



General Assembly

Distr.: General
XX February 2026

English only

Human Rights Council

Sixty-first session

23 February–2 April 2026

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Requesting That Somalia Protect Christians From Being Persecuted

1. INTRODUCTION

In its 2026 World Watch List, Open Doors ranked Somalia as the 2nd worst country for Christians.(1) This is due to persecution by the government and other Somalis.(2) Additionally, Islam is the only legal religion in Somalia, and converting from Islam to any other religion is punishable by death.(3)

2. BACKGROUND

The decline of Christianity in Somalia has been going on since 1969 under the rule of Mohamed Siad Barre.(4) Under Barre, Somalia embraced secular modernization while also closed churches, expelled missionaries, and harassed Christians.(5) Following the collapse of Barre's regime in 1991, radical jihadists began filling the power vacuum, and by 2000, al-Shabaab, an Islamic terrorist group, began controlling regions in southern and central Somalia.(6)

Today, Somalia is operating under a provisional Constitution that disregards freedom of religion. Accordingly, "Islam is the religion of the State," and "[n]o religion other than Islam can be propagated in the country."(7) It is estimated that there are approximately 1,500 Christians living in Somalia.(8) However, exact numbers are hard to determine.(9) This is a sharp decline in the Christian population, considering that, in 1940, there were more than 40,000 Catholics living in just southern Somalia.(10)

In Somalia, most of the Christians are converts from Islam. This puts their life at risk because the punishment for leaving Islam is death.(11) Women in particular are vulnerable when they convert. Often, they are humiliated in public, placed under house arrest, raped, or forced to marry Muslim men.(12) Christians have no legal protections, and authorities have created a hostile environment for Christians through surveillance, harassment, and intimidation.(13) Because of this, Christians are forced to practice their faith in secret.(14)

Additionally, Christians are not only persecuted by the government, but they are also routinely harassed and attacked by members of their communities and their own families.(15) One Christian shared that his father told him, "I cannot stop you from reading your Bible, but if you become a Christian, I will be the one to kill you."(16)

Below, we have highlighted just a few examples of Christian persecution in Somalia. Unfortunately, these are just a sample as many stories are unreported out of safety concerns.(17)

3. VIOLATIONS

In January 2026, a Muslim social media influencer in Somalia posted a video claiming that Somalis were being targeted by Christians.(18) In the video, he stated that "[w]e must be aware and protect our vulnerable people like women and children and the poor people who are being targeted by these Christian organizations." Comments poured in on the video calling for Allah to "destroy the people underground" and stating that "the infidels should be caught and hanged."(19)

In 2025, one Christian convert shared his story of the numerous problems he faced after converting to Christianity.(20) He shared that he was ostracized by his family, lost his inheritance, and that his life had become full of suffering.(21) Later, he was imprisoned for sharing his faith, but was released only after his wife was able to convince authorities that he was insane and possessed.(22)

On August 19, 2025, a woman was beaten and locked in a room with her child after she saw a vision of Christ and began listening to Christian worship music.(23)

In January 2025, a woman converted to Christianity and began showing videos to her father and mother.(24) She was later told by her husband that she had three months to renounce her Christian faith or he would divorce her.(25) By June, she was forced into exile under the threat of death by her family.(26) She shared that she has “received threatening messages from two of [her] relatives, saying it would be better to kill [her] than allow [her] to remain a Christian, since [she’d] become an apostate and should be killed.”(27) Since then, she has been moving from village to village trying to find work to survive with her children.(28)

4. REQUEST

Somalia has not only failed to stop an onslaught of persecution against Christians but also encourages it in law and practice. For years, Christians have been suppressed, exiled, and threatened, such that there may be no more than 1,500 Christians in the whole country. Immediate action needs to be taken to stop the persecution of Christians in Somalia. The government is clearly unwilling to stop the violence. The international community must demand that Somalia protects Christians and stop the persecution.

- (1) Somalia, OPEN DOORS, <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/somalia/>.
- (2) Id
- (3) Faith under Fire: Overview of the Presence and Persecution of Christianity in Somalia, SOMALI MISSION (Aug. 2025).
- (4) Somalia Report 2026, OPEN DOORS (2026).
- (5) Id.
- (6) Id.
- (7) THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION art. 2, <https://humanrts.umn.edu/research/Somalia-Constitution2012.pdf>.
- (8) Serving the Hidden Church in Somalia, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (May 28, 2025).
- (9) Somalia Report 2026, *supra* note 4
- (10) Somali Christian Census, SOMALI BIBLE STUDY (2023), <https://somalibiblesociety.org/download/census-of-somali-christians-2023.pdf>.
- (11) Uzay Bulut, Christians Are Persecuted in Every Muslim-Majority Country, THE EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVE, (Dec. 31, 2025).
- (12) Id.
- (13) Somalia, *supra* note 1.
- (14) Id.
- (15) Id.
- (16) Id.
- (17) Somalia Report 2026, *supra* note 4.
- (18) When the Underground Church is Exposed, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Jan. 9, 2026), <https://persecution.org/2026/01/09/when-the-underground-church-is-exposed/>.
- (19) Id.
- (20) From Stealing a Bible to Serving Secretly – Rooble from Somalia, OPEN DOORS (Oct. 2, 2025).
- (21) Id.
- (22) Id.
- (23) Christian Mother, Baby Locked in Room in Somalia, MORNING STAR NEWS (Aug. 19, 2025) <https://morningstarnews.org/2025/08/christian-mother-baby-locked-in-room-in-somalia/>.
- (24) Mother in Somalia Loses Husband, Home for Accepting Christ, MORNING STAR NEWS (Jun. 18, 2025), <https://morningstarnews.org/2025/06/mother-in-somalia-loses-husband-home-for-accepting-christ/>.

(25) Rachel Huston, Somali Mother Loses Husband, Home, and Safety, after Christian Conversion, PREMIER CHRISTIAN NEWS (June 24, 2025),
<https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/somali-woman-forced-to-flee-family-home-after-conversion-to-christianity>.

(26) Mother in Somalia Loses Husband, Home for Accepting Christ, *supra* note 24.

(27) Huston, *supra* note 25.

(28) Mother in Somalia Loses Husband, Home for Accepting Christ, *supra* note 24.