

Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: 3rd Quarter trend summary and analysis

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants continued to move in complex flows from the Horn of Africa and Yemen region. This quarter, movement was characterised by persistent conflict, increased risk, and amplified intolerance. Internal and cross border displacement in Yemen, South Sudan and surrounding countries also increased, while returns to Somalia peaked.

Irregular Movement from the Horn

Northward (through Egypt into Israel)

This quarter, Egypt continued to gain popularity as a gateway transit country for travel across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, as the Egyptian government made promises to crack down on irregular migration through the country.

In July and August, local [media reports](#) documented by [RMMS](#), indicated that at least 1,300 persons of mixed nationality, including those from the Horn of Africa, were apprehended by Egyptian authorities as they attempted to cross the Mediterranean from Egyptian shores. Europe's border agency [Frontex](#), estimated that more than 12,000 migrants arriving in Italy between January and September 2016 departed from Egypt.

The growing popularity of Egypt as a springboard across the Mediterranean has been linked to the precarious security situation in Libya, encouraging more people to move through Egypt. The longer journey however has been associated with increased risk of death at sea. In September, a boat carrying approximately 600 migrants, including Egyptian, Sudanese, Eritrean and Somali migrants, capsized as it attempted to navigate the seas. Rescue workers recovered the bodies of at least 202 migrants and rescued a further 169, suggesting many more may have perished.

Migration into Israel remained constrained as the border wall between Egypt and Israel limited the numbers of asylum seekers and migrants entering the country and restrictive asylum policies limited access to protection for many. However in a push back, a special appeals court for refugee issues ruled that the Israeli government [must reconsider its position on Eritrean asylum seekers](#) in the country, which was deemed in effect to bar Eritrean nationals from gaining refugee status. The government's policy, which discounts fleeing military service (the reason given by most Eritrean asylum seekers) from falling within the definition of "persecution" under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The Israeli government vowed to appeal the decision.

Eastward (towards Yemen)

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

Arrivals into the Horn of Africa from Yemen continued to dwindle this quarter. 2,204 persons arrived into the region between July and September, a 6 percent decline from the second quarter. As of 30 September 2016, a total of 89,621 persons had sought refuge in neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa since the outbreak of conflict in Yemen in March 2015.

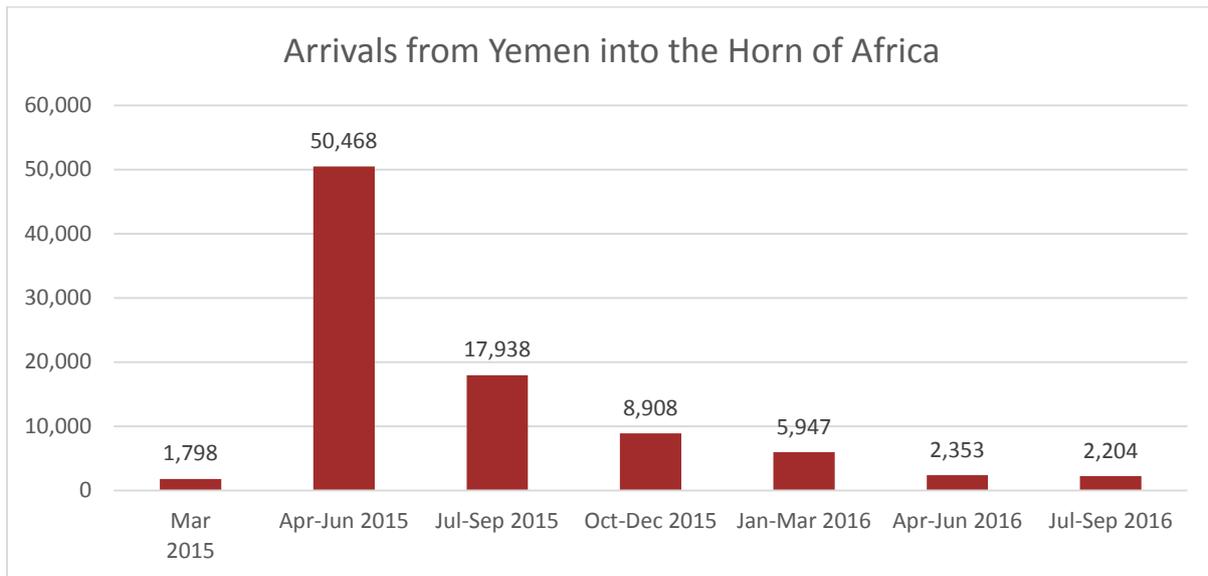


Figure 1: Arrivals from Yemen into the Horn of Africa

Data source: UNHCR

Unbaiting conflict in Yemen continued to spur internal displacement in the country. At the end of the quarter more than 2.2 million people were internally displaced, more than one million of whom had been displaced for more than one year. The conflict and resulting displacement has been linked with alleged breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. A [report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) has called for the establishment of an international independent body to carry out comprehensive investigations in Yemen.

Despite this, inward movements of Ethiopian and Somali nationals into Yemen this quarter continued with the pace of arrivals recorded in the second quarter. At least 33,826 persons (81 percent Ethiopian, 19 percent Somali) travelled from Obock, Djibouti and coastal town near Bossaso, Puntland, on par with the 35,399 arrivals between April and June 2016. 12,750 people arrived in July alone, marking the second highest arrivals recorded so far in 2016.

In a continuing trend, migrants and asylum seekers preferred to depart from Bossaso than Obock. 85 percent of journeys were made along the Arabian Sea, with the remaining 15 percent electing to use the Red Sea route. Continued abuses (see Migrant Vulnerabilities below) are believed to contribute to the declined use of the Red Sea route.

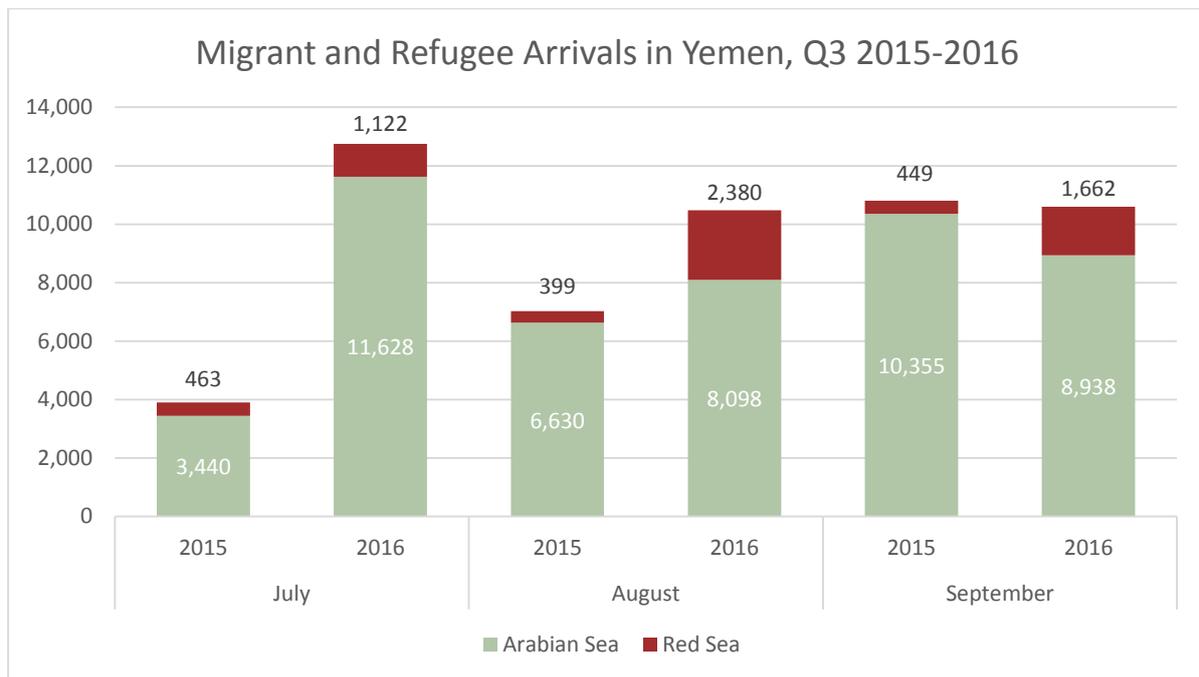


Figure 2: Migrant and Refugee Arrivals in Yemen, Q3 2015-2016

Data source: UNHCR

Southward (through Kenya towards South Africa)

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

In July, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it was working to secure the release of 483 Ethiopian migrants who were jailed in Zambia and Zimbabwe for attempting to enter South Africa irregularly. In the same month, the Tanzanian government was reportedly looking for funds from the European Union to repatriate 500 irregular migrants from Ethiopia by the end of the year.

In August, 10 Ethiopian nationals were held by Zambian police in relation to a suspected human smuggling case. The ten were uncovered after the vehicle ferrying them the country was involved in a traffic incident.

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 14,374 migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean, representing 23 percent of all arrivals along that route. Arrivals among Horn of Africa nationals dipped this quarter, with movements between July



and September marking a 12 percent decline on numbers between April and June. This is typical of patterns of arrival witnessed in 2015 and 2014, which on average have shown a 10 percent decline between quarter two and quarter three. This quarter, significant reductions in movement were particularly noted among Eritrean nationals (17 percent) and Sudanese nationals (28 percent). Moreover, overall arrival figures this quarter remain significantly lower (45 percent) than those recorded during the same quarter in 2015. This reduction correlates with continued reports this quarter of a [crackdown by Sudanese authorities and pro-government militia](#) on irregular migration through the country. Sudanese security officers announced that they had intercepted [816 African migrants](#) (including 347 Eritreans, 130 Ethiopians and 90 Sudanese) between June and August as they attempted to irregularly migrate through the country. These security operations may be persuading more migrants to bide their time in transit. [Reports](#) in the second quarter suggested that there were a large number of Eritrean migrants and refugees living in Khartoum awaiting an opportunity to continue their journey north.

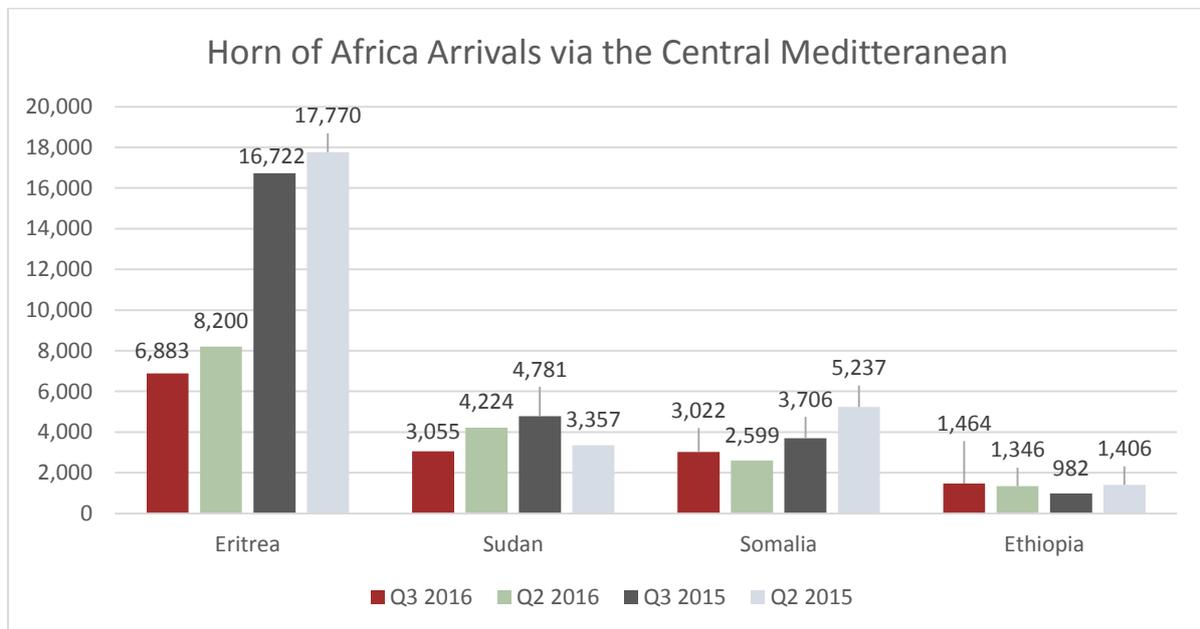
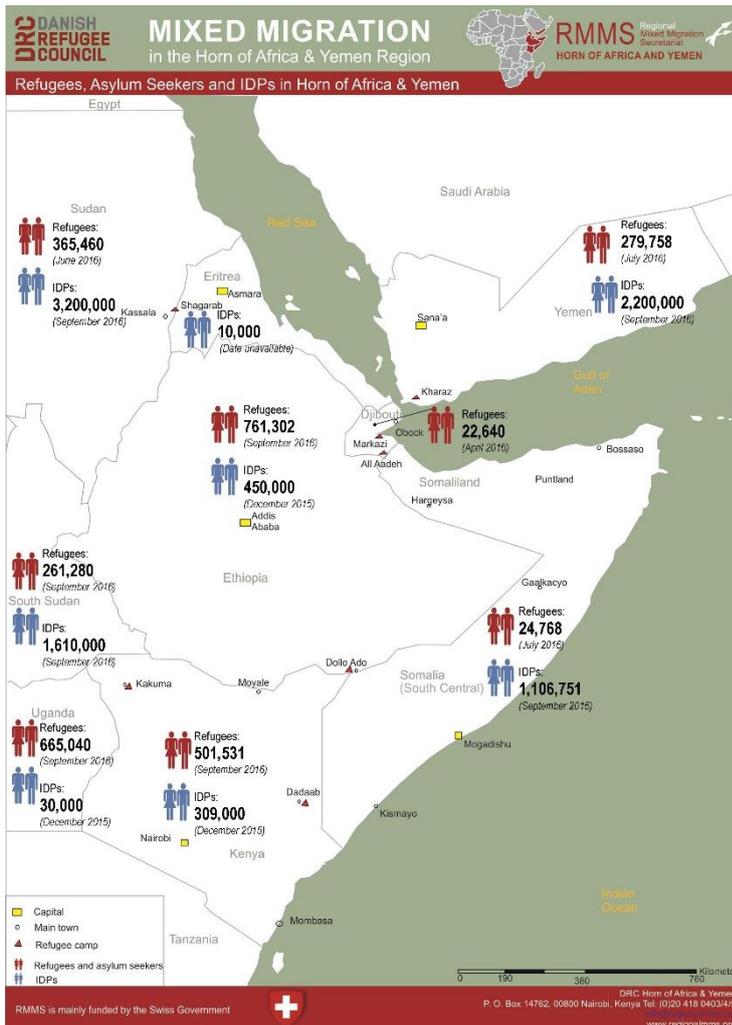


Figure 3: Horn of Africa Arrivals via the Central Mediterranean

Data source: UNHCR

Refugees and Asylum Seekers



In July 2016, a new outbreak of violence in South Sudan between government forces allied to President Salva Kiir and rebel forces loyal to First Vice President Riek Machar spurred a mass outpouring of South Sudanese refugees into countries in the region, further destabilising the situation in the budding nation, and pushing the number of South Sudanese refugees to more than 1.1 million at the end of the quarter.

At the end of September, there were more than 2.87 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.

67% of all refugees and asylum seekers are hosted in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

Figure 4: Map of refugees and IDPs in the Horn of Africa
Data sources: UNHCR, IDMC

Human rights agencies and NGOs continued to [raise serious concern about the return of Somali refugees](#) to Somalia, putting to question the voluntariness of the returns process. Despite this, voluntary return movements surged this quarter, with a total of 15,832 persons repatriating between July and September. In August, a UNHCR field official in Dadaab claimed that the surge in refugees registering to leave the camp was as a result of [threats issued by the government](#) – a position [rebutted](#) by a UNCHR spokesperson in Nairobi, but one supported by [Human Rights Watch](#), who termed the program as one “fuelled by fear and misinformation”.

In an [extension of the concerns](#) surrounding the return programme, authorities from the Jubbaland administration in Somalia prevented refugees from moving out of the transition centre in Doble town, due to the lack of humanitarian and integration support available once the returnees reached their final destinations. This action resulted in a significant drop in return movements in September (3,055) when compared to August (10,260 – the highest on record since 2014), and is emblematic of the complexity of competing agendas affecting the repatriation exercises. An average of 41,089 persons would have to be returning to Somalia every month between October and December 2016 to reach the 150,000 person target set by the [Ministerial Tripartite Commission](#).



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 this quarter.

Within the region, the Red Sea crossing from Djibouti to Yemen was rife with reports of human rights violations, including high levels of attempted or actual abduction. In August and September, migrants reported at least 1,444 instances of abduction. This figure is much higher than the 327 reported in quarter two and 551 reported in quarter one, and cannot be linked to any particular occurrence, however reported abduction fluctuate from month to month.

Detention and deportation of migrants was a very present risk this quarter. In September, Yemen authorities reported having [detained dozens of African migrants](#), mostly from Ethiopia, on the suspicion that they might be recruited by militant groups in the country. In the same month, IOM reported the deportation of at least 600 Ethiopian migrants from Yemen who were deported from Southern Yemen.

Further afield, alarming reports of migrants in Egypt selling their kidneys for cash to finance their travel to Europe, revealed the desperation fuelling extreme measures to finance movement. A study in the [British Journey of Criminology](#) found that brokers in Egypt were luring undocumented migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to sell their organs for around USD 4,500. The report also cited instances of migrants being forced to have their organs removed against their will. An Eritrean people smuggler had earlier confessed that migrants who were unable to pay for their journeys across the Mediterranean were being sold for EUR 15,000 to groups involved in [organ harvesting](#) and sale.

Along the Central Mediterranean route, 589 migrants, asylum seekers and refugees of all nationalities are reported to have died while making the sea crossing to Italy this quarter, accounting for 19 percent of all deaths on this route since the beginning of 2016.

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

This quarter, governments in the region convened to discuss mixed migration with an aim to improve the protection of persons on the move. Continentally, governments made steps to improve the mobility of Africans on the continent. Globally, governments committed to improve the protection of migrants and refugees. In Europe

In July 2016, the African Union (AU) launched the AU electronic passport (e-passport), an initiative of the Union's [Agenda 2063](#), which envisions "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena". In line with Aspiration 2 and 7 of the Agenda, it is expected that the e-passport will facilitate the free movement of people, goods and services, and spur intra-Africa trade, integration and socio-economic development. The passport is currently only available to AU heads of state and government, ministers of foreign affairs, and permanent representatives of AU member states, but the Agenda envisions that visa requirements for all African citizens shall be abolished by 2018. According to the [Africa Visa Openness Report 2016](#), Africans need visas to travel to 55% of other African countries.

On 19th September 2016, the UN General Assembly hosted a high—level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants, with the aim of brining countries together towards a more



humane and coordinated approach. States adopted the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), which sets out a new approach to responding to refugees through a Comprehensive Refugee Response (CPR) Framework. The Framework includes a range of activities ranging from addressing route causes to emphasizing self-reliance of refugees. The Declaration has set ground for negotiations leading to an international conference and the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

On 20th and 21st September, the governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, Puntland, Sudan and Yemen convened at the 6th meeting of the Regional Committee on Mixed Migration in Addis Ababa. Thematic topics covered Migration Response Centres and referral mechanisms; search and rescue at sea; and child protection and migration management. Recommendations included strengthening regional cooperation and coordination to address search and rescue, and improving data collection and management on the situation of children in mixed migration flows.

On 6th October 2016, the EU established the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The mandate of the agency will be to: ensure implementation of an integrated border management system, oversee border control at the external border of the EU, provide increased operational and technical support to Member States, support search and rescue operations, and play an enhanced role in returns. The new agency, which assumes the operations of Frontex, was launched amid controversy that European border guards are using weapons to stop boats driven by suspected human smugglers and injuring or killing migrants and refugees in the process.