

September 2011: Mixed Migration monthly summary - Horn of Africa and Yemen.

This document is a monthly summary of information gathered by the RMMS as verified, and added to, by participants of the October 4th 2011 Mixed Migration Teleconference (managed by the RMMS) and involving over 20 participants from Kenya, Somalia South-Central, Puntland, Somaliland, Djibouti, Yemen and Ethiopia representing IOM, UNHCR, DRC, RMMS, Intersos and the Yemen Mixed Migration Task Force.

Yemen: New Arrivals:

1. **September data:** The September new arrival figures as compiled by UNHCR indicate that during September a total of 12,079 Somalis and non-Somalis arrived on the Red Sea coast and Arabian Coast in 193 separate boats (smugglers boats). This figure is almost precisely double the September 2010 figures. The running total this year is 72,111 new arrivals up to and including September.
2. **Estimation of annual totals:** If current trends continue the 2011 total of new arrivals disembarking from smuggler boats on Yemeni shores can be expected to be around 106,000 migrants/asylum-seeking new arrivals. Again, almost exactly double the 2010 total of 53,000 new arrivals.
3. **Three-month totals into Yemen:** The three month (June/July/August) total of new arrivals in Yemen from the HoA in 2011 was 22,626. This is almost double the same three month total for 2010 (12,223).
4. **Doubling 2010 recorded levels:** The total new arrivals from January- September (inclusive) in 2011 are just over 72,000 almost double the 36,000 total during the same period in 2010. Considering that this trend of double figures began before the famine in Somalia and Ethiopia started to bite, there is no reason to expect it to stop in coming months, as the famine crisis continues. However, increased access to food aid within South Central may reduce the imperative for communities to move.
5. **New arrivals to Yemen peaks in August:** In terms of available statistics of new arrivals, the month of September recorded the highest number this year with 12,079. 73% of these were non-Somalis and 64% arrived on the Red Sea coast with the remaining 36% arriving along the Arabian coast.
6. **Increased vulnerability cases:** The proportion of 'Special legal/physical protection needs' category of new arrivals was 24% in the second quarter and only 4% in the first quarter of 2011. This is a remarkable five-fold increase between quarters. 'Special legal/physical protection needs' – is a vulnerability category for those that have faced the protection violations/prosecution and are vulnerable as a result.
7. **Increased rape, torture and kidnapping in September:** A high number of women were raped on board during the sea crossing in September. Others were raped in Obock before departure and even in Yemen on arrival. In September there was also a disturbing increase in the phenomenon of torturing new arrivals to extort money through telephone contact with relatives, as well as hostage taking for ransom and forced smuggling up to Saudi Arabia against the will of new arrivals. Many of these incidents were reported against Ethiopians and in the area of the Al-Jadid Coast, Taiz Governorate.

8. **The spike in crossings-related deaths** between 2011 and 2010 is huge (at 1200% rise): The deaths at the start of the year (mainly along the Red Sea) – were largely from boats capsizing due to a combination of bad weather at sea and mechanical failure. Later there were cases of suffocation. Several new arrivals have drowned recently along the Arabian Sea coast when smugglers forced passengers off their boats / disembark in high seas. In September 7 people drowned.
9. **Rough seas - little deterrent:** The figures for the last 6 years show that a significant drop in new arrivals occur in June and July (in contrast to numbers in May and August), when the waters and weather are too wild. This year, however the numbers crossing in June and July (more than 11,000 were the highest recorded. This could be a result of the worsening situation (conflict in Somalia and drought in both Somalia and Ethiopia).

Yemen: In-country risks and threats to migrants:

1. **Criminalization of smuggling:** There are increasing reports of robbery, violence, kidnapping, abandonment and 'forced smuggling' (and therefore trafficking) of new arrivals (mostly non-Somalis) along the Yemen coast, especially the Red Sea in the area of Bab El Mandab. Those perpetrating these acts of abuse include smugglers and villagers with apparent collusion, in some cases, with state officials. The increasing insecurity in Yemen is affecting law and order in the country, allowing for the smugglers to take advantage of the situation. The reported increase in cases of smuggling/trafficking coincided with the start of the civil conflict in Yemen. The increase in such reports has been the cause alarm. UNHCR reports that it held discussion with the Lahij Governor urging him to provide greater protection to migrants. However, given the political situation in Yemen, the authorities appear to have limited power at this time. UNHCR is pushing for a common approach by all the agencies on the ground to advocate with the government in this regard.
2. **The impact of Yemen's current insecurity on migrants/refugees:** The insecurity in Yemen appears to have had little impact on new arrival trends. It may even have allowed smugglers to thrive with greater ease and thereby enabled or encouraged more people to make the crossing. On the ground, the insecurity, and especially the fighting in Abyan Governorate has put further constraints on the reception of new arrivals, and especially the transportation of new arrivals from the Arabian Sea to Kharaz camp. Random road blocks government and tribal or militia based were appearing along the coast roads and international agencies were restricted in their movements due to the risks. Testimonies from new arrivals indicate that they were either unaware of the escalating situation in Yemen or simply 'did not care', stating (in the case of Somalis) that they were fleeing from far worse insecurity. IOM is advising the new arrivals on the situation in Yemen e.g. safe areas, areas where fighting is rife etc... upon reception. IOM are conducting an information campaign about the insecurity situation in Yemen at their reception centre in Obock in Djibuti, through the Migration Response Centre there. IOM reported that victims that have been treated at their medical centre in Yemen still resort back to the smugglers for secondary movement or opt to remain in Yemen despite the conflict, refusing IOM's AVR. It may be noted that in September in Libya, Nigerians are reportedly migrating there despite the political conditions and conflict and stigmatization of Sub-Saharan Africans at present. This shows that civil unrest and insecurity may not be a deterrent to migration. It may indeed be seen as an opportunity by many aspiring migrants.
3. **Somalis alleged / planned involvement in fighting:** A radio report issued in late September claimed that 40 Somalis in Sana'a had been rounded up and detained after reports that Somalis were being used as snipers against un-armed demonstrators. Several other media had reported that Somalis would be involved in the fighting in Abyan alongside armed groups. The potential social antagonism and violence towards the many thousands of Somalis in Sana'a and in Yemen could be high if the

public associate Somalis as either pro-government henchmen or mercenaries for the security apparatus or fighters in extremists groups there. Apparently, the Yemeni government has denied these rumours concerning Somalis.

4. **General conditions deteriorating:** A trend of asylum seekers and refugees from conflict-ridden areas such as Abyan and Sana'a moving to relatively calmer areas such as Aden (and the Al Kharez refugee camp) was mentioned and overall the conditions for migrants and asylum-seekers in Yemen remains harsh. According to UNHCR this is deteriorating, with life in Basateen (an area in Aden city) worse than ever and conditions in the overcrowded camp of Kharez are also harder than before.

Yemen: Migrants returning from Yemen.

1. **Migrants stranded in Northern Yemen:** IOM report that despite having assisted approximately 5000 Ethiopians to return to Ethiopia from Yemen in the last year, including 1200 to Ethiopia by air this year, 3000 Ethiopians remain stranded in camps in Haradh on the Yemen-Saudi border. The 3000 are unable to continue their journey into the Gulf countries due to tightened border controls by the Saudi authorities, nor are they able to return home without any resources. About 1,500 migrants are currently receiving meals daily from an IOM feeding centre supported by the World Food Programme (WFP). There are reports of border guards selling migrants back to smuggling groups. IOM informed the teleconference that the number of migrants stranded in Haradh, northern Yemen is constant despite continued expulsion from Saudi Arabia; it is not possible to have an accurate figure of those stranded at Haradh, especially Ethiopians, due to the constant in-flow and out-flow of migrants in any given day e.g. migrants deported from Saudi Arabia are flowing in while others are leaving Haradh to repeat their attempt to cross the border into Saudi Arabia or for other destinations. Therefore those approaching IOM for assistance are an amalgamation of deportees and new arrivals and it is not always possible to distinguish between them. Smugglers are active in the area and many of the migrants have high expectation of being smuggled back into Saudi Arabia or assisted by IOM to return to Ethiopia. Many of the women and girls among the group of 3000 have been identified as victims of trafficking.
2. **Spontaneous return to Somaliland / Puntland:** During June and July the number of returnees from Yemen back into Puntland and Somaliland rose but the numbers are less than were expected. The majority of those returning appeared to make the journey without violence or mishap and rapidly returned to their communities without seeking assistance. The Yemen MMTF suggest between 1500-1700 have returned this year (up to June) while UNHCR use a figure of 1300 (cautiously). UNHCR claim they have close contact with officials and monitors but accurate tracking is problematic due to the spontaneous nature of these returns and the state of insecurity in Yemen. Equally in Somaliland and Puntland there are no thorough systems in place to capture data. In Bosasso, for example, only returnees in dire need contact the Migration Response Centre (MRC) on arrival.

Somaliland: Expulsion order against 80,000 foreigners

Announced expulsion of '80,000' Ethiopians from Somaliland: In early September the Somaliland government announced that by the first week of October all illegal, non-refugee status migrants would be expelled from Somaliland. Since late 2008, registration of all Ethiopians was stopped by the government in Somaliland meaning that the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Somaliland is unknown as they are grouped together with economic migrants and form part of the mixed migration cohort.

UNHCR briefed the teleconference on the situation: A more realistic number of those undocumented migrants at risk of expulsion was estimated to be between 15,000 to 20,000 by agencies although UNHCR is using 20,000 heads of families as a planning figure. There is sense that the expulsion announcement is politically driven, that it has incited public disdain for Ethiopians and has already resulted in a number of Ethiopians spontaneously

leaving Somaliland, although most remain. The head of UNHCR Somalia visited Somaliland to discuss the issue with agencies and government officials. A letter was sent to the Somaliland Minister of Interior dated 25th September 2011 in which concerns of non-compatibility of international Human Right standards, implications and other concerns relating to the announcement were highlighted and recommendations and assistance to deal with the undocumented Ethiopian migrants were proposed. In these recommendations UNHCR requested its HQ for an emergency team to undertake a screening of the individuals concerned. The Somaliland authorities have stated verbally that they will not deport registered Ethiopians. There are some indications that some employed Ethiopians may be issued with temporary work permits and that international law will be respected.

It was noted that when in 2003 a similar situation arose in Djibouti with the government ordering some 8,000 migrants to leave their territory, UNHCR was able to conduct a registration exercise and granting refugee status to a large number of the individuals concerned. In this regard, the importance of advocacy with the authorities was highlighted.

In light of the porous Somaliland/Ethiopia border, the question of a 'revolving door phenomena' was raised; it was suggested that the reality of this phenomena should be emphasized to the Somaliland authorities. Participant wondered how Ethiopians would return to areas of drought and poverty willingly and not seek another location such as Yemen.

Puntland: Detention of Somali migrants:

290 Somalis in mixed migration flow detained

During September cases of migrants arriving in Puntland from Somalia (South Central) being separated (when travelling with family or in groups) and detained in Garoowe by authorities caused concern. Most detainees were male youths and the official number rose to 290 by mid-September. The precise intentions and rationale of the authorities was not clear (accusations of suspected possible affiliation to the Al-Shabaab (AS) were raised by the authorities following AS departure from Mogadishu last month.) Different humanitarian agencies were pressured to assist the detainees whilst in detention (with food and water etc. as well as transport back into South Central). By the end of September it was reported (though not confirmed) that most of the detainees were deported to South Central Somalia at Gaalkacyo but some remained detained in Garoowe

The key issue relates to what are different agencies' policies to deal with requests from the authorities to assist detainees given that they were not screened or allowed to apply for asylum but were instead jailed and criminalized. The Minister of Interior and Police Commissioner of Puntland told IOM that they are in need of assistance to profile and screen such migrants to ascertain possible affiliation to the Al-Shabaab.

Djibouti. Migrant vulnerabilities:

Deaths and abuse suffered by migrants:

During September the Djibouti government claimed to IOM (while requesting assistance) to have on their territory between 300-400 corpses of Ethiopian migrants who allegedly died of thirst and/or exhaustion (and possibly volcanic gases). Previously the number used was 80. In Djibouti during August the estimated number of Ethiopians crossing to the Red Sea coast of Yemen was over 200 per day. The departure points are in restricted areas (smugglers coves) north of Obock itself. Participants shared news of other hardships and abuse by smugglers (rape, neglect, abandonment and robbery) faced by Ethiopians as they travel through Djibouti to the departure points along the Bar El Mandeb coast.

Mixed migration flows into and through Kenya (and Ethiopia):

1. **Somali refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia:** Movement of refugees and asylum-seekers into Kenya and Ethiopia has been well documented throughout this year – particularly accelerated by the on-going drought crisis. Between January to 31st August 2011, UNHCR report that **163,000** Somali refugees have been registered in Kenya (Dadaab), bringing the total number of Somalis in Dadaab to

514,500. During the same period **90,000** Somalis were registered in camps along the Ethiopia-Somali border (inside Ethiopia) bringing the total there to 171,500. Although there are figures available for refugees and asylum-seekers, statistics for irregular migrants are not captured anywhere for Kenya or Ethiopia.

2. **Mixed migrants into and through Kenya:** Apart from the on-going refugee influx an unknown number of Somalis and Ethiopians continue to enter Kenya (avoiding registration) joining, as irregular migrants, the large Ethiopian and Somali communities in Kenya. Normally their intention is to engage smugglers to take them south through Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique etc. into RSA. Indicative information suggests the number of Somalis and Ethiopians trying to enter RSA this year are higher than 2010 and earlier years and access is more problematic as countries tighten their border controls. The RMMS told the teleconference participants that although its primary focus was on the movement of mixed migration into Yemen it would seek to track more accurately the southern routes where protection and assistance concerns for Ethiopian and Somali migrants are also high.

This briefing paper, summary will be made available on a monthly basis to donors, government representatives, international organizations and United Nations offices as one of a range of products developed by the RMMS to support protection, assistance and advocacy intervention in response to mixed migration in the region.