

Mixed Migration Task Force Update

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DREAMING OF A BETTER FUTURE YOUNGSTERS YEARNING TO ESCAPE

As the situation keeps deteriorating in Mogadishu, more and more Somalis dream of escaping their country. "Young people are especially wishing to travel abroad because they have never known peace", a UNHCR Mogadishu staff explains. "They see going to Yemen as the only possible escape route to a better life, even though they know how dangerous the journey can be". Crossing to Kenya is no longer possible as the border has remained closed since early 2007. The information campaign led by the MMTF in Puntland and South / Central to warn about the dangers of the crossing, along with the high interest displayed by Somali radios for the subject, have raised awareness in and around Mogadishu. Yet some young people, boys and increasingly girls, are still willing to go. "They don't tell their family that they are planning to cross, because they are afraid their parents would forbid them to go", the aid worker explains. "It is rumoured that some youngsters even train themselves to swim, in case their boat would capsize, and to walk long distances in the desert", he states.

Many young Somalis feel stranded in their own country, where they have known only violence for most of their life. Mohammed, a young student who fled Mogadishu and now lives in Puntland, waits for his family to send him the money that will allow him to pay the fee for his passage. He is adamant that he will cross. "I can no longer study, I have nothing to do but wait, this is not a life for me", he says. "I want to build my future, and for this my only prospect is crossing to Yemen and then going on to Saudi Arabia, where you can have both peace and a job", he explains. He reiterates that nothing will make him change his mind. "Nothing, except if peace comes back in Mogadishu. Then I will go back because it is my city, and it is the place where I should build my life, if it were possible".

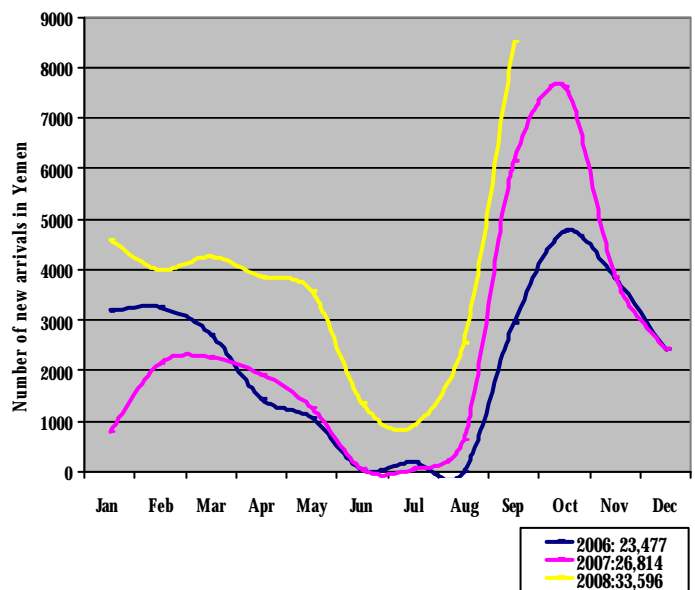


This Somali student fled Mogadishu but remained stranded in Galkayo, after the Puntland authorities refused to let him travel north. He was still hoping to reach Bossaso and cross to Yemen.
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Trends and figures: UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS OF NEW ARRIVALS IN YEMEN

From January to the end of September, some 33,600 people have reached the Yemeni shores, a figure more than twice as high as the one reported at the same date last year. Somalis amount to more than two-third of the new arrivals in Yemen, while Ethiopians represent most of the others. Some 140 people from Djibouti and Eritrea have also undertaken the crossing. At least 230 people have died and an estimated 365 remain missing.

Crossings remained low in June and July due to the stormy seas. The movement resumed in August and peaked in September, with 8,500 people making the journey. This represents the highest number of crossings ever registered since this data started to be compiled in 2002. This year is not only characterized by the unprecedented scale of the movement but also by greater proportions of women and children in the flow and higher numbers of arrivals from Djibouti. This later change could notably be attributed to the fact that the crossing from Djibouti tends to be safer: the journey is shorter, boats usually carry less passengers and less violent incidents are reported. Somalis arriving in Yemen notably mention forced recruitment, indiscriminate killing, general insecurity and lack of livelihood due to the lasting instability as reasons for fleeing. Most new arrivals either settle in urban areas or continue their journey onwards to the Gulf States and Europe. Only a very limited number of them head to Kharaz refugee camp, located in Southern Yemen.



The Mixed Migration Task Force

The Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF) was established in early 2007 with UNHCR and IOM acting as co-chairs, under the auspices of the Inter Agency Standing Committee's Protection Cluster. MMTF membership includes OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council. The purpose of the task force is to develop a rights-based strategy to ensure a comprehensive coordinated response to protection and humanitarian needs of migrants and asylum seekers transiting through Somalia.

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