



Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2014: 3rd 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 January 2014. This 3rd 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 EAST from the Horn

The trends of Ethiopians and Somalis migrating east to Yemen indicate a robust rise in numbers. In the 3rd quarter of 2014 the total estimated number of new arrivals was 29,789, representing a 22% rise against the 2nd quarter totals, and a 73% rise against the first quarter totals of 2014. In fact the 3rd quarter total new arrivals from the Horn in Yemen were only 6% off parity with the combined total of new arrivals in the 1st and 2nd quarters.

When compared with 2013, these 3rd quarter totals represent a 60% increase – in July to September 2013 just 11,678 migrants arrived in Yemen in mixed flows.

Throughout this 3rd quarter the proportion of Somalis and Ethiopians attempting to enter Yemen and (mostly) travel on to Saudi Arabia has remained the same as previous quarters and earlier years; at around 75-80% Ethiopians in contrast to the 20-25% Somalis.

Irregular movement NORTH, SOUTH, WEST from the Horn

The indications from reports from diverse sources - especially migrant stories and testimony suggest there has been a significant rise in the number of migrants moving in non-easterly directions, throughout 2014 and continuing in this 3rd quarter. However, this cannot be verified with data as there are no systems of data collection in place comparable to that of the Yemen coastal monitoring mechanism (organized by international agencies).

With the border between Egypt and Israel sealed since early 2013, the trend is for migrants travelling north from the Horn (predominantly Eritrean) to either join with asylum seekers and migrants from the Middle East (Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians and Lebanese) crossing to Europe (to Greece and Italy) from Egypt, or, they travel west through Egypt into Libya where they attempt to cross the Mediterranean using Libyan smugglers. Ethiopia and Sudan are commonly used by Eritrean migrants in transit. Some Eritreans use the northern refugee camps in Ethiopia as resting places before secondary movement.

There are indications that between 3,000-5,000 Eritreans may be leaving their homeland every month. These levels are denied by the Eritrean government. During 2014 the RMMS published the [Going West](#) report that collated research findings from multiple sources to arrive at these estimations. Elsewhere European immigration authorities including EASO (European Asylum Support Office), FRONTEX and Italian navy patrols, Ethiopian and Sudanese refugee camps as well as reception and detention centres (in Italy, Greece and Malta) have reported a rapid rise in the number of Eritreans (also of note, an increase in unaccompanied minors) during 2013 and 2014. Of note, a significant number of unaccompanied migrants from Eritrea have been on the move. Reportedly, 4,000 Eritrean



minors arrived in Italy since the beginning of the year, including more than 3,200 children travelling without their parents. This 3rd quarter saw repeated mention of Eritrean asylum seekers making the long trek to Europe and a high proportion were found attempting (some fatally) the sea journey across the Mediterranean. Reports suggest there are hundreds/thousands of Eritrean migrants in Libya waiting for smugglers and boats to take them across the sea. In many cases Eritreans wait until they reach their chosen country before applying for asylum. During this quarter and throughout the year countries such as Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and the UK and others recorded a spike in numbers of Eritrean asylum seekers.

Other mixed flows are seen passing from Ethiopia and Eritrea into Sudan and then through Libya to the coastal areas where they attempt to cross the sea to Italy. The number making the sea crossing to Italy has been rising fast in 2014 (compared with 2013, almost four times the number) with a high proportion making the crossing in this 3rd quarter (over 50% of the annual crossings to date took place in the 3rd quarter).

Going south, through Kenya and down the eastern corridor of Africa towards South Africa, the number of migrants are not known. Indications are that this route is still popular and commonly used by migrants in mixed flows but without data it is impossible to comment on any trend changes in this quarter.

The problem of absence of data on mixed flows will partially be addressed by the implementation of the 4Mi project ([Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative](#)). In the 3rd quarter monitors were set up in the northern transit and destination countries (Ethiopia, Egypt, Italy, Malta and Turkey). Monitors in the eastern and southern countries of origin, transit and destination will be set up in the 4th quarter of 2014 and continue into 2015.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The number of refugees and asylum seekers in the Horn region continues to increase. With new crises and complex emergencies in the Middle East and South Sudan developing during 2014, numbers have spiked during the year and into the 3rd quarter.

Looking at the numbers of refugees in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen alone, the total number of registered refugees have increased by approximately 8% between the 2nd quarter and the 3rd quarter; from approximately 1,359,000 to 1,473,000. The greatest increase was seen in Ethiopia which by the end of the 3rd quarter hosted over 256,000 South Sudanese (and 246,000 Somalis) representing a rise of 12% of refugees between the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2014. Ethiopia continued to host the largest number of refugees in the region in the 3rd quarter of 2014.

Efforts to return refugees from Kenya to Somali have resulted in very small return flows to date despite significant efforts and policy developments under the [Tripartite Agreement](#).

Returns of migrants from Saudi Arabia (and 'recycling'/re-migration of expelled migrants)

As documented in detail elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of migrants voluntarily left, or were expelled from, Saudi Arabia in the final quarter of 2013 and the first quarter of 2014. Of the estimated one million (plus) departing migrants, over 160,000 Ethiopians were expelled to Addis Ababa and over

36,000 Somalis were forcibly returned to Mogadishu. Just 347 were deported in September. Reportedly, as many as 550,000 Yemeni migrants were also returned to Yemen during the same period (late 2013 and up to mid-2014). Some Yemenis continued to be returned in the 3rd quarter of 2014. Concerning Ethiopians, this 3rd quarter of 2014 saw an end to the mass expulsions although some hundreds of Somalis continued to be returned to Somalia South Central.

The figures of new arrivals in Yemen of Ethiopians and Somalis in the 3rd quarter represent a dramatic rise (the highest 3-month total in the last 7 years of reporting and similar to the level of the 3rd quarter in 2011). There are indications that a significant proportion of the new arrivals in this quarter are 'recycling', formally-expelled migrants who are trying to re-enter Saudi Arabia despite the threat of repeated expulsion. Some sources suggest these migrants use their expulsion as a 'free ticket' home in order to re-group and try again to enter Saudi Arabia for employment, despite the risks they face on the journey. Additionally, the Ethiopian government continues to impose a ban on labour migration through Private Employment Agencies and therefore more people are using the irregular route as it is the only available option to find work in Saudi Arabia.

Migrant deaths at sea

The 3rd quarter of 2014 was a deadly period at sea for migrants/refugees travelling to Europe where an estimated 2,775 deaths occurred on the Mediterranean between July – September representing 83% of the total number of deaths at sea in the Mediterranean in 2014 to date. Consequently, the risk of migrants/refugees losing their lives significantly increased in the 3rd quarter compared to the first 6 months of 2014, where an estimated 500 deaths were reported. Aside from an alleged deliberate sinking of a boat in September (killing an estimated 500), most of the deaths at sea appear to be due to accidents and overcrowding. Over half of the deaths are reportedly Eritrean and Syrian nationals. The others were from various countries including many from sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn. The actual numbers are not known or verifiable.

While RMMS data does not capture deaths along the crossing to Yemen during the 3rd quarter, 215 migrants/refugees are estimated to have died from January – October, causing 2014 to be described as the deadliest year at sea for those journeying to Yemen. This epithet may be related to an increased number of migrants/refugees making the crossing when compared to the significant drop in crossings during 2013. In contrast to previous years, there is little to indicate that the sea deaths along this route were intentionally caused.

Migrant Vulnerabilities – kidnapping, human trafficking, detention, exposure

As in the first half of 2014, this 3rd quarter saw continued protection deficits along the major routes out of the Horn of Africa.

In Yemen kidnapping for ransom along with detention by authorities were ranked among the main sources of vulnerability for migrants/refugees. In September, it was estimated nearly 75% of migrants/refugees were kidnapped and ransomed on arrival in Yemen between January – September 2014. Although average ransom figures during this specific quarter are not available, Ethiopian migrants/refugees were more vulnerable to kidnapping. As in previous years, reports of collusion between authorities and smugglers continued. However, there were indications that the Yemeni authorities were more proactive in dismantling smuggling and human trafficking rings, especially when



compared to the same period in 2013. Reports of collusion between authorities and smugglers were also reported along the Ethiopia and Djibouti border.

Like in the first half of 2014, deteriorating security and lawlessness in Libya continued to negatively impact migrants/refugees. Migrants/refugees from the Horn often en route to Europe were susceptible to kidnapping and ransoming by criminal gangs as well as detention. In August 2014 an estimated 7,000 migrants/refugees from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East were held in detention and an unknown number were stranded. In September, asylum-seekers in Israel (who were susceptible to indefinite detention from 2013) were granted some respite when a High Court ordered the closure of a detention facility (housing 2,500 predominantly Eritrean/Sudanese asylum-seekers).

Migrants/refugees moving out of and within the region continued to be exposed to harsh travelling conditions, which in some cases lead to deaths related to heat exposure and starvation.

With respect to the level of kidnapping (for trafficking and holding for ransom) of migrants and refugees in eastern Sudan, the 3rd quarter of 2014 showed a positive trend. In Sudan, there were reports of a significant drop (58%) of trafficking cases in the eastern region in the first 8 months of 2014 when compared to the same period in 2013. According to UNHCR who have developed anti-trafficking projects with the Government of Sudan in 2013 and throughout 2014, the number of kidnappings have significantly reduced. However the number of residents in the refugee camps in eastern Sudan have dramatically reduced in 2014 due, it is assumed, to the high levels of risk associated with kidnapping, torture and trafficking that faced Eritreans in recent years. Agencies dealing with Eritrean victims of torture in Cairo also report a significant drop in cases during 2014, compared with 2013 and earlier years.

It is not clear if the anti-trafficking interventions in eastern Sudan in combination with the Egyptian army's disruption of trafficking gangs in the Sinai have led to an absolute reduction of abuses against migrants or whether the criminal gangs have merely moved to other locations. RMMS concludes that concerning the 3rd quarter of 2014 there may be grounds for optimism with a significant reduction of cases of abduction, torture, trafficking and deaths of Eritrean migrants in particular in Sudan and Egypt. There are however cases of similar abuses in Libya facing migrants from Eritrea, Somaliland, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Regional drivers

The well-documented drivers causing mixed migration within the region and out of it remain strong comprising: impoverishment (livelihoods and unemployment); insecurity (civil conflict and forced recruitment); social oppression (forced marriages, dysfunctional home-life); political oppression; environmental fragility / natural disasters.

As previously noted, the 'push' and 'pull' factors continue to combine as central drivers for mixed migration flows. No less this 3rd quarter: trends can be identified that point to the high influence of the 'culture of migration' having taken root, where irrespective of conditions in countries of origin many families opt to having one or more member working overseas. Equally the importance of 'aspirational migration' facilitated by aspects of an increasingly globalised and digital world where opportunities to study, visit, communicate and travel are higher than ever.

The critical mass of Diaspora abroad with finances to effect 'chain migration' of relatives and friends is also a strong pull factor. Finally, the power of seduction by 'brokers' and smugglers to lure new waves



of economic migrants with the accompanying impact of success stories (through social media networks, in particular Facebook).

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

The effect of anti-migrant/refugee sentiment in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Kenya continued the trend of shrinking space and options for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. In Saudi Arabia the policy of 'Saudi-ization' of their work force was the policy factor behind the expulsions. Rising security concerns in the region contributed again to the policy discourse and negative media narrative around migrants. The regime in Eritrea continued to sustain the migrant exodus irrespective of the risks they face. However, most countries in the region (particularly Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Yemen) continued to offer refuge for the rising number of refugees and asylum on the move in the 3rd quarter. Irregular migrants in most countries were treated as violators of the law and where the police, immigration authorities and judiciary had the capacity they were 'criminalised' – resulting in arrest, detention, deportation, imprisonment etc. The detention of irregular migrants and their return (not necessarily voluntarily), including unaccompanied minors, continued in the 3rd quarter.

Meanwhile, the reaction of European countries to rising sea crossings in the Mediterranean and in particular the Mare Nostrum (Italian navy) rescue at sea policy has led in part to stronger pull factor for many migrants. Tens of thousands of irregular migrants were rescued by the Italian initiatives during the 3rd quarter. As most migrants seek to move on to other countries in Europe, some argue that migrants use the 'rescue at sea' as a facilitation to reach Europe and quickly transit Italy itself.

Prosecution of traffickers and smugglers in the region remained weak despite claims of arrests in Ethiopia, Somaliland, Puntland, Yemen and Sudan during the 3rd quarter. Censure of corrupt state officials who may be colluding and facilitating the multi-million dollar smuggling and trafficking 'business' continues to be non-existent.

Despite various regional conferences and meetings having taken place in 2013 and those held or planned in 2014, momentum towards a coherent, sustainable and harmonized regional approach to mixed migration continued to elude the region in this 3rd quarter.