

QUARTERLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

APRIL TO JULY 2023



HORN OF AFRICA-YEMEN MIGRATION TRENDS

Migrants, mainly from Ethiopia, continue to cross the Gulf of Aden with the hope of reaching neighbouring Gulf countries through Yemen in search of safety and economic opportunities. An increasing number have also cited conflict as one of the reasons they have left home.

As of 31 July 2023, IOM teams recorded more than 86,000 migrant arrivals to Yemen, surpassing the total number of arrivals in 2022 (73,233). IOM estimates that total arrivals in 2023 could reach double the amount of 2022, levels similar to pre-pandemic years.

As the rate of arrivals increases, groups engaged in criminal activities, including smuggling and trafficking, appear to have scaled up their operations along key sea routes, targeting those vulnerable to exploitation.

The Gulf of Aden crossing is one of the world's busiest and most dangerous, yet under-reported, maritime migration and smuggling routes. For those who survive, the situation on arrival is dire. Abduction, detention, violence and extortion perpetrated by criminal groups in Lahj and Shabwah – areas along Yemen's coastline – remains severe.

Once boats arrive from Djibouti or Somalia, migrants are sometimes left to find their way through Yemen on their own. Those who can pay high sums are often able to arrange for faster and more direct transportation to the border for onward movement.

However those lacking these financial means are immediately taken into the custody of criminal groups for the purposes of smuggling or trafficking, and often transferred to 'smuggling dens' where criminal groups operate with impunity throughout Yemen.

Many of these migrants are reportedly 'sold up' the route, often detained in these sites until they can pay for their release before they are transferred from the custody of one group to the next – continually forced to pay or work to secure their release and onward movement from one site to another.

While being held in these sites, migrants report being deprived of access to food and water and subjected to torture and sexual violence. Evidence of this violence is reportedly shared with the families of migrants to extort them. Many migrants report that their families in Ethiopia have sold their land and homes, or taken on significant debt, to secure their release.

Over the reporting period, increased tension and alleged disagreements between criminal groups engaged in smuggling and trafficking and local authorities led to an increase in security raids, notably in Lahj where an estimated 50 'smuggling dens' are located. As a result of these raids, smugglers have reportedly moved landing areas closer to Bab Al Mandab, locale area more difficult to access due to its proximity to mountainous areas.

Furthermore, arrest campaigns targeting migrants continued during the reporting period. In June, at least 500 migrants in Aden were arrested and forcibly transported outside IOM's departure centre where a facility utilized to accommodate migrants prior to Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flights. IOM has coordinated with local authorities and advocated that arbitrary arrests, detention and forced movement end.

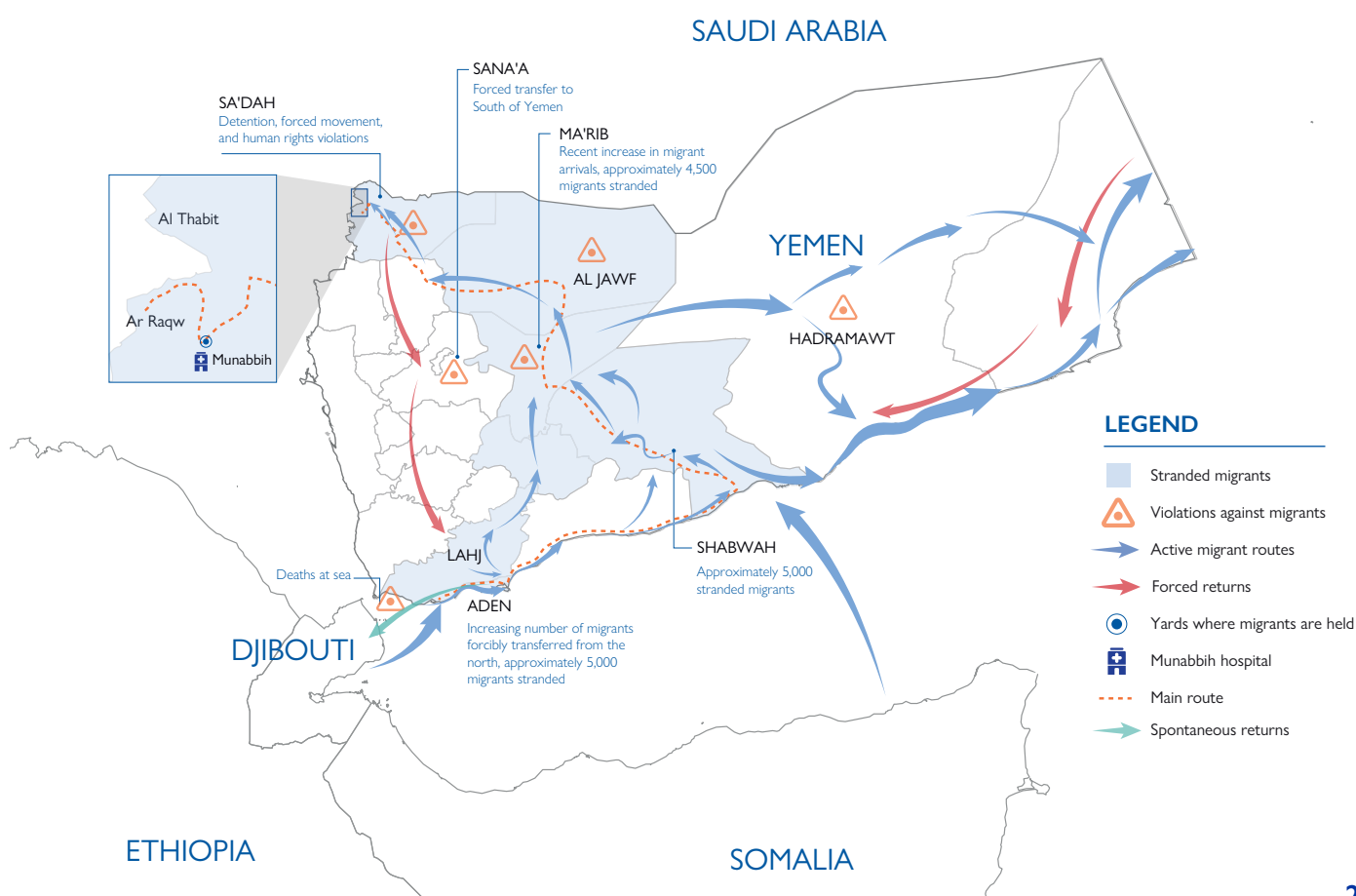
There have also been increasing reports of systematic pushbacks of migrants across international, governorate and district borders by security forces. Migrants attempting to cross international borders continue to be exposed to risk of targeted violence. Cases have been recorded of migrants returning from the border in critical condition, arriving to the IOM-supported Monnibeh Hospital with traumatic injuries, including those consistent with explosive weapons.

Whilst the majority of migrants continue to attempt the journey to KSA, an increasing number of migrants are also seeking opportunities in Oman. Pushbacks from Oman to Al Maharah governorate (an area near the Omani border) continued to be observed. Migrants who have been pushed back are often in need of access to health and protection services in the area.

According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview, an estimated 209,000 migrants are in need of humanitarian assistance throughout Yemen, among whom 43,000 are stranded in inhumane conditions.

As the number of new arrivals continues to increase, needs will also continue to rise during the second half of 2023 and those most vulnerable – women, girls and unaccompanied children – will continue to need greater protection and support. IOM continues to directly support and engage with key partners to respond to the specific needs of people on the move.

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



FACILITATING SAFE RETURNS

Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flights facilitated by IOM remain the only safe pathway home for many stranded migrants in Yemen. From 1 January to 31 July, IOM has assisted 5,674 migrants, including 5,604 Ethiopians, to return home safely on VHR flights.

IOM's Migrant Response Points in Sana'a, Ma'rib and Aden are approached daily by migrants asking for help to return home. In June, teams registered thousands of migrants who requested return assistance.

More migrants find themselves stranded and increasingly reliant on direct assistance from IOM and other humanitarian actors. During the reporting period, protests were organized six times by migrants who called for more VHR support in front of the humanitarian hub in Ma'rib.

Migrants and the authorities have both consistently emphasized the need for regular and reliable VHR opportunities, including for victims of trafficking, women and unaccompanied children. Identifying sustainable solutions for those who cannot return home also remains a priority.



Stranded migrants prepare to embark on IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight to Ethiopia from Aden. @IOM/Majed Mohammed 2023

MIGRANT PROFILES & TRENDS

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix teams recorded a total of 45,177 migrant arrivals between April and July 2023 at Points (FMPs) in Lahj and Shabwah governorates along the southern coastal border.

Arrival trends remained largely consistent with the previous quarter, with 82 per cent of migrants arriving from Djibouti (76 per cent in Q1), whilst the remaining 18 per cent travelled from Somalia.

An overwhelming majority of new arrivals (99.9 per cent) stated that they intend to travel onwards to KSA, likely to seek better economic opportunities. Only 33 migrants stated that they intend to remain in Yemen with the rest intending to transit through Yemen to Gulf countries. In terms of gender breakdown, 76 per cent of arrivals were men; 5 per cent women; 16 per cent boys, and 3 per cent girls.

For further information on flow monitoring activities, please see <https://migration.iom.int/reports>

MIGRANT VOICES

Son Rescues Injured Father and Escorts Him Home from Yemen to Ethiopia

Early this year at the airport in Aden, a group of 265 migrants lined up to board a chartered Yemenia flight to Addis Ababa. A father and son duo, Jamal and Mohammed, were among them.

“I left Ethiopia four years ago, by foot and car. From Ethiopia to Djibouti to Yemen, it took me one month and a half to get to Yemen. For another 15 days, I was detained by a smuggler and beaten, before I was released and found employment at a farm in Ar Rawah. I stayed there working for the last three to four years,” shares the father, Jamal.



Mohammed seated with his father, Jamal, at Aden Airport in Yemen ahead of their voluntary humanitarian return flight home to Ethiopia © IOM 2023/ Eva Sibanda

Jamal worked under exploitative labour conditions and what he earned was minimal. After he was seriously injured on the job, without anyone to support and in pain, Jamal finally decided it was time to return home.

“I was working in Ar Rawah as a farmer. While working, I fell from a tractor and badly injured my arm and leg. Once I realized I could no longer work, I knew I had to go home.”

Jamal sought medical support following his accident at a nearby healthy facility in Rida. His friends – fellow migrant farmers – pooled their resources to pay for his medical bills.

One of the migrants that Jamal had originally travelled with subsequently had already returned to Ethiopia. Once he was back home, he informed Jamal's son, Mohammed, of his father's condition. Mohammed left Ethiopia for Yemen, determined to bring his father home no matter the danger.

“I didn't tell my mother or anyone else in the family; I just left, but once I got to Yemen, I called my mother and told her I had arrived in Yemen to get dad.”

It took Mohammed one month to travel to northern Yemen, close to the border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where his father was stranded. Once reunited, they made their way south towards Aden. There they were registered and had their documents processed at the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Departure Centre. After two months, they were finally able to take one of IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flights to go home.

VHR flights from Yemen are considered a life-saving response for stranded migrants in Yemen. Insecurity throughout the country, lack of food, shelter, health care as well as exploitative labour conditions and violence perpetrated by smugglers make life in Yemen not only difficult but also dangerous.

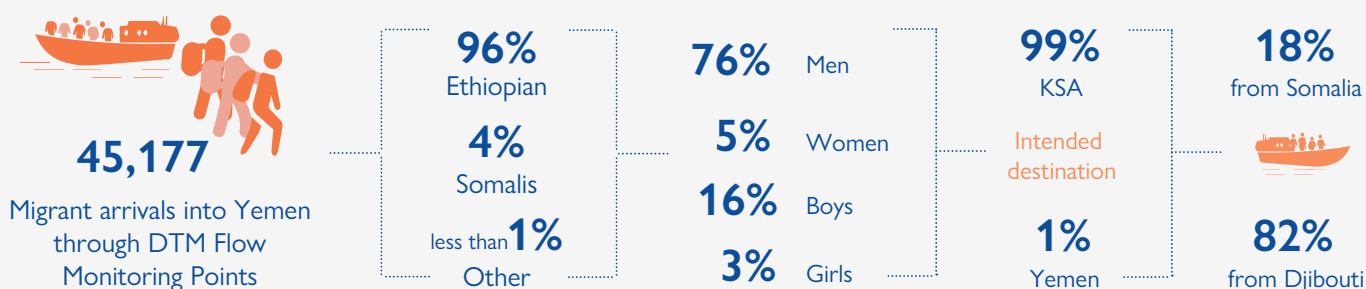
IOM's movement assistance encompasses support at each stage of a migrant's movement: from verification and registration, to offering shelter and core relief items to travelling migrants, to chartering the flights, to helping migrants reach their homes and reunite with their families after landing in their home countries.



An IOM team member helps guide migrants departing from Aden airport on a Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight to Ethiopia @IOM/Majed Mohammed 2023

BREAKDOWN OF ARRIVALS

ARRIVALS APRIL TO JULY 2023



SPONTANEOUS RETURNS TO THE HORN OF AFRICA

The perilous reality in Yemen for migrants has resulted in some taking the same risky boat journeys used to arrive, to return to the Horn of Africa. Migrants are reportedly paying between USD 150-200 for the boat journey back, departing from Lahj (Ras Al Ar'a) to Djibouti.

During the reporting period, IOM DTM teams in Djibouti recorded 2,157 returning migrants, among whom 803 spontaneously returned in July alone.

RETURNEES

The return of Yemeni migrants from KSA continued during the reporting period. IOM's DTM teams recorded 16,622 Yemenis returning to Yemen between April and July, via the Al Wadeeah flow monitoring point.



IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN IN 2023

PILLARS OF INTERVENTION

Since IOM began operations in Yemen, its migrant assistance programme has aimed to ensure that migrants in Yemen have access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection of their rights, safety and dignity.

Throughout Yemen, IOM:

1. Delivers life-saving humanitarian protection and assistance through fixed centres (health clinics, Migrant Response Points) and mobile teams that improves access to immediate medical care, relief items (clothes, shoes and hygiene items), food, information on safe migration, case management, psychosocial support and Cash for Work opportunities.
2. Provides opportunities for safe and voluntary return assistance through IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Returns mechanism. Assistance includes the provision of 'fit-to-travel' medical screenings and medical escorts as needed before and during travel.
3. Analyzes trends including inflows, push and pull factors, migration routes, protection dynamics, risks and mitigation measures. The gathering of this information is done through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and safety audits along migratory routes to inform a routes-based approach to programming.
4. Develops and implements of a regional approach to safe, dignified and orderly migration to promote engagement within the region on a coordinated rights-based response at the governance level, a component of which involves strengthening the capacities of relevant actors in counter-trafficking and assistance to victims.
5. Enhances coordination with partners on multi-sectorial migration responses through the Mixed Migration Working Group and the UN Network on Migration, strengthening advocacy and ensuring clear referral mechanisms at both regional and country level.

Migrant Protection and Assistance Activities April to July 2023



Migrant Response Points
Community-Based Centres supported



3,763
Migrants supported with
safe, voluntary return



Mobile Medical Teams operational
along key migration routes



A migrant woman receives mental health and psychosocial support at the IOM MRP in Aden. © IOM/ Eva Noma 2023

MIGRATION 2023 OUTLOOK

In 2023, an estimated 209,905 migrants require at least one form of assistance (according to the 2023 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview) such as life-saving health services, case management and protection assistance, among other forms of assistance.

IOM remains dedicated to addressing the critical needs of people on the move through its multisectoral programming, while also advocating that:

- Safe and dignified return support is provided to those who wish to leave Yemen;
- Human rights of all migrants in Yemen are upheld at all points of the migration journey;
- Detention should only be used as a measure of last resort when humane conditions can be met. No children should be detained;
- Forced relocations under inhumane conditions should end and migrants are to be granted due process of law, including but not limited to fair trial;
- Humanitarian organizations are granted access to migrants across Yemen;
- Migrants are included in all humanitarian programming, based on needs and not status and the migrant funding should be mainstreamed across the humanitarian response.



Stranded migrants prepare to embark on IOM's voluntary humanitarian return flight from Aden to Ethiopia. © IOM/Majed Mohammed 2023

IOM'S MIGRANT ASSISTANCE IN YEMEN IS SUPPORTED BY



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

