

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2013: 1st Quarter trend summary and analysis

Tightening of border controls in Saudi Arabia

Following the rise in cases of smuggling and trafficking of people and contraband goods; and recent deaths of Saudi Arabian soldiers guarding the border, the Saudi Arabia government set up various [military check points and sites](#) on the border to increase security. The kingdom has also begun the construction of a 1,800 km border fence with Yemen that would stretch from the Red Sea coast in the west to the edge of Oman in the east. Yemeni tribes living close to the border have resisted the move.

The border fence is designed to stem the flow of thousands of irregular immigrants, drug smugglers and gun runners from Horn of Africa region and Yemen. The first part of the fence has already been built on the coast, slowing down - but not stopping - the tide of illegal immigrants. Additionally, Saudi Arabia considers one of the main risks to its security to be attacks launched into the kingdom by al-Qaeda-linked militants based in Yemen, which continues to be plagued by internal conflicts, militancy and lawlessness.

Deportations

Additionally in Riyadh, an amendment was made to Saudi Arabia's labour law during this quarter which stipulated that foreign workers are forbidden from running their own business and must remain strictly linked to their original sponsors for all work-related activities. Subsequently, thousands of Yemenis have been expelled. There are well over 300,000 Yemenis in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who have sought employment other than that which was provided by their sponsor, or after they left their initial sponsor.

Decreased movement of migrants into Yemen

During this quarter a total of 29,469 migrants made both the Sea(s) crossings to Yemen in a total of 391 boats. This means that on average approximately 32 crossings were made every week carrying an average of 75 people per boat.

In comparison to the previous year, both in terms of total number and proportional representation, the number of new arrivals in Yemen decreased by 12% compared to the 1st quarter of year 2012 where a total of 33,634 made both the Sea(s) crossings. In terms of proportion, non-Somalis moving to Yemen increased by 4.2 % while the proportion of Somalis decreased by a similar margin. The non-Somalis were mostly from the Ogaden, Amharic, Tigray and Afari regions. The reasons for fleeing their country have been attributed to pursuit of economic opportunities and fear of political persecution.

Decrease in number of Somali's in mixed flow

There was a noted decline in proportion and number of Somalis making the Sea crossing to Yemen. During this quarter a total of 4,373 Somalis made the crossing(s), which was a 31.4% decline compared



to the first quarter of 2012. Majority of the Somalis were from South Central specifically the regions of Shebelles, Bay, Banadir and Juba and also belonged to the Hawiye, Dir and Darood clans.

Kidnapping, Extortion and Ransom

During this quarter, the trend of commoditization (kidnapping for ransom) and criminality against migrants in Yemen continued. A notable difference, and perhaps arising from the publicity that stories of abuse have attracted, Yemen introduced military coast guards and community monitoring groups who have with frequency (within the quarter) mounted anti-smuggling/trafficking campaigns along the Lahj coast.

The numbers of coastal guards patrolling both the Lahj coast, ostensibly with the aim of curbing smuggling/trafficking activities have reportedly increased. As a result, landings along the Lahj coast have reduced while landings at the Al Jadid coast of Taiz governorate have increased. The smugglers are allegedly in contact with internal smuggling gangs who advise them via satellite phones on when and where to disembark migrants.

In Haradh, on the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, thousands of African migrants from the Horn of Africa continue to face harrowing conditions without access to any food, health care or sanitation facilities. The restrictive immigration policies in Saudi Arabia coupled with the tightening of border controls has increased the number of migrants stuck up in the border town.

Varied risks in the Sea(s) crossings

Concerning the number of migrants dying or going missing at sea, the trend from previous quarters (in 2012) continues. Very low numbers were recorded in 2012 compared with two years earlier and in the first quarter of 2013, according to UNHCR, there were no reported deaths at sea.

However, the number of reports of violence and abuse during the crossing have continued in addition to the particular risk of rape and sexual violence facing and increasing number of young females during the sea crossing to Yemen (see below).

Somali refugees in Dadaab and Dollo Ado refugee camps

In the first quarter of 2013, the population of Somali refugees in Dadaab refugee camp slightly decreased by 3.08% or 16,065 individuals in comparison to the camp population (Somali refugees) by the end of December 2012. The population as of the end of the 1st quarter stood at 507,540 refugees. In Dollo Ado refugee camp, the population of Somali refugees during the first quarter of 2013 rose by 4.9% or 11,151 individuals in comparison to the number of refugees in the camp by the end of December 2012.

Increase in number of Somali's returning to Mogadishu

A notable trend in Mogadishu has been an increase in the number of Somalis returning temporarily and permanently to Mogadishu. According to the UNHCR a total of 13,324 Somali refugees made



“[spontaneous](#)” returns from Kenya since January 2013. The UNHCR, quoting relief agencies working in Dadaab, attributed the returns to searching for work, business opportunities, checking on farms/property and a general assessment of the situation as well as cases where refugees found conditions in Kenya intolerable.

The higher incidents of returning refugees can also be attributed to the relocation order that was issued by the Kenyan Government On the 18th of December 2012. Kenya is keen on enforcing a mandatory encampment policy, as a precursor to the relocation of all Somali refugees from the Northern Kenyan camps to Somalia. Though the decision remains unresolved in the Kenyan courts, quite a number of Somalis are opting to return to Mogadishu.

Sexual and Gender based Violence of Women en-route to Yemen

During this quarter reports of sexual and gender based violence, including the gang rape of females have persisted in all the three months. In the month of January for example, there were at least 36 reported cases of sexual and gender based violence, most of them at Sea and perpetrated by the smuggling crew. Young females are also facing possible abductions while awaiting departure to Yemen in Obock, Djibouti.

The boat journey from Obock to Yemen is also rife with abuse, almost every female encountered indicated being the victim of or witnessing a rape during the boat journey. In one reported case during the month of February, an Ethiopian female that had been gang raped by the Yemeni smuggling crew during the sea journey from Obock to the Red Sea was thrown overboard as the smuggling vessel approached the coast. None of the other passengers were able to assist her.