

Human Rights Violations in Somalia: Structural Causes, Cultural Disruption, and Pathways to Sustainable Reform

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Somalia's human rights crisis must be understood as the outcome of prolonged state collapse, violent conflict, proxy warfare, and institutional fragmentation rather than as a reflection of Somali culture or social values. For decades, Somali society was grounded in strong communal ethics, respect for women and elders, religious moderation, and social accountability. The collapse of the central government dismantled these safeguards and opened space for extremist ideologies, criminal economies, and power abuses that were previously alien to Somali life.

This research report presents a comprehensive analysis of human rights violations in Somalia as of January 2026, based on field research, survivor testimonies, institutional reviews, and engagement with civil society, religious scholars, donors, and policymakers. It argues that Somali civilians—especially women, children, journalists, internally displaced persons (IDPs), pastoralists, and human rights defenders—are victims of structural failures rather than cultural norms.

Somalia is often described through the language of crisis. Yet such descriptions obscure a deeper truth: Somali society is historically resilient, socially cohesive, and grounded in ethical norms that value dignity, mutual responsibility, and justice. The current pattern of widespread human rights violations is not an extension of Somali culture but the consequence of institutional collapse and proxy conflict.

Human rights violations today include arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, forced recruitment, corruption, aid diversion, intimidation of journalists, and violence against vulnerable groups. These violations are perpetrated by state actors, terrorist organizations, militias, and criminal gangs operating with impunity.

Somalia's cultural disruption correlates directly with prolonged proxy wars. Extremist ideologies were introduced as tools of influence and control, enabling terrorism, piracy, and criminal economies. Migration has become a survival strategy, not a rejection of national responsibility.

State-building requires ethical leadership, accountability, and alignment between Islamic values, Somali culture, and modern governance. Human rights protection is essential for peace, prosperity, and global security, given Somalia's strategic location.

Somalis are not asking for privilege; they are asking for justice, safety, and opportunity. Protecting human rights in Somalia is inseparable from regional and global peace. Ending proxy conflict, investing in people-centered development, and supporting Somali-led reform will allow Somalia to reclaim its social fabric.

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