

Her Royal Highness Duchess of Edinburgh visits Somalia

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The Duchess makes two-day visit to Mogadishu, meets women and girls organisations and President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

Ahead of International Women's Day (8 March), The Duchess made a two-day visit to Somalia 23 to 24 February.

In Mogadishu, The Duchess was hosted at Villa Somalia by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for an introductory call during which they discussed the crucial role women play in peacebuilding, strengthening community resilience and ensuring accountability for sexual and gender-based violence. The Duchess welcomed the Federal Government of Somalia's Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan and encouraged its sustained implementation to improve conditions on the ground.

During the visit, The Duchess met Somali women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. In a meeting at Uganda House, Villa Somalia, The Duchess and first daughter Jihan Abdullahi Hassan heard from victims of gender and sexual based violence perpetrated by al-Shabaab, reinforcing the importance of the UK-Somalia security partnership.

The Duchess also visited a Somali village in Lower Shabelle where the wives of Somali soldiers explained the dangers posed by al-Shabaab and the challenges they face while their husbands fight for a more secure and stable Somalia.

Somali organisations and partners of the British Embassy, including Ifrah Foundation, ALIGHT Somali Women's Leadership Initiative and the Somali Women Study Centre, told the The Duchess about the challenging operating environment they face, with conflict, drought and scarcity of resources exacerbating the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. UK support to Somali organisations working with survivors of GBV reached almost 130,000 women and girls between 2024 and 2025. Somali survivors received clinical support for health complications associated with GBV, hygiene and dignity commodities, and psychosocial support.

Visiting a hospital in the centre of Mogadishu, The Duchess saw the impact of a UK-funded sexual and reproductive health service programme operating across 39 health facilities in five regions—Banadir, Bay, Mudug, Lower Shabelle, and Galgaduud. These areas are significantly affected by insecurity, displacement, and weak services. UK support helps to strengthen service delivery, which reduces the stigma and fear associated with seeking care after sexual violence. In an emotional conversation with victims of sexual and gender-based violence, supported by this programme run by International Rescue Committee, The Duchess heard the terrible impact of female genital mutilation, rape and sexual assault on Somali women.

The Duchess departed Somalia on 24 February, to continue her regional tour.

More information

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