

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: 4th Quarter trend summary and analysis

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants continued to move in complex flows from the Horn of Africa and Yemen region. Migration and displacement dynamics remained complex this quarter, with ongoing migration, new displacement, and simultaneous return movements.

Irregular Movement from the Horn

Northward (through Egypt into Israel)

Developments in Israel continued to constrain the space for asylum seekers in the country. A new amendment to Israel's anti-infiltration law, will require African asylum seekers to deposit 20 percent of their salary into a fund that will only become available to them once they leave the country. Employers will also be required to set aside an additional 16 percent into the fund. The law, which will come into effect in April 2017, is [reportedly](#) aimed at making the employment of asylum seekers more expensive, and offers asylum seekers a bigger incentive to leave the country. Israel has a [history](#) of denying asylum seekers access to refugee status determination processes and placing extensive limitations on access to social and welfare services, in a bid to deter entry (and stay) into the country by irregular means.

In further efforts to constraint movement into Israel, the government also announced that it was raising the height of its border wall with Egypt by another three metres, to eight metres tall. The wall, which was originally completed in 2014, is celebrated by Israel for reducing the entries of "infiltrators" into the country. The extension of the wall demonstrates Israeli government's determination in preventing irregular entry into its territory, particularly by sub-Saharan African nationals, who typically enter the country via neighbouring Egypt.

In Egypt, the government showed its strengthened commitment to crack down on human smuggling and trafficking operations through or from its territory. In October, the government concluded the process of passing a new anti-human smuggling law, that imposes prison terms of up to 25 years and fines (ranging from approx. USD 3,200 – 12,900) for those found guilty of smuggling persons, or acting in collusion with smuggling networks. In November, Egypt announced that it had [uncovered](#) an international criminal network dealing in human body parts, coinciding with [reports](#) of smuggling brokers who were luring migrants to sell their organs to finance their onward journeys. Egypt is an [increasingly popular](#) gateway for migratory movements from sub-Saharan Africa to Italy.

Eastward (towards Yemen)

Movements between the Horn of Africa and Yemen were significantly defined by movements into Yemen, and to a lesser extent by movements of asylum seekers and returnees seeking safety from the conflict in Yemen.

This quarter, arrivals from the Horn of Africa towards Yemen decreased significantly from the preceding quarter. At least 19,165 persons (86 percent Ethiopian and 24 percent Somali) travelled from Obock, Djibouti and coastal towns near Bossaso, Puntland to Yemen. This represents a 43 percent drop from reported arrivals in the third quarter, and is a departure from trends witnessed along this route, where the highest arrivals are typically recorded in the final quarter of the year. This decline corresponds with increased reports from new arrivals of deportations of Ethiopian nationals from Yemen back to Djibouti,

which may have persuaded fewer migrants to travel to Yemen (see *Migrant Vulnerabilities* for more on deportations). Nonetheless, overall arrivals in Yemen in the whole of 2016, were the [highest on record](#) since monitoring began in 2006.

In mid-October, the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency following months of often violent anti-government protests, particularly in the Oromia region. In November, the government reported that it had arrested more than 11,000 people in connection with the unrest. This quarter, Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers interviewed in Yemen increasingly referred to cases of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and killings of protestors by the government for suspected involvement with the protests, as a key reason for their migration out of the country. 87-92 percent of interviewed Ethiopians arriving in Yemen between October and December identified themselves as Oromo. This is a stark contrast to figures in 2014, which indicated that Oromos made up around 50 percent of Ethiopians arriving in Yemen.

In what appears to be a well-established pattern of movement, migrants and asylum seekers continued to depart from Bossaso in higher numbers than from Obock. 85 percent of journeys were made across the Gulf of Aden/Arabian Sea, with the remaining 15 percent made along the Red Sea route. Continued abuses (see *Migrant Vulnerabilities* below) are believed to contribute to the declined use of the Red Sea route.

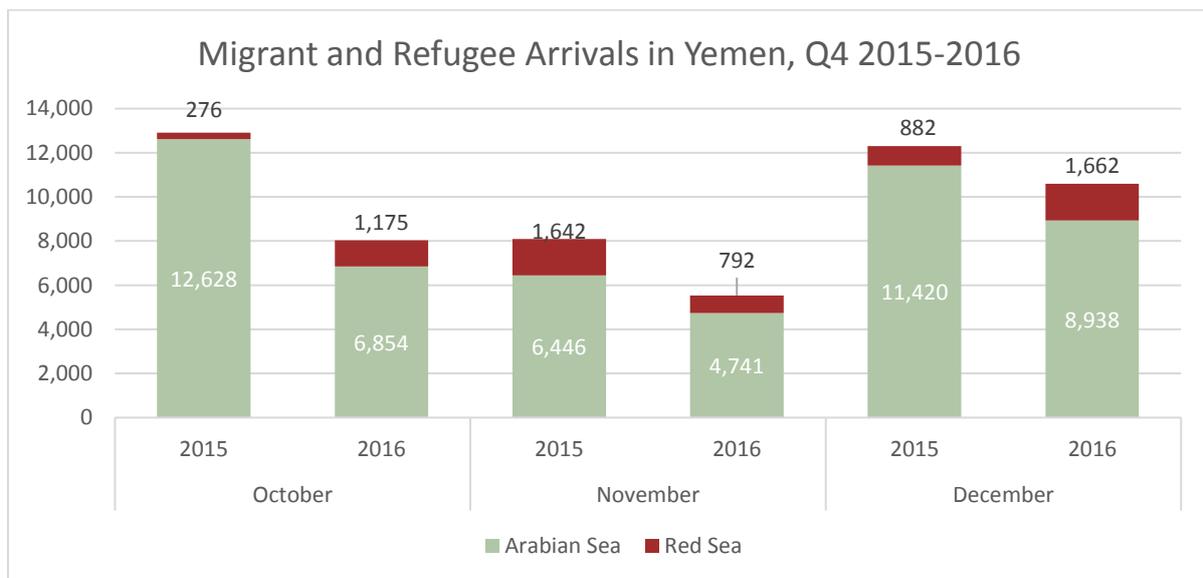


Figure 1: Migrant and Refugee Arrivals in Yemen, Q4 2015-2016
Data source: UNHCR

Arrivals of refugees, returnees and third country nationals from Yemen into the Horn of Africa remained on par with the general flow witnessed over the last two quarters. 2,982 persons arrived into the region (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) between October and December 2016. By 31 December 2016, a total of 92,603 persons had sought refuge in the Horn since the outbreak of conflict in Yemen in March 2015.

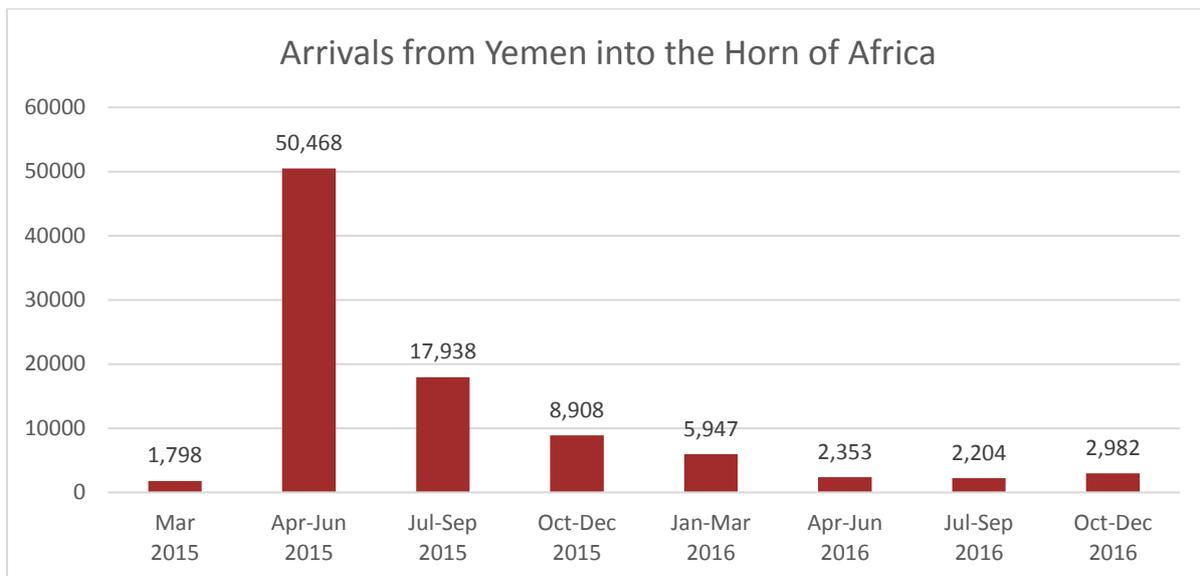


Figure 2: Arrivals from Yemen into the Horn of Africa

Data source: UNHCR

During the same period, enduring conflict and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Yemen continued to push internal and international displacement within and outside of the country. At the end of the quarter, there were an approximate 2 million persons internally displaced in Yemen. The majority of IDPs were displaced within the first six months of the conflict, and 84 percent are reported to have been displaced for more than a year.

Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)

As with the previous quarter, there were a limited number of reports on migratory movements from the Horn of Africa along the southern route towards South Africa.

In December, a group of 34 migrants were deported from Mozambique for entering the country irregularly. The migrants, who travelled from southern Ethiopia, through Kenya and Tanzania, became stranded when the truck in which they were travelling collided with another vehicle, killing seven others. Every year thousands of Ethiopian nationals irregularly migrate from Ethiopia, through countries in the eastern tier of the continent *en route* to South Africa. Immigration detention is a typical response by governments in the region to the irregular movement of migrants through their territories.

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

Movements west from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) towards Europe this quarter were typical of movements witnessed in comparable periods. 7,244 migrants and refugees from the region arrived in Italy between October and December 2016, a slight 5 percent increase on arrivals registered in the same period in 2015. Migration this quarter was lower than that witnessed in the third quarter – a comparative 48 percent decline – but was characteristic of flows during this season, which are typically lower due to difficult weather conditions on the Mediterranean Sea which discourages sea journeys.

Overall, arrivals from the Horn of Africa accounted for 15 percent of all arrivals in Italy this quarter, a reduction from 23 percent in quarter three. This apparent contraction is actually as a result of increased



movements from countries in West Africa which pushed the comparative share of Horn of Africa downwards.

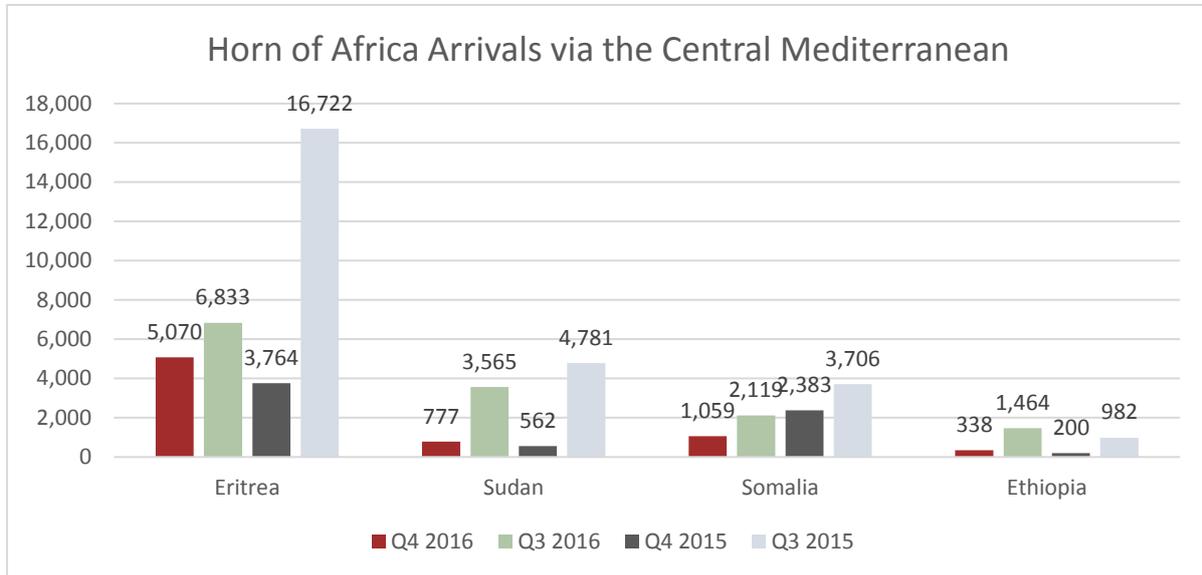
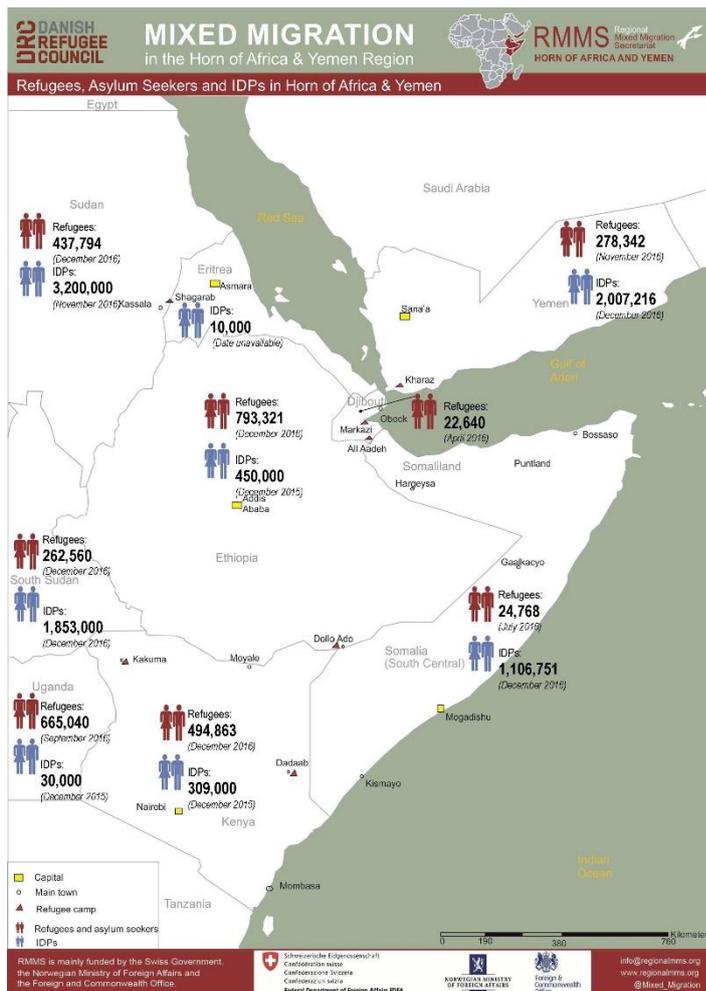


Figure 3: Horn of Africa Arrivals via the Central Mediterranean
Data source: UNHCR



Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The situation in South Sudan remained precarious in the fourth quarter of 2016 and continued to dominate the displacement dynamics in the region. Political tensions between President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar intensified, and with no solution in sight, thousands of South Sudanese fled into neighbouring countries in the region.

At the end of December 2016, there were more than 2.67 million refugees and asylum seekers displaced within the region (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen), and 8.9 million IDPs. 73% of all refugees and asylum seekers are hosted in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

After a lull in voluntary repatriation movements of Somali refugees from Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya in the third quarter of 2016, the pace of return movements increased in the final quarter. 6,994 Somali refugees were supported to return during the period.

Figure 4: Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs in Horn of Africa and Yemen

Data source: UNHCR, IDMC

In a positive move, the Kenyan government appeared to soften its position on the imminent closure of the Dadaab refugee camp. In October, the government announced that it was extending the deadline for the camp’s closure by six months, to May 2017. In recent years, Kenya has become re-known for issuing threats on the closure of Dadaab refugee camp and later rescinding on them.

Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure

Migrants and asylum seekers moving within and beyond the Horn of Africa and Yemen region continued to face protection risks while on the move.

The risks of abduction and deportation were particularly acute for migrants and asylum seekers travelling along the Red Sea route between Djibouti and Yemen. 2,228 instances of abduction were reported in the quarter, significantly higher than reports made in any of the preceding quarters in 2016 (Q3 – 1,444, Q2 – 327, Q1 – 551). Reports of abduction were frequently accompanied with reports of migrants and asylum seekers being held captive in “dens” in inland Yemen, where new arrivals would be tortured and/or sexually abused until they were able to raise a ransom to secure their release.

New arrivals also continued to consistently report being deported from Yemen back to Djibouti, with intermittent reports of forceful disembarkation causing migrants to drown at sea. Migrants and asylum



seekers reported 1,988 cases of deportation in the quarter. It is unclear whether those being deported from Yemen were given an opportunity to claim asylum, raising concern about possible *refoulement* of asylum seekers in the groups.

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

During the fourth quarter, the European Union intensified its push for cooperation with African countries to collaborate in reducing the pace of irregular migration to Europe. A [report](#) of the European Commission on the progress made on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration, concluded that the bloc should sign return “compacts” with Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal by early 2017. Moreover, a [policy paper](#) recommended that the EU “apply the necessary leverage” required to get results. UNHCR [cautioned the EU](#) against linking support to countries on their cooperation on migration matters.