



International Organization for Migration
Organisation internationale pour les migrations
المنظمة الدولية للهجرة



Yemen: Migration in a Time of Crisis

MIGRATION AND YEMEN

Most migrants begin their journey to Yemen in Djibouti, Sudan, or Somalia, seeking to cross the Red or Arabian Seas and enter Saudi Arabia or another Gulf country. Smugglers transport irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Yemeni coast, often landing in Hajja Governorate in the north or Bab el-Mandeb, in Taizz Governorate, further south. Many Somalis cross in boats from Bossasso in Puntland and disembark in Shabwah Governorate.

Once in Yemen, migrants make their way on foot to the north, hoping to cross into Saudi Arabia and either find work there or travel on to other Gulf countries. Since the outbreak of hostilities in March 2015, Yemen's northern border has seen intense fighting and artillery bombardments – Hajjah and Sa'adah governorates have been declared military zones. This has led to many migrants turning away from the northwestern border once they arrive, and heading south to either seek work in Yemen (opportunities for which are limited) or to return to their country of origin.

Crisis and Deepening Needs

As Yemen's crisis continues, IOM has recorded a significant number of migrants who have been kidnapped and severely abused for extortion. Frequently, international migrant smugglers consort with kidnapping gangs in Yemen, delivering the migrants directly to the gangs that in turn profit from the migrants' captivity. In other cases, the kidnapping gangs will offer bogus jobs or transportation, or simply apprehend the migrants as they walk through the country.

Once kidnapped, the migrants are regularly beaten and tortured, and forced to contact relatives in their home countries to beg for ransom money that will secure freedom. Often the torture is deliberately inflicted while the migrant calls home so that the relatives hear the

sounds of violence and pain. The amounts demanded vary but are generally around US\$2,000; a great deal of money for a family that often shoulders a debt for the migrant to travel abroad to seek a job.

In November 2015 alone, 34% of 663 migrants who came to IOM for urgent assistance reported that they had been kidnapped and extorted. The high rate of these incidents is alarming given the wide-spread lack of political, economic and physical security, as well as increasingly limited access to food and other basic goods in Yemen.

The country's current migration inflows, which are similar to the pre-Crisis trends of 2014, exacerbate the needs further. Even after the outbreak of conflict, over 70,000 people are estimated to have arrived in Yemen so far this year. These arrival trends are also corroborated by IOM's work, with most migrants interviewed saying that they came to Yemen in the last six months. The vast majority also indicate that they are unaware of the ongoing conflict in Yemen before they travel. Others are told by smugglers that the conflict has subsided and travel through Yemen is now easier.



IOM staff work with stranded migrants in Al Hudaydah.
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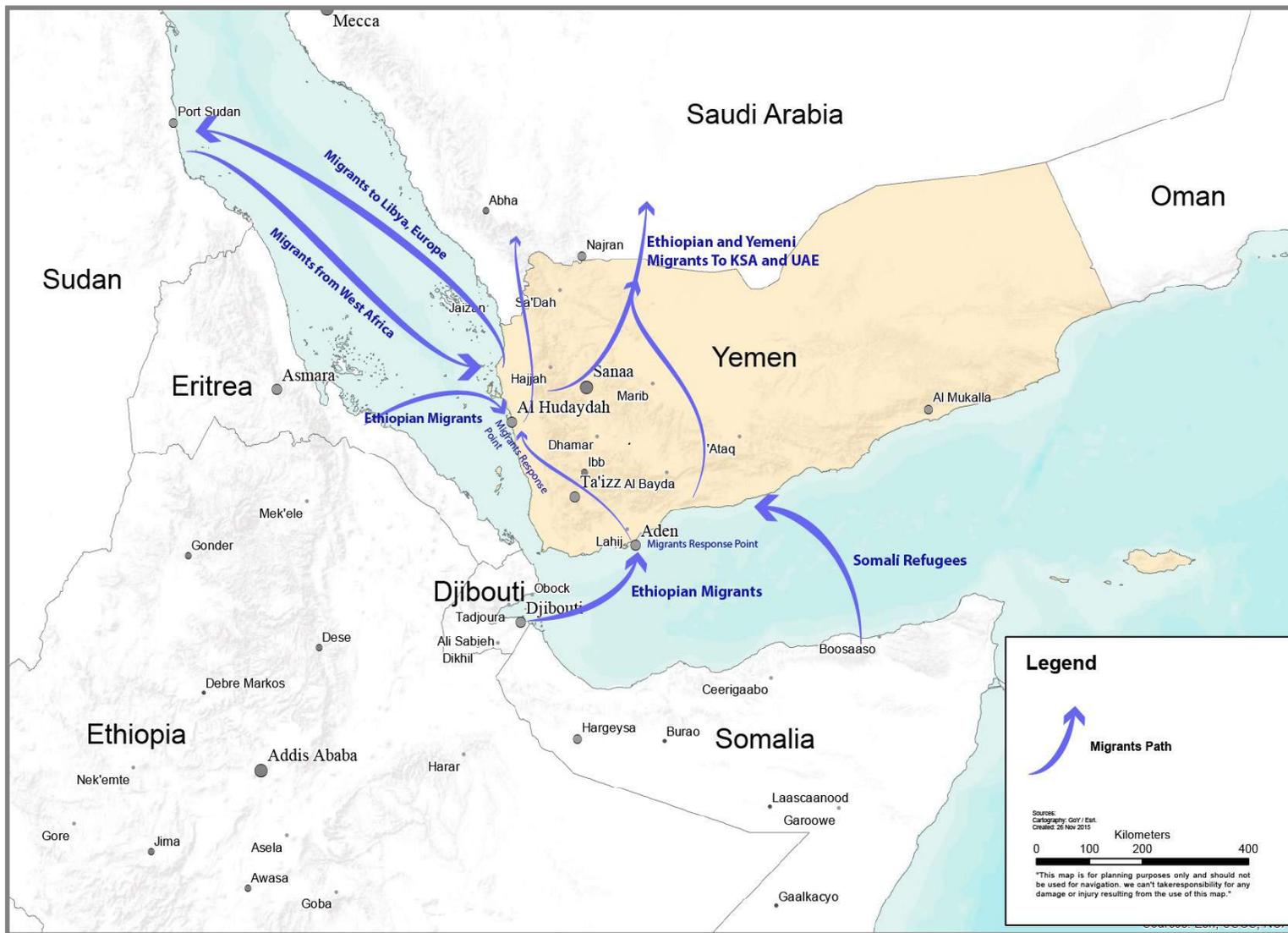
Located on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is an important but little known transit and destination country on international migration routes. Every year, thousands of migrants from East and West Africa travel to the country, some seeking employment and long-term settlement there, others looking to reach Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. A large number of these are left stranded and destitute after their journey, with little means of support and no way to return home – a problem that is exacerbated by the conflict raging in the country since March 2015.

In response, IOM provides vulnerable migrants with essential lifesaving humanitarian assistance and advocates for assisted voluntary return and reintegration support at home.

The Crisis has led to a deepening of already acute needs within the migrant population in Yemen; not only in terms of access to basic, life sustaining food and water, but also in terms of complex protection and health needs.

IOM's Assistance for Vulnerable Migrants

IOM undertakes a number of migration interventions in Yemen, with Migrant Response Points operating in Aden, Taizz, and Al Hudaydah governorates. The most immediate intervention is lifesaving humanitarian assistance, including food and water, medical assistance, and basic clothing and hygiene items. For those found to be in need of greater assistance upon screening, for example victims of kidnap and torture, those injured by the conflict, unaccompanied minors or severely malnourished migrants, IOM provides screening for vulnerabilities, shelter, medical referrals to local hospitals, and psychosocial support. So far this year, IOM has provided food to 4,858 migrants, sheltered 973, and distributed 2,754 non-food item kits.



Additionally, IOM has cared for hundreds of migrants with acute mental trauma and physical injuries, including wounds from gunshots and weeks of brutal torture. Similar to the pre-Crisis context of 2014, Ethiopian males constitute the majority (approximately 90%) of IOM's caseload in Yemen, with unaccompanied migrant minors representing one-fifth of all cases.

IOM's humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants during the Yemen Crisis addresses immediate and lifesaving needs. Yet the migrants who have become entrapped by the conflict seek IOM's assistance in returning to their countries of origin. So far this year, IOM has assisted 1,967 stranded migrants in voluntarily returning home by air, 2,257 by sea, and 28 have been resettled to third countries as part of those countries' admission programmes. These operations provide an alternative for destitute migrants stranded in Yemen who want to go home, but are subject to funding availability.

IOM's migrant assistance projects are regularly supported by the following generous donors: UK Department for International Development, European Union, US Department of State, Government of Japan, Swedish International Development Agency, UN-Central Emergency Response Fund, and the US Association for International Migration.



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