

Hello, and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

I'm Avi Arditti.

Today we report on efforts by Somali-based al-Shabab to get people in the United States to join the group.

"So we're not talking about the root cause -- what caused these people to go back, ostensibly to defend the dignity and the sovereignty of a nation that is being destroyed."

But first, we report on efforts to persuade Western powers to become more-involved in the fight against al-Shabab.

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## **Al-Shabab Attack Unlikely To Cause Western Intervention**

Several Westerners were among the 67 people killed last month by al-Shabab gunmen in Kenya. The September 21st attack took place at a shopping center in the capital Nairobi.

Since the attack there have been calls for Western countries to get more involved in the fight against al-Shabab. The group is based in Somalia and linked to al-Qaida.

But experts say that is not likely to happen.

Caty Weaver reports.

The victims of the Westgate Mall attack included citizens of Australia, Britain, Canada and other western nations. But Sajjan Gohel, the Security Director of the Asia-Pacific Foundation in London, says those deaths will not likely lead to direct Western action against al-Shabab.

“What we will probably see is more impetus by the international community, especially the United States, in trying to encourage Somalia’s neighbors in becoming more active, more involved, in trying to dismantle the infrastructure of al-Shabab.”

Shiraz Maher, of the Center for the Study of Radicalization, at Kings College in London, says Western nations are now more careful after their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“I think the West now favors having localized countries who are responding to regional crises taking the lead, and they will support from behind the scenes. The level of support might increase, but I don’t think you’d see anything like American direct intervention for example.”

Sajjan Gohel says ending the threat from al-Shabab will be difficult.

“This is a group that has splintered. Its factions are displaced in a number of countries, not just Somalia. They are recruiting from the refugee populations that exist throughout the Horn of Africa

and East Africa. It's a challenge, it's a big challenge. And unfortunately they also are able to recruit from the West."

There are now 17,000 African Union troops in Somalia. They are known as AMISOM. They will continue to take the lead in fighting al-Shabab, alongside Somali troops.

Nicholas Kay, the United Nations' diplomat for Somalia, says the international community must increase their efforts against al-Shabab.

"Particularly extra resources for the military effort where the AMISOM are under-resourced, they have, for example, not a single military helicopter for a campaign in a country that is the size of Afghanistan."

Helmoed Romer Heitman is a military expert for Jane's Defense Weekly. He says African Union forces need more equipment so they can react to threats across the continent.

“Outside powers coming into Africa to do it, well the Europeans aren’t that willing, and most of them no longer have the clout because they have had to scale down so much. Do we really want China or India or somebody else doing that? Because they are not going to do it in our interests, they’re going to do it in their interests. The U.N. takes too long, we have seen that. So there is a need for a continental force, and in fact regional forces in the continent.”

Experts say the shopping center attack in Nairobi shows that al-Shabab is alive and well, and that it is able to take action outside Somalia.

I’m Caty Weaver.

## **Al-Shabab Finds Fighters Among Somali Youth**

The American state of Minnesota has a large Somali community. There are concerns that the community is a good place for al-Shabab to find young men to become fighters. Many young Somali men in the United States are torn between two cultures -- Somali and American. This could leave them open to religious and

nationalist appeals from the group that attacked the Westgate mall in Nairobi.

Hashim Yonis is active in the community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is working with other young Somali men to help them deal with a sense of alienation -- of feeling separate from both cultures.

“My generation, I call them the lost generation. They are not part of the traditional Somalia. They are not part of, hundred percent, so they basically have their one foot on the America side, the Western side, and then the other one back home.”

In addition to working with young Somalis, Mr. Yonis is campaigning for local office. He is a candidate for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Many young Somali men are the children of refugees who fled the long civil war in their country. Some of these young men are having difficulty with American life. Some drop out of school and cannot find a job, or they get involved with gangs.

Nimco Ahmed is a Somali activist who works for the Minneapolis City Council. She says the war and resettlement have broken up the traditional family structure.

“Most of our fathers are either not here or not in the country or dead pretty much. So not having a father figure for our boys has been a struggle for us. And it’s still a struggle for us.”

Al-Shabab has gotten at least 20 Somali-Americans to fight against foreign troops in Somalia. The Islamist militant group uses a mixture of religion, nationalism and what some say is deception, or dishonesty.

Some people in the Somali community, including Hussein Egal, believe those who joined al-Shabab should not be criticized for wanting to help Somalia.

“So we’re not talking about the root cause -- what caused these people to go back, ostensibly to defend the dignity and the sovereignty of a nation that is being destroyed.”

But the majority opinion in the Somali-American community is that al-Shabab tries to control emotionally conflicted young people.

Hashim Yonis and other leaders are trying to fight the appeal of terrorist groups by calling for improved education and opportunities for more Somalis to better mix into American society.

United States officials say they have no evidence that any Americans took part in the attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi.

And that's As It Is for today.

We had reporting help for today's program from Henry Ridgwell and Brian Padden.

Every day on As It Is we report on issues that we hope are of interest to you.





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I'm Avi Arditti.

## **Contact information for VOA Learning English:**

Postal address:

**VOA Learning English  
Room 3400  
330 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20237  
United States of America**

Email us at: [LearningEnglish@voanews.com](mailto:LearningEnglish@voanews.com)

Or go to our website -- [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com) -- and click  
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