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1.10.1. Repercussions for refusing to pay 'taxes' to Al-Shabaab or for paying taxes to others

○ (a) Overview of Al-Shabaab tax system

The UN Panel of experts on Somalia, in its latest report from 2024, indicates that Al-Shabaab's overall financial income for 2023 exceeded 150 million USD. This resulted from its extensive financial operations,[808](#) and extremely diversified revenue generating system, whereby taxation through coercion or 'taxtortion' is the norm.[809](#)

Under this system 'everything and anything is potentially a source of income', not just the 'flows' of commodities, goods or vehicles coming into ports or passing through checkpoints.[810](#)

Among others, Al-Shabaab relies on following sources of revenue: checkpoints, forced charitable or alms contributions (zakat or zakah, or zakawat in Somali,[811](#) the annual wealth tax[812](#)), direct extortion of business, taxation of imports into ports, kidnappings for ransom,[813](#) taxation of farm produce, livestock selling, water and irrigation resources, vehicles registration fees, operating licences fee,[814](#) local tax imposed based on need (infaq),[815](#) as well as property and business ventures in Somalia.[816](#)

For further information see also the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Actors (June 2021). In the context of checkpoint (isbaaro) taxation, Al-Shabaab categorises its taxation system into four distinct streams: transit (gadiid), goods (badeeco), agricultural produce (dalag) and livestock (xoolo).[817](#) In 2024 new products and tariffs, such as on scrap metal, were also introduced.[818](#)

Al-Shabaab can extort and levy taxes in areas under their direct control – heartland – as well as beyond it, where they do not have permanent presence, or where their presence is contested, depending on how strong the government and the state security forces are locally.[819](#)

○ (b) Repercussions for refusing to pay taxes

In the absence of an effective protection system, Al-Shabaab can pressure anybody into paying taxes.[820](#) Men and women are required to pay taxes to the group, despite the formal ban on women's work or businesses.[821](#) Threats and punishments are core parts of Al-Shabaab's enforcement tactics to coerce civilians into compliance and making sure the taxation systems runs smoothly.[822](#) Deadly[823](#) or brutal violence is relatively rare being its threat or 'spectre' sufficient to discourage non-compliance.[824](#) Tax-demands are not negotiable, but in specific cases people in need can bargain - to a certain extent - also with the help of clan elders.[825](#) Women who cannot afford to pay taxes are sometimes told to hand over their children.[826](#)

Among others, checkpoints are a major source of revenue for Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab is known for retaliating violently and scare 'road users into compliance',[827](#) hence preventing them from using alternative routes.[828](#) Al-Shabaab taxes vary depending on vehicles, on whether goods are imports or exports, and on whether they may benefit government-controlled areas. In which case traders might not be allowed to pass, be threatened with death, or made to pay double the normal tariff.[829](#)

At the end of August 2024, as a reaction to the new 5% sales tax, Al-Shabaab, while threatening dire consequences, warned banks and financial institutions not to comply with the new government directives and asked individuals to withdraw their money from those institutions failing to do so.[830](#) See section 1.10.2 Repercussions for refusing to pay taxes to 'others for further details.

Al-Shabaab retaliation for refusing to pay 'taxes',[831](#) included:

- Abductions: fifteen clan elders in Hagar village, near Afmadow (Lower Juba), were abducted on 16 July 2023, and taken to Jilib, because accused of defying order regarding tax collection in the region;[832](#) a truck driver travelling between Jowhar and Balcad, near Basra village (Middle Shabelle), was abducted on 19 July 2023 over a tax extortion dispute;[833](#) two clan elders in Dabader village, near Afmadow (Lower Juba), were abducted on 21 June 2024, due to unpaid taxation to the group;[834](#) two passenger vehicle drivers in Hagar, near Afmadow (Lower Juba), were abducted and taken to Jilib on 7 September 2024, due to alleged tax fraud.[835](#)
- Shooting and killing: on 1 December 2023, unidentified gunmen shot and killed a businessperson and injured two of his children in Bosaso (Bari), over a tax extortion dispute;[836](#) on 10 February 2024, Al-Shabaab shot and killed a businessman in Bosaso (Bari), over a tax extortion dispute.[837](#)

- [808](#)

UNSC, Report of the Panel of Experts pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023), 28 October 2024, [url](#), para. 62

- [809](#)

UNODC, More powerful by the day - Terror Financing and Disruption Efforts in Somalia, March 2023, [url](#), p. 3

- [810](#)

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Schouten, P., Paying the price - The political economy of checkpoints in Somalia, 2023, [url](#), p. 61 and footnote n. 136

- [812](#)

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- [814](#)

Stern O. M., Al-Shabaab gendered economy, March 2021, [url](#), pp. 13, 22

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- [818](#)

UNSC, Report of the Panel of Experts pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023), S/2024/748, 28 October 2024, [url](#), para. 64, pp. 58-60

- [819](#)

ODI, Playing the long game - Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabab and civilians in areas beyond state control, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-13

- [820](#)

UNODC, More powerful by the day - Terror Financing and Disruption Efforts in Somalia, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-12

- [821](#)

Stern O. M., Al-Shabaab gendered economy, March 2021, [url](#), pp. 17, 22

- [822](#)

ODI, Playing the long game - Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabab and civilians in areas beyond state control, August 2023, [url](#), p. 16; Stern O. M., Al-Shabaab gendered economy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 13

- [823](#)

ODI, Playing the long game - Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabab and civilians in areas beyond state control, August 2023, [url](#), p. 13

- [824](#)

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ODI, Playing the long game - Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabab and civilians in areas beyond state control, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 13-14

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EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. Curated Data Files, Somalia, 21 March 2025, [url](#), SOM41693

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EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. Curated Data Files, Somalia, 21 March 2025, [url](#), SOM41694

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EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. Curated Data Files, Somalia, 21 March 2025, [url](#), SOM44949

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EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. Curated Data Files, Somalia, 21 March 2025, [url](#), SOM45647

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EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. Curated Data Files, Somalia, 21 March 2025, [url](#), SOM43393, SOM43394

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