intelligible is Af-Maay to Speakers of Af-Maxaa? 2011, [url](#), p. 19; Mukhtar, Mohamed H., Historical Dictionary of Somalia, 2003, p. 30

- [435](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 14

- [436](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 13

- [437](#)

Besteman, C., Unraveling Somalia: Race, violence and the history of slavery, 1999, pp. 49-54

- [438](#)

Hoehne, M. V., Telephone interview, 9 March 2025; MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 8

- [439](#)

UNHCR March 2018: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Somalia: Bantu, [url](#)

- [440](#)

Cassanelli, L., Victims and vulnerable groups in southern Somalia, 1995, [url](#)

- [441](#)

Besteman, C., Unraveling Somalia: Race, violence and the history of slavery, p. 236

- [442](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), pp. 14-15

- [443](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 19

- [444](#)

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report — Somalia, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

- [445](#)

USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Somalia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 30

- [446](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 28

- [447](#)

USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Somalia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 42

- [448](#)

USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Somalia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 42

- [449](#)

EASO, Somalia: Targeted Profiles, September 2021, [url](#), section 4

- [450](#)

Nurse, D., Bajuni: people, society, geography, history, language, n.d., [url](#) p. 4

- [451](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 3;  
Walsh, M., The lost world of the Bajuni, 2010, [url](#)

- [452](#)

Walsh, M., The lost world of the Bajuni, 2010, [url](#)

- [453](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 8

- [454](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), pp. 13, 22

- [455](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 22

- [456](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 3;  
Walsh, M., The lost world of the Bajuni, 2010, [url](#)

- [457](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 13

- [458](#)

MEDA, Assessment Report on Minority Groups in Somalia, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 14

- [459](#)

Somalia, Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy (MF), Stakeholder Engagement Plan;  
Somali Sustainable Fisheries Development Project-Badmaal, 5 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 26

- [460](#)

Shamso Sheegow 2025, Dadka laga tiraada badan yahay [People who are fewer in number],  
2025, [url](#)