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3.9.3. Persons belonging to groups specialised in Islamic services

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This sub-profile refers to persons who belong to minority groups specialised in Islamic services. These minorities include the Ashraf (Hassan and Hussein sub-groups) and the Sheikhal (Jasira, Gendershe, Loboge, and Aw Qutub sub-groups).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 1.4., 1.4.4., 1.4.5.; Targeting 2021, 4.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which groups specialised in Islamic services could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, Ashraf and Sheikhal occasionally face human rights abuses due to their non-major-clan origins. Sexual abuse and violence against women and girls belonging to minority groups have been also reported.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that individuals belonging to groups specialised in Islamic services could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be considered. More specifically, the situation of **Ashraf** has been characterised by their structural marginalisation as a minority group in southern Somalia. Members of majority clans have taken advantage of them and rarely face serious consequences. In recent years they gained some political and economic influence in southern Somalia again. They also have access to education. Some Asharaf and Sheikhal engage successfully in businesses. Still, members of both groups (**Ashraf and Sheikhal**) occasionally face discrimination due to their non-major-clan origins. Although intermarriage between majority and minority groups such as Asharaf and Sheikhal is accepted, it is typically the case that women come from the minority group while men belong to the majority group.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for groups specialised in Islamic services, **in the whole of Somalia, including South-Central Somalia,**

Puntland and Somaliland, to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **The specific minority group to which the applicant belongs**: Although in the Somali parliament, three seats are reserved for the Sheikhal clan through the Hawiye clan family, the Gendershe and Jasira Sheikhal sub-groups face marginalisation, while Loboge and Aw Qutub sub-groups acquire a more ambiguous position. Some Ashraf and Sheikhal engage successfully in businesses, including large-scale businesses in Mogadishu.

- **Gender**: Women and girls belonging to minority groups are at a higher risk of sexual abuse and violence. Furthermore, their group belonging in combination with gender-based discrimination influences access to education. Regarding intermarriage, women from Ashraf minority may marry members of majority groups, due to the highly religious prestige the Ashraf hold among other Somalis.

- **Home area and local clan dynamics**: Ashraf living in and around Baidoa have a slightly more protected position compared to other areas. The Aw Qutub Sheikhal sub-group had suffered some discrimination or harassment in Somaliland from the dominant Isaaq clan, being suspected of disloyalty to the Somaliland state after 1991.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **race/nationality**. Furthermore, persecution of groups specialised in Islamic services may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**, based on an innate characteristic or common background which cannot be changed (the family they are born into/their inherited religious status) and distinct identity in Somalia, as they are perceived as different in the Somali society.

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