

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2015: 2nd Quarter trend summary and analysis

Irregular Movement from the Horn

Northward (through Egypt into Israel)

This quarter, the Israeli government upped the pressure on migrants and asylum seekers to voluntarily leave the country. Rwandan President Kagame reportedly confirmed that the agreement for the relocation of third country nationals in Israel to Rwanda was, in fact, in place. However, with plans to introduce a US\$3,500 incentive for return and with reports emerging that persons declining to leave would be transferred to a detention facility in the Negev desert, [such](#) repatriations would be coerced. For those accepting the return package, local NGOs claimed that the promises in the Israel-Rwandan agreements failed to materialise on their arrival.

The Egyptian government also appeared to have toughened their stance on the use of the country as a transit point for migrants and asylum seekers into Libya and onto Europe. Egyptian security forces [claim](#) to have arrested 6,004 people attempting to illegally enter or leave Egypt between October 2014 and April 2015, and closed 551 human smuggling tunnels in the country. In June 2015, Egyptian border forces claim to have arrested a total of 619 migrants in separate swoops. Local media further reported on a proposed migration law that if endorsed would see irregular migrants, including asylum seekers imprisoned for between 15 and 20 years. If enacted, such a law would likely institutionalise the arbitrary detention of migrants and asylum seekers.

The notorious kidnapping and trafficking cases (mainly of Eritreans) that were so evident between 2011 and 2013 appear to have diminished as on-going fighting between militants and Egyptian government forces have significantly disrupted trafficking activities. It is [estimated](#) that nearly 30,000 Eritreans were abducted and taken the Sinai between 2007 and 2013 to suffer torture and ransom demands.

Eastward (towards Yemen)

Following the outbreak of conflict in Yemen on 23rd March 2015, the security situation deteriorated rapidly in the second quarter, resulting in mass internal and external displacement. As at 6 July 2015, there were 1,267,950 internally displaced persons in Yemen. Despite the worsening situation, Yemen continued to experience continued arrivals of migrants across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden but monitoring activities that have provided reliable estimates of new migrant arrivals for the last 8 years have been disrupted since May 2015.

Migrants setting off towards Yemen from Djibouti reported being unaware of the scale of the conflict, or being convinced by smugglers that conflict had ended. A total of 1,108 migrants and asylum seekers arrived in Yemen during the quarter, but due to partial monitoring this is judged to be an understatement of the true level of new arrivals. Past evidence [suggests](#) that increased turbulence in countries like Yemen and Libya do not deter migrants and more specifically do not stop smugglers encouraging migrants to go to Yemen, whatever the dangers.

The ban by the Ethiopian government on labour migration of its citizens to third countries remains in place, and Ethiopians continue to rely on irregular migration as means to access work opportunities

outside of the country. Ethiopians made up 96% of arriving migrants (Somalis 4%). This represents a 2,003% reduction in movements when compared with the first quarter. However, these comparisons should be treated with caution for two reasons: first, this quarter's statistics only account for Red Sea arrivals; second, this quarter saw a shift in departure points with increased numbers leaving from Bossaso across the Gulf of Aden, where all monitoring missions have been suspended since March. As mentioned, it is likely that the number of arrivals in Yemen are higher than reported.

In a reversal of the traditional mixed migratory routes to Yemen, thousands of people moved from Yemen into Djibouti and Somalia. Between 8 April and 2 July, 16,035 people arrived in Djibouti (50% Yemeni, 40% other Third Country Nationals, 10% Djibouti nationals). Similarly, 18,286 people arrived in Somalia this quarter (90% Somali, 9% Yemeni, 1% Third Country Nationals, including Djiboutians and Syrians). As the situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate with no resolution or end to the conflict in sight, this movement is expected to continue into the following quarters.

Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)

In keeping with previous quarters local media reported on the Kenyan government's use of immigration detention as a means to control the movement of migrants through its territory. In April 2015, 159 Ethiopian migrants were [reportedly](#) arrested and detained for being in the country unlawfully, and between January and April 2015, border officials claim to have deported over 500 Ethiopian nationals.

In May 2015, South Africa deported more than 400 Mozambicans after anti-foreigner violence left seven people dead. Government sources stated that more than 3,900 people, including 1,650 irregular migrants were detained between April and May 2015.

UNHCR [data](#) reveals that South Africa was the premier destination for asylum seekers in 2014, with 369,393 applying for asylum at the end of the year. Globally South Africa ranked 7th, following Russia, Germany, France, USA, Sweden and Turkey. Of those applying for asylum in 2014, Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali national made up 21 percent (17,797 persons). The number of undocumented migrants crossing into South Africa is unknown, but conservative [estimates](#) place this number anywhere between three and six million people.

Westward (also known as the 'Central Mediterranean route')

Until 2015, Mediterranean Sea arrivals were primary felt in Italy with migrants approaching the European Union through the Central Mediterranean route. This quarter, the [Eastern Mediterranean route](#) (via Greece, southern Bulgaria or Cyprus) emerged as an increasingly popular migration route to Europe. In June 2015, Greece surpassed Italy as the main entry point into Europe for migrant and asylum seeker for the first time. Recent [IOM figures](#) show that some 150,000 migrants and asylum seekers arrived in Europe since the beginning of the year; Greece has received 75,970 and Italy 74,947. The number of arrivals are putting a huge strain on receiving countries, and particularly Greece as it struggles with one of its worst economic crises in decades.

According to UNHCR [data](#), the profile of people taking these routes diverges quite significantly. The main countries of origin of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy were Eritrea (25 percent), Nigeria (10 percent), Somalia (10 percent), Syria (7 percent) and Gambia (6 percent). Of those arriving in Greece, the most populous were Syrians (57 percent), followed by Afghanis (22 percent) and Iraqis

(5 percent). Taken as a whole Horn of Africa (Eritrea and Somalia) arrivals account for 17 percent of the arrivals in Europe, who collectively rank as second to Syrian arrivals (34 percent). Eritreans [reportedly](#) have an asylum success rate as high as 75 percent in Europe.

In reflection of the arrivals, this quarter witnessed the highest number of fatalities at sea. IOM [figures](#) indicate that at least 1,944 people perished in the Mediterranean this year, accounting for 72% of the global figure of 2,700 deaths. 70% (1,370) of these fatalities occurred in this quarter alone (a 171% increase on quarter one), and 99% (1,350) of them happened in the Central Mediterranean. All figures point to route that is becoming ever increasingly perilous. But these conditions seem to have done little, if anything, to deter the thousands of migrants who continue to board boats on the North African coast towards Europe.

As outlined in a recent RMMS [feature article](#), the upsurge in arrivals in Europe is resulting in a toughening up of policies and has stirred a general anti-migrant sentiment across the continent's general public. In a strategy to disrupt smuggling networks, European Union states launched a joint naval operation known as [EUNAVFOR Med](#) with a first phase mission to undertake surveillance of said networks. The EU [failed](#) this quarter to reach an agreement on the relocation of 40,000 asylum seekers already in Europe and the resettlement of a further 20,000 refugees currently residing outside of the EU. This hardline stance is one that we are likely to see continue as countries try to narrow the avenues through which migrants and asylum seekers are able to access Europe.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Ethiopia continued to host the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in the 2nd quarter of 2015 (704,816), with the largest populations coming from South Sudan (39%), Somalia (35%) and Eritrea (20%). Similarly, Kenya hosted 594,613 registered refugees and asylum seekers as at 1 July 2015. Somalis continued to account for the largest population (71%), followed by South Sudanese (16%) and other third country nationals (13%). At the end of 2014, [UNHCR figures](#) suggest there were 1,237,033 refugees hosted in the Horn (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia).

Following a terrorist attack by Somalia-based militant group Al-Shabaab on Kenya's Garissa University claiming 148 lives in April 2015, Kenyan authorities declared intentions shut Dadaab refugee camp fearing that it had become a passage way for terrorists to get into the country. The announcement revealed once again the tenuous relationship between Kenya's duty to protect refugees and secure its borders. The Kenyan government backtracked on these plans following intense pressure from the international community and meetings with UNHCR chief António Guterres. Nevertheless, the voluntary return exercise resumed and was opened up to an additional six regions in Somalia. 2,048 refugees were voluntarily repatriated in the quarter. As of 30 June there were 350,092 registered refugees in Dadaab as well as over 50,000 Somali urban refugees. 720 Kenyan refugees who had fled to Uganda during the 2007-2008 post-electoral violence were voluntarily repatriated to the country on 5 May 2015.

Global refugee figures are at an all-time high. According to UNHCR's [Global Trends Report](#), 59.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 – the highest number ever recorded. This was 8.3 million more than in 2013; the biggest annual increase ever in a single year. Ethiopia ranked 5th globally, following Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon and Iran.

Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure



Despite the increased [search and rescue operations](#) capacities available in the Mediterranean Sea, this quarter proved to be a more volatile period for mixed migrants using the Mediterranean route into Europe. [Migrant deaths](#) in the Mediterranean totalled 1,370 between April and June, a 171% increase on deaths in the first quarter of 2015, and a 95% increase on the 318 deaths reported in the same period in 2014. Smuggling networks continue to rely on a transportation model that relies on using flimsy vessels and increasingly, abandoning boats to avoid capture by border patrol officials. IOM [data](#) confirms the death of 45 migrants in the Gulf of Aden and 4 off the Yemen coast between January and March 2015. No further deaths have been recorded.

Migrants continued to face risks related to their safety this quarter, as they were faced with abduction, abuse and extortion. UNHCR expressed its concerns over the abduction of 14 Eritrean asylum seekers (7 unaccompanied children, 5 women, 2 men) by unknown elements in eastern Sudan on 4 June. In another report Sudanese police rescued 48 trafficking victims of Ethiopian and Eritrean nationalities, who had been held by traffickers in eastern Sudan for two weeks. In Libya, media reports alluded to the kidnapping of 86 Eritreans by Islamic State militants from a smuggler's caravan in western Libya.

Despite the ongoing conflict in Yemen, [reports persist](#) about the presence of criminal gangs along the Red Sea coast, and a number of new arrivals have been reportedly abducted and held for ransom.

An Amnesty International [report](#) documented alleged acts of abuse, torture, and sexual violence against thousands of foreign nationals, including refugees and asylum seekers in Libyan towns. Amnesty documented such abuses in and around Sabha (south-west Libya), the main transit point for people from West Africa entering Libya through Niger or Algeria, and in Ajdabya, the main arrival hub for those travelling from Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia via Sudan. Further south, foreign nationals witnessed a spate of xenophobic attacks instigated by South African nationals in the country that left seven people dead. According to their report, mobs targeted migrant workers from other African countries, accusing them of taking their jobs.

As in previous quarters, migrants continued to face the risk of arbitrary detention as governments in the region continued to rely on incarceration as a method of immigration control. In Kenya, 159 irregular migrants of Ethiopia origin, were arrested, detained and charged with being in the country unlawfully. Despite the reciprocal Visa Abolition Agreement with Ethiopia, dispensing the need for a visa, reports of arrest of Ethiopian irregular migrants commonplace. In May 2015, Human Rights Watch released a [report](#) purporting violence against migrant detainees in Saudi Arabia. A [report](#) released by North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force (MHub) revealed a consistent pattern of arbitrary detention, and allegations of violence and brutality against migrants held in Libyan detention facilities.

Regional and Global Initiatives to Address Irregular Migration, Trafficking and Protection at Sea

In May 2015, the European Commission (EC) unveiled its [Agenda on Migration](#) outlining a series of emergency and long-term measures to deal with the unprecedented number of people crossing the Mediterranean for its 28-nation member states to adopt and enact. The EC pledged to triple the budget of the maritime border monitoring operations Triton and Poseidon; to launch a counter-trafficking intervention in the waters between Europe and Libya; and to implement quotas for a fairer system of processing asylum claims among European Union (EU) member states. According to the Agenda, asylum seekers would be distributed amongst EU member state according to "emergency relocation quotas", a system designed to relieve frontline countries such as Italy and Greece from shouldering the lion's share of processing asylum claims. Member states later [failed to reach the target](#) allocation for the relocation of 40,000 arrivals from Italy and Greece.



In May 2015, UNODC held a [workshop](#) in Addis Ababa on migrant smuggling and trafficking intended to aid Djiboutian and Ethiopian governments to strengthen legislation and cooperation between the two states to combat human smuggling and trafficking.

In May 2015, the Royal Thai Government hosted a [regional meeting](#) on irregular migration in the Indian Ocean, bringing together 17 countries in the Asia-Pacific along with UNHCR, IOM and UNODC. The meeting concluded with a set of proposals and recommendation discussing on immediate responses to assist people distressed at sea, as well as to curb people smuggling and trafficking and to address the root causes of movement.

The European Union launched a naval operation, known as [EUNAVFOR Med](#) on 22 June 2015, with a mission to 'identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers'. The operation has only launched in its first phase, which will focus on the surveillance and assessment of such networks in the Mediterranean.