

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: 2nd Quarter trend summary and analysis

Mixed migration movements were increasingly numerous and complex in the second quarter of 2016. Migration along the northward, eastward and westward routes all showed an increase in numbers, with migrants and refugees being motivated to move by ongoing conflict, political oppression and a lack of opportunities. Internal and cross border displacement in Yemen, South Sudan and surrounding countries also increased, while a pledge to close Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya has generated uncertainty about the protection of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees.

Irregular Movement from the Horn

Northward (through Egypt into Israel)

Movements this quarter were characterised by an increasing number of migrants and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa arriving in Egypt and using the country as a gateway for further travel across the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe.

A media report in May 2016, highlighted a [growing number of Eritrean nationals](#), and a sizeable number of Somalis, Sudanese and Ethiopians in Cairo hoping to depart from the Egyptian coast. It appears that the migrants and asylum seekers are using Egypt to circumvent the precarious security situation in Libya, and [reported round-ups and deportations occurring in Khartoum](#), Sudan. Instead, some migrants choose to travel through the eastern part of Sudan and avoid Khartoum, on their way to Egypt. The sea route from Egypt to Europe is also increasingly being used by Egyptian nationals, who made up 5 percent of arrivals in Italy between April and June 2016.

In a continued committal to crack down on irregular departures from Egyptian shores, media reports documented the [interception of 331 migrants](#) (including Sudanese, Eritrean, Somali, Ethiopian, and Egyptian nationals, amongst others) by Egypt's naval forces in June. The migrants were apprehended aboard three boats which were attempting to depart from Egypt's Alexandria port towards Italy. Egypt's National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration stated that [Egyptian border guards had managed to stop 5,076 between April and July 2016](#).

Migration into Israel remained limited as security surveillance at the border wall between Egypt and Israel continued to prevent asylum seekers and migrants from entering the country. However, in a positive outcome for refugee protection, [Israel granted refugee status to an asylum seeker of Sudanese origin for the first time ever](#). Figures from the government's Population, Immigration and Borders Agency (PIBA) show that between 2009 and the beginning of 2015, Israel has granted asylum to only 4 Eritrean nationals (out of 2,408 applications) and none to Sudanese nationals (of 3,165 applications). Mutasim Ali's application was the first of its kind to be accepted by the government. Despite optimism shared by Ali and his lawyers, a spokesperson for the Interior Ministry stated that ["this is not part of a mass effort"](#) by the government to offer protection to the approximately 45,000 migrants and asylum seekers of Eritrean and Sudanese origin in Israel.

Eastward (towards Yemen)

Movements between the Horn of Africa and Yemen continued to be characterised by a [bi-directional flows](#), both from the Horn to Yemen and from Yemen to the Horn. Enduring conflict also continued to result in the displacement of persons within the country.

At the end of June 2016 there were 2,818,072 internally displaced persons in the country, a slight increase on the more than 2.7 million that were displaced at the end of the first quarter of 2016, and more than one in ten of the total Yemeni population.

As of 30 June 2016, a total of 87,417 persons (including 30 percent Yemeni nationals and 36 percent Somali nationals) had sought refuge in neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa since the outbreak of conflict in March 2015. The pace of arrivals in the Horn this quarter continued to show a downward trend, with only 2,353 persons arriving between April and June, a 60 percent decline from the first quarter. Aside from arrivals recorded in March 2015, this quarter has the lowest arrival figures on record. The increasing number of internal displacements in Yemen may point towards a preference among Yemenis to relocate to safer areas within the country than to seek safety outside the country. Yemen’s [Taskforce on Population Movement](#) confirmed that 800,000 IDPs had been tracked as having returned to or within 19 governorates as at the end of May 2016.

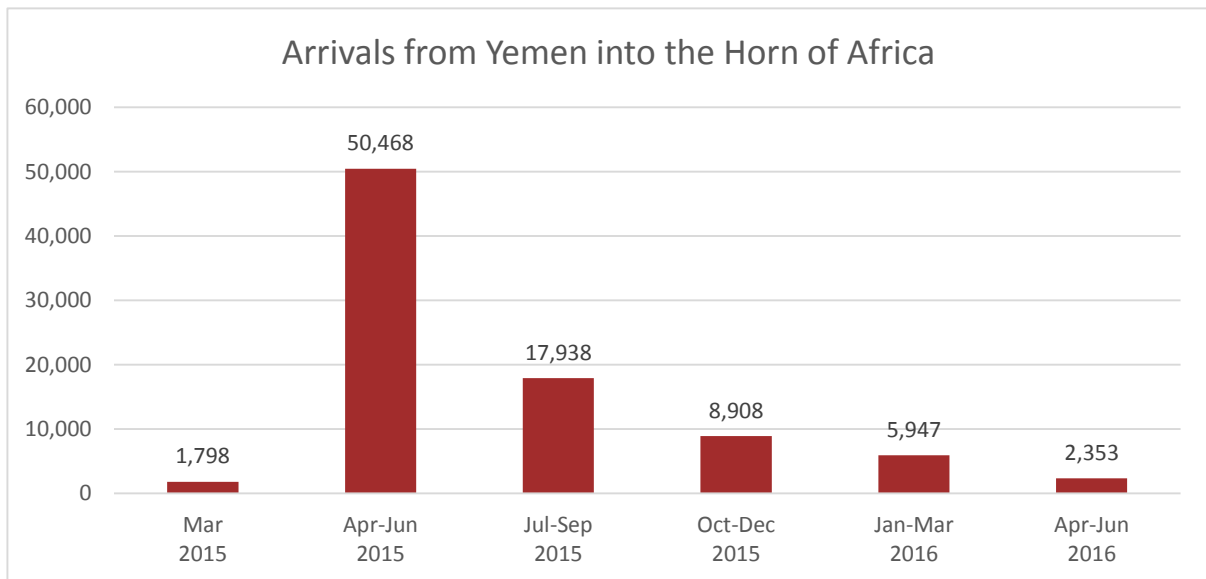


Figure 1: Arrivals from Yemen into the Horn of Africa

Data source: UNHCR

The warring factions in the country failed again to hold successful peace negotiations, with the talks between the government and Houthi rebels being postponed indefinitely. An agreement on the [cessation of hostilities](#) appears to have taken hold in around 80-90 percent of the country, but remains precarious, with sporadic violence being reported. With no political solution yet agreed, it is likely that the displacement trend will continue into the next quarter.

Conflict continues to do little to deter migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa from travelling to Yemen (and beyond), in search of protection and economic opportunity. At least 35,453 persons (87 percent Ethiopian, 13 percent Somali) travelled from Obock in Djibouti, and from coastal towns near Bossaso in Puntland to Yemen this quarter. This represents a 23 percent increase on arrival figures recorded in the first quarter of 2016, and a significant 338 percent increase on arrivals recorded during

the same period in 2015. 14,373 persons arrived in June alone, which is the highest monthly arrival figure registered since records began in 2006. The spike in number coincided with the holy month of Ramadan and it is likely that this spurred a perception amongst migrants and refugees that the border crossing between Yemen and Saudi Arabia (a popular destination country for the majority transiting through Yemen) would be easier to navigate.

As with the first quarter this year, and movements in 2015, migrants and asylum seekers preferred to depart from coastal shores close to Bossaso rather than from Obock. 84 percent of journeys were made along the Arabian Sea with only 16 percent using the Red Sea. Continued abuses (see Migrant Vulnerabilities below) and the presence of military patrols along the Red Sea are believed to contribute to the declined use of the Red Sea route.

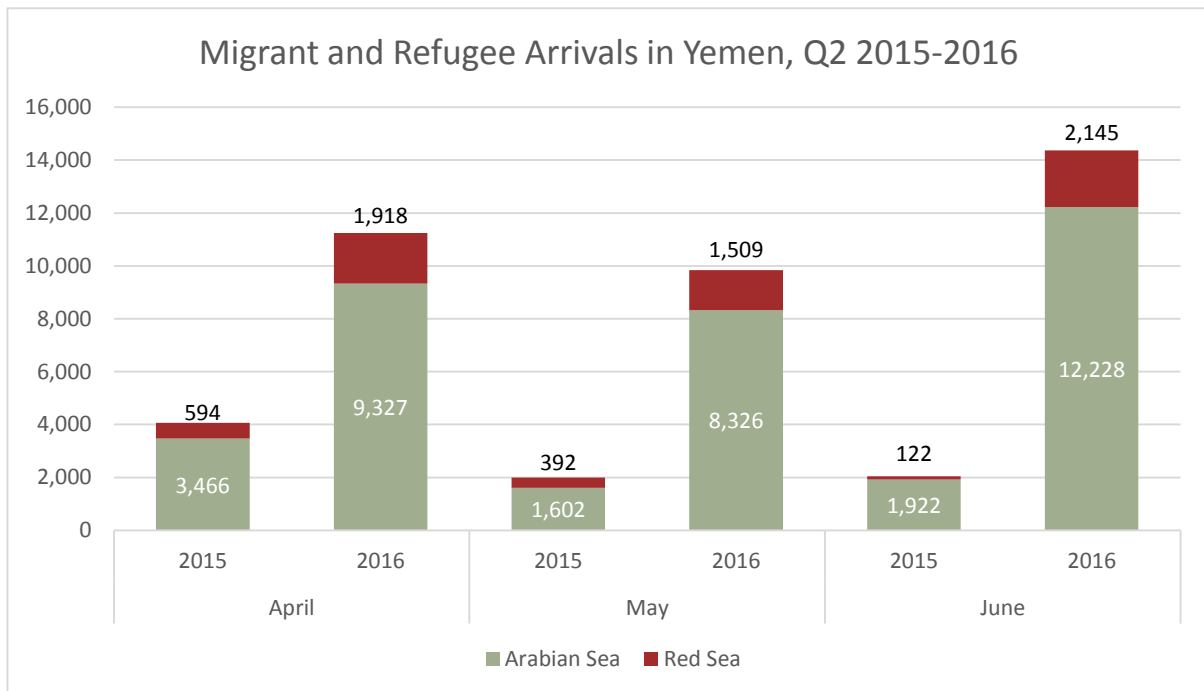


Figure 2: Migrant and Refugee Arrivals in Yemen, Q2 2015-2016

Source: UNHCR and RMMS

Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)

Typical of journeys made south, migrants and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa continued to face risks of detention and deportation as they move irregularly along the eastern corridor towards South Africa.

According to [media reports](#), 119 Ethiopian nationals were detained in Malawi in May for illegal entry into the country and for travelling without documents. In the same month, IOM supported the repatriation of 14 unaccompanied child migrants to return from Zambia to Ethiopia. The children, aged between 12 and 17 years, were intercepted by Zambian police while attempting to cross into South Africa and were detained for several months before being released. Detention is frequently used as an immigration measure in southern African countries, where the government does not have the finances required to deport migrants back to their country of origin.



Every year thousands of Ethiopian nationals irregularly migrate from Ethiopia, through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique en route to South Africa. [Figures from 2009](#) suggest that between 17,000 and 20,000 Somali and Ethiopian migrants are smuggled towards South Africa every year, with Ethiopian national accounting for at least two thirds of the estimates. While the number of undocumented migrants from other African countries crossing into South Africa is unknown, conservative [estimates](#) place this number anywhere between three and six million people.

Westward (also known as the ‘Central Mediterranean route’)

This quarter a total of 16,369 migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean, making up 32 percent of all arrivals along that route. The upward trend in arrivals among Horn of Africa nationals noted at the end of the last quarter, appears to have been sustained during this quarter, with arrivals between April and June accounting for a significant 415 percent increase from arrivals between January and March. The biggest climbs were noted amongst Eritreans (1,233 percent), followed by Sudanese (455 percent), Ethiopians (350 percent) and Somalis (73 percent). A surge in movements in the second quarter of the year is characteristic of patterns witnessed in 2015 (and 2014) and is often correlated with better weather conditions.

Nonetheless, arrival figures are yet to be on par with those recorded during the second quarter of 2015 (27,970 persons) and this is most apparent amongst Eritrean nationals. Eritrean arrivals in Italy this quarter dropped 54 percent when compared to the same quarter in 2015, and 53 percent when comparing the first six months of 2016 to the same period in 2015. If [unconfirmed anecdotal evidence](#) received by RMMS last quarter holds true, then there are a large number of Eritrean migrants and refugees currently lying in wait in Khartoum, Sudan waiting for their opportunity to continue their journey north. Moreover, in May 2016, Human Rights Watch reported on the [deportation of 442 Eritrean nationals](#) (including six registered refugees) from Sudan back to Eritrea, which may have had an impact on movements towards Europe. The [reported deployment of Sudanese forces](#) to the remote desert on the Sudan-Libya border may have also contributed to a reduction in persons using this route.

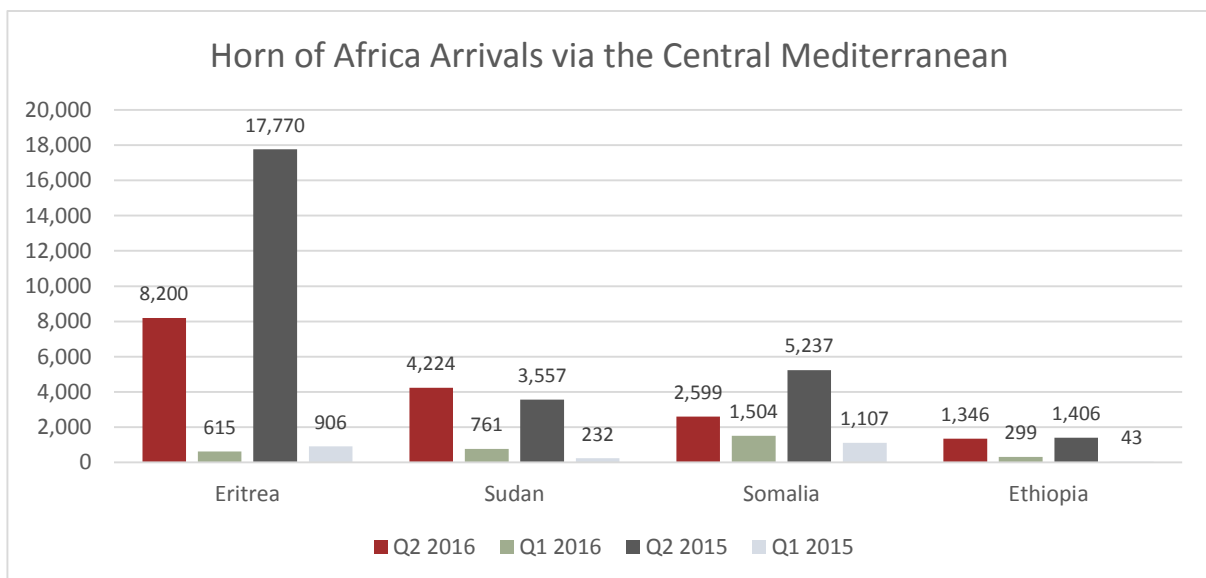


Figure 3: Horn of Africa Arrivals via the Central Mediterranean
Source: UNHCR and RMMS

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

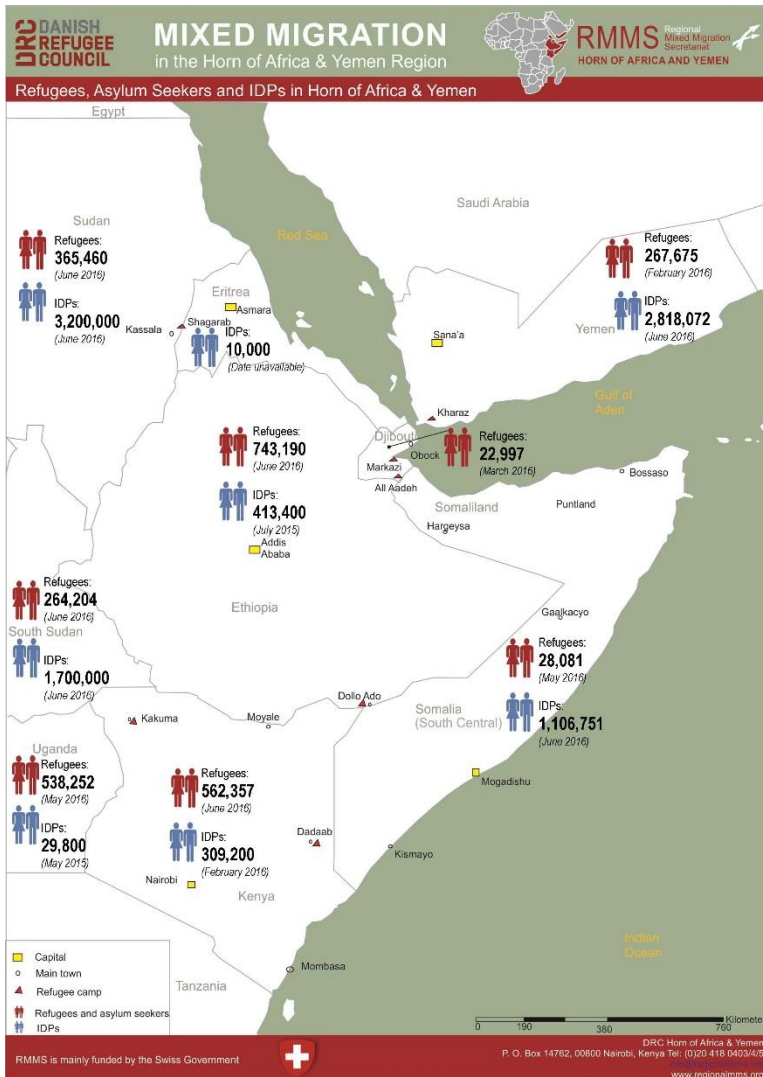


Figure 4: Map of refugees and IDPs in the Horn of Africa

Sources: UNHCR, IDMC, RMMS

This quarter, sustained conflict in Yemen and South Sudan continued to drive populations in the region to seek refuge within and beyond country borders. At the end of June 2016, there were approximately 2.79 million refugees and asylum seekers displaced within the region (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen), and 9.2 million IDPs.

Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda continued to host the largest number of refugees, making up 66% of all refugees within the region.

Internal displacement within Yemen increased again to more than 2.8 million. Peace negotiations between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels were indefinitely suspended this quarter and a precarious ceasefire has not firmly taken hold across the whole of the country, potentially creating an opportunity for further displacement.

In May 2016, the Kenyan government released an unexpected statement announcing the [closure of Dadaab refugee camp](#) and the repatriation of Somali refugees hosted in the country back to Somalia, citing “very heavy economic, security and environmental burdens” borne on behalf of the region and international community. The government further announced the disbandment of the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA), paralysing refugee registration in the country. One week before this announcement the government published a retroactive gazette notice [revoking the prima facie refugee status of asylum seekers from Somalia](#), prompting all asylum seekers arriving after 1 April 2016 to undergo individual Refugee Status Determination.

Kenya faced immediate criticism from [rights campaigners, NGOs](#) and the [UN](#), who aired concern that Kenya may be in breach of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which protects asylum seekers and refugees from being returned to places where their lives and freedoms could be threatened. UNHCR has previously maintained that [conditions in Somalia are not conducive for mass return](#). The move was also criticised by Somalia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who stated that the closure of Dadaab would [negatively affect refugees and increase the risk of insecurity in the region](#).

In June, a [Joint Communiqué](#) by the Ministerial Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Somali Refugees from Kenya to Somalia, consisting of the Kenyan government, Somali government and UNHCR, noted “the prospect of the reduction of the population in the Dadaab camps by 150,000 individuals by the end of 2016”.

Voluntary repatriations were significantly affected in May following the disbandment of DRA, but resumed to their normal levels in June after the government instituted a Refugee Affairs Secretariat, responsible for the same functions as the now defunct DRA. The pace of voluntary repatriations has picked up in 2016 as 10,899 Somali refugees have been supported to return between January and June this year, 2,768 of whom returned in June (the highest on record), in comparison with 6,097 who returned during the whole of 2015. However, an average of 25,000 refugees would have to be returning to Somalia every month between July and December to reach the 150,000 person target, which is much higher than the 17,481 people that returned between the start of the repatriation programme in 2014 and June 2016.

Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure

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

Migrants and asylum seekers crossing the Red Sea from Djibouti to Yemen continued to report witnessing or being victim to numerous violations before and during their journeys. People on the move remained particularly vulnerable to abuses at the hands of their brokers and smugglers. In May, new arrivals in Yemen reported the rape of 10 Ethiopian women by Afari brokers and the abduction of 40 Ethiopian women in Obock, who were captured and taken to the nearby mountain range and not seen again. In June, new arrivals reported the kidnap of 10 male migrants by Afari brokers, who were sold to Yemeni groups who would reportedly transport them to Yemen before handing them over to trafficking gangs in the country. New arrivals reported the abduction of at least 327 migrants during this quarter, which is lower than the 551 abductions reported in the first quarter of 2016, however reported abductions fluctuate from month to month.

Detention and deportation was also a risk among migrants travelling to Yemen. New arrivals in Yemen reported increased border patrols and a heightened security presence along the Ethiopia-Djibouti border during this quarter, with some migrants reporting that they were detained or deported back to Ethiopia. In May, new arrivals reported the detention and subsequent deportation of around 200 Ethiopian migrants by Djiboutian soldiers back to Ethiopia. Migrants also reported being stopped by security personnel at checkpoints in Djibouti and paying bribes before they could pass.

As in the first quarter, the risk of death at sea resulting from capsizing boats and vessels continued to pose a risk for migrants and asylum seekers this quarter. According to data provided by IOM, a total of 11 persons lost their lives while attempting to make the crossing between the Horn of Africa and Yemen between April and June 2016, an 82 percent decline from deaths in the last quarter, mirroring similar low levels witnessed at this time of year in 2015. Migrants making this crossing in April were forced by smugglers to disembark from their boat in deep water and swim to shore, resulting in the death of at least 2 Ethiopian migrants.

Along the Central Mediterranean route, 2,129 migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are reported to have died while making the sea crossing to Italy in the second quarter of 2016. According to IOM data 344 migrants from the Horn of Africa region have died in the entire Mediterranean between January and 25 July, accounting for at least 9 percent of all deaths.

While there is a lot of numerical focus on the deaths that occur at sea, incidences of death in overland locations are also a major, and possibly higher, risk for those on the move. Based on interviews with over 1,300 migrants, RMMS' 4Mi project was able to record the [deaths of 1,245 people](#) on the move in Libya (870), Sudan (295) and Egypt (80) between 2014 and 2016. The figure appears to give credence to the [consistent indications](#) by migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa that even more people might die while crossing the Sahara Desert than while crossing the Mediterranean. Moreover, 4Mi data shows that many of the deaths were reported to occur at least in part due to preventable reasons, including access to medicine, food, water and shelter.

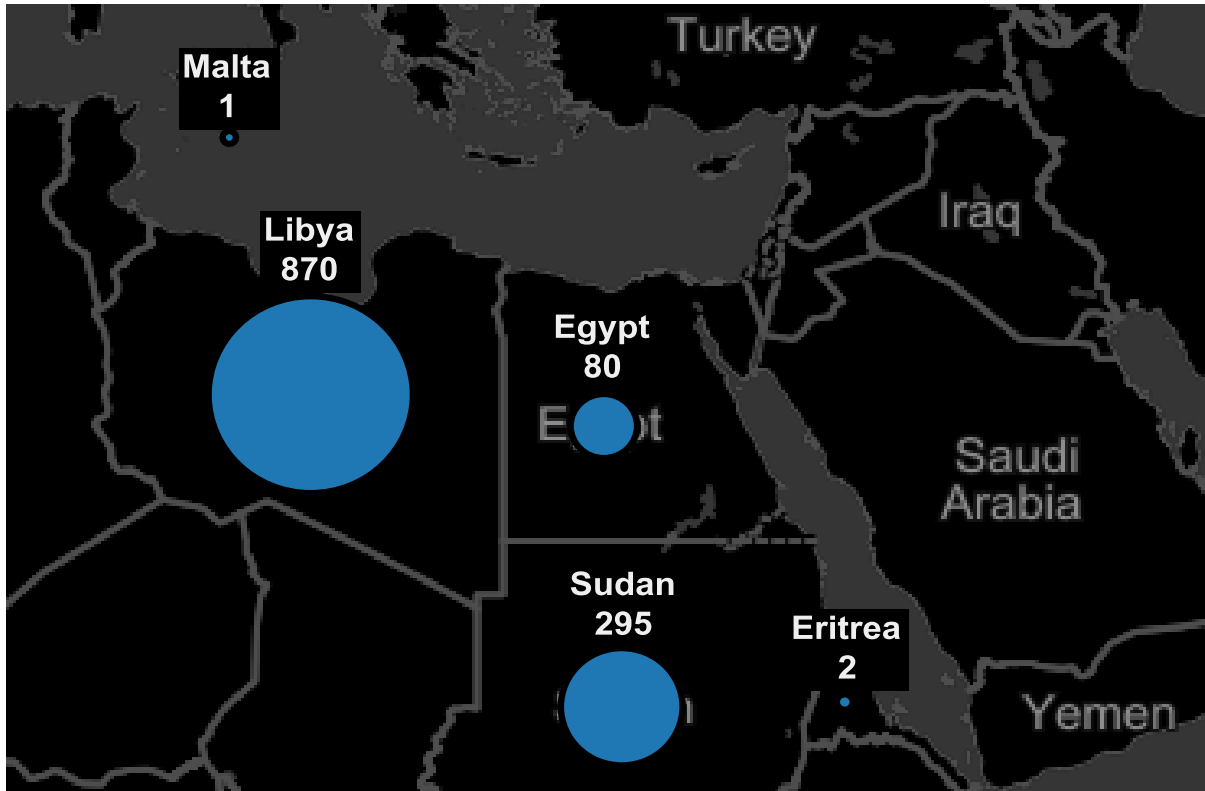


Figure 5: Number of Migrant Death by Country

Source: [4Mi](#)

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

This quarter, governments in the region and more particularly in Europe established new initiatives aimed at improving the handling of migration into their countries.

The Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia announced the establishment of several High Level and Technical Task Forces to better manage migration issues in the country. One High Level Task Force on Migration Management will be responsible for setting up policies and relevant legislation, and negotiating with partner countries on pathways for legal migration. Two Technical Task Forces on Human Trafficking and Smuggling and Return and Readmission will also be formulated.

In June 2016, the European Commission announced the launch of a [New Migration Partnership Framework](#) aimed at reinforcing cooperation with third countries to better manage migration. In order to encourage cooperation, the EU has plans to offer an opening up of legal routes for migration to



Europe and a UN-led global resettlement scheme to contribute to the fair sharing of displaced persons; and a series of financial instrument to offer short and long-term solutions, including an additional EUR 1 billion for the EU Trust Fund for Africa, and a proposed EUR 3.1 billion package to boost investment in developing countries. The Framework has received strong criticism from various quarters, including from Oxfam and Amnesty International. Read more in RMMS' article [At Any Cost?](#)

NATO countries approved the establishment of a new operation, known as "Sea Guardian", to support the EU in controlling migrant and refugee flows across the Mediterranean Sea. The new mission will support the EU's Operation Sophia, which currently has the authority to intercept, board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling and trafficking operations in the international waters between Libya and Europe. However, it remains unclear when the Sea Guardian would start work, which assets it would have at its disposal, and exactly what it would do. Human Rights Watch has raised concern that NATO's involvement in migration control is a signal of a "[dangerous shift toward militarisation of a humanitarian crisis](#)".

The European Union has approved proposals to establish a [European Border and Coast Guard](#) agency that will assist countries in the bloc in coping with high levels of migration. Under the new plan, 1,500 guards would be on hand for deployment to countries even if they did not ask for support. The proposals states that the force would not be intended to usurp States' sovereignty, but rather to operate as a safety net for national border guards. The EU Commission would propose an intervention and it would be approved by the European Council. The proposal will now be sent to the European Council for final approval.