



Stranded migrants try to find shade near the IOM MRP in Aden. © IOM 2020/IR. Ibrahim

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 outbreak has restricted global mobility, whilst heightening the risk of exploitation of vulnerable populations. This report provides a snapshot of the **COVID-19 epidemiological situation** and **mobility restrictions**, and of the **current migration trends** along the Eastern Corridor migration route, in addition to an analysis of the impact that movement restrictions have had in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. Moreover, it provides **information on the main protection concerns for migrants** and **assistance provided**, and **COVID-19 risk mitigation measures**. This report utilizes data collected through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs), Migrant Response Centres (MRCs),¹ Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) data, as well as anecdotal information provided by IOM team members working in the region.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL UPDATE AND RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK

Incidence Trend of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases as of 30 September 2021



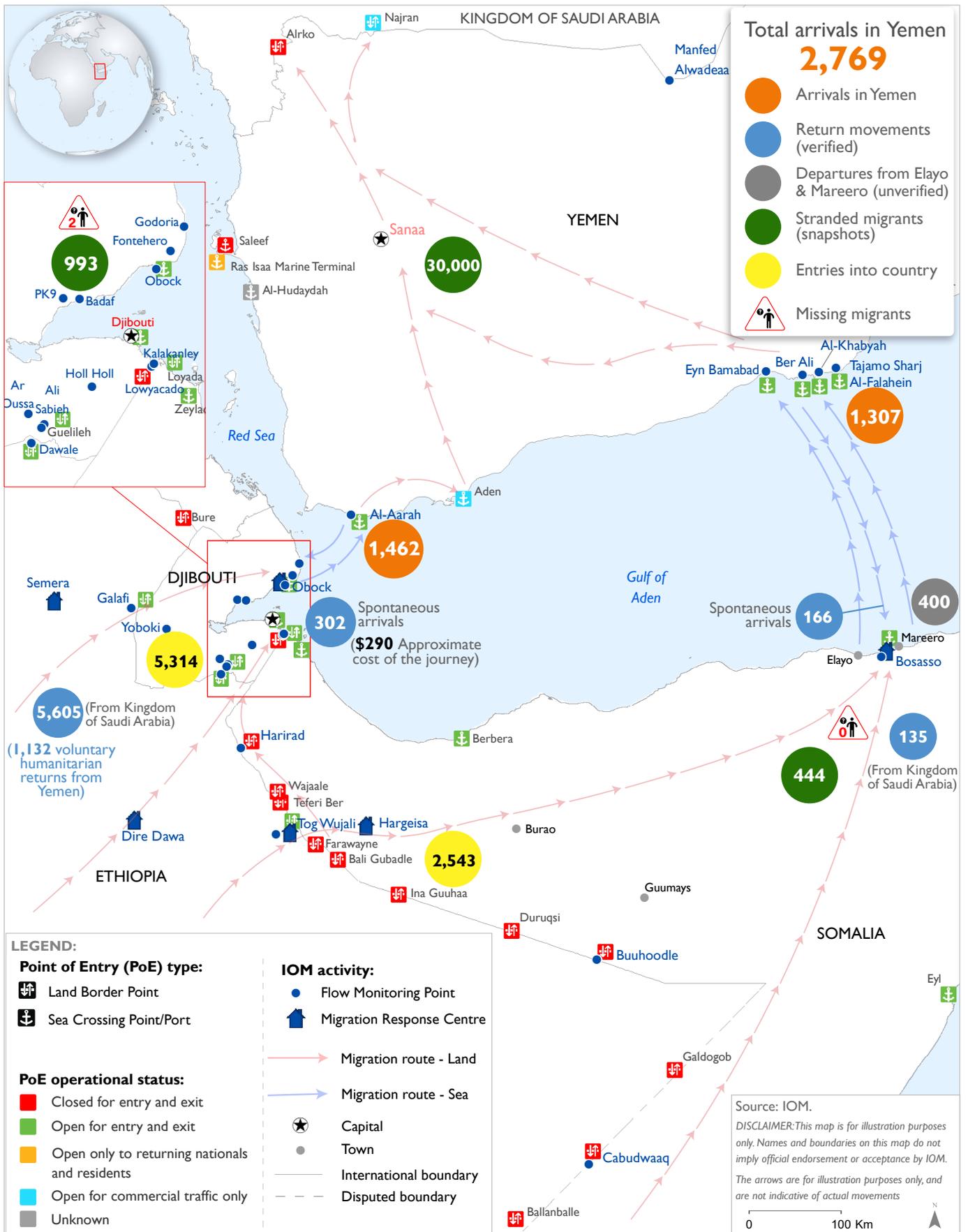
	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Somalia	Yemen
Confirmed cases	12,811	345,674	19,980	9,067
Deaths	167	5,582	1,111	1,721
Recoveries	12,149	312,806	9,523	-
Active cases	495	27,286	9,346	-

¹ Migration Response Centres (MRCs) are situated along key migration routes, where they fill critical gaps by providing direct assistance, including food and temporary shelter, information and service referrals to migrants on the move. MRCs bring together key partners to facilitate the identification of migrants in vulnerable situations, and ensure that they receive appropriate, immediate and longer-term support. Eight MRCs are currently operational in the Horn of Africa: Obock (Djibouti), Hargeisa, Bossaso (Somalia), Semera, Metema, Dire Dawa, Togochale and Moyale (Ethiopia).

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COVID-19 Epidemiological Situation

As of 30 September 2021, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 387,532. Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases (89% of total cases). The country distributed over 2.8 million vaccine doses obtained through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative by the end of September. Following Ethiopia are Somalia (5% of total cases) and Djibouti (3% of total cases), while Yemen cases represented 2% of the total cases. As of 30 September 2021, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 8,581, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (65% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 19.0%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.3%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.6%) and Somalia (CFR 5.6%). This is much higher than the global average CFR of 2.0% and is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. On 23 September, Yemen's Ministry of Public Health and Population received 360,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses to be urgently distributed across governorates, prioritizing those who already received their first dose.

COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions

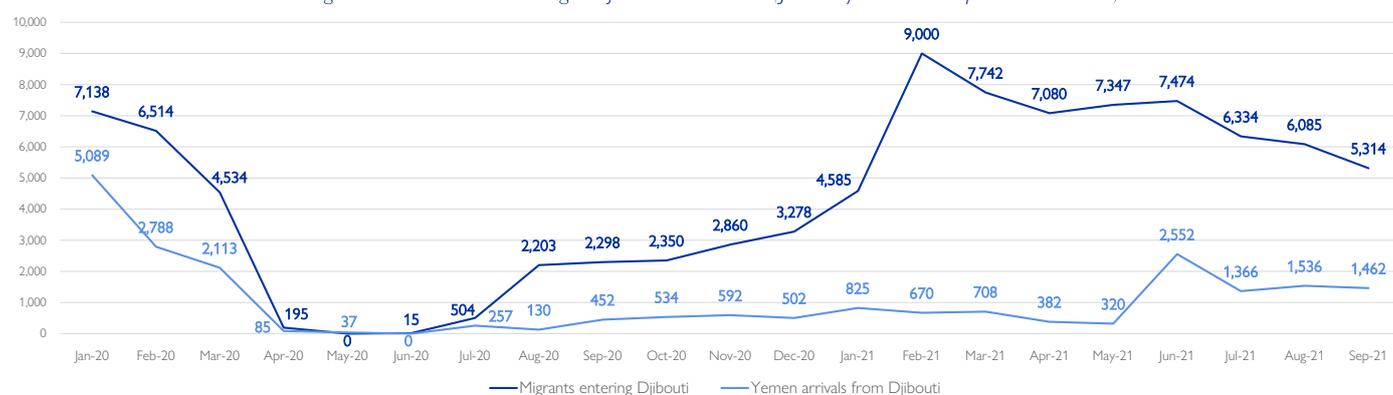
Mobility restrictions remain largely unchanged in Djibouti and Ethiopia as of the end of September 2021. Somalia tightened its international travel restrictions on 22 September due to an increase in confirmed cases. More than a year after the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders in July 2020, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 2.63% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 99.81% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). In Yemen, mobility restrictions as well as health screenings at internal transit points have remained lifted, with a total of 15 sea border points and three land border points open for movement.

DJIBOUTI SITUATION

Migrant Flows Observed Through Djibouti and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrant movements into the country continued to decrease, with 5,314 entries observed in September from Djibouti's western borders, which is 13% lower than the entries observed in August. This brings the total entries into the country in 2021 to 60,961. Migrants entering Djibouti in September were mostly all Ethiopian nationals while 16 Ugandan nationals were also tracked; the latter had reportedly travelled from Ethiopia and were headed towards Yemen. The migrants were mainly adult males (76%), followed by adult females (11%) and children (13%).²
- With 1,462 new migrant arrivals in September, a total of 9,821 migrants arrived in 2021 from Djibouti to Yemen. All September arrivals disembarked near Al-Aarah FMP in Lahj governorate. A majority of the migrants tracked were men (83%), 7% were boys, 9% were women and 1% were girls. Similar to the previous month, 53 unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) were tracked upon entry from Djibouti (up from 37 UMCs tracked in August); these make up 43% of all children arriving in Yemen from Djibouti.

Migrant Movements through Djibouti to Yemen (January 2020 - September 2021)



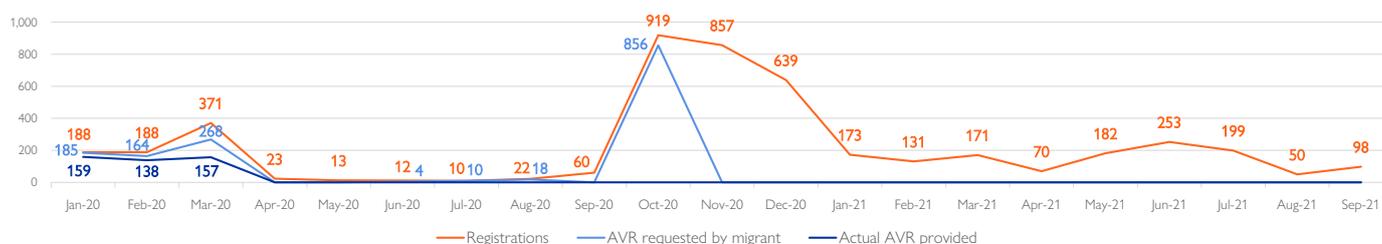
- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti continued in September 2021 with a total of 302 Ethiopian migrants, which is a slight decrease from the 316 returns reported in August 2021. A vast majority of the returns were men (98%). Since May 2020, IOM tracked a total of 15,991 spontaneous returns of Ethiopian migrants, 9,897 of which were in 2021.

² The sex and age disaggregated data of entering migrants is an estimation because of the data collection methodology.

Migrant Protection and Assistance

- Two Ethiopian migrants (both adult males) lost their lives in September. One of them was a 29-year-old man who was stabbed and died in the Dikhil region, while the second person, whose age is unknown, died from dehydration in the Ali Sabieh region. This brings the total migrants' deaths or disappearances in Djibouti this year to 73.
- As of 30 September 2021, 993 migrants (870 male, 123 female) on their way to the Arabian Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 11 spontaneous sites located along the migration route; most migrants were stranded in the Dikhil region.
- 98 new migrants were registered at the Obock MRC in September, which is almost double the registrations recorded in August.
- As part of IOM's AVR programme, a group of 179 migrants were returned to Ethiopia in September.

Registrations at the MRC in Obock and AVR Services Requested and Provided (January 2020 - September 2021)



SOMALIA SITUATION

Migrant Flows Observed Through Somalia and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrant entries into Somalia increased by 28% between August (1,990) and September (2,543). Almost all migrants were Ethiopian nationals, while nine Tanzanian nationals were also tracked; the latter were likely intending to stay in Somalia. Overall, 23,182 migrants entered Somalia in 2021.
- Migrant arrivals to Yemen from Somalia stood at 1,307 in September, which represents a 494% increase compared to the 220 arrivals recorded in August. Although the reason for this increase is unknown, it is likely due to the changing seasons, as the rough seasons and windy weather conditions during the late summer months calm down and make sea-crossings possible again. This brings the total arrivals from Somalia in 2021 to 6,259. Similar to what was observed in the past, a majority of the migrants tracked upon arrival in Yemen from Somalia were Ethiopian nationals (60%) with the remaining being Somali nationals (40%); the arrivals from Somalia were tracked through the FMPs on the southern coast of the country, along the Gulf of Aden. More than half of the arrivals were adult males (54%), while 20% were adult females and 26% were children. Unlike reports from previous months, though similar to the last two months, no UMCs from Somalia were tracked during this month.
- According to unverified reports received by IOM, the departures from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso, as well as Elayo, increased by over six fold, with 2,140 such migrant departures reported, compared to August when 300 migrants boarded boats to Yemen. These reports also stated that Elayo is becoming the preferred port of departure for migrants, with most migrants departing from there. Following an Al-Shabaab attack against the Bossaso prison in March 2021, the Puntland police has established security bases near Mareero.

Migrant Movements through Somalia to Yemen (January 2020 - September 2021)



Note: Figures for arrivals from Somalia to Yemen for January 2020 were 0 because of the program's closure of Yemen Movement Points in Somalia. Small elevations were noted in arrivals between July and August 2021 due to data cleaning.

- Similar to what observed in Djibouti, spontaneous movements from Yemen to Somalia are occurring, and 166 movements were tracked upon arrival in Bossaso in September, which is an increase from 71 in August (55% male, 45% female). The majority of movements were returning Somalis (99), while 67 Yemeni nationals were also tracked. This brings the total returns from Yemen to Somalia since May 2020 to 3,081, of which 2,083 occurred in 2021.

Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that 444 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso (300), Burao (120) and Hargeisa (24), with few options available to continue their journey or return home.
- A total of 416 migrants were registered at the Bossaso (228) and Hargeisa (188) MRCs; a slight 6% decrease from August. Migrant movements along the border with Ethiopia continued due to the ongoing Tigray conflict which has spilled over to other regions in the country. In September, the MRCs in Somalia registered 13 Tigrayan migrants (12 male, 1 female), and most were young people aged between 15 and 29 years old.
- 198 AVR requests were received at the MRCs in Hargeisa (100) and Bossaso (98) in September. During this month, 17 AVR movements took place from the Bossaso MRC back to Ethiopia and among them were eight stranded Sudanese migrants.
- During the month of September, Saudi Arabia returned 135 Somali migrants to Mogadishu, including 51 children (26 male, 25 female). All returnees received onward transportation assistance (OTA) to their community of return as well as temporary accommodation prior to OTA. One male infant received medical assistance

Registrations at the MRCs in Bossaso and Hargeisa (January 2020 - September 2021)

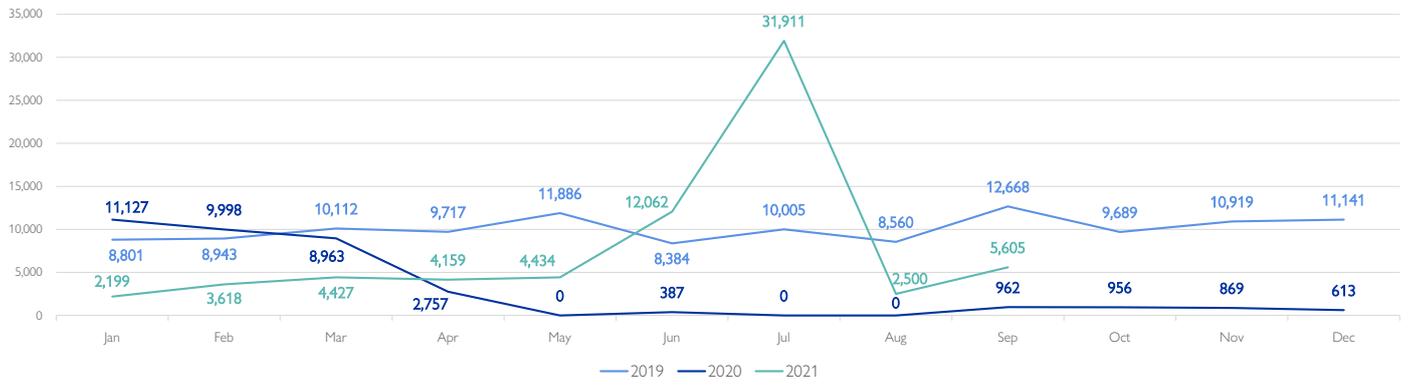


ETHIOPIA SITUATION

Migrant Flows, and Protection and Detention Concerns

- Returns of Ethiopian nationals from Saudi Arabia continued with a total of 5,605 returns in September, at a rate of around 1,300 returns per week. Returnees from the Tigray region continue to arrive in great numbers from Saudi Arabia, roughly 18% of all arrivals in September (1,006 in total). The vast majority were female (83% versus 17% male), and a total of 193 returnees were children under the age of five years old.
- The Government of Ethiopia has arranged dedicated shelter sites in Addis Ababa to accommodate Tigrayan returnees who have no family members to rely on for a possible extended period of time, while those with relatives in Addis Ababa are encouraged to reunite with their family members. Some of the most vulnerable returnees are hosted in shelters run by IOM and other organizations.
- Access to the Tigray Regional State and conflict-affected areas in northern Amhara and western Afar remains very limited and risky. Significant numbers of Tigrayan returnees remain stranded outside the regional state, mainly in Addis Ababa. In addition, many returnees from northern Amhara and a small number from western Afar cannot return to their home communities because of the conflict’s spread to these regions. Returnees whose communities remain inaccessible require basic support services, temporary accommodation and specialized assistance in Addis Ababa or other locations. Of particular concern are UMCs who cannot reunify with family as they need suitable long-term accommodation options and possibly alternative care arrangements.
- A total of 117 migrants, including 53 UMCs, were registered at MRCs bordering Djibouti and Somalia in September, namely in Dire Dawa (119), Semera (32) and Togochale (26). Migrants mainly departed from Oromia (64%) and Dire Dawa (12%). No Tigrayans were registered by MRCs in Ethiopia in the month of September.

Returns of Ethiopian Nationals from Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM

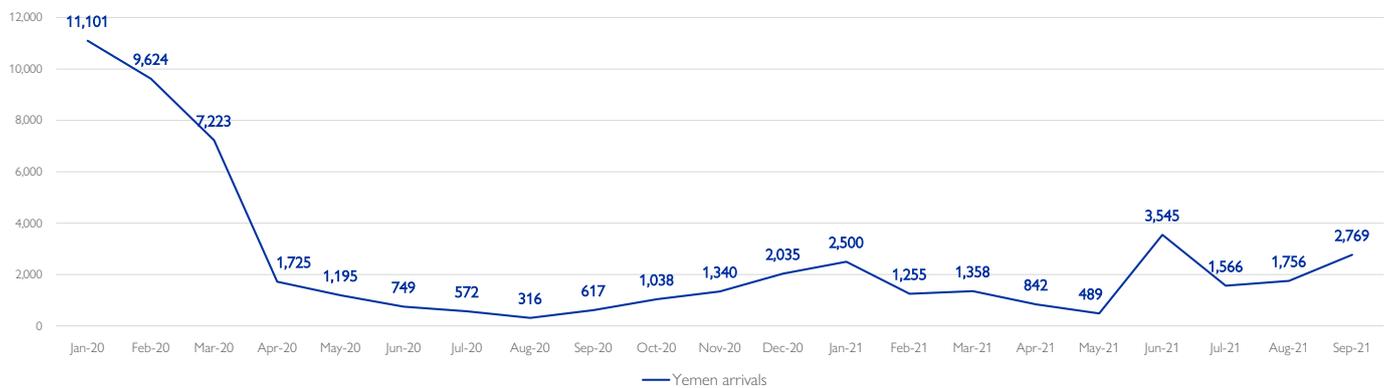


YEMEN SITUATION

Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

- Overall, 16,080 migrant arrivals from the Horn of Africa were tracked on the shores of Yemen in 2021, of which 2,769 arrivals were recorded in September; this is a 68% increase from August as the harsh weather conditions at sea begin to improve and the arrival of migrants to Yemen increases correspondingly.
- Most migrants travelled from Djibouti (53%), with the remaining travelling from Somalia (47%); the arrivals from Somalia increased by 494% while the arrivals from Djibouti increased by 5%.³
- 81% of all arrivals were Ethiopian nationals and 19% were Somali nationals.
- The majority of the migrants were adult males (69%), 14% were adult females and 17% were children (up from 11% in August). 53 UMCs were also tracked – these make up 12% of the overall number of children arriving in Yemen.

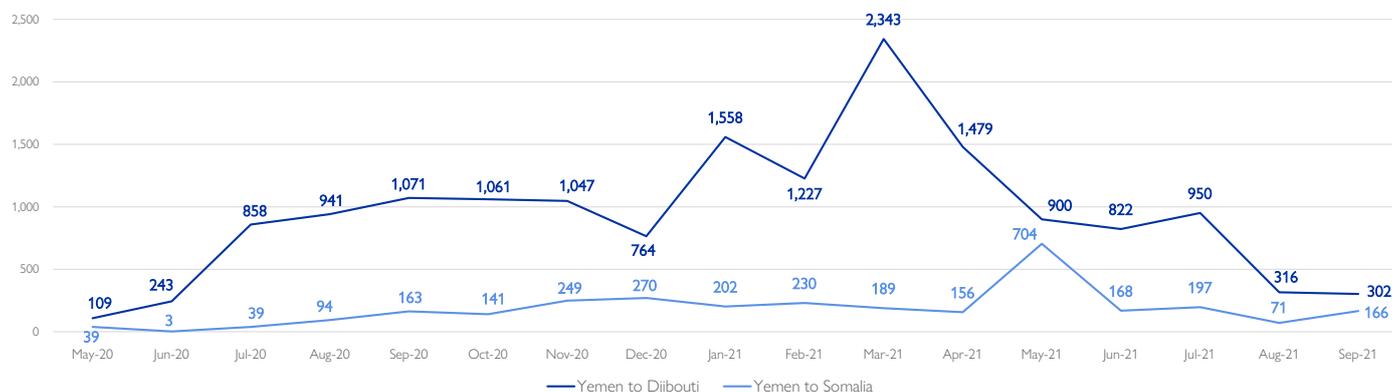
Migrant Arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa (January 2020 - September 2021)



- DTM Yemen continued tracking returning migrants from Saudi Arabia in September as access to the FMP at the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border remains possible. During this month, 4,228 such returns were tracked, which is 53% more than the 2,769 arrivals tracked in August.
- Due to the difficulties faced by migrants upon arrival in Yemen with their inability to move onwards towards Saudi Arabia, as well as ongoing conflict and living conditions in Yemen, many migrants opt to return back to the Horn of Africa. Since May 2020, a total of 19,072 migrants have made this perilous return journey back to Djibouti (15,991) and to Somalia (3,081).

³ 22 migrants were also tracked internally, travelling within Yemen.

Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (May 2020 - September 2021)



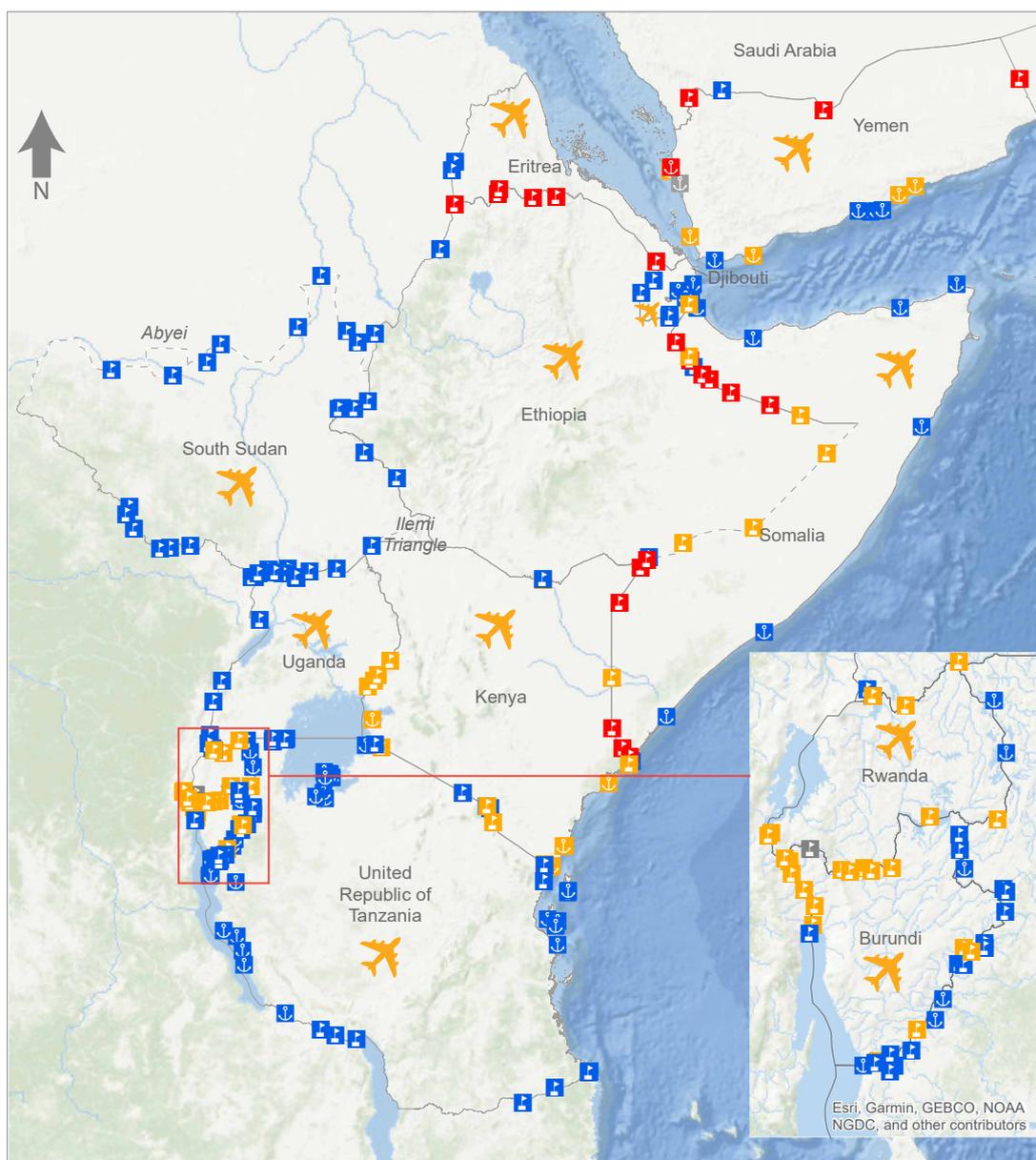
Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that approximately 30,000 migrants are stranded or trapped within Yemen's borders, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance and being at-risk of grave protection risks along endemic smuggling and trafficking routes. Migrants are stranded in urban locations or areas considered hard to reach along migratory routes in uninhabited areas or at border points in Sa'ada governorate. Indiscriminate shelling continues in areas of Monaibh, Sa'ada where it has been estimated that two migrants died and six were injured. However, this has not deterred movements through Sa'ada as the governorate remains a main transit area with around 80 migrants believed to have crossed the border into Saudi Arabia.
- The route to Saudi Arabia is now open and the number of migrants heading to Saudi Arabia through Sa'ada has increased since September. Migrants often pay around USD 135 (500 Saudi rials) to the smugglers once they reach Saudi Arabia. As Ma'rib witnessed escalating violence in recent months, fewer migrants have been coming to Ma'rib and more departures than arrivals were recorded in September thereby affecting migrant flow movements and routes used to reach Saudi Arabia. Offensives near and around Ma'rib are therefore leaving migrants susceptible to increased protection risks and threats and often diverting their journeys and making them more transient.
- IOM continues to receive credible information about forced transfers or forced deportations occurring in the north of Yemen, but the numbers are yet to be determined due to lack of humanitarian access.
- Thousands of stranded migrants have approached IOM's Aden Migrant Response Point (MRP) asking for return assistance to Ethiopia through VHR. These VHR flights resumed in March after months of disruption, and 1,332 migrants were returned to Ethiopia in September (1,052 male, 80 female). Planned movements are now occurring every Tuesday and Thursday on a regular basis. However, challenges remain due to delays in the process of verification of nationality.

ANNEX 1 | 2021 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	MRC Total
Bossaso	181	111	321	251	308	152	279	220	228	2,051
Dire Dawa	0	0	0	0	6	14	1	8	119	148
Hargeisa	225	97	56	57	73	113	156	221	188	1,186
Metema	0	0	72	80	15	36	336	188	134	861
Moyale	-	-	187	230	44	59	51	314	50	935
Obock	173	131	171	70	182	253	199	50	98	1,327
Semera	0	0	71	33	34	213	112	12	32	507
Togochale	31	126	14	61	49	45	76	88	26	516
Monthly Total	610	465	892	782	711	885	1,210	1,101	875	7,531

ANNEX 2 | STATUS OF POINTS OF ENTRY IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA REGION AND YEMEN



Status of international flights*

- Not Restrictive
- Partially Restrictive
- Totally Restrictive
- Not available
- Disputed Areas
- Countries East and Horn of Africa

Status of other border points

- Sea Border Point
- Land Border Point
- Closed for entry and exit
- Partial closure
- Open for entry and exit
- Unknown

*Details of the travel restriction can be found on IATA website: <https://www.iata.org/>

SOURCE:
International Air Transport Association (IATA)
Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

DATE: 30 September 2021

DISCLAIMER: These maps are for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.