

# Child Soldiers Within Somalia: Land and Piracy Issues

By: Linnea Magsuci

# General Information

- + Somalia is located in Eastern Africa; east of Ethiopia and Kenya.
- + Size: slightly smaller than Texas
- + Climate: mostly desert; moderate temperatures in the north and hot in the south
- + Economy: Lacking in natural resources, Somalia has relied on livestock, money transfer companies and telecommunications.

# Definition of a Child Soldier

- + According to UNICEF: "A child soldier is defined as any child - boy or girl - under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity. "
- Not limited to cooks, messengers and anyone traveling with the group.
- Includes girls and boys recruited for sexual purposes or a forced marriage
- Note: The definition does not apply to a child carrying a weapon

# Al-Shabaab (Land)

- + Al-Shabaab is an Islamic military organization that controls Southern Somalia excluding the capital Mogadishu. The group describes itself to be pursuing a jihad against the “enemies of Islam”. It has been in conflict with Somalia’s transitional government and its Ethiopian supporters, and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).
- + The Al-Shabaab has reportedly declared war on the UN and other Western non-governmental organizations that distribute food in Somalia.

# Area controlled by the Al-shabaab



# Recruitment

- + The youngest child soldier recruited was 8 years old. Amnesty International has said that majority of the soldiers range from 10 years old to 17 years old.
- + Recruiters have used different methods to recruit child soldiers. A popular method is brainwashing them to believe that they would go to paradise if they took part in the defense of Somalia and Islam. Some children are lured out of their homes with promises of gifts, such as mobile phones. While others were threatened or kidnapped. One girl said that her school was attacked by the al-Shabaab, so they can take the children away.
- + Street children in Mogadishu are the targets of recruitment because they are the most vulnerable, with no family looking after them.

# Life as a Child Soldier

- + According to a source from BBC News, the Al-Shabaab use the children as shields. Only poor children are used to fight. 10 year old children have been spotted in Mogadishu's market places with guns and whips.

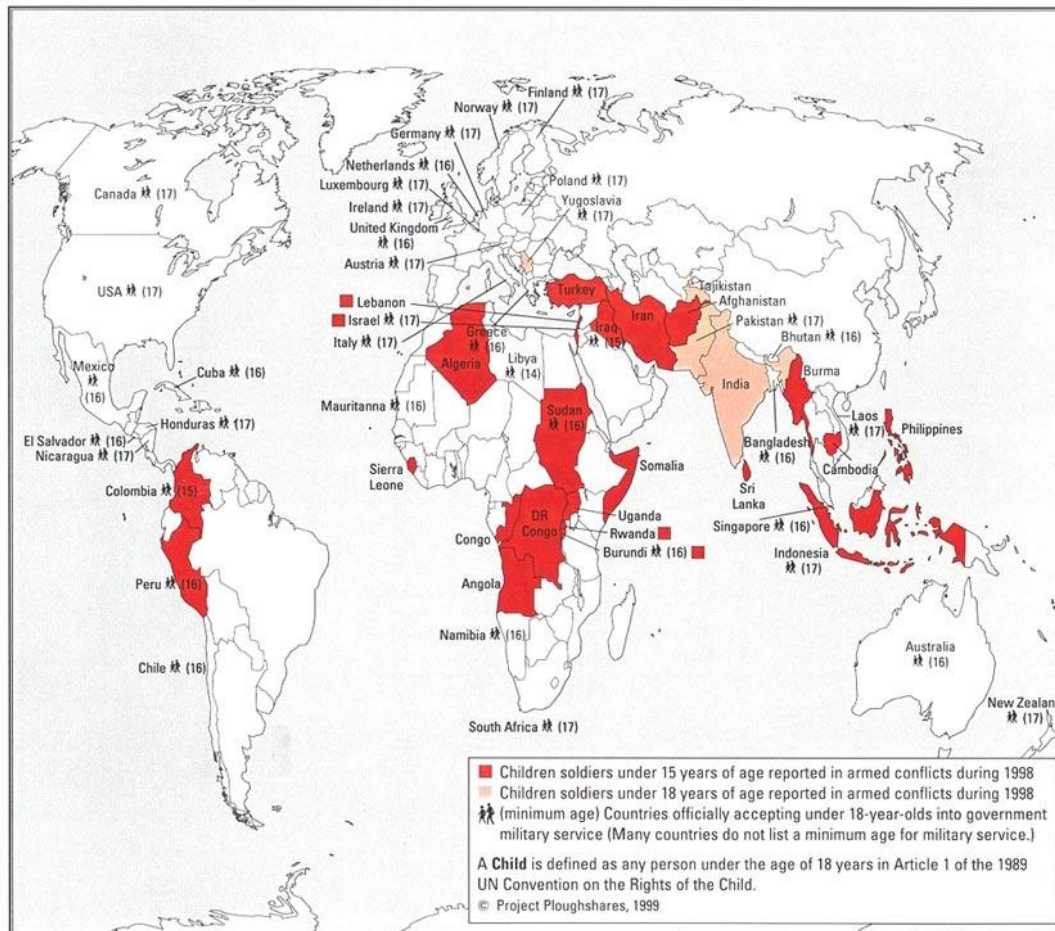


# Life as a Child Soldier (continued)

- + Hundreds of Somali children are trained in camps in Southern Somalia by the Al-Shabaab.
- + Foreigners are hired to train the children. Many come from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and other countries. Translators are hired to help them.
- + With the current situation in Somalia, militias are currently increasing their recruitment of children under the age of 15.



# Map



Major sources: Ridda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children); Human Rights Watch.

## Child Soldiers Reported in Government or Insurgent Military Service

- ◆ Of the 31 countries hosting armed conflict in 1998:
  - ◆ 87% have seen child soldiers deployed.
  - ◆ 71% have seen child soldiers under the age of 15 deployed.
- ◆ As many as 300,000 children serve in government forces or armed rebel groups. Some are as young as seven years old.
- ◆ Technological advances in weaponry have contributed to an increased use of child soldiers. Children can operate lightweight automatic weapons as easily as adults.
- ◆ No peace treaty to date has recognized the existence of child soldiers, or made provisions for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

# Map 2

## Warfare Waged by the Young

Conflicts in these nations are notable for their brutality and the participation of child soldiers.

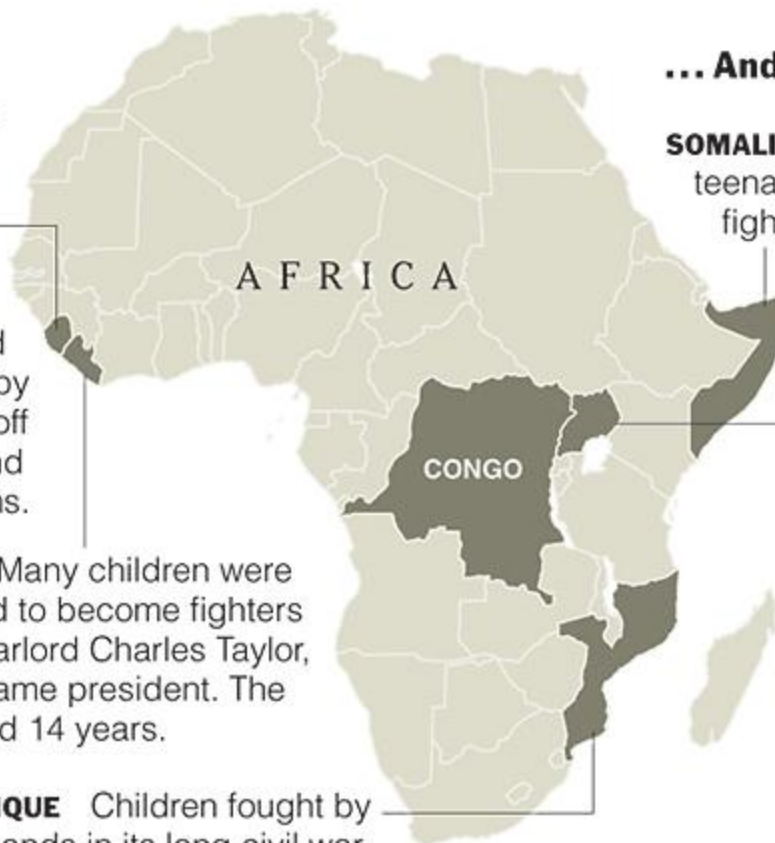
### Recent Wars ...

#### **SIERRA LEONE**

Young soldiers terrorized civilians by hacking off hands and even arms.

**LIBERIA** Many children were abducted to become fighters for the warlord Charles Taylor, who became president. The war lasted 14 years.

**MOZAMBIQUE** Children fought by the thousands in its long civil war.



### ... And Those Still Raging

**SOMALIA** War profiteers, including teenage gunmen for hire, are fighting to prevent the formation of a stable government, which could collect taxes and curb illegal businesses.

**UGANDA** An army of kidnapped children led by a messianic rebel leader have brutalized thousands.

**CONGO** Boy soldiers in the employ of warlords keep conflicts alive in regions far beyond government control.

# Somali Piracy

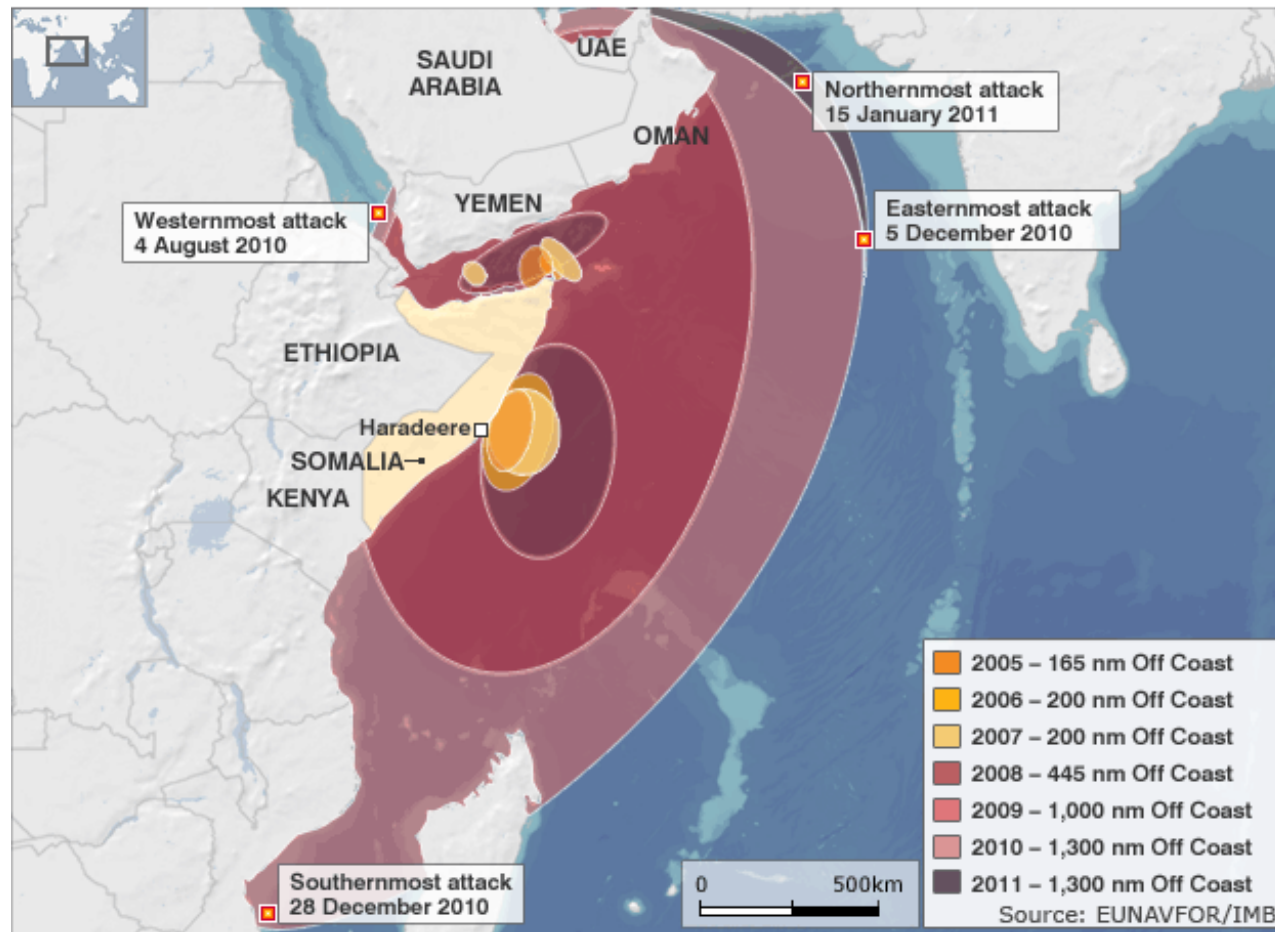
- + Piracy off the coast of Somalia has posed a threat to international shipping since 2005.
- + The pirates refer to themselves as the *badaadinta bada* (saviors of the sea). They don't consider themselves to be murderers but as attackers of ships.
- + There are four major groups operating the Somali coast:
  1. National Volunteer Coast Guard = mainly attacks small boats and fishing vessels around Kismayo on the southern coast
  2. Marka Group = consists of several scattered and less organized groups functioning around the port city of Marka
  3. Puntland Group = made up of traditional Somali fisherman operating around Puntland
  4. Somali Marines = considered to be the most powerful pirate group. It has a military structure with a fleet admiral, admiral, vice-admiral and head of financial operations

# World Trade

- + According to Captain Keith Blount of Operation Atalanta:
  1. 90% of global trade by sea
  2. 10,000 global destinations
  3. 95% of maritime trade travels through 9 checkpoints of Indian Ocean
  4. 40,000 ships pass through Indian Ocean every year
  5. 3 million barrels of oil go through Babel Mendev strait (between Yemen and Djibouti and Somalia)
  6. 1 trillion dollars worth of trade passes through Babel Mendev Strait
  7. Patterns of Somali Piracy: dense in the central Indian ocean; active hunting ground for pirates

# Expansion of Somali pirate attacks

Expansion of pirate operations







Somali Pirates hijacking a Chinese trade ship

# The Pirates

- + Many pirates are 20-35 years old.
- + According to a BBC report, there are 3 different classifications:
  1. Local Somali Fishermen = the brains of the pirates' operations due to their knowledge of the sea.
  2. Ex-Militiamen = soldiers who formerly fought for the local clan warlords, or ex-military from the former Barre government used as guards
  3. Technical experts = operate equipment, example: GPS devices

# Child Pirates

- + According to a recent capture of Somali pirates by the Indian Navy, 25 of the 61 pirates captured are children below the age of 15.
- + A quote from Oneindia news, An official commented on this alarming trend and said, "At least four of them are just 11 or so. It seems younger and younger children in Somalia are being pushed into piracy, which is proving immensely lucrative in the lawless country...the established pirates, who have got rich, are no longer sailing out on raids."
- + Previous to the capture, the Indian Navy were able to foil two pirate attacks. Many of the pirates within the ships were children.



# Somali Transitional Government

- + The Somali Transitional Government has been accused of recruiting child soldiers.
- + Amnesty International recently published a report on the impact of war crimes on Somali children, including the recruitment of child soldiers under 15.
- + The report revealed that the Somali Transitional Government is on the United Nations “list of shame” as a party recruiting, using, killing and maiming children in armed conflict.
- + General AbAbdulkadir Sheikh Ali Dini, Somalia’s army chief, said in reply, “The Somali government should not recruit immature children and adolescents as soldiers and it is not part in our national constitution.”

# What is the UN doing?

- + There isn't a specific UN agency or NGO solely focusing on Somali child soldiers. But there are UN agencies, NGOs, and networks such as The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict working to ensure stronger protection for children affected by armed conflict.
- + Since the mid-1980s, UNICEF has played an important role in advocating and releasing children from military groups.
  - UNICEF and its NGO partners have also provided care, technical guidance, and financial support to help the national programs for demobilization, disarmament and most importantly reintegration.

# UNICEF Somalia

- + UNICEF is the organization with the largest presence in Somalia.
- + UNICEF works with local administrations, local and international NGOs and other UN agencies to provide services for Somali women and children.
- + UNICEF Somalia's work in child protection has been focused in four areas:
  1. Studying child protection and small arm
  2. Supporting the rehabilitation of child soldiers
  3. Strengthening Somalia's juvenile justice system

# MDGs

- + Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
  - Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
- + Goal 2: Achieve Universal Education
- + Goal 4: Child Health
- + Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development



# The End

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8173079.stm>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/24/a-pioneer-of-somali-piracy>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/18/somalia-oil>

[http://www.unicef.org/somalia/cpp\\_134.html](http://www.unicef.org/somalia/cpp_134.html)

<http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/childsoldiers.pdf>

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/east/Challenges-to-Somalia-Famine-Relief--126132404.html><http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Amnesty-International-Report-says-Somali-Militias-Recruiting-Child-Soldiers-125890388.html>

<http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/90055235?Somalia%20denies%20recruiting%20child%20soldiers>

[http://filipspagnoli.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/child\\_soldiers\\_africa.jpg](http://filipspagnoli.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/child_soldiers_africa.jpg)

[http://filipspagnoli.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/child\\_soldiers\\_world.jpg](http://filipspagnoli.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/child_soldiers_world.jpg)

<http://www.assistnews.net/images07/A%20child%20soldier%20in%20Sierra%20Leone.jpg>

<http://blogs.voanews.com/breaking-news/2011/07/25/un-sets-donors-conference-for-horn-of-africa-drought-2>

[http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/sites/default/files/human\\_cost\\_of\\_somali\\_piracy.pdf](http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/sites/default/files/human_cost_of_somali_piracy.pdf)

<http://news.oneindia.in/2011/03/17/child-soldiers-below-15-turn-pirates-in-somalia-aid0113.html>