



## **Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2014: 4th Quarter trend summary and analysis**

A full and detailed End of Year 2014 analysis of regional trends, statistics and policy changes will be released by RMMS in February 2014. This 4th Quarterly trends analysis is an indicative summary description of the basic trends and changes in mixed migration flows. Details by month of the numbers, trends and policy events can be found in the [Monthly Summary](#) section of the RMMS website. Irregular Movement from the Horn

### ***Northward (through Egypt into Israel)***

In the 4th quarter, this formerly significant route along which thousands of mostly Eritreans would pass monthly, remained closed due to the border control measures between Israel and Egypt. On the detention policy side, a High Court decision in September 2014 ordering the closure of Israel's Holot detention centre (where approximately 2,000 asylum seekers are detained) has not resulted in any changes to detention arrangements due to three subsequent amendments to the Anti-Infiltration Law. Most of Israel's 50,000 migrant and asylum-seeker population are Eritrean (36,000). Throughout the 3rd and 4th quarter it became clear that this group has shifted and is using the Westward route instead (also known as the Central Mediterranean route) taking them out of Eritrea into Ethiopia and then Sudan and on to Libya. Thousands of asylum seekers already in Israel have left voluntarily or been deported. Many have left under controversial arrangements whereby people are returned to third countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda. These mechanisms were the subject of a Human Rights Watch report, [Making their lives Miserable: Israel's coercion of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers to leave Israel](#). The impact of changes on this route on the situation in Egypt remains largely unknown although Egypt is starting to feature as a country of transit with boat departures from Alexandria reported in the 4th quarter.

### ***Eastward (towards Yemen)***

The numbers of Ethiopians and Somalis moving irregularly east to Yemen continued to rise in the 4th quarter, a modest increase (9%) on 3rd quarter figures. Figures in the 4th quarter of 2014 show that between October to December, monthly arrivals to Yemen have increased by 119%, 447% and a staggering 1,880% respectively, as compared to the same months in 2013. This indicates that the slow down on arrivals due to Saudi expulsions which commenced in 2013 has almost reversed, with irregular migration to Yemen at an all-time high. Throughout this 4th quarter the proportion of Somalis and Ethiopians attempting to enter Yemen and (mostly) travel on to Saudi Arabia has shifted slightly with about 85% Ethiopians (previously 75-80%) in contrast to the 15% Somalis. It would seem more of these people are departing from Bossaso than from Djibouti due to stricter controls in Djibouti.

With a ban on private employment agencies in Ethiopia still in place as at the end of December 2014, irregular migration is now a major mode of migration for Ethiopians, including women who tended in the past to use private employment agencies and not travelling irregularly. After leaving Ethiopia through the crossing point in Dikhil they take the sea crossing to Yemen, risking death at sea or abduction and kidnapping off the Yemeni coast, before moving onward to Saudi Arabia. This highlights the way in which changes at policy levels in countries of origin and destination can alter irregular migration pathways, in this case increasing their importance. More people, 59% of all arrivals over this 4th quarter, now depart from Bossaso, Somalia, with the remainder departing from Obock in Djibouti.

An RMMS report released in the 4th quarter, [Abused and Abducted: the plight of female migrants from the Horn of Africa in Yemen](#), highlights the situation of women taking this route including the many thousands who disappear and remain unaccounted for.

Unfortunately the higher number of arrivals and the increased demand for irregular migration along this route has led to a significant increase in boats capsizing and deaths in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. In the 4th quarter 29 deaths were reported, bringing the annual total for 2014 to 246 persons. RMMS has contributed to the IOM report, [Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost During Migration](#), that collates migrant fatalities worldwide along irregular routes.

### ***Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)***

In an effort to address the paucity of information about irregular migration along the southern route, RMMS's 4Mi project ([Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative](#)) set up monitors in South Africa during the 4th quarter. Governments of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa also met with IOM and UNHCR to address migration flows along this corridor. A case of 253 Ethiopians being assisted to return by IOM after being detained in Tanzania was also recorded in the 4th quarter indicating that Ethiopians are continuing to move along this route, paying up to USD 4,500 to reach South Africa via Tanzania.

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

Movement along the westward route, where people from the Horn (predominantly Eritrean) join with asylum seekers and migrants from the Middle East (Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians and Lebanese) crossing to Europe by boat across the Mediterranean from Egypt or Libya, continued to rise in the 4th quarter. Over 30,000 people were reported to have arrived in Italy during the 4th quarter via this route; a three-fold increase in December 2014 alone as compared to December 2013. There are multiple reasons for the surge in arrivals along this route including the closure of the Egypt-Israel border, Eritreans making secondary movements out of camps in Ethiopia and Sudan, the growing number of Syrian refugees seeking durable solutions, Libya's volatile political and security climate allowing smuggling to continue unchecked and the perception amongst asylum seekers and migrants that irregular migration into Italy is the fastest and easiest way to reach mainland Europe.

Eritreans now comprise the second-largest group along the Central Mediterranean route after Syrians, with approximately 15,000 arriving registering as refugees in Europe in the 4th quarter. An alarming spike in unaccompanied minors using this route has been noted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. As reported in an [RMMS feature article](#), the International Crisis Group and other agencies have found that smuggling and trafficking is organized out of Eritrea by the Rashaida, and children face additional protection risks such as kidnapping, extortion and abuse. Countries such as Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark also recorded increased numbers of Eritreans seeking asylum in-country in the 4th quarter. Notably a Danish Immigration Service investigation into this issue in October 2014 sparked controversy when it claimed the human rights situation in Eritrea may not be as bad as rumoured. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have challenged the report which is likely to have little impact on the continuing outflow of asylum seekers from Eritrea.



More deaths were also recorded along this route, both in the 4th quarter and overall in 2014, with 3,419 deaths reported. This makes the western route the deadliest corridor for irregular migrants globally. Notably this figure only records deaths at sea, and does not include the many migrants whose deaths go unreported in the desert crossing between Sudan and Libya, as was noted in the RMMS [Going West](#) report. Another trend of note on this route in the 4th quarter included the shift from the Italian-led search and rescue patrols under Mare Nostrum to Operation Triton which is being carried out by the EU border agency Frontex. The new Operation Triton is a scaled-down and lowered funded operation as compared to Mare Nostrum.

### **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Ethiopia continued to host the largest number of refugees in the 4th quarter of 2014 (660,987). There was a 9% decrease in the total number of refugees registered in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen in the 4th quarter from approximately 1,473,000 to 1,338,674 persons.

As noted above, some of the 111,321 Eritreans registered in Ethiopia undertake secondary movements into Sudan and then on to Libya. To date there are no official figures on the number of Eritreans leaving refugee camps in Ethiopia. In the 4th quarter, figures show that Ethiopia continued to host the largest number of asylum seekers and refugees from South Sudan (251,545); it also hosted IGAD-led peace talks in Ethiopia. Kenya is host to the largest Somali refugee population (424,691) with an unknown number residing in urban locations. Despite efforts to return refugees from Kenya to Somali under the [Tripartite Agreement](#), only several hundred individuals were recorded as returning in the 4th quarter (131 households comprising 603 individuals). At the close of the 4th quarter, efforts to amend the Security Laws and Refugee Act in Kenya have been suspended pending a petition brought by several parties. In Yemen, a country that faced its own political and security crises, there were 248,000 registered refugees mostly from Somalia of which 19,640 were new arrivals in 2014.

### **Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure**

Throughout the 4th quarter an increased number of deaths were recorded in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea and the Mediterranean, attention was raised to the situation of women from the Horn of Africa being abducted off the coast of Yemen and the trend of Eritrean unaccompanied minors being smuggled by criminal gangs (Rashaida) through Sudan and Libya in their attempts to cross into Europe by boat.

An increased number of landings (15 boats) have been reported at Bab al-Mandab in Yemen, and new departure points identified via the Red Sea route, to avoid detention by Djiboutian security officials who have stepped up interception and deportations. Migrants and refugees continue to face difficulties accessing food, water and shelter in Obock, Djibouti and exhaustion and dehydration en route. Some 50 migrants were abandoned by smugglers in the desert in Djibouti and died in Q4. More people have also died in the Gulf of Aden/Red Sea, with approximately 25% of all cases of death at sea recorded in Q4. Thousands of migrants/refugees report being kidnapped and held for ransom off the coast of Yemen; in November alone there were reports of 2,400 people kidnapped (some held hostage for weeks) including 71% of female arrivals. This is in addition to the 16,500 women unaccounted for and presumed abducted and trafficked, who tried to make this same journey between 2011-2013 along the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden (for further details see the RMMS report, *Abused and Abducted*).

In the 4th quarter, around 200 of the 400-700 youth from Somaliland seeking to reach Europe through Sudan and Libya are being intercepted by Ethiopian authorities. Countless others are kidnapped and held for ransom by gangs in Libya, with people reporting ransoms of approximately USD5,000. This in turn impacts families in Somaliland, Somalia and Ethiopia who are going into debt to repay ransoms out of fears their loved ones will be killed. In Djibouti people reported paying the approximately USD300 for the journey to Yemen only to be abandoned by smugglers or robbed. In the 4th quarter, it was reported that as departures increased from Bossaso, so have police patrols with several hundred migrants apprehended and 14 smugglers charged. The arrest and successful prosecution of smugglers is a promising development in a context where the implementation of the rule of law is fragmented, as the RMMS Discussion Paper 'What If' (December 2014) discusses in greater detail.

With the increased number of Eritreans using the route from Ethiopia, into Sudan and through to Libya, estimated at several thousand people per month, there have also been alarming reports of 23 people with physical signs of torture or being chained together in Kassala, Eastern Sudan and of a large number of unaccompanied minors being encouraged to leave Eritrea only to find themselves held for ransom in Sudan. The Rashaida, a group who used to operate along the eastern corridor, are involved in the smuggling and kidnapping people out of Eritrea. Eight Eritrean asylum seekers also drowned while attempting to cross the Atbarah River in Sudan.

On the Libyan-side, 29 cases were reported in the 4th quarter of Kenyan women stranded in the country, of whom 27 were found to have been trafficked. Little is known about the scale of recruitment of Kenyan women by human traffickers except that the women appear to be from rural areas and are lured by the promise of employment opportunities. Throughout the 4th quarter Libya remained the primary departure point for people seeking to reach Italy by boat. With 75% of all migrant at sea now occurring the Mediterranean, the issue of protection at sea emerged as a key concern in the 4th quarter, especially with nearly 50% of all arrivals originating from refugee-producing countries— Eritrea (23%), Syria (17%) and Somalia (3%). Smugglers also turned to methods such as using children to steer vessels and abandoning ships in open waters in order to avoid prosecution.

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

During the 4th quarter a number of regional and global meetings were held bringing attention to various aspects of irregular migration. On trafficking, an AU regional conference on Trafficking and Smuggling was held in Khartoum, Sudan in October 2014 that resulted in the adoption of the [Khartoum Declaration](#). The EU and AU are now jointly cooperating on a [Khartoum Process](#) to create a framework for policy and dialogue.

At an inter-governmental level, IOM hosted the 4th Annual Regional Committee on Mixed Migration for Horn of Africa and Yemen in Addis Ababa. Bringing together representatives from Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Somaliland, Puntland and Yemen with observers (states including Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt with IGAD, the AU, IOM, UNHCR, RMMS, ILO, and other partner organizations and donors). A number of non-binding recommendations on migration and health, migration data analysis and environmental migration were endorsed by delegates that focus on achievable action by regional governments in the year ahead. IGAD also held its 4th [Regional Consultative Process on Migration](#) in Addis Ababa on migration challenges in the region, guided by IGAD's Regional Migration Policy Framework.



At the end of the 4th quarter the UNHCR High Commissioner's [Dialogue was held on Protection at Sea](#), drawing global attention to the number of migrants and refugees who have risked their lives on dangerous sea crossings in 2014 (an estimated 348,000). The Dialogue brought together governments, UN agencies, NGOs and maritime and coastguard organisations to discuss critical issues related to protection at sea, such as search and rescue operations, and the associated need for protection on land to stop people taking dangerous sea journeys. As part of the Opening Address, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, spoke about the lack of concern for migrants in distress and the need for structured regional responses. On the latter points, the first RMMS Discussion Paper, [What If: Scenarios of implemented and enhanced migration legislation and policies in the Horn of Africa and Yemen](#), was released in the 4th quarter to provide a stock-take of existing policies in the region and posit scenarios for enhanced implementation to address critical issues related to trafficking, smuggling and protection at sea.