

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2015: 3rd Quarter trend summary and analysis

A combination of new and renewed conflict, endemic poverty, and poor protection, among others, continued to drive complex population movements from the Horn of Africa and Yemen region this quarter. Governments in the region, and in transit countries along the various migratory routes, endorsed more restrictive measures in efforts to curb irregular migration through their territories. Migrants and asylum seekers alike continued to face significant protection risks, ranging from abuse to abduction and death at sea.

Irregular Movement from the Horn

Northward (through Egypt into Israel)

In this quarter movement northwards from the Horn has been characterised by continuing engagement of smugglers by people on the move as well as increasing strictness by relevant authorities in Egypt and Israel against migrants.

In August 2015, Israel's High Court of Justice approved the latest version of the Prevention of Infiltration Law, limiting the detention of asylum seekers to a period of one year. The ruling was a positive outcome for asylum seekers in the country, who had previously been subjected to a possible detention of up to 18 months before release. However, the discharge was made conditional on barring those freed from accessing Tel Aviv or Eliat. This elicited [strong criticism](#) which, in absence of a necessity to protect national security, public health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others, may be in contravention of international law. [Reports](#) surrounding the coerced repatriation or relocation of asylum seekers to third countries in Africa were substantiated by Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority, which made available [statistics](#) revealing the deportation of 8,355 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers between January 2013 and July 2015. These moves are the latest in a series of actions by the Israeli government to make the country an undesirable destination for asylum seekers and migrants, either by deterrence or frustration. Despite this, the determination of asylum seekers and migrants to enter Israeli territory appears not to have waned, as local media [reported](#) on the entrance of 142 migrants/asylum seekers since the beginning of 2015, more than those entering in 2013 and 2015 combined.

In September 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [announced](#) construction of a border wall on its border with Jordan, announcing that the government "will not allow Israel to be submerged by a wave of illegal migrants and terrorist activists". The construction is an extension of the wall built on the border with Egypt in 2013 and marks the increasing securitised approach of the Israeli government to migration through its territory.

This quarter the Egyptian government continued to exhibit a mark of strength against the use of the country's territory as a transit point for migrants and asylum seekers into Libya and onto Europe. Local reports suggest Egyptian security forces apprehended and detained a total of [5,087](#) migrants in July, [228](#) in August and [2,215](#) in September. In other [reports](#), border officials arrested and deported at least 67 migrants of mixed nationalities. On a similar front, Egypt has moved one step closer to passing a law that prescribes prison terms ranging to life imprisonment and penalties of up to 500,000 Egyptian Pounds for persons facilitating the passage of undocumented persons in and out of the country. However, in a departure from an earlier position to criminalise the presence of undocumented persons,



the newest draft of the law considers irregular migrants as “victims” providing them with several protections.

As in the first two quarters this year, 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 to the Sinai between 2007 and 2013 to suffer torture and ransom demands.

Eastward (towards Yemen)

This quarter, on-going conflict in Yemen continued to cause massive displacement and diversify movement within Yemen and to and from the Horn of Africa.

The overall security situation in Yemen remained intense and continued to worsen, with persistent air strikes, armed clashes and shelling causing injury, claiming lives and resulting in widespread internal and external displacement. In October 2015, the [Task Force on Population Movement](#) confirmed a new internal displacement figure of 2,305,048 persons, surpassing previous estimates in the last quarter by 60% and indicative of the quickly deteriorating situation in the country. At the end of September 76,693 persons (22% Yemeni, 38% Somali) had fled Yemen into countries in the Horn of Africa. Projections by conflict analysts indicate a continued decline in the conflict situation and increase in displacement.

As in the second quarter, the volatile conditions in Yemen did little to discourage migrants and asylum seekers from crossing the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to Yemen. It is estimated that at least 1,311 asylum seekers and migrants made the Red Sea crossing this quarter, with a further 10,490 sailing to Yemen via the Gulf of Aden. Monitoring activities continued to be disrupted during the period, and the numbers given are therefore understood to be an understatement of the true level of new arrivals. In fact, past evidence [suggests](#) that increased disorder does not deter migrants and more specifically do not stop smugglers encouraging migrants to move, whatever the hazards.

Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)

This quarter, migrants and asylum seekers continued to move irregularly along the eastern corridor from the Horn of Africa towards South Africa, facing risks of detention and deportation.

Local media [reports](#) covered the harsh conditions faced by Ethiopian migrants detained in Malawi, where they were held in unsanitary, overcrowded prison facilities. The migrants, often detained after being charged for illegal entry into Malawi, were reportedly continuously held even though they have served a sentence or paid a fine, as there are no funds to repatriate them.

Every year thousands of Ethiopian nationals irregularly migrate from Ethiopia, through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique en route to South Africa. While 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')

The Central Mediterranean route remained a consistently popular route for migrants and asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa during the quarter. Those on the move from the Horn of Africa, predominantly Eritreans, Somalis and Sudanese, continued to face protection risks including kidnapping and drowning at sea.

61,717 people made the sea crossing from North African coasts to Italy averaging at approximately 20,000 persons per month, in keeping with movements in the second quarter. Cumulative arrivals along this route between January and September 2015 total 132,071 persons. Arrivals from the Horn of Africa in particular dominated the use of this route with Eritreans accounting for 27 percent of those crossing, Somalis 8 percent, and Sudanese 6 percent.

Migrants and asylum seekers continue to face considerable protection risks along this route, particularly in Sudan and Libya where those on the move this quarter faced kidnap and abduction from criminal and possible trafficking elements. [Local media](#) covered the rescue of six hostages (of Eritrean and Ethiopian nationality) from human traffickers in Hafiare in the eastern parts of Sudan near the border with Eritrea. Authorities also managed to rescue 154 hostages in the remote desert between Libya and Sudan. Human trafficking is widely spread on the border between Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia, with hundreds of refugees being abducted and taken as hostages for ransom in Sudan.

IOM [data](#) reconfirmed the Central Mediterranean route as the most deadly sea crossing globally, with a total of 1,187 deaths recorded this quarter and 3,036 between January and September. Statistically speaking, around 98% of those boarding vessels make it safely across, offering migrants and asylum seekers relatively good odds of crossing the Mediterranean into Europe. This may in part be encouraging migrants and asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African states to board boats on North African shores and gamble the crossing to Europe.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

This quarter, continued regional instability, inter-communal clashes, and all-out conflict continued to drive up displacement of persons across borders in search of safety. There were a total of 2.22 million refugees being hosted in the region (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen) at the end of September 2015.

Ethiopia maintained its position as the host of the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in the region and on the continent. At the end of September 2015, 733,312 registered asylum seekers and refugees were present in the country. The Government of Ethiopia announced its decision to grant prima facie refugee status to Yemeni asylum seekers, joining other countries in the region in its decision to do so. In Kenya, there were a total of 593,529 registered asylum seekers and refugees at the end of the quarter. The Kenyan government, in conjunction with UNHCR, continued support the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from the Dadaab refugee complex in the country to Somalia. By the end of September 2015, a cumulative total of 4,851 refugees had been repatriated since the beginning of the return exercise in 2014.

Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure

As in previous quarters, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees continued to face significant protection risks within and outside the region.

Vulnerabilities with regard to deaths at sea varied for migrants and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa depending on the route they used. For those plying the Eastern route to Yemen, IOM [data](#) at the end of September 2015 recorded a total of 86 deaths in the Horn of Africa since the beginning of the year, none of which occurred in the second or third quarters, indicating a comparatively reduced death rate in the sea crossing between mainland Africa and Yemen.

For migrants using the Mediterranean Sea crossing into Europe however, migrant deaths totalled 1,187 between July and September, a slight improvement on the 1,349 recorded in the second quarter. In terms of purely statistical analysis, sea crossings do not pose a significant risk to migrants and asylum seekers, who are almost assured of a safe crossing – fatalities occur for roughly 2.3% of those making a sea voyage.

Nonetheless, smuggling networks continue to rely on a transportation model that relies on using flimsy vessels to ship migrants and asylum seekers from point to point, putting at risks the lives of those in their charge.

Migrants and asylum seekers continued to face substantial hazards on their journey this quarter, with reports of abduction, abuse and extortion. In July, [media coverage](#) reported on the rescue of 6 hostages (of Eritrean and Ethiopian descent) from human traffickers in the eastern parts of Sudan, on the border with Eritrea. Reports persist about the presence of criminal gangs along the Red Sea coast, who reportedly abduct newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers and hold them for ransom.

In July alone, [reports](#) indicated that an alarming 66% of 463 migrants crossing from Djibouti to Yemen were abducted on landing. Other migrants also reported being held by smugglers in Tadjoura, Djibouti and beaten until they could raise the money required to make the crossing to Yemen from family members. Based on information received from migrants making the crossing, those being abducted appear to be exclusively Ethiopian nationals.

Governments in the region and beyond continued to rely on detention and deportation as a method of immigration control. One media report covered the detention of a large number of Ethiopian nationals in Malawi detention centres, where they faced unsanitary, overcrowded facilities, with a lack of food. The migrants had been detained for being in the country illegally and having been charged and served with deportation, were being held as there were no funds to deport them.

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

Governments in the region and around the world recognised the large-scale movements of migrants / refugees needed to be tackled in a more holistic and collaborative manner and met to show commitment to addressing irregular migration. While some are motivated by rights-based concerns, in this quarter there was also a stronger sense that the new influx created an political crisis or a policy crisis for many countries.

In September 2015, the Government of the Republic of Djibouti hosted the 5th annual Regional Conference on Mixed Migration. The regional meeting brought together governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Somaliland, Puntland, Sudan, and Yemen. Observers included the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), together with IOM,

UNHCR, the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS), the Mixed Migration Hub, and other partner organizations and donors.

The conference aimed to improve multi-lateral collaboration to propose and endorse recommendations that will serve as a roadmap for influencing policies affecting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the region. Based on recommendations from the 2014 committee meeting, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the 5th meeting focused on three key areas: Migration and Development, Detained Migrants, and Child Protection in Migration Management. The outcome of the Conference's deliberations remain to be seen over the coming months, which will ultimately require strong political will from the region's governments if they are to be implemented.

In late September, EU interior ministers finally approved a [much-contested plan](#) to relocate 120,000 asylum seekers across the continent over the next two years. Asylum seekers will be moved from Italy, Greece and Hungary to other EU countries. Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis will be prioritised in the relocation and member states refusing to accept population will face a financial penalty of 0.002% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This relocation plan comes on the heels of an earlier [agreement](#) to relocate 32,256 persons from Greece and Italy to other EU states.

In the same month, the European Commission announced a proposal to provide 1.8 billion Euros in funding to African countries to contribute to tackling the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. [The Fund](#), which will focus on the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa regions, will be channelled to projects to support employment creation, especially for young people and women. Support will also be leveraged to countries of origin to strengthen capacities for migration management, border management and countering radicalisation and extremism. How the Fund will be administered remains to be seen, with concern that some of the same governments reportedly responsible for human rights violations causing many to flee their homeland, would be tasked with administer the funds. Additionally it is not at all clear that mixed migration flows will be affected by limited cash injections into training or development programmes, as part of efforts to tackle so-called root causes of movement.