



Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa-Central Mediterranean Route

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Fostering Resilience, Regional
Integration and Peace for
Sustainable Development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As Europe struggles to manage its largest migrant crisis in more than half a century, attention has focused largely upon the refugee flows from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where years of war and instability are driving the exodus. But in 2015, an estimated 154,000 migrants entered Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route – an increase of nearly 400% over the previous year, and more than 1,000% over 2012 – most of them from the Horn of Africa. By far the largest contingent of migrants – nearly 39,000 in 2015 – is from the sub-region’s second smallest country: Eritrea.

In contrast with the mass, largely uncontrolled movements of refugees from the Middle East, irregular migration from the Horn of Africa is dominated by highly integrated networks of transnational organised criminal groups. Coordinated by kingpins based chiefly in Libya and the Horn of Africa, these networks “recruit” their clients via schools, the Internet and word of mouth; they corrupt government officials to ensure seamless travel across borders; they collude with Libyan militias to secure safe passage across the desert to launching points on the southern shores of the Mediterranean; and they cast their human cargoes adrift at the limit of Libyan territorial waters in order to avoid interdiction and arrest by European security forces.

Inception and Purpose of the Report

Security has long been a shared preoccupation of countries of the region. The “revitalisation” of IGAD in 1996 expanded the organisation’s mandate to more directly address challenges of peace and stability in the sub-region, including, under Article 18(a), “effective collective measures to eliminate threats to regional co-operation, peace, and stability.”

In 2002, the states of the region signed the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol, which outlined the various components of a new African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) built around structures, objectives, principles, and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management, and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent. In this context, in 2003, the IGAD Summit of Heads of State and Government endorsed a new strategy for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (CPMR), which was enlarged upon in October 2005 to develop an IGAD “Peace and Security Strategy” in line with APSA.

Although the new strategy remained heavily focused on inter-state and intra-state conflict, it called for the enhancement of IGAD activities on countering emerging transnational security threats. IGAD, coming to terms with the expanding scope of regional security challenges, adopted a new Security Strategy in December 2010 and, in October 2011, launched the IGAD Security Sector Programme (ISSP), whose expanded mandate included counter-terrorism, transnational organised crime (TOC), maritime security, and security institutions’ capacity-building.

Since March 2014, Sahan has been a strategic partner of the IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP). Between November 2013 and November 2014, Sahan served as lead consultants to the ISSP Task Force on Transnational Security Threats (TST), and has been requested by ISSP to assist in the development of a TST Initiative to tackle the region's most immediate and salient security priorities, which include human smuggling and trafficking.

Within the context of the TST Initiative, two or more Member States of IGAD may request the support of ISSP to strengthen their cooperation in countering a common threat. In May 2015, the Governments of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of the Sudan jointly requested a study on human smuggling and trafficking networks between the Horn of Africa (HOA) and southern Europe, via the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR). The overall purpose of the study would be to provide a baseline assessment of the criminal syndicates along the smuggling/trafficking corridor, and how they operate across source, transit, and destination countries. The Sudanese focal point for the study was the National Counter Terrorism Commission, headed by General Mohamed Jamal El-Deen, while the Ethiopian focal point was the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) of the Federal Police.

Methodology

Between June and September 2015, a team from Sahan, operating under the auspices of ISSP, conducted primary and secondary research on the presence and operations of human smuggling and trafficking networks in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Libya, with special emphasis on operations.

Sahan personnel worked in close consultation with government officials from Ethiopia and Sudan, and received excellent cooperation from some European countries, notably the UK and Italy. With the knowledge and consent of the relevant Member States, the research team interviewed former members of human smuggling and trafficking networks, as well as migrants and other members of their families. During the course of the study, researchers visited Belgium, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom, meeting with government officials, migrants, and refugees from the Horn of Africa, as well as NGO officials. The research team also obtained access to relevant documentation and evidence, and the opportunity to travel to find locations including refugee camps. In so doing, the Sahan team adhered strictly to the standards and evidence required of the United Nations Expert Groups.

Literary Resources

Considerable literature exists concerning the scope and nature of human smuggling and trafficking in the Horn of Africa, although it has focused principally on thematic issues, such as the circumstances of migrants and refugees, routes taken, the drivers of migration, and general numerical trends. While this work has proved very useful in informing policy-makers on some of the challenges faced by migrants and refugees making the perilous journey from the Horn of Africa through the Central Mediterranean via Libya, there remain critical gaps in understanding – notably with respect to the organisation, leadership, and methods of smuggling and trafficking networks.

Key publications on human smuggling and trafficking have been produced by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS)¹, the Small Arms Survey, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the North Africa Mixed Migration Hub (Mhub), and Altai Consulting. A 2014 study by RMMS on the shift in smuggling routes from the Horn of Africa away from Yemen and towards Libya² provides a commendable and comprehensive overview of routes, threats, numbers, and motivations, but does not look specifically at the organised crime groups. Another 2014 report, by USIP, includes a detailed study, based on extensive fieldwork, of the smuggling economy and the threat it poses to future stability in Libya.³ A 2015 study by Altai again summarises information on the routes and methods of smuggling and trafficking in the Horn of Africa compiled for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), but provides no new information on the criminal networks involved.⁴ Within Europe there is limited reporting on migrants and refugees smuggled from the Horn of Africa, except when specific incidents or court cases make the news.

Given the intersection between human smuggling and trafficking, arms trafficking, insecurity, and armed conflict, a deeper understanding of the Libyan civil war and its impact on the security of the wider region is central to analysing the transnational criminal networks involved in irregular migration. To this end, the Small Arms Survey is conducting an ongoing study of weapons in North Africa, which has included reporting on the Libyan security sector, foreign fighters, and insecurity – a useful resource to support future work linking human smuggling to other types of contraband.⁵ The UN Libya Panel of Experts' report to the Security Council in 2015⁶ has also developed some limited reporting on potential revenue generated by human smuggling, but has yet to identify the networks beyond individuals who may be specifically relevant to the Libyan context.

Finally, RMMS, Mhub, and Altai have done considerable reporting on detention centres in Libya, but have focused on the conditions of migrants and legal-conceptual issues dealing with smuggling and trafficking.⁷ Most reporting on detention centres per se has only focused on the 19 identified detention centres operated by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), which operates nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior based in Tripoli. Little reporting has been undertaken as to the number of informal detention centres in operation, which may also form the basis for criminal liability of smugglers and traffickers who coordinate activities through these facilities.

¹ It should be noted that while RMMS receives its bulk financing from the Danish Refugee Council, it is also specifically tasked with developing the Migration Pillar within IGAD. Potential collaboration between RMMS and Sahan and the IGAD Organised Crime Pillar is touched upon later in this report.

² Going West, contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya and Europe, RMMS, June 2014.

³ Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition, Mark Shaw and Fiona Mangan, United States Institute of Peace.

⁴ Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean: connecting the dots, Altai Consulting, June 2015.

⁵ See Small Arms Survey Security Assessment in North Africa, available at <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sana/home.html>

⁶ Final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, S/2015/128.

⁷ See Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads, Mapping of Migration Routes from Africa to Europe and Drivers of Migration in Post-revolution Libya, Altai Consulting, November 2013; Detained Youth: the fate of young migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Libya today, MHub, July 2015; Behind Bars, the detention of migrants in and from the East and Horn of Africa, RMMS, February 2015.

Report Structure

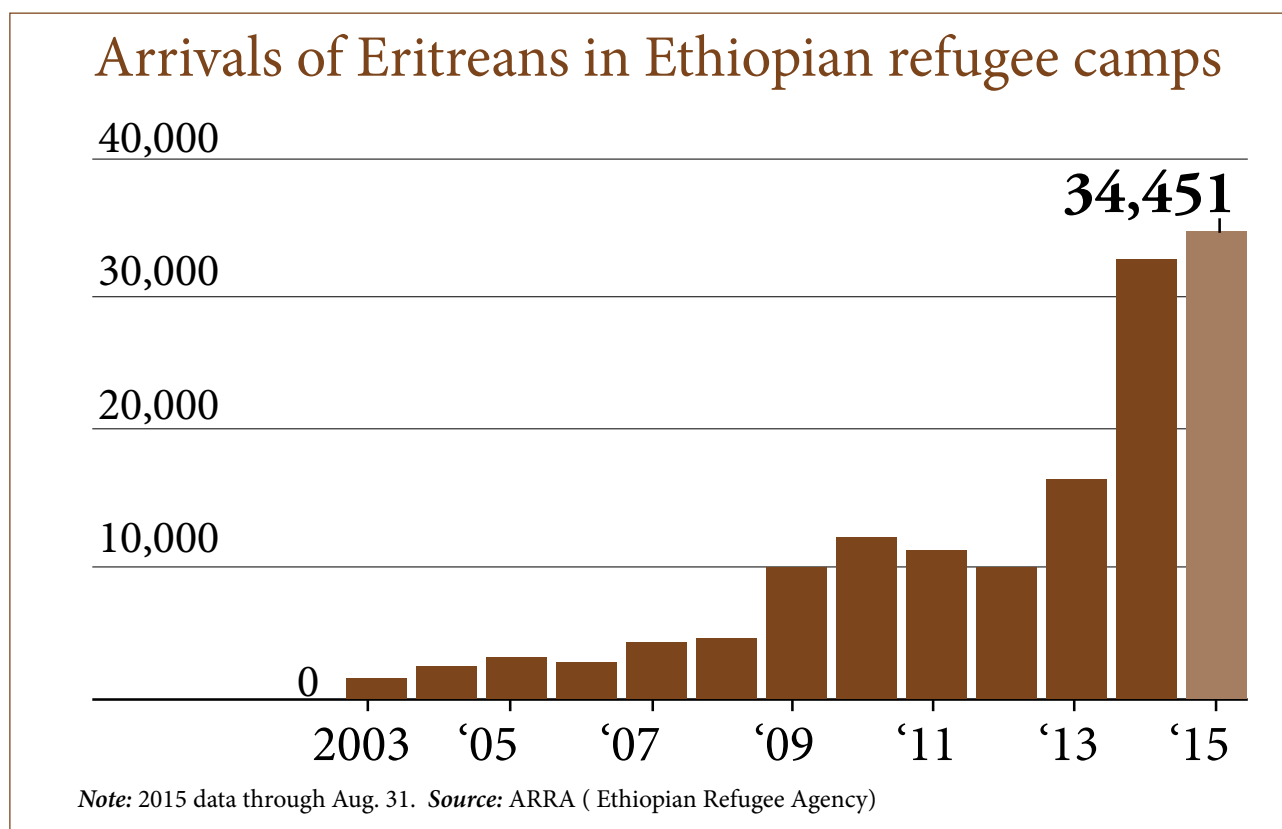
This report does not intend to repeat much of the valuable reporting that has already been produced on the conditions of migration and routes taken, save for instances where such information is relevant to the modus operandi of the criminal networks themselves. The purpose of this report is to map out as much as possible the networks involved in human smuggling and trafficking and to identify what policies could be brought to bear in dealing with them.

The report is hereafter divided into four additional chapters, the next of which deals with general trends and patterns of migration from the Horn of Africa. Chapter 3 synthesises evidence unearthed by various law enforcement operations, to identify some of the criminal ringleaders involved in human smuggling and trafficking from the Horn of Africa through the Central Mediterranean. Chapter 4 examines the responses of various national authorities and international organisations with respect to human smuggling and trafficking. Chapter 5 concludes with some recommendations for consideration.

Chapter 2: Migration

Principle Routes out of the Horn of Africa

A principle cause of the sharp increase in the arrivals of Eritreans on Italian shores is the large and growing volume of Eritreans fleeing their country into northern Ethiopia, as well as into eastern Sudan. The table below, culled from recent media reporting,⁸ shows a sharp increase in the arrivals of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, with a record 34,451 arrivals reported into Ethiopian camps between 1 January 2015 and 31 August 2015. UNHCR Ethiopia on 31 August 2015 has reported a total Eritrean refugee and asylum seeker population in Ethiopia of over 140,000 people, an increase of almost 33,000 people from the end of October 2014. Anecdotal information from UNHCR suggests that a significant proportion of new arrivals are unaccompanied minors. Most of these people are registered in the six principle camps in northern Tigray and Afar regions.



By contrast, throughout 2014 UNHCR reported the arrival of only 1000 Eritreans on average per month into camps in Sudan, stating that 80 per cent of these arrivals would normally travel onwards. Statistics received

⁸ Thousands flee isolated Eritrea to escape life of conscription and poverty, Matina Stevis and Joe Parkinson, Wall Street Journal, 20 October 2015.

from UNHCR in October 2015 show that the total population of the nine principal refugee camps in eastern Sudan has decreased from 78,925 in 2013 to 75,883 in 2015. Most Eritreans interviewed for this report that recently fled to Sudan say that they travelled straight on to Khartoum for fear that they might be abducted by trafficking gangs from some of the refugee camps in eastern Sudan, particularly from Shagarab. Indeed, the route into eastern Sudan, which has often been used by migrants and refugees as the starting point of the long journey to Sinai and Israel, has become less popular for many Eritreans given the completion of a security fence by Israeli authorities in early 2013. It is also the case that trafficking gangs are still involved in abductions of people from camps, notably Shagarab.

As such, Ethiopia acts as the primary crossroads for migration out of the Horn of Africa, not only for Eritreans, but also for Ethiopians and Somalis. Ethiopian authorities have been investigating the following three principle routes out of the region:

The first and most important route appears to be the route through Sudan and Libya. Migrants and refugees from Eritrea travel south from across the border and the refugee camps, with some of them arriving to Addis Ababa where they are redirected into the hands of another transporter, while others travel directly to the border crossings at Humera and Metema, often via Gondar or Bahar Dahr. A significant entry point for Somalis into Ethiopia appears to be the Tug Wajaale border crossing between Somaliland and Ethiopia. Smuggling networks also appear to be moving Ethiopian Somalis along this route. Migrants and refugees interviewed for this report routinely state that smugglers entice their clients by offering free travel to Sudan, where they would be expected to make their first payment. Ethiopian police investigations have determined an integrated network that straddles both Sudan and Ethiopia.

Between Sudan and Libya, many of the “clients” undertake serious risks, including being sold off to ransom collectors in Sudan if they are unable to meet their first payment. Many migrants and refugees also reported that the transporters who drive migrants up to Libya often dump their clients in the desert if the Libyan transporters fail to arrive on time, effectively leaving them to perish if they are not found. Rapes are routinely committed against women by Libyan militia and transporters who are hired to carry them onwards. The risk of detention is high in Libya, with many migrants and refugees subjected to severe beatings and torture if captured by militia. Numerous migrants and refugees have been executed — and some beheaded — by the Islamic State (IS). Many migrants, especially Sudanese, now opt to travel to Egypt where they can attempt to take boats from ports near Alexandria, although they also run the risk of detention along the way. Partly as a result of the success of this route, Khartoum is also now an important staging post for onward international smuggling.

The second route of importance is the corridor towards southern Africa. Ethiopian and other migrants of other nationalities typically cross the border into Kenya near Moyale. Upon entry into Kenya, many of these individuals are connected to smugglers who can move them to Tanzania onwards, even as far as South Africa. The next chapter documents how some of those smuggled may travel onwards from South Africa to Latin America, and even as far as the United States. A number of arrests of Ethiopians have been made in Kenya and Tanzania under extradition treaties, with Ethiopian authorities continuing to investigate financial links between this network and the one operating the Central Mediterranean Route.

The third route of importance has traditionally been to the Gulf countries. In early 2015, Saudi Arabia announced it would no longer tolerate irregular migrants, leading to the expulsion of tens of thousands of Ethiopians from the country. Prior to this decision, in the seven years preceding 2013, an estimated 500,000 civilians (mainly Ethiopian and Somalis) from the Horn of Africa were estimated to have crossed the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.⁹ Many of them ran the risk of abduction, notably women, thousands of whom went missing after arrival during this period. With the escalation of the conflict in Yemen, this route has become increasingly difficult to monitor, although anecdotal evidence points to a slowdown in traffic due to the Yemeni conflict. Nonetheless, UNHCR continues to document large numbers of Ethiopians and Somalis being smuggled on boats from the Somaliland and Puntland coast. Between July and September 2015, almost 5000 people were registered as arriving on the Arabian coast this way, although the true figure may be much higher. Small numbers of migrants and refugees also continue to travel from Ethiopia to Djibouti and onwards by sea to Yemen. A number of the launching points from Puntland and Somaliland are also used by weapons smugglers who ply the waters between Yemen and the Somali coast.

Arrivals from the Central Mediterranean

More than a quarter of the 128,619 people recorded by FRONTEX as having arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route between January and September 2015 were identified as being from Eritrea.¹⁰ These 32,966 Eritreans totalled more than double the number of the second largest nationality group – Nigerians. The route through Libya has grown in significance for Eritreans, underlining both the numbers leaving the country and the escalating scale of Eritrean organised crime groups carrying out smuggling via the Central Mediterranean Route. Maritime departure points are mainly located in the west of Libya, in the coastal area that is geographically closest to Lampedusa and the Straits of Sicily. Incidents at sea, with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) among the data sources, confirm vessel tracks in this area. Information also confirms launchings from Benghazi and Tobruk, as well as from further east into Egypt, close to Alexandria. FRONTEX estimates that 90 per cent of migrants reaching Italy come from Libyan shores. About 6 per cent of migrants recorded in the same period have set sail from Egypt.

In 2014, the number of Eritreans arriving in Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route increased sharply to 33,559, up from 10,398 in 2013 and 1,889 in 2012. Eritreans were not counted among the top three nationalities on any of the other land or sea routes into Europe, according to FRONTEX data. Corroborated statistics are also recorded by the Italian government (see table below), and show significant increases in Somali and Sudanese refugees and migrants taking place between 2014 and 2015. By contrast, arrivals of Syrian refugees in Italy via the same route have collapsed, as most Syrians now travel first through Turkey and then Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean Route.

Interestingly, Ethiopians are not recorded as a distinct category, but are instead grouped together with other nationalities, and must be less than 5,037 in recorded number. Nevertheless, significant numbers of Ethiopians

⁹ Migrant Smuggling in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, June 2013.

¹⁰ <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/> Accessed on 6 November 2015.

reside at camps in Europe, including the “Jungle” in Calais. Some Eritreans in the “Jungle” camp (estimated at up to half of those recorded as Eritreans) were in fact Ethiopians seeking to be viewed as refugees rather than economic migrants. A number of members of the Eritrean diaspora who work with irregular migrants declare that Ethiopians often pretended to be Eritrean to boost their chances of claiming asylum in European countries, but estimated that such cases represented considerably less than half the total “Eritrean” caseload. Since Tigrigna-speaking people inhabit parts of both northern Ethiopia and southern Eritrea, it can be difficult for a translator or interviewer who is not from the region to distinguish the country of origin.

Arrivals by sea to Italy - Main Countries of Origin January - September 2014/2015

(source: Italian Mol)

Main Countries of Origin	2014	2015
Eritrea	32,357	35,938
Nigeria	6,951	17,886
Somalia	4,113	10,050
Sudan	2,370	8,370
Syria	32,681	7,072
Gambia	6,179	6,315
Bangladesh	3,925	5,037
Total All Countries of Origin	138,796	132,071

Interviews with dozens of those who were confirmed as Eritreans suggest nothing to contradict the recent findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea, which concluded in June 2015 that “widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Government of Eritrea”. Of those interviewed, dozens provided convincing testimony of abuses that they were subjected to, including severe beatings and torture in detention. Most of those detained claimed to have been placed in prison for refusing to obey orders as national service conscripts, for attempting to escape national service, for their religious beliefs, or for vocalising criticism of the government. While there were also numerous cases of Eritreans leaving the country principally to escape living under an authoritarian regime with limited freedoms and opportunities, there is little evidence from this study to support recent arguments for the re-classification of Eritrean asylum seekers in Europe as simply “economic migrants”.

The International Organisation for Migration calculates that there have been 2,860 deaths at sea between 1 January and 29 October 2015 on the Central Mediterranean Route, equating to roughly two per cent of all passengers who travelled this route. By contrast, IOM only calculates that there have been 435 deaths of passengers traveling the Eastern Mediterranean Route to Greece in the same period, despite arrivals in Greece numbering almost 580,000, in other words only 0.075 per cent. As such, a passenger traveling the Central Mediterranean Route would be almost 30 times more likely to die at sea than a migrant or refugee traveling the waters between Turkey and Greece.

Overcrowding of vessels and lack of safety equipment have been extensively documented. Rescuers and those that have made the journey note that vessels often lack enough fuel to reach Europe, suggesting that smugglers are deliberately creating a Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) scenario where rescue is imperative in order to save those on board. Eritreans interviewed for this study also note that some vessels lack a power source, in which case two boats are tied together, thus increasing the risk of loss at sea. Maritime cases on the Central Mediterranean Route are often referred to as trafficking, but almost all cases reviewed for this study meet the legal definition of smuggling with aggravated circumstances: scenarios that endanger the life or safety of the people being smuggled, as well as inhumane or degrading treatment.

Arrivals from the Eastern Mediterranean

There are not many Horn of Africa civilians arriving in Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Turkey to Greece), which is dominated by civilians from Syria and Afghanistan. According to UNHCR, Somalis account for only one per cent of all those taking the Eastern Mediterranean Route up to the end of October 2015. That one per cent however still amounts to 6,000 Somalis in absolute numbers, not an insignificant figure. A number of Eritreans interviewed for this study have also testified to traveling to Turkey by air from Sudan, using Turkish visas issued in Khartoum in Eritrean or Sudanese passports. Several Turkish “businessmen” operating between Somalia and Djibouti have also reportedly been issuing Somalis with Turkish visas which are then used for flights from Mogadishu to Istanbul.

Conditions in Libya

Under the Gaddafi Regime, Libya was a notable destination for migrant workers. In 2011 there were estimated to be just under two million migrant workers in the country, including many Eritreans and Somalis who fled to Italy and Malta after the regime fell.¹¹ Libya was also a point where people seeking to travel onwards broke their journey to work and raise funds. After the fall of Gaddafi, there was a rapid appearance of “hybrid security institutions... blending formal and informal elements”.¹² Nevertheless, at this point there remained a semblance of central control that extended to some of the border areas. Irregular migrants continued to move to Libya both to settle and to continue onwards.

From 2012 until July 2014, smugglers and traffickers escalated operations as the state moved towards collapse. An escalation in conflict from mid-2014 onwards was combined with a significant increase in the number of migrants coming through Libya. In particular, organised criminal groups benefited from the collapse of border controls after Libyan forces abandoned their positions on the border with Sudan in 2014.¹³ One senior

international official working on Libya reported of previously hearing about hundreds of irregular migrants passing through the country, but that now it is “thousands and thousands”.

Destabilisation in Libya has led to the withdrawal of international diplomatic presence, including African ambassadors from many of the irregular migrants’ home countries. This has led to a situation where migrants are at risk of being detained indefinitely, because there is no communication at the diplomatic level to repatriate them.¹⁴ Nevertheless, one NGO official based in the region for a significant amount of time alleges that some remaining diplomatic personnel profit from the irregular migration routes, by charging “fees” to negotiate the release of people from detention centres. Two eyewitnesses appeared to corroborate these allegations when they reported that they have seen high-profile smugglers at the Eritrean embassy in Tripoli.

In addition to the formal infrastructure of detention centres which were once but no longer fully controlled by the Libyan state, there has been a proliferation of holding centres, some of which are operated as warehouses for human stock (notably Ajdabiya) and others as detention centres by various militia and security forces who may also engage in ransom-for-release activities. Migrants and refugees can often be held for several months, in deplorable conditions, before being allowed to move on.

“Safe house” in Ajdabiya



¹¹ IOM. Migrants Caught in Crisis: The IOM Experience in Libya. http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/MigrationCaughtinCrisis_for-web.pdf

¹² Cole, Peter. Lacher, Wolfram. 2014. Small Arms Survey. Politics by Other Means: Conflicting Interest’s in Libya’s Security Sector <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-SANA-WP20-Libya-Security-Sector.pdf>

¹³ Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

¹⁴ Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

A situation in which irregular migrants are languishing in detention centres for lengthy periods with guards who may lack regular pay, presents obvious risks of abuse and potential exploitation by organised criminal groups with motives such as hostage-taking for ransom, or simply profiteering from their release. Numerous migrants and refugees interviewed for this study reported that rape by transporters and detention guards is a regular feature of travel through Libya. Many Ethiopian and Eritrean women also reported that they had purchased intravenous contraception in Sudan before their journey through Libya.

Many studies that included thorough fieldwork in Libya were conducted prior to the summer of 2014, but recent, reliable reporting is scarce. The situation on the ground has meant there is very little information on the new routes in eastern Libya.¹⁵ Ajdabiya was notable as a transit hub in the past, and testimony from Eritreans interviewed for this study at several locations in Europe indicates this area remains a key point where the journey is broken in order for payments to be received by the organised criminal groups carrying out the smuggling.

The closest entry point into Libya for people being smuggled from the Horn of Africa is the sparsely populated tri-border area in the south-east. The main population centre in the south-east is Kufra, a traditional stopover on trans-Saharan routes and therefore a long-standing smuggling hub. Arms, commodities (fuel), drugs, and people are smuggled through the Kufra area. The largest flows in the area take place via the people-smuggling routes. Fuel routes flow north to south and drug routes run south to north. Arms routes run south, and then generally turn west towards Niger. Interviews in a 2014 study indicated that a leadership source in the Toubou tribe, which inhabits parts of the southeast and centre of Libya, perceived drugs and people-smuggling routes as being the most profitable.¹⁶ Conflict in Kufra between the Toubou and Zuwayya tribal groups has been ongoing for several years and many migrants have become victims, including a number of Sudanese killed in March 2015.¹⁷

Smuggling routes have fluctuated in response to the demands of the conflict, with indications that some weapon flows have reversed in order to supply fighting in Libya and that people-smuggling routes often shift to avoid insecure areas that have become difficult to negotiate, including Kufra. The fighting in Kufra may have driven the development of an alternative people-smuggling hub. A senior Tunisian researcher who has worked extensively in Libya reports that people are increasingly travelling to Tazerbu (in Kufra district, around 250 km to the north-west of Kufra). From Tazerbu they go to Ajdabiya, following a route through territory that is under the Magharba tribe.¹⁸

The majority of the Eritreans interviewed for this study who had travelled through Libya during 2015 described a desert journey from Sudan to Ajdabiya, which did not transit towns or villages. The journey was broken in desert locations, with vehicles travelling on sand rather than asphalt to avoid the “police”, and lasting approximately one week. In cases where vehicles broke down they could be stranded for weeks, with

¹⁵ Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

¹⁶ Shaw, Mark. Mangan, Fiona. 2014. United States Institute of Peace “Illicit trafficking and Libya’s transition” <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libya's-Transition.pdf>

¹⁷ Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

¹⁸ Interview with a senior Tunisian researcher, Tunisia, August 2015.

many passengers dying from dehydration. Militias were a threat for convoys at all points travelling through the desert in Libya, according to those who had taken the route.¹⁹ When smuggled through desert routes, there is no need to stop in Kufra, according to a senior international source based in the region. In this case the first city reached in Libya is Ajdabiya.

In 2015 there has been little visibility on the situation in Kufra, including routes and access areas used by smugglers to cross the Libyan border. The situation on the southern border of Egypt has influenced routes in the past. When crossing the Egyptian border has been possible, smugglers have sought to avoid the fighting around Kufra by moving into Egypt and crossing into Libya further north.²⁰

Eritreans who had made the journey through Libya in 2015 described what appeared to be multiple routes across the Libyan border with some depicting interceptions by armed groups they believed to be Chadian and some by groups they believed to be Egyptian. The border crossings are made in areas of remote desert to make it difficult for people being smuggled to be aware of precise locations or identities of people encountered who may masquerade as State groups or take on other false identities.

Many Eritrean migrants interviewed for this study also claimed that the greatest risk at the start of the journey was in the tri-border area of Sudan, Libya, and Chad, where they state that there is a threat from “Chadian raiding forces”. Some of those interviewed had been seized by armed groups that they believed to be Chadian (they were informed by the kidnappers or by their smugglers). They described heavily armed groups with weapons including DShK machine-guns and RPGs along with Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles, who would fire at vehicles that did not stop. Women were often raped by these groups. Those held affirm that the smuggler usually negotiated a ransom (in one case it was lower if paid quickly). Another noted that the smuggler had charged an “insurance” premium of around \$400 to \$500 in case of kidnap on the route, just under a tenth of the ransom cost of approximately \$5,500 demanded by raiders claiming to be Chadian.²¹ There is a possibility that the threat of kidnap could be used by organised crime networks smuggling people to extort additional payments, even when the group is not under threat.

Sabha is another major smuggling hub in southern Libya, located in the east of the country. People travelling on routes from the Horn of Africa trying to reach coastal departure points have no reason to transit through dangerous areas of Libya to reach Sabha, according to several sources working in the region. Most irregular migrants in Sabha are from West Africa. The few from the Horn of Africa will likely have been in Libya for a longer time and travelled to Sabha for a variety of reasons.²² The area around Sabha is notable for its farms, with a large percentage of the population being migrant workers, predominantly from West Africa. Traditionally migrants stayed in dormitories, often owned by people from their country of origin.²³ Without the presence of competent authorities, this type of temporary work linked with accommodation leaves migrants open to exploitation and deception that may reach the legal definition of human trafficking.

¹⁹ Focus groups carried out with Eritreans in Calais in August and September 2015, and in Rome in October 2015.

²⁰ Telephone interview with a senior international contact who worked in Libya in 2014.

²¹ Focus groups carried out with Eritreans in Calais in August and September 2015, and in Rome in October 2015.

²² Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

²³ Bredeloup, Sylvie. Pliez, Olivier. 2011. European University Institute. The Libyan Migration Corridor <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/16213/EU-US%20Immigration%20Systems%202011%20-%202003.pdf?sequence=1>

As the security situation has deteriorated in Libya, the use of armed protection has proliferated. According to a 2014 United States Institute of Peace (USIP) report, the “prevalence of weapons has completely changed the game in Libya and led to an industry in criminal protection”.²⁴ This has the potential to escalate the power influenced by organised crime groups carrying out smuggling, if they find it necessary to increase their weaponry in order to operate.

Armed groups that control key border crossings also profit from the smuggling trade as they seek revenue.²⁵ Profits available to armed groups from the smuggling routes are among the threats to future stability in Libya, as revenue is generated by a multitude of armed actors. The same 2014 USIP report states: “Organised criminal behaviour, illicit trafficking and trade, and the armed groups that perpetrate them are harming the transition at a time when consolidating institutions of statehood is critical.”²⁶

A further threat is that militias linked to terrorist groups will seek to profit from people-smuggling routes. Videos have been released showing Eritreans and Ethiopians captured by the Islamic State (IS) in Libya. An IS-affiliated group taking control of Sirte and the surrounding area has been widely reported. It is operating in proximity to Ajdabiya and to routes towards launching points in western Libya. A recent update to the Security Council noted: “The prevailing political and security divisions within the country have prevented the development of a coordinated policy to deal with the threat of Daesh affiliates.”²⁷

Several militias in Libya have been linked with Al-Qaida. In November 2014, Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi and Ansar al-Sharia in Derna were listed by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee for their association with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. There have been some anecdotal accounts of vessels carrying irregular migrants departing from Benghazi, but this is not confirmed.²⁸ All of the confirmed departure points have been in western Libya. Known departure points for migrants are cities with no IS presence.²⁹

Finally, opportunities for illicit taxation and kidnapping for ransom are endemic on overland routes and in the areas around informal detention centres. Kidnapping of irregular migrants for ransom in the Sinai and Yemen has raised significant amounts. Ransom payments for Eritreans held in the Sinai were routinely recorded at between \$10,000³⁰ and \$50,000³¹. This underscores the threat that militias or militant groups in Libya seeking to profit from human smuggling routes could make far more than the profits available from illicit taxation of the routes, or, indeed, the amounts generated by the organised crime groups carrying out the smuggling.

²⁴ Shaw, Mark. Mangan, Fiona. 2014. United States Institute of Peace “Illicit trafficking and Libya’s transition” <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf>

²⁵ UN SC. 2015. Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011). S/2015/128.

²⁶ Shaw, Mark. Mangan, Fiona. 2014. United States Institute of Peace “Illicit trafficking and Libya’s transition” <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf>

²⁷ UN SC, 7485th meeting, 15 July 2015, S/ P V.74 8 5 http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.7485&referer=/english/&Lang=E

²⁸ Interview with a senior international contact, Tunisia, August 2015.

²⁹ Telephone interview with a senior researcher who has worked in Libya, July 2015.

³⁰ Physician’s for Human Rights – Israel. 2011. Hostages, Torture, and Rape in the Desert: <http://www.phr.org.il/uploaded/Phr-israel-Sinai-Report-English-23.2.2011.pdf>

³¹ Estefanos, Meron, et al. 2012. Human Trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between Life and Death http://www.eepa.be/wcm/dmdocuments/publications/Report_Human_Trafficking_in_the_Sinai_Final_Web.pdf

Chapter 3: Networks on the Central Mediterranean Route

Human smuggling and trafficking between the Horn of Africa and Europe is controlled by sophisticated and integrated international networks that derive massive profits from the mass movement of thousands of migrants and refugees, often in aggravated circumstances. These networks, frequently interlinked, are formed by key individuals in communication with each other and operating mainly between Europe (notably Italy), Libya, Ethiopia, and Sudan. The principal smugglers and trafficking kingpins who dominate the Central Mediterranean Route are predominantly Eritrean in nationality, but they collaborate with ethnic Somalis, Ethiopians, and Sudanese in order to be able to operate easily across borders and amongst the diverse communities of the Horn of Africa.

The ringleaders are also the financial overlords of the trade, coordinating the transport and storage of human cargo by generating the principal revenue for paying off transporters and corrupting law enforcement agents in Ethiopia and Sudan, for renting out armed militia convoys and vast warehouses for the storage of human cargo in transit hubs – notably Ajdabiya, Libya – and for procuring passenger and support boats for the final sea journey launched from coastal locations near Tripoli. Thus while migrants and refugees travelling from the Horn of Africa to the Central Mediterranean physically pass through the hands of discrete groups of drivers and transporters that hand the travellers over to each other near national borders and at other transfer points along the journey, the “duty of care” owed to paying “customers” is typically assumed by the small ring of individuals who extract the greatest financial returns from the business.

Recent investigations in various jurisdictions have highlighted the complex transnational nature of these networks. Combating them effectively will require an equally sophisticated multi-lateral approach, but most governments concerned continue to treat human smuggling and trafficking as a domestic problem – in part because they naturally tend to focus on individuals who can be prosecuted within their respective jurisdictions. International cooperation to counter the threat remains limited and largely ad hoc, and action against the criminal networks responsible is further complicated by the fact that their operations span large areas where law enforcement and criminal justice capacities are weak or even – in parts of Somalia and Libya – non-existent. Consequently, although efforts to counter human smuggling and trafficking along this route are gathering momentum, the challenges remain formidable.

Italian Investigations: Exposing the Criminal Networks

In the aftermath of maritime tragedies near Lampedusa in October 2013 and September 2014, in which roughly 800 migrants and refugees drowned, prosecutors in Sicily opened investigations with a view to prosecuting those responsible. Dubbed “Operation Tokhla” and “Operation Glauco 2”, these enquiries revealed, in considerable detail, a great deal of information about the organisation and structure of key human smuggling and trafficking networks between the Horn of Africa and Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route.

The Tokhla investigation resulted in several arrests, including Maesho Tesfamariam, one of the Eritrean ringleaders responsible for organising the ill-fated journey of September 2014 and who, at the time of his arrest, was based in Germany. Authorities also arrested 24 people in Sicily as a result of the Glauco 2 investigations in June 2015, most of whom were Eritrean nationals.

Glauco 2 exposed the modus operandi of two other prominent smugglers formerly based in Libya: Medhanie Yehdego Mered (born in Eritrea), and Ermias Ghermay (born in Ethiopia). The two men are portrayed by Italian prosecutors as the most prominent individuals responsible for coordinating the transfer of human cargoes through Sudan and Libya. Ghermay, who has operated from the notorious beachhead of Zuwara near Tripoli, is known to have been responsible for organising the vessel that sank off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013.

The investigation demonstrates his communications from his base in Zuwara with collaborators in Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as calls to Israel in relation to financial payments. Since the investigations concluded, numerous credible sources in Libya have reported that Ghermay has gone to ground and may no longer be a major figure in the world of human smuggling in Libya.



Maesho Tesfamariam



Medhanie Yehdego Mered



Ermias Ghermay (police sketch)³²

³² A number of eyewitnesses who have met Ghermay insist the sketch is at best a weak representation of him.

Mered, who today is still considered to be one of the biggest smugglers in the Horn of Africa, was responsible for a boat that capsized in the Mediterranean on 18 April 2015, causing the deaths of at least 30 migrants and refugees.³³ Glauco 2 investigations also demonstrated that Mered had been calling numerous collaborators in Sudan, as well as in Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden (where his wife and mistress both reside). Wiretaps revealed conversations between Mered and various contacts where he discussed moving money to Dubai, and how he might try to invest the proceeds of crime in locations as disparate as Canada and Sweden. In a conversation captured in May 2015, he is heard discussing the cost of constructing a house in Eritrea with his uncle. The public release of the Glauco 2 findings apparently disrupted Mered's plans to emigrate to Europe and sent him into hiding, leaving his network in the hands of his associate, "Wedi Issak".



"Wedi Issak"

Although Mered and Ghermay are clearly among those smugglers near the apex of the trade in human cargo via Libya to Europe, there exist dozens of other smuggling kingpins of importance – especially those who operate reception centres and warehouses around the city of Ajdabiya, a key transit centre in eastern Libya for migrants and refugees making their way to coastal launching points near Tripoli.

Multiple sources in Sudan and Libya, as well as the Glauco 2 and Tokhla operations, identify Abdurazak Esmail, an Eritrean national, as one of the largest smugglers operating in Libya. Esmail has over the years cultivated extensive political connections to various security forces who control the management of detention centres once administered by the Libyan state. In addition to collecting money for the transfer of migrants and refugees across Libya and the Mediterranean, Esmail collects roughly \$4,000 for releasing migrants and refugees who may have been captured and placed in various detention centres, and providing them passage to Italy. Esmail has been based in Libya since 2006, but is known to travel internationally – notably to Dubai, from where he manages his financial affairs. During his frequent absences from Libya, Esmail delegates his Libyan operations to a local fixer known only as "Jaber", with financial operations co-handled by a Sudan-based accomplice known as "Hamed Omar".

Another Eritrean smuggler known as "Abdusalam" works in parallel with Esmail to release migrants and refugees from detention centres and move them to Italy. The Tokhla investigation also identified an accomplice of Esmail named "Jamal Saudi", a former prisoner in Eritrea who escaped to Sudan and who has been operating in Libya for the past two years. According to testimonies provided to Italian prosecutors, Saudi has also been involved in ensuring the safe passage of Eritrean migrants and refugees through Egypt into eastern Libya, after which the travellers flew directly from Benghazi to Tripoli where Saudi would receive them at the airport in person.

³³ This figure is based on confidential interviews with family members of migrants and refugees who disappeared at sea after boarding a vessel. Some of them were later confirmed dead. It has not been possible to tally the precise number of other boat sinkings that tie directly to Mered. Given the very large numbers of deaths at sea, however, it is likely Mered has been implicated in a much larger number of migrant deaths.



Jemal Saudi

If the allegations against them are true, then Esmail, Abdusalam, and Saudi are collectively responsible for the deaths of scores of people. In April 2014, a boat carrying more than 180 people and organised by Saudi disappeared on its journey across the Mediterranean. In July 2014, investigators on Tokhla intercepted a phone call between Saudi and another individual referring to the death of 35 passengers on board a boat that had been organised by Esmail. A year later, in April 2015, another boat organised by Abdusalem capsized in the Mediterranean with 100 Eritreans aboard.

Other Eritrean smugglers and traffickers in Libya and in Sudan include “Kidane”, “Walid”, “Chegora” and a female smuggler, “Zaid”, all of whom operate warehouses in Ajdabiya. Among the largest smugglers exclusively operating in Sudan and feeding into networks in Libya are “Wedi German”, “Kiros”, “John Merhay”, and “Shumay Ghirmay”. Some of these individuals have been referred to in the Italian investigations, which sketch extensive communications between Libya-based smugglers and their accomplices in Sudan.

Ethiopian Investigations

Between mid-2014 and mid-2015, the Federal Police in Ethiopia investigated some 400 cases of human smuggling and made more than two hundred arrests.³⁴ Although many of the arrests relate to investigations covering the movement of human cargo via the southern route to South Africa and the eastern route to Gulf countries, the Ethiopian authorities estimate the numbers of migrants travelling the northern route to Libya are the highest of the three routes. According to police investigators, migrants and refugees travelling south from Eritrea and Somaliland into Ethiopia, or from refugee camps in northern Ethiopia, are usually funnelled through Addis Ababa where they link up with brokers who move them on towards the border with Sudan en route to Libya.



“Galbedi”

National authorities assess that ethnic Somalis and Eritreans are smuggled separately into Sudan by parallel Eritrean/Ethiopian and Somali networks.³⁵ Money to secure the transport of passengers through Ethiopia and into Sudan is handled by hawala agents controlled in large part by a Khartoum-based Somali known as “Ali Hashi” – a relative of a prominent Somali businessman named Abdulkadir Hashi, who was once chairman of Qaran Express, the now defunct money transfer agency. From Khartoum, Ali Hashi arranges money transfers to the Somaliland border town of Tug Wajaale where the money is cashed out to finance the transportation network that feeds across Ethiopia into Sudan.

A parallel Somali smuggling network operates between Addis Ababa and Khartoum. National authorities believe that one of the main Somali smugglers operating in Addis Ababa is known as “Galbedi”, while in Khartoum, two Somali students known as “Faizzal Gazzal” and “Omar Abukar” link incoming Somali migrants to smugglers who will organise their onward journeys.

Ethiopian police have compiled a list of names and telephone numbers of the key vehicle owners involved in smuggling between Ethiopia and Sudan. These individuals appear to be in close communication with each other, coordinating their operations and highlighting the seamless connections between the logisticians of the human smuggling trade across national borders in the Horn and North Africa.

Sudan

Sudan serves both as a country of destination and a country of transit for migrants from West Africa, Central Africa, and the Horn of Africa.³⁶ By the end of 2015, Sudan is expected to host approximately 460,000 refugees and asylum seekers, nearly one quarter of whom are from Eritrea.³⁷ Large volumes of migrants also pass through Sudanese territory into neighbouring states, principally Libya, due to a well-organised network of transporters, warehouses, and financial facilitators working together to move travellers through Sudan to their destinations. According to the Sudanese authorities, smuggling and kidnapping has increased in the border area between Sudan, Egypt, and Libya. They admit that Sudanese nationals are collaborating with Libyan smugglers to conduct illegal activities freely, especially in Libya.

One of the most widely cited transit hubs is a camp near Khartoum known to migrants as “Hajar”.³⁸ It reportedly hosts mainly Eritrean migrants and refugees, followed closely in number by Ethiopians, Sudanese, and a small number of Syrians. Interviews with migrants and refugees in Calais, Rome, and Stoke-on-Trent, as well as Sudanese IDPs from Darfur, paint a vivid picture of the camp in the arid lands to the north of Khartoum, which is also referred to as “Kilo 105”. The “Hajar” transit hub serves as a final staging point before transporters move the travellers into the south-eastern quadrant of Libya.

The Eastern Route

Eastern Sudan has long been notorious as a zone for various types of smuggling and trafficking. The two principal routes pass through the Kassala and Gederef areas, where smugglers take advantage of large, poorly controlled refugee camps to avoid government interference. From here, the routes bifurcate, with some migrants continuing their journey westward, towards Khartoum and its environs, while others turn north towards Egypt and the Sinai.

³⁴ Interview at Federal Police headquarters, Addis Ababa, 13 June 2015.

³⁵ Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 June 2013.

³⁶ According to the Sudanese government, the main countries of origin include Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Central Africa; and east of Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

³⁷ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483b76.html>.

³⁸ It has not been possible to identify with precision the location of the “Hajar” camp.

³⁹ Interview with senior Sudanese government officials, Khartoum, October 2013.

The Sinai route has historically been dominated by ethnic Rashaida networks operating cross border between Sudan and Eritrea. In recent years, a consortium of Rashaida smugglers and Egyptian Bedouin gangs colluded with Eritrean kingpins to smuggle tens of thousands of migrants seeking safe passage via Sudan and Egypt into Israel. This route is also a well-documented route for weapons smuggling into Sinai. However, in 2013 Israel completed a 230-kilometre barrier on its frontier with Egypt, and the Sudanese authorities intensified their efforts to stem human smuggling and trafficking along this route – in part because of concerns over linkages to armed groups operating in neighbouring Sinai that pose a potential threat to the national security of Sudan.³⁹

Despite the slump in human smuggling, the Rashaida and Bedouin networks that used to control the trade continue to use the Kassala route for other purposes. Reports of arms smuggling to Sinai persist, and refugees and migrants who cannot pay their fees to smugglers along other routes may be sold to these, who in turn ransom the refugees and migrants for profit – a practice which was pervasive among these groups during the height of the refugee and migrant rush to Israel. Even Mered, identified by Glauco 2, lost many of his early customers to Bedouin gangs kidnapping travellers en route to Israel. Although the same gangs continue to prey on refugees resident in refugee camps in eastern Sudan, such as the Shagarab camp, they have also reportedly established a presence in Hajar in order to purchase and to ransom migrants who default on their payments to smugglers.



Zuwayya convoy



Zuwayya convoy



"Futum"



“Futum”

Southern Libya: No Man’s Land

With the exception of the Sinai corridor, most Sudanese smuggling routes lead northwest into Libya, although some migrants travel to Egypt, where launching points for Europe have reportedly been established near Alexandria. Travellers to Libya are carried from the border regions towards Ajdabiya, Sabha or Rabyanah in pickup trucks mostly operated by Arab Zuwayya militias. One smuggler, who calls himself “Futum” and operates between south-eastern Libya and Ajdabiya, has documented his partnership with Zuwayya militias in photographs (see below). As a result of such collusion, human smuggling and trafficking activities have become intertwined with local conflict dynamics in south-eastern Libya.

Clashes are common between such Zuwayya units and their Toubou militia rivals in south-eastern Libya; a fresh round of hostilities erupted on 23 July 2015, involving the widespread use of heavy weapons in civilian areas of Al Kufra.

According to several sources of the UN panel of experts on Libya, the fighting in Al Kufra province appears to pit Zuwayya militia allied with Fajr Libya (Libya Dawn) forces against Toubou units allied with Operation Dignity fighters loyal to General Khalifa Heftar in Benghazi. Zuwayya convoys plying this route with human cargo are subject to systematic raids by Toubou militia, often involving the rape of Ethiopian and Eritrean women by one or both sides. In late July 2015, during an escalation in the fighting, at least 120 Eritrean travellers were kidnapped by Toubou militia and reportedly taken into Chad where they were ransomed for over \$5,000 a head. In a separate incident around the same time, at least 170 Eritreans were abducted by Toubou bandits and then left to die in the desert.

Migrants who successfully run the Al Kufra gauntlet eventually arrive in Ajdabiya, the main staging ground within Libya for onward travel to the coastline around Tripoli. Ajdabiya is traditionally dominated by the Magharaba tribe, although consensus within political factions of the tribe has been gradually breaking down since the Libyan revolution. One of the major power brokers who appears to control security forces in Ajdabiya, where many of the human smuggling warehouses are found, is Ibrahim Jadhnan, a former Gaddafi loyalist who turned against the regime and eventually became a key figure in the Petroleum Facilities Guard. Sources in Libya state that Jadhnan, who gained notoriety for his role in the attempted smuggling of crude oil on the MV Morning Glory in March 2014, is now a loose ally of the Dignity coalition, while retaining enough influence in Ajdabiya to influence the selection of security agencies and government militia there. Ibrahim's brother, Usama Jadhnan is a prominent ally of the Islamist militia Ansar al-Sharia and was also involved with the "Islamic State" chapter in Nawfaliya, where many abducted Eritreans are reportedly held in detention by Islamist fighters.

Given the scale of the human smuggling business in Libya, there can be little doubt that migrants and refugees have become a commodity fuelling the war economy in the region and contributing to the centrifugal forces responsible for the enduring breakdown in law and order. Efforts to counter the human smuggling and trafficking trade are at risk of falling victim to competing factional and regional interests at play in the Libyan conflict. As one senior Sudanese official has observed:

[This] issue is affecting our border security tremendously. Parts of Libya are becoming uncontrollable. It is becoming a smugglers' paradise, everybody can do whatever they want to do. The smuggling trade is therefore threatening the security of Chad, Central African Republic, Sudan, the whole region.⁴⁰

Kidnappings by the "Islamic State" Group

Travelling west from Ajdabiya, migrants and refugees face the risk of being abducted or killed by militiamen carrying the flag of the "Islamic State" (IS) group. Since there are few passable land routes between Ajdabiya and Tripoli, smugglers and their human cargoes seem to have no choice but to traverse territory south of Sirte where IS maintains a presence. Although there is no evidence of structured collaboration between smuggling networks and IS, there are indications that some "cohabitation" arrangements have developed between them.

⁴⁰ Interview with a senior Sudanese government official, Khartoum, October 2015.

Indeed, it appears that IS has taken a strong interest in the flow of migrants and refugees, executing some for propaganda purposes while attempting to indoctrinate others.

On 4 March 2015, a group of more than 200 refugees and migrants, including Eritreans, Somalis, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Syrians, was travelling north from Ajdabiya. Some distance from Sirte they were held up by an IS checkpoint. The IS fighters separated the Christians from the Muslims, with some refugees and migrants feigning devotion to Islam in order to be grouped with the Muslims. According to eyewitnesses, IS troops allowed the driver to continue past their checkpoints with the Muslim passengers aboard. The remaining travellers, including 54 Eritrean and 8 Ethiopian men, were taken to a safe house nearby and made to wear orange and black jump suits. Among the IS guards were four apparently Eritrean fighters who spoke to a number of Eritrean teenagers in the group of hostages, attempting to persuade them to read the Quran and to convert to Islam. On 7 March, the men were asked to leave the safe houses. Those in orange were beheaded while those in black were shot in the back of the head. The executions were filmed and excerpts broadcast by IS in April 2015. Shortly after the executions, the Ethiopian government confirmed that many of those appearing in the video were Ethiopian nationals.

The minors in the group were given a choice to face execution or to undertake Islamic studies, which most reportedly opted for. They were indoctrinated over a period of five weeks until the fighters departed the area to begin military operations, presumably against elements of the Libyan 166 Brigade that were deployed by the Tripoli government to combat IS in Sirte at that time. During the attack, a group of young boys escaped and headed to Tripoli. En route, they encountered a Muslim Eritrean man who told them of an earlier kidnapping of migrants and refugees on the same road prior to 4 March. He stated that he had also been asked to join IS to fight. Weeks later, some of the women who had been in IS captivity also managed to escape, although seven unaccompanied minors reportedly continued to be held.

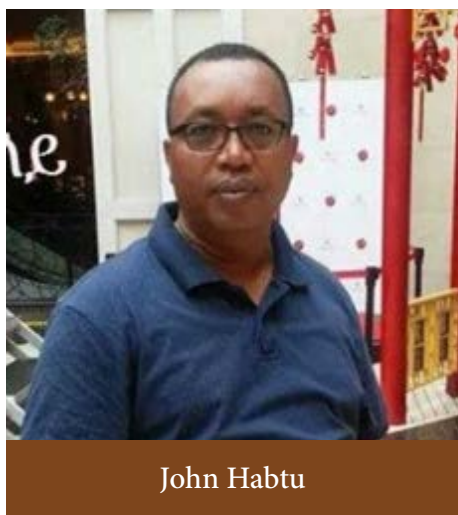
A second kidnapping took place on 4 June 2015 in similar circumstances, on the road between Ajdabiya and Tripoli. In this case, the driver of the truck carrying the travellers stopped his vehicle several hours after leaving Ajdabiya, after passing a military checkpoint, and herded the passengers into another truck. According to witnesses, less than one hour after setting off in the second truck, the driver was stopped by fighters in black uniform, carrying the flag of IS and who introduced themselves as “Islamic State”. The fighters appeared to be from a variety of African countries and between them spoke several languages, including English and Arabic. Again Muslims were separated from Christians. At least 86 travellers were abducted and placed in a safe house that also doubles as a hospital near Sirte. As the area came under attack by rival forces in the coming days, the travellers were all moved to another safe house nearby, which was eventually struck by incoming fire. Some of the travellers managed to flee the safe house at this time, but many were re-captured by IS.⁴¹

⁴¹ A relative of one Somali migrant claims he has been contacted by phone by his brother in Libya, who at the time of his call [undated] stated he was in IS captivity with scores of other Somalis. Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 June 2015.

Launching Points from the Libyan Coast

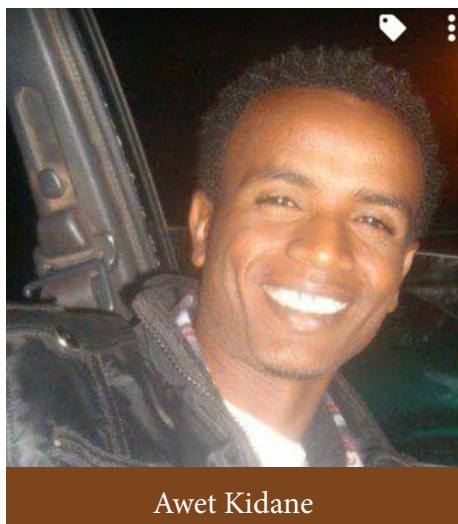
From Ajdabiya, migrants and refugees continue onwards to the northern coast of Libya where they board boats for Europe. The principle launching points for the Central Mediterranean Route are the beachheads of Zuwara, Al Qoms, and Garoubouli, near Tripoli. These locations are nominally under the control of various militia loosely aligned with the Libyan General National Congress (GNC) and are used as entry and exit points for other contraband, such as the smuggling of diesel fuel to Malta. A much smaller number of launching points reportedly exist in eastern Libya, near Tobruk, and also near Alexandria, in Egypt.

The hazards of the Mediterranean crossing begin as soon as migrants leave Libyan shores: there are increasingly frequent accounts of rival armed smuggling gangs attacking each others' passenger boats off the coast of western Libya.⁴² As in Somalia during the heyday of piracy, land-based criminal syndicates in Libya are therefore beginning to show signs of their capacity to materially affect the security environment at sea – a development that bears close monitoring.



Human Smuggling “First Class”

Not all migrants and refugees are obliged to face the hazards of desert and maritime journeys described above: some smugglers offer “first class” treatment – at a price. These include a number of well connected Eritrean smugglers operating from Khartoum, who conduct complex international smuggling operations, organising flight connections to remote international destinations, from where European visas are obtained for their “passengers”. Chief among them is an Eritrean individual known as “John Habtu” (aka “Obama”), who allegedly holds citizenship in the Netherlands, but who owns a property in Leeds, and who for a price of \$20,000 or more per head is organising travel of people from Sudan to Singapore and the Philippines, from where his clients are issued European visas and flight tickets to Europe. During the last week of August 2015, the Singaporean authorities made some arrests of Eritreans at Changi airport, which may have been connected to “Obama’s” smuggling operations.



Another Khartoum-based smuggler using the Singapore route is known as Awet Kidane. One Eritrean migrant paid Kidane \$30,000 to travel from Khartoum to Belgium via Singapore. Once in Belgium, the traveller’s family members were instructed to transfer money to contacts in Sweden and Dubai, a system of payment similar to that employed for land-based travel through Libya.

⁴² Confidential interview with sources in Libya, who stated that in one instance boats owned by “Kidane” and “Chegora” came into conflict with each other on the high seas.

An alternate “first class” smuggling route involves travel to the United States via Latin America. One of the pioneers of this route, Habtom Merhay, was indicted in the United States in 2010 and pleaded guilty to several counts of smuggling migrants from Eritrea. A British citizen of Eritrean descent, Merhay typically moved his passengers from Khartoum, via his base in Dubai, to several locations in Latin America – notably Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador – after which they were smuggled into the United States.

Similarly, one of the targets of the Glauco 2 investigations, Ghermay Ashgedom, was wiretapped on 31 May 2015 in discussions with an Eritrean woman about the possibilities of smuggling people via Guatemala and Mexico.

Information obtained by the Ethiopian Federal Police indicates that at least three known smuggling kingpins involved in the Libya trade also arrange “first class” travel via South Africa to Latin America and the United States. One of these smugglers, Kesete Te’ame (aka “Asgedom”) has escaped bail in Ethiopia, and is believed to now operate partly from Khartoum.

Eritrea’s Emigration Crisis

Roughly one quarter of the migrants and refugees reaching European shores from the Horn of Africa in 2014-15 were Eritreans – a remarkable figure given that Eritrea constitutes less than 4% of the region’s population. Moreover, Eritreans are disproportionately represented among the known kingpins of the criminal networks that dominate human smuggling and trafficking along the Central Mediterranean Route.

In late 2014, the Eritrean government became sufficiently concerned about the number of young people fleeing the country that it instituted a “shoot on sight” policy along its borders and blamed unnamed foreign powers for fuelling the crisis. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea found this policy to be in effect as recently as early 2015 – a charge that the government of Eritrea denies.⁴³ Nevertheless, Eritrean smugglers and traffickers have found Eritrea to be a relatively permissive environment within which to operate.

Informants interviewed for this study fell broadly into two categories: those who claimed to have fled Eritrea on their own, and those who claimed to have been assisted. Members of the former group uniformly described crossing the borders to Ethiopia and Sudan via remote routes in order to avoid border police and patrols. Their first contact with smugglers took place outside Eritrea.

Members of the second group described various types of contact with facilitators from within Eritrea, who then arranged for safe passage out of the country. Two women who had been smuggled by “Obama” to the Philippines this year testified that the organisation and payments for their international travel was all handled in Asmara. When making the payments they were asked to hand over passport photos to the money collector, who returned several weeks later, with fresh Eritrean passports including official exit visas from Eritrea, as well as a UAE visa. It is unclear whether the passports were forged or were authentic documents obtained irregularly from corrupt officials.

⁴³ Report of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1), June 2015, pp. 317-320

Other Eritrean travellers contacted smugglers over the Internet, and were provided with local contacts inside Eritrea (usually Asmara). These facilitators – sometimes alleged to be government officials – would typically arrange for transportation to Sudan or Ethiopia without any immigration procedures. In one case, the smuggler employed a vehicle from the parastatal Segen Construction Company,⁴⁴ which was waved through checkpoints all the way to the Sudanese border. Several migrants who had transited Khartoum reported that their onward travel to Libya was handled by John Merhay, a prominent smuggler mentioned above.

Some prominent Eritrean human smugglers appear to be unconcerned that their own government might take action against them. Before his arrest and prosecution by the US criminal justice system, Habtom Merhay made frequent trips to Eritrea.⁴⁵ A number of known smugglers also appear to rely upon the services of Eritrean diplomats abroad. The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat has noted that some Eritrean migrants are reported to have obtained Eritrean ID cards or passports at the Eritrean embassy in Khartoum because “a person who applies for a passport does not have to prove that their exit was legal”.⁴⁶ Several individuals interviewed for this study also reported visiting the Eritrean embassy in Tripoli during the course of 2015, despite having left their country illegally.

In February 2015, media reports in Italy surfaced concerning a Milan Flying Squad investigation that resulted in the arrests of a number of Eritrean smugglers. Among those arrested was Efrem Misgna, who routinely serves as an escort for Eritrean government and party officials when they visit Europe. In April 2012 he was included in the entourage of a senior official of the ruling People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) arriving at Stockholm airport. While the Eritrean government may not have been aware of Efrem’s criminal activities, his case highlights the degree to which Eritrean human smugglers have penetrated their country’s political establishment.



Efrem Misgna (in yellow) with PFDJ delegation in Stockholm April 2012

⁴⁴ These assertions are supported by wiretaps cited in the Glauco 2 investigations.

⁴⁵ Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, “Going West: contemporary mixed migration from the Horn of Africa to Libya and Europe”, June 2014, p.34.

⁴⁶ The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea in 2011 and 2012 had reported the involvement of Manjus in human smuggling into eastern Sudan, and his connections to Rashaida networks, in particular those under Mabrouk Mubarak Salim, the former leader of the Rashaida “Free Lions” rebel group who had since been absorbed into Sudan’s ruling coalition. Diplomatic sources have stated that while Manjus has received a military promotion, his status in real terms has been diminished, given the arrests made against his key associates in the human smuggling trade.

On 24 July 2015, the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated officially that it had compiled evidence against human trafficking networks that it would be willing to share with foreign partners on condition that a “credible,” independent enquiry be launched under UN auspices. Diplomats in Asmara understand that some of this evidence may relate to associates – now under arrest – of General Teklai Kifle “Manjus”, the commander of Eritrea’s western military zone, who has been accused by previous UN investigations of collusion with Rashaida smuggling networks in eastern Sudan. ⁴⁷

Chapter 4: Efforts by IGAD Member States

The IGAD architecture for combatting human smuggling and trafficking is currently a patchwork of strategies, policies, institutions, and capacities of individual member states, within the context of the IGAD Peace and Security Strategy and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

Efforts are taking place at all levels to strengthen the sub-region's capabilities to counter human smuggling and trafficking. However, this report focuses on the measures taken by the two concerned Member States: Ethiopia and Sudan.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia established the National Council against Human Trafficking and Smuggling in June 2012. This body has its origins in a national task force, which was created in 1993 to deal with the mass exodus of Ethiopians to Southern Africa at that time. The 1993 task force failed to stem smuggling routes, which proliferated to include itineraries to Sudan and the Gulf countries, and was eventually replaced by the 2012 Council.

The National Council was first headed by then Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn; upon his accession to the post of prime minister later the same year, the chairmanship of the council was passed to the new deputy prime minister, Demeke Mekonnen. The National Council comprises representatives of regional governments, the Addis Ababa and Direedawa municipal authorities, the National Intelligence Service, Parliament, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Police, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Women and Youth, the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, the Confederation of Ethiopians Workers Union, the National Chamber of Commerce, the Government Communication Office, religious institutions, and the Ethiopian Youth Federation. The National Council is sub-divided into four working groups and supported by a law enforcement task force:

1. **Protection Working Group:** Headed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, its main objective is promoting public awareness campaigns, creating opportunities for legal working conditions, and developing appropriate social and economic policies targeting potential migrants.
2. **Victims Assistance Working Group:** Headed by the Ministry of Health, its main purpose is to repatriate and support victims, and rehabilitate victims of human smuggling and trafficking.
3. **Legislation and Prosecution:** Headed by the Ministry of Justice, its main purpose is to implement the international conventions and protocols on human smuggling and trafficking and to develop national laws. This group also meets to discuss police efforts and legal cases against smugglers and traffickers, as well as border control measures and public awareness campaigns. The Minister of Justice also acts as the chair of the law enforcement task force, which deals more narrowly with criminal cases of priority for the government.

4. **Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation:** This working group is tasked with developing further information and intelligence on the networks, methods, and modalities of smuggling and trafficking networks operating in Ethiopia and the region.

In addition to the National Council, Ethiopia gazetted Proclamation 909 on 17 August 2015, entitled “The Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants”. The draft legislation proposes imprisonment of 25 years to life imprisonment or a fine up to 500,000 Ethiopian Birr (approx. US\$23,500) for aggravated trafficking, which may feature physical violence and drugging. The act also proposes imprisonment for 15 to 25 years and fines up to 300,000 Birr (approx. US\$ 14,150) for those facilitating such crimes, and penalties of 15 to 20 years and a maximum fine of 300,000 Birr for the smuggling of migrants. The proclamation covers offences related to forging documents and destroying evidence, and sets out various preventative, investigative, and procedural provisions including surveillance options against criminal networks, arrest and detention, and plea-bargaining. In addition, the proclamation deals with issues relating to protection, rehabilitation, and compensation for victims. If aggravated circumstances in either cases of smuggling or trafficking lead to death or severe bodily harm, the maximum penalty could even be death, a proposal that would complicate mutual legal assistance on human smuggling or trafficking cases between Ethiopia and other governments where the death penalty is prohibited. It should be noted, however, that the draft law itself has yet to be passed.

The Ethiopian authorities have set up community-based task forces, known as Community Discussion Forums, in 400 locations in Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, and in the Southern Nations regions. The purpose of these forums has principally been to lead public awareness campaigns, which also include the airing of government-produced films warning of the hazards of human smuggling and trafficking. Local and traditional leaders are also involved in sensitisation of local communities and in providing information to local police and security agencies.

Discussions with workers assigned to some of these local task forces reveal that coordination and accountability are particularly weak at the local level, and data that is available locally is inexplicably unavailable to the federal authorities. The Federal Police have responded by opening more branches in certain regions, notably in Direedawa, Harar, and Oromia, with two more planned in Tigray and the Southern Nations region next year. Police officials in Ethiopia’s Somali Regional State have suggested that they would also benefit from public awareness campaigns encouraging family members of migrants and refugees to come forward and provide information on those responsible for smuggling and trafficking their relatives out of Ethiopia.

Federal Police officers are also actively investigating rogue police officers and units who may be involved in facilitating smuggling at the Somaliland-Ethiopia and Sudan-Ethiopia borders. At least one senior police officer from Amhara region, who Ethiopian authorities say has been in telephone contact with some members of the ring of international smugglers identified in the Glauco investigations, has been arrested.

As a result of their collective efforts, the Ethiopian authorities have acquired considerable understanding of the human smuggling and trafficking trends running through their territory. Ethiopia has made some 200 arrests of various suspects it alleges are involved in smuggling and trafficking and has secured the extradition from Kenya of several smugglers known to operate the Southern Route from Ethiopia into Kenya and on to southern Africa.

Sudan

Sudan operates a National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, which was mandated under the Combating of Trafficking Act of 2014. The Committee comprises representatives of the National Intelligence and Security Services, the Ministry of Interior and Police, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Committee is tasked with reporting every two months to the Council of Ministers with updates on various threats and challenges. This report is then addressed to the Head of State, who subsequently tasks various organs of government as necessary.

The Committee also oversees the work of special investigations units that have been formed on an ad hoc basis to deal with the smuggling and trafficking networks in the eastern state of Kassala and in Khartoum. These in turn feed information to a Special Attorney who has been mandated to prosecute human smuggling and trafficking crimes. This work is intended to complement the activities of other directorates of the police, notably the General Directorate of Investigations and Criminal Investigations, which has been identified by Sudan's interior ministry as a key investigative body dealing with human smuggling and trafficking at the national level.

The Combating of Trafficking Act stipulates sentences of a maximum of 10 years of prison for smuggling and 20 years or death for trafficking and aggravated trafficking, raising possible impediments to mutual legal assistance with certain foreign governments. The Act provides for punishing facilitators, including those who may rely on coordinating smuggling and trafficking activities through Internet communication of any kind, and also places the onus on transportation companies to verify the validity of their passengers' travel documents. The Sudanese government is also deeply concerned about the exploitation of refugee camps for human smuggling and trafficking purposes. It has therefore tightened screening procedures for asylum seekers and is exploring additional measures.

In terms of operations, Sudan has stepped up its activities against human trafficking gangs, particularly those operating between the eastern state of Kassala and Sinai, and who often commit gruesome abuses in the process. Sudan's National Counter Terrorism Commission confirms that operations, largely under the command of Kassala's police forces, have been ongoing since late 2014, resulting in the arrests of an unspecified number of smugglers and traffickers and the release of hundreds of victims.

Between October 2014 and May 2015, the Sudanese authorities cite 21 such operations in the Gedaref and Kassala areas alone. In early November 2014, Sudanese police in Kassala state engaged human smugglers in a firefight, setting free six Eritrean hostages and recovering at least one G4 rifle.⁴⁷ On 28 June 2015, Sudanese state media reported anti-trafficking police engaging in a firefight in the Ghabat al-Qitar area of Kassala state in eastern Sudan, after which a number of weapons and vehicles were seized and reportedly up to 47 Ethiopian hostages were freed. Days later, on 9 July, the head of police in Kassala, General Umar al-Mukhtar, revealed that the abductors demanded a ransom estimated to four million Sudanese pounds (the equivalent of \$160,000) to be paid in exchange for freeing many of the victims.⁴⁸ Sudan's interior ministry reports that 850

⁴⁷ Sudanese police free Eritreans from human trafficking gang, Sudan Tribune, 9 November 2014.

⁴⁸ Information reported by BBC Monitoring.

victims have so far been released in operations in eastern Sudan and in the desert regions near the Libya border in north-west Sudan, although no breakdown between the regions is available.

Notwithstanding the current focus on eastern Sudan, the Sudanese authorities acknowledge the key role of Sudan-based smugglers in the expansion of transnational criminal networks between the Horn of Africa and Europe, and say that they are determined to take action despite current resource constraints.

According to the Sudanese authorities, there are many obstacles to Sudan's efforts in fighting human smuggling and trafficking, the most challenging being:

- The transnational nature of the issue, including the fact that smugglers and trafficking gangs are of different nationalities and operate in the remote, porous border areas between countries, entering and exiting at will. The lack of will by neighbouring governments to deal with this issue – some of which have understandably neither the capacity, nor the appetite since they are marred by more pressing issues – compounds this problem.
- The high cost of anti-smuggling and trafficking operations, and of dealing with increasing numbers of illegal migrants.
- The lack of funding and control of humanitarian organisations managing the border refugee camps.

The Sudanese authorities propose increased cooperation between Sudan, Libya, and Egypt, including information-sharing, the establishment of joint forces, and strengthening border controls. They also suggest the reinforcement of anti-trafficking laws, including against refugee camps, which they believe should be monitored more closely.

Joint Sudanese-Ethiopian Operations

Sudan and Ethiopia are increasingly engaging in joint initiatives to tackle smuggling and trafficking activities across their common border. According to the Ethiopian Federal Police, operations have been conducted between authorities in the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia and in Blue Nile and Sennar states in Sudan.

Between July and September 2015, Ethiopian police forces conducted joint operations with police in both neighbouring states of Sudan, repatriating a number of Ethiopian individuals who have been arrested and charged with smuggling people via local farms and villages, for onward transportation to Khartoum, in collaboration with Sudanese smugglers. It is unclear just how many migrants from Ethiopia are travelling through this route into Sudan, but it is unlikely to be as popular a route as Humera and Metema, which are in closer reach for refugees and migrants from Eritrea and Somalia entering Ethiopia from its northern borders.

According to Federal Police officers who serve on the national task force in Addis Ababa, such joint operations do not yet extend to the northern border regions of Humera and Metema, the principal entry points for refugees and migrants to Sudan.

The Khartoum Declaration of 16 October 2014 launched the AU-Horn of Africa Initiative on Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants and laid out member state commitments to ratify international conventions on human smuggling and trafficking, to address the socio-economic causes of migration, to strengthen law enforcement efforts, to protect victims, and to foster cooperation with international organisations willing to assist in developing capacities.

On 28 November 2014, ministers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Egypt, and Tunisia met with their counterparts from the 28 EU countries as well as the European and African Union Commissioners in charge of migration and development and the EU High Representative. Together, they launched the “EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative”, also known as the “Khartoum Process”, which aims to tackle trafficking and smuggling of migrants between the Horn of Africa and Europe.

The Khartoum Process provides a political forum for facilitating the more practical measures that must be accomplished at international, national, and regional levels. Key to achieving these goals will be the development of the African Union Border Program (AUBP). Currently, the African Union Peace and Security Council is formulating policies that could build on the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation, also known as the Niamey Convention. The Convention is a legal instrument of the AUBP, which addresses issues such as border security, trade, migration, infrastructure, and communication, providing member states with institutional support and facilitating mechanisms for cooperation on border matters. In the process of developing this policy, the AU has already mapped out possible roles for itself in regard to dealing with migration flows. In concrete terms, African Union policy-makers are exploring how they might bolster the AUBP by obtaining financing for:

1. Facilitating joint operations and information flows between African states cooperating on policing and legislation, when it comes to combating human smuggling and trafficking;
2. Coordinating capacity development programmes for regional border management systems including building capacity for local authorities and communities to feed into the national border efforts;
3. Organising joint trainings on migration laws for law enforcement border agencies, and trainings of officers at the borders to develop skills to identify smuggling routes;
4. Organising mass awareness-raising campaigns at sensitive zones involving local communities and targeting youth but also families, to discourage ambitions of illegal migration and support its prevention. Some of these awareness events could double as opportunities for law enforcement officers to collect relevant information related to police cases; and,
5. Facilitating the establishment of cross-border centres dedicated to receiving and re-guiding illegal migrants.

The European Union

The European Union (EU) has pledged financial assistance for regional efforts to combat human smuggling and trafficking within the context of the Khartoum Process. However, the EU is also pursuing an independent course of action to prevent further loss of life at sea, to tackle the root causes of the human emergency in the Mediterranean – in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit –, and to fight human smugglers and traffickers.

On 18 May 2015, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a military operation to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean. As a result, and as part of the European Union's Comprehensive Approach, on 22 June 2015 the EU launched a military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED).⁴⁹ The aim of this military operation is to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture, and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers.

Although the deployment of European naval forces in the Mediterranean to prevent further loss of life is a welcome development, their effectiveness in countering smuggling and trafficking operations remains questionable. Since smugglers typically abandon migrants' boats before leaving Libyan territorial waters and have already written them off, capturing and disposing these vessels will make no difference to smuggling and trafficking. More robust military options, including the pursuit of smugglers into Libyan territorial waters and possible military action against their onshore bases, are being considered but would pose inherent threats to the migrants and asylum seekers themselves.

On 9 October 2015 the UN Security Council, through resolution 2240, authorised international naval forces to intercept migrant smuggling vessels off the coast of Libya for the purposes of inspection. The resolution did not include cover for the third phase of the EU military operation, which is designed for operations in Libyan territorial waters and would require either the approval of the Libyan government, or the UN Security Council acting under Chapter VII authority.

⁴⁹ See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015D0972&qid=1435825940768&from=EN>

Chapter 5: Recommendations⁵⁰

1. Enhance and expand cooperation between law enforcement agencies

Despite very positive steps between the governments of Ethiopian and Sudan in jointly countering human smuggling and trafficking, there is a need to both to enhance this bilateral cooperation and to expand it to include other governments and intergovernmental bodies.

Transnational criminal networks straddle multiple jurisdictions and can only effectively be dismantled by timely, effective information sharing and operations between concerned authorities. In the context of this study, Italian investigations clearly demonstrated that the kingpins in the IGAD region play a crucial role in the directing of traffic on European soil, but senior Ethiopian and Sudanese officials had neither been apprised of the extensive investigations that had been conducted in Europe – even those extensively covered in the media – nor briefed on specific elements that fall within their respective jurisdictions.

As the primary countries of transit for migrants from Eritrea and Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan are central to international efforts combating human smuggling and trafficking in the region. However, there are limits to what they can achieve without cooperation from other concerned governments in Europe and the IGAD region, as well as intergovernmental bodies such as EUROPOL and INTERPOL.

It is therefore recommended that IGAD take the lead in convening a conference of concerned law enforcement entities to explore the prospects for enhanced cooperation in countering human smuggling and trafficking. Such a forum should include a frank exchange on the potential impact of the death penalty on cooperation related to trafficking and aggravated smuggling cases, together with possible mitigating measures.

2. Authorise UN sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for human smuggling and trafficking in Libya

Human smuggling and trafficking has become both a driver of conflict in Libya, and a threat to the peace and security of neighbouring states. Understanding and analysing human smuggling and trafficking networks in Libya, as well as the involvement of various Libyan factions in the trade, is essential to the efforts of IGAD member states and their international partners in tackling the problem.

The UN Security Council has authorised sanctions against those “who threaten Libya’s peace, stability, and security”, and has established the UN Panel of Experts on Libya to report on sanction violations, including the financial links of the warring parties and political spoilers. Given the potential financial importance to various Libyan factions of human smuggling and trafficking, the Security Council should consider specifically authorising sanctions and mandate the Panel of Experts to report on and recommend the designation of key individuals and entities (whether inside or outside the country) engaged in human smuggling and trafficking in Libya.

⁵⁰ The Government of the Republic of Sudan has proposed a framework for further consultation and action by IGAD on human smuggling and trafficking, which will be presented to Member States and addressed during the next phase of this initiative.

Such information should be made available to concerned member states for the purposes of sanctions enforcement or prosecution.

3. Enhanced European Union engagement in regional law enforcement and border protection initiatives

The November 2015 European Union (EU) conference in Valetta has identified five priorities for discussion between member states:

1. Addressing the root causes by working to help create peace, stability, and economic development;
2. Improving work on promoting and organising legal migration channels;
3. Enhancing the protection of migrants and asylum seekers, particularly vulnerable groups;
4. Tackling more effectively the exploitation and trafficking of migrants;
5. Working more closely to improve cooperation on return and readmission.

The EU should consider adding a sixth priority, focusing on law enforcement and criminal justice measures. This should include discussions on national and regional law enforcement initiatives; ways and means for EUROPOL to cooperate with IGAD and its member states on criminal investigations; and options for strengthening border security and management within the IGAD region, through the African Union Border Program.

4. Enhanced role for IGAD's Transnational Organised Crime Pillar

This study has been possible only in the context of IGAD's Security Sector Program (ISSP), which has enabled the participation of key government officials from both Ethiopia and Sudan. More specifically, human smuggling and trafficking falls under the auspices of ISSP's Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) pillar.

Bilateral cooperation between Ethiopia and Sudan has been very positive and continues to improve. However, a comprehensive approach to human smuggling and trafficking in the IGAD sub-region will require enlargement of these efforts to cover additional smuggling routes and the engagement of other concerned member states. ISSP's TOC pillar is ideally placed to enlarge and deepen cooperation between member states, as well as to assess and report on progress and develop new initiatives.

Steps should also be taken to strengthen cooperation between ISSP and the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS). RMMS has recently developed a web of local "stringers" at migration hot spots across the IGAD region and in Italy, Malta, Mozambique, and South Sudan, who provide regular updates from the field on the shifting migrant routes and smuggling and trafficking organisations. Information from this initiative would be of great value to ISSP and IGAD member states in enhancing their own efforts to understand and respond to the challenges of human smuggling and trafficking in the region.

5. Sponsored public awareness campaigns

Various police and government authorities in the region have stated that they would benefit from sponsored public awareness campaigns, urging communities who have been affected by human smuggling and trafficking to come forward and provide information on both migrants and smugglers or traffickers. Improved community outreach would positively impact data collection by local and national law enforcement teams.