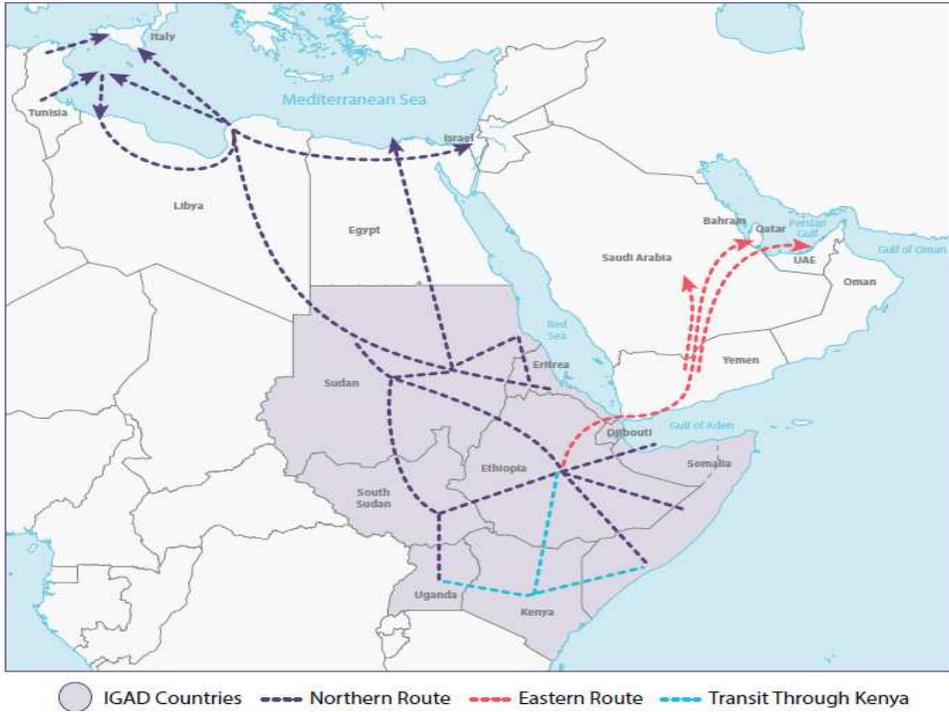


# Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Horn of Africa: Patterns, Dynamics, and Criminal Networks



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## 1. Introduction

Human trafficking (HT) and migrant smuggling (MS) are intertwined, yet distinct, criminal activities that pose serious challenges to human beings and states. Human trafficking<sup>1</sup> and migrant smuggling<sup>2</sup> have been confused and used as synonymous terms until the adoption of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the protocols thereto (referred to as the Palermo Convention hereafter) that defined both acts in a comprehensive way. In spite of the continued debates among the academia and interest groups such as feminist researchers, the Palermo Convention has provided the most commonly used definition of the terms.

Human Trafficking refers to the illegal recruitment and movement of persons by means of force, threat, coercion, deception or abduction for the purpose of exploitation including sexual exploitation, forced labor, servitude, slavery or removal of body organs.<sup>3</sup> MS is a form of illegal migration involving the organised transport of persons across an international boarder, usually in exchange for a sum of money, and sometimes involving dangerous conditions. MS can happen clandestinely or through fraudulent and deceptive means to gain an economic benefit.<sup>4</sup> That is, smuggling is based on voluntary contract in the beginning, and it is a one-time relationship. Like any other forms of organised crime, both HT and MS aim at illicit economic gain from illicit migration of people. MS is always cross-border crime while HT can also happen within a nation without crossing borders. The critical distinguishing features of HT is that it involves the use of force or coercion and its **purpose** of exploitation. However, it has to be pointed out that the distinction between HT and MS remains blurred (Roth, 2010; Kangaspunta, 2007, cited in Savona & Stefanizzi, 2007). Experience show that there are overlapping cases where smuggling becomes trafficking when the victim is subjected to exploitation contrary to the original agreement (Roth, 2010, Hughes, 2003).

Human trafficking and migrant smuggling have posed an expanding and complicated security threat in the Horn of Africa region<sup>5</sup> that negatively has affected the livelihoods of ordinary people, endangered the social and moral fabric of communities and undermined state security. The impact of HT and MS smuggling is also felt in transit and destination countries beyond the region. The pattern of HT and MS out of the region has evolved into a form of transnational organised criminal model involving networked

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, human trafficking refers to trafficking in persons (TIP) as defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and children, hereafter referred to as the TIP Protocol (UN, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> Human smuggling refers to the definition provided in the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, hereafter referred to as the SoM Protocol (UN, 2000)

<sup>3</sup> See the UN TIP protocol art 3, for a complete definition

<sup>4</sup> See the UN SoM Protocol art 3(a)

<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this report, the Horn of Africa is limited to the IGAD region that consists of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

criminal syndicates. Domestic human trafficking remains a very low profile while it is widespread in all member states of the region. The focus of main stream media, concerned international organizations and states is on cross-border and transnational illegal migrations and trafficking.

Intra-regional smuggling and trafficking of human beings is mostly for transit purposes towards the Middle East, South Africa or Europe. The Horn of Africa region is arguably the primary growing hotspot for human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Africa, with the flow of irregular migrants reaching unmatched proportions.

This paper, therefore, discusses the patterns and dynamics of HT and MS in and out of the region, the common routes; and the nature of the perpetrators. Currently, intra-regional HT and MS poses limited security threats compared to the alarming growing flow of informal migration out of the region. The paper will also try to link the prevalence of a sizable and 'less regulated' refugee population as vulnerable groups exposed to HT and MS out of the region.

## **2. Patterns and Dynamics - A Growing Complex Phenomena**

The pattern and typologies of trafficking and smuggling in the HoA region are typically overlapping. Illegal migrants from the Horn of Africa initially seek the assistance of help of smugglers to assist them to illegally reach their destinations in Europe, the Middle East or South Africa, but later are often subjected to many forms of exploitation, abuse, abduction, torture and other cruel punishments and in the process becoming victims of trafficking. As an illustration, many young Eritrean, Somali and Ethiopian migrants who transit through Djibouti, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, or Yemen as they migrate towards the Middle East or Europe become stranded and exploited in these transit countries, and regularly become trafficking victims.

The trafficking phenomenon in the wider HoA region has national, regional and inter-regional dimensions. While many victims are trafficked intra-regionally, within eastern Africa, a large portion is sent to Europe or the Middle East or South Africa. Human trafficking and migrant smuggling in and out of the Horn of Africa region have overwhelmed the countries of source, transit and destination countries. The unprecedented increase in the number of illegal migrants, particularly from the Horn region has become a national, regional and international humanitarian and security concern. The international community has similarly become increasingly vocal, as migrants are exposed to brutal and inhuman treatment. There are reports of human trafficking in every country included in the region, with some reporting a steady rise in incidents in recent years.<sup>6</sup>

### **Domestic Trafficking**

Domestic trafficking refers to trafficking that occurs within a state. Domestic trafficking of women and children for the purpose of domestic work, servitude, cheap/forced labour or prostitution is rampant in all countries of the region. In most of the countries, children (both girls and boys) make up a large number of trafficking victims. Traffickers prey on vulnerable groups of society and conditions such as

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<sup>6</sup> US State Department (2014), Trafficking in Persons Report 2014

poverty and conflict to persuade victims to traffic them under the pretext of a better future. The countries of the region are the most poverty and conflict stricken states more than their share in any form. The high rates of poverty also make it relatively easy for criminal networks to identify desperate individuals and it is not difficult to persuade parents to release their children against payment with promises of better education and a better life for their children and the parents. Lack of proper awareness about what lies ahead and desperation provides traffickers the opportunity to recruit the victims. The deceptive skills of local brokers also prevents parents and the potential victims from predicting that they are likely to be forced into commercial sex prostitution, involuntary domestic servitude, or forced labour.<sup>7</sup>

Trafficked children are found in all countries of the region to a varying degree and are involved in prostitution, forced labour as domestic servants, unpaid (less paid) farm workers, street begging, or coerced to commit petty crimes, such as theft.<sup>8</sup> Young people from the vast rural areas of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan and Eritrea are aggressively recruited and subjected to forced labour, domestic servitude and commercial sex work mainly in bigger towns, households, farming areas, and informal business sectors such as mining.

There are also reports that show that infants too are victims of trafficking. A trafficker arrested in September 2010 in Kenya was transporting ten children, five boys and five girls aged between ten months and ten years.<sup>9</sup> In South Sudan, under age children are being recruited to serve as soldiers which can also be understood as a form of human trafficking. The UN estimates there are about 11,000 child soldiers in South Sudan's fighting factions.<sup>10</sup>

Women and girls are another heavily targeted group, trafficked for labour (such as domestic servitude) and sex work. There are reports of significant collection of brothels in cities such as Addis Ababa, Kampala, Nairobi, Mombasa and other bigger town in the region, which employ underage girls as prostitutes.<sup>11</sup> In South Sudan and Sudan, women and girls, particularly from the rural areas or the internally displaced, are vulnerable to forced labour or being forced into sex work. In Kenya, Womankind Kenya, a nongovernmental organisation based in Garissa in Kenya's North Eastern Province, estimates that fifty female children are trafficked or smuggled to Nairobi from North Eastern Province and Somalia each week.<sup>12</sup> Vehicles that transport miraa (khat) from Kenya to Somalia return loaded with young girls and women, who end up in brothels in Nairobi or who are shipped to Mombasa and destinations outside Kenya.<sup>13</sup> Many who end up in Nairobi are then sent to Mombasa from where underage children are trafficked for sex tourism; for a fee of \$600, young girls between the ages of ten and fifteen are sold

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<sup>7</sup>Gastrow, Peter. *Termites at Work*.2011. International Peace Institute.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2014*, p. 418.

<sup>9</sup>Gastrow, Peter. *Termites at Work*.2011. International Peace Institute.

<sup>10</sup>Burridge, Tom. *Child soldiers still being recruited in South Sudan*.27 October 2014. BBC. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29762263>

<sup>11</sup>US Department of State.(2014), p. 171; ILO. (2010). Direct Request (CEACR) – adopted 2009, published 99<sup>th</sup> ILC session (2010). Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) – Ethiopia. Retrieved from ILO: [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:2309473](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:2309473)

<sup>12</sup>Gastrow, P. (2011, p. 71)*Termites at Work*.2011. International Peace Institute

<sup>13</sup>Gastrow, P. (2011), p. 71

into the sex industry and forced to engage in sexual activities against their will.<sup>14</sup> The trafficking of Kenyan children, women and men, for the purposes of domestic servitude, prostitution and forced labour is on the increase.

### **Cross-Border Trafficking and Smuggling**

In cross-border trafficking, the region plays a triple role, acting as a source, transit and, to a limited extent, a destination for victims of trafficking and smuggling. Intra-regional human trafficking and smuggling are common but the purpose is predominantly smuggling of migrants for transit purposes. However, there are fewer intra-regional HS and HT practices in the HoA. For example, Ethiopian young girls are trafficked to Djibouti, South Sudan and Sudan for the purpose of commercial sex and domestic works. Somalis are also trafficked to Uganda and Kenyans are also smuggled/trafficked to South Sudan, while Ugandans and Kenyans are trafficked/smuggled to each other.

The United States Department of State's *2014 Trafficking in Persons Report* notes that "traffickers smuggle Somali women, sometimes via Djibouti, to destinations in the Middle East, including Yemen and Syria, where they frequently endure domestic servitude or forced prostitution."<sup>15</sup> It is also common to Ethiopians and Eritreans to be smuggled through Djibouti and Somalia, though the latter route is experiencing a decline. Obock is increasingly becoming the preferred departure point for Ethiopians and also Eritreans to some extent, to cross to Yemen via the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden and transit to Saudi Arabia.<sup>16</sup>

In international trafficking and smuggling, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia are the most affected countries of the region followed by Sudan, Uganda and Kenya as source countries. Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti are also key transit hubs, while the role of Somalia as transit country is declining. In this regard, countries of the region predominantly serve as source and/or transit in trafficking or smuggling victims to the Middle East and Gulf countries, Europe and South Africa in search of better life.

This article will therefore focus on Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia as source countries and Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan as transit countries. Djibouti and to some extent Somalia serve as the transit hub to the eastern route of migrants towards Yemen and further the Gulf countries. Sudan is the centre for the transit of victims from the Horn to Europe through Libya or Egypt and the Mediterranean sea. Kenya is the transit area for victims travelling to South Africa. This route is becoming less frequented now following the xenophobic attacks of foreigners in some cities of South Africa.

In addition to increasing flows, the region has also seen geographic shifts in human trafficking flows. Recent reports show that increasing number of traffickers/smugglers are preferring to transit Ethiopian and Somali victims through Djibouti rather than Somalia despite the higher risk of being abducted in Yemen. The West-Northern route to Europe has shifted from the Sinai-East Mediterranean to the middle Mediterranean through Libya as a result of 1) the increased hostage taking by the Rashaida tribe

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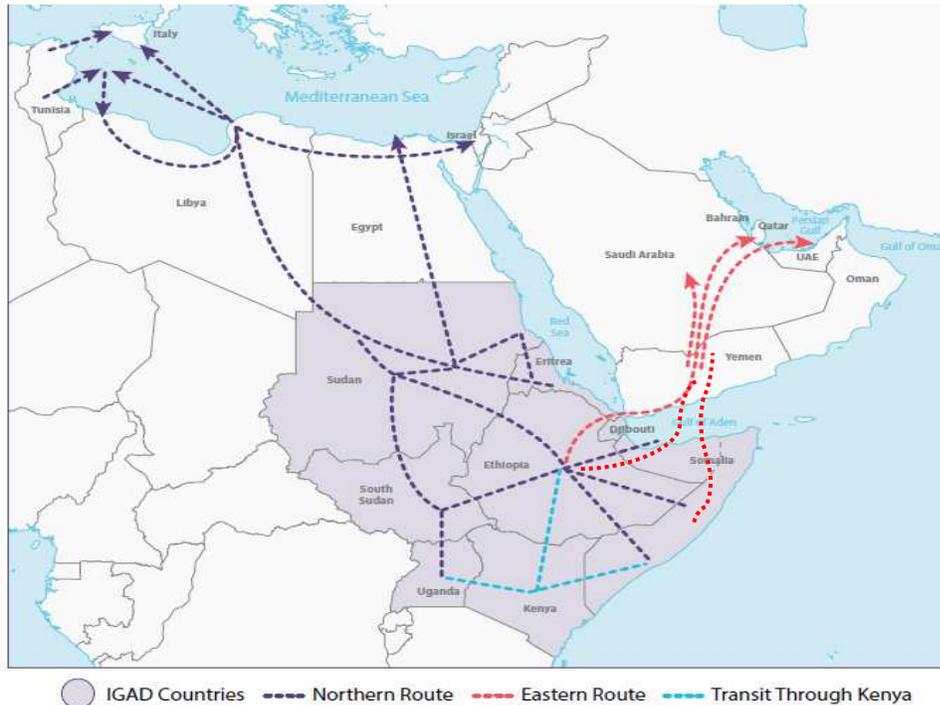
<sup>14</sup>Gastrow, *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> United States Department of State, *TIP Report 2014*, p. 417.

<sup>16</sup>Gastrow, *ibid*.

in Sudan<sup>17</sup> and the forced organ removal in the Sinai desert and 2) crisis in Libya that has left its borders completely ungoverned.<sup>18</sup> However, due to the risk of abduction ISIS has posed in the ungoverned spaces of Libya, there seems to be a growing shift towards the eastern Mediterranean Sea despite the danger of crossing a longer water surface to reach Europe.

Figure 1: Migration and trafficking routes within and out of the IGAD region



Source: Reitano et al (2014: p. 21) Regional TOC Assessment Study, ISSP/IGAD

### Eastern Route:

In recent years, Djibouti has become the central transit area replacing the northern Somalia route mainly through Bosasso. The US 2014 TIP report revealed that in 2013 alone about 80,000 Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean migrants entered Djibouti illegally mainly en route to the Middle East and few of them to Turkey, Europe and Djibouti itself.<sup>19</sup> Djibouti police records also show that in the first nine months of 2014, more than 25,000 had crossed to the country mostly in groups. Travelling in groups is a new trend from the past when migrants tended to move covertly individually or in small groups.<sup>20</sup> This further indicates the involvement of organised smugglers across borders.

RMMS reports assert that 85% or more of Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean migrants arriving in Yemen are believed to cross through different places in Djibouti and majority of the migrants were subjected to

<sup>17</sup> Sudanese authorities deny that Sudanese citizens of the Rashaida tribe or organised criminal networks are involved in the abduction, torturing and other atrocities against migrants.

<sup>18</sup> Reitano et al (2014) Regional TOC Assessment Study, ISSP/IGAD

<sup>19</sup> United States Department of State, *TIP Report 2014*.

<sup>20</sup> Statistics provided by the Gendarmerie of Djibouti, 23 September 2014.

life threatening harsh circumstances and barbaric conditions of crime such as forced labour, domestic servitude, sex trafficking and extortion in their journey to and upon arrival.<sup>21</sup>

The Somali route, though in lesser scale, is still being used by Somalis and some Ethiopian illegal migrants. The long and harsh conditions and the increased presence of Ethiopian anti-smuggling police units in the eastern part of Ethiopia have contributed to the reduction. Crossing through Eritrean Red Sea to Yemen is another small scale smuggling route used by northern Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants.

## North-Western Route

### Sudan - Egypt Route Through Rashaida - the old route

Sudan is the hub of the north western route for nearly all Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants in addition to the Sudanese migrants who intend to cross to Europe.<sup>22</sup> in 2014, UNHCR estimated about 2,000 Eritrean migrants/refugees enter Sudan illegally each month and in the same year there were about 90,000 refugees in camps in Eastern Sudan, mainly Eritreans.<sup>23</sup> Later in the same year, the UNHCR received approximately 1,000 refugees per month in the refugee camps of Eastern Sudan<sup>24</sup> that might show the heightened second movement of refugees illegally migrating to Europe through North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. Because of the deteriorating conditions in the camps, many refugees register and attempt to obtain refugee status before moving on to the north. According to the manager of the Al Shagarab refugee camp in eastern Sudan, there were 112,000 refugees registered in that camp but the actual number staying there during mid-2014 was down to about 20,000.<sup>25</sup>

The hot spots of human trafficking and illegal migration in Sudan are found in the eastern and northern parts of the country where Sudanese criminal syndicates, often members the Rashaida ethnic group, networked with cross-border criminal networks (mostly Eritreans) undertake profitable smuggling and trafficking operations characterised by abduction, hostage taking, torturing and extortions. The criminal networks have close but fluid networks with criminals in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Most of the victims in this sub-route often use refugee camps as transit while criminal networks also use the camps as recruitment fields for their prey. The Eritrean refugee camps in northern Ethiopia are also sources of Eritrean illegal migrants either as a transit hub or once again recruitment fields by their fellow Eritrean criminal gangs. Often smugglers have access to enter refugee camps with no obstacles with their

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<sup>21</sup> *Blinded by Hope, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian Migrants*, Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS), Nairobi, June 2014, at P. 5. Available at:

[http://www.regionalmms.org/fileadmin/content/rmms\\_publications/Blinded\\_by\\_Hope.pdf](http://www.regionalmms.org/fileadmin/content/rmms_publications/Blinded_by_Hope.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> UNODC, *Smuggling of Migrants into, through and from North Africa*, (June 2010).

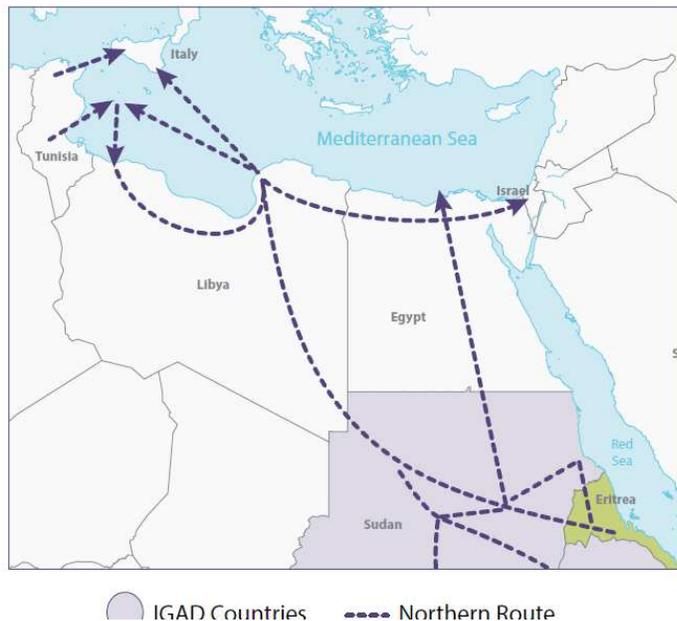
<sup>23</sup> Kai Nielsen, UNHCR Sudan, *Aljazeera World – Between the desert and the fire*, 10 October 2014, at 09.40 minutes. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2014/10/between-desert-fire-201410783728442551.html>

<sup>24</sup> Kai Nielsen, *ibid*

<sup>25</sup> Babaker Othman Al Basheer, Manager of Al Shagarab Camp, *Aljazeera World – Between the desert and the fire, supra*, at minute 37.53.

vehicles and communicate with their agents and refugees and convince them to assist them to enter Egypt or Israel and even Europe on agreed payments, which later is subject to increased amount.

**Figure 2: North-Western Migration Route out of the IGAD region**



Source: Reitano et al (2014: p.22) Regional TOC Assessment

From the refugee camps migrants normally hope to use the northern route to reach their destinations in Europe. Smugglers and traffickers facilitate and assist the victims and migrants to cross northern Sudan border with Egypt and then either to Europe or Israel. Most Eritrean refugees used to prefer this route for some years until 2013/14. Sudanese smugglers/traffickers handover the victims to their counterparts (Egyptians) at the borders to take them mostly to Israel and rarely Europe on additional fee. Migrants often hope that it is much easier to cross to Europe and middle eastern countries once they arrived in Israel, which often proved to be wrong. Horrifying cases of human body theft, kidnappings, torture, rape, mutilation, and even death by mainstream media and international organisations.<sup>26</sup> As a result of such heinous and barbaric criminal acts, violence in Sinai desert, strict border control by Israeli authorities and the various campaigns by various concerned actors, migrants have abandoned this route and shifted towards the Sudan-Libya treacherous desert route towards the central Mediterranean Sea en route to north Africa and then Europe.

### **Sudan - Libya - Central Mediterranean Route:**

In this route, Sudan is once again the key passageway of illegal migrants from Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia. This route has attracted victims for its perceived success of crossing to Europe in spite of the possibility of death, kidnapping and other forms of criminal conditions. Eritrean migrants cross to Sudan either through the Ethio-Sudan border to travel directly to a gathering camp (safe houses) in Khartoum

<sup>26</sup>Human Rights Watch. (2014). "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die", Retrieved from Human Rights Watch: [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt0214\\_ForUpload\\_1\\_0.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt0214_ForUpload_1_0.pdf).

or transiting in refugee camps in east Sudan. The border crossing is facilitated by a network of smugglers by fellow countrymen of migrants often linked with Sudanese counterparts. Somali migrants often gather in groups in *Hargeysa* (Somaliland) and cross to Ethiopia through the border town of *Togo Wajale*, transiting at Addis Ababa (Bole Michael area) and *Gondar* town and then cross to Sudan through *Metema* or *Galabad* and other small informal border crossings. Migrants are then taken to specifically designated places in Khartoum, Omdurman or *Arab-Jumuiya* through the eastern State Qadarif. As discussed elsewhere, Somali victims are smuggled by Somalis who operate in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya. Sometimes, Somali smugglers operate in collaboration with Sudanese and other transnational criminal syndicates.

Ethiopian migrants come from different parts of the country. Ethiopian migrants are gathered in their closer areas and travel often in groups to Bahirdar or Gondar or Humera towns and cross to Sudan with the help of smugglers and rarely by themselves through *Metema*, *galabad*, *Lugdi*, *Hamdayt* and other border areas and travel to Khartoum. Then similar routes to the Somali migrants take place to reach Libya and cross to Europe through the central Mediterranean sea assisted by more organised criminal syndicates.

Migrants are subject to stay in safe houses in border areas inside Sudan, in Khartoum, Omdurman and other places to transport them in groups to Libya. Most payments are made in Sudan, often after reaching in Khartoum. Payments are often made by *hawala* transfer and rarely a handover by family members and very rarely through formal bank accounts. In Libya, Tripoli, Sirte, Benghazi are the widely used transit cities and routes to the Mediterranean Sea.

### **Southern Route:**

For the Southern route, Kenya is the hub of transit for migrants mostly from Somalia and Ethiopia. The southern route from the Horn to South Africa via Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi etc involves mainly Somalis and Ethiopians. The challenge of human trafficking and migrant smuggling does not take a higher priority in Kenya. Migrants are seen as criminals who illegally cross the border and who willingly enter into agreement with smugglers to assist them to be smuggled against payments. However, Kenyan smugglers are hugely engaged in human smuggling networked with Somali, Ethiopian, Tanzanian and other nationals.<sup>27</sup> Recent observations show that Somali and Ethiopian migrants through the Southern Route are not only destined to South Africa but also to Latin America and the further the United States. This route is believed to be more expensive than the other routes. Migrant smugglers in Kenya, Tanzania or Malawi assist migrants to obtain either travel or refugee status documents whether counterfeited or obtained through corrupt practices.<sup>28</sup> It was reported that "hundreds of thousands of Kenyan identity documents have been fraudulently and corruptly awarded to Somalis, Ethiopians, and others who arrive in Kenya"<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Ethiopian Federal Police Senior Officer who investigated the Southern Route criminal network, on 25 July, 2015, Addis Ababa

<sup>28</sup> Interview, *ibid*

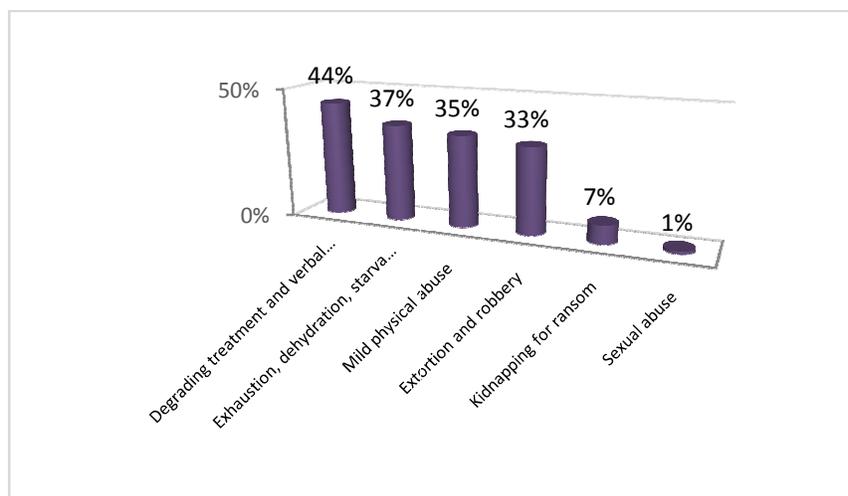
<sup>29</sup> Reitane et al, page 26, *ibid*

### 3. The Role of Criminals and Their Networks

The existing perception that criminal networks and their collaborators are primarily responsible for recruiting and, transporting, harbouring, smuggling and trafficking innocent persons to leave their homeland for a better future against their will through deception, or trickery or false promises is misleading. It is evident that criminal networks play a role in deceiving potential victims and their families, however the majority of those who are smuggled have already convinced themselves and are prepared to leave and so there is little need for persuasion. Many of them are determined to be smuggled often generally aware of the extreme hardships including possible loss of life, removal of organs etc(RMMS, 2014) - *ready to take any risk for better life*.

A survey made by the Regional Mixed Migration Service (RMMS) (2014) on Ethiopian potential migrants, as can be seen from the figures below, revealed that the majority of them are prepared to tolerate harsh circumstances except sexual abuse and to some extent kidnapping. The survey results indicate the readiness on the part of migrants to endure the harsh and cruel conditions to reach their destination. It is not less common for potential migrants to approach local brokers to help them cross borders. It is also common that migrants smuggle themselves without the help of smugglers, a phenomenon which could be termed as 'self smuggling'. For example, Eritrean refugees in from eastern Sudan and northern Ethiopia camps leave camps to cross to Sudan and South Sudan illegally.<sup>30</sup> Such practice is also common for Ethiopians particularly who cross through the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia.<sup>31</sup> It is ironical that the urge and continued desire to migrate seem to be stronger than the fear that these risks might evoke<sup>32</sup>. What this tells us is that we have to revisit our assumptions about the role of criminal networks in facilitating human trafficking and smuggling and the weakness of governments to address the problem.

**Figure 5: Conditions Ethiopian potential migrants would tolerate during migration<sup>33</sup>**



<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ethiopian Police officer who investigated such cases, August 23, 2015, Addis Ababa

<sup>31</sup> ibid

<sup>32</sup> Reitano et al (2015, page ) ibid

<sup>33</sup> RMMS (2014, pp. 33) Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants

It still stands true that criminal syndicates and their networks in collusion with individual government employees/officials play a critical role in facilitating HT/HS in the region. Human trafficking and smuggling perpetrators operate with different organizational models. Criminals operate at local (community), county/zonal (mostly placed in larger towns as coordinators), cross-border and international levels. Local brokers are mostly ad-hoc and informal who identify potential victims, create the first contact directly or through family members or friends and recruit them then facilitate means of transportation to areas where recruits are collected in safe houses and handed over to more organised criminal syndicates. The network between these criminal groups is often through family or clan or close friendship links. They specifically operate within the ethnic territory. Traffickers/smugglers at national levels also take a similar form but share loose and informal business ties with other ethnic based groups operating in different routes. In most cases, Somalis are smuggled/trafficked by their fellow Somalis, while Kambatas from Southern Ethiopia are similarly victimised by ethnic Kambata.

It is at the borders that criminal networks become multinational and complex. For example Ethiopian smugglers/traffickers seek the assistance of their Sudanese or Yemeni or Eritreans or Kenyan and beyond syndicates. Smugglers and their collaborators from the other side of the border create illicit networks that engage in the facilitation of transport, providing false travel documents and corrupting officials. But still fellow citizens of victims play an essential role. In the case of the migration to Europe through Sudan-Libya, Eritreans are often smuggled/trafficked by Eritreans across the whole route but others facilitate the process. For example Sudanese smugglers play an important role. This is similar to Ethiopians, Somalis, Sudanese and other migrant nationals.

Law enforcement officials in Djibouti noted that migrant smuggling, particularly from Ethiopia and to some extent from Somalia and Eritrea is increasingly becoming more organised in the country and across the borders. Given the number of people attempting to transit through Djibouti, this country has proved increasingly lucrative for smugglers. Discussions with these law enforcement officials reveal the emergence of three stages of criminalisation: (i) an ad hoc and informal trade by which individual smugglers facilitate transit of an individual; (ii) a more organised smuggling trade where groups utilise the profits earned on ad-hoc smuggling to buy better vehicles and arms to extend their control along a route; (iii) smuggling groups seek to extend the profitability by extorting families of the migrants they are smuggling, holding them hostage at points along the route.<sup>34</sup> It is reported that two notorious smugglers operating in Libya have made about 75 million £ Sterling in just two years according to conservative estimates.<sup>35</sup> Some intelligence information revealed that vehicles with a privilege not to be subject to inspections are used to transport migrants within a country and cross borders.

## 4. Summary

Human trafficking and human smuggling in and out of the Horn of Africa region is increasingly posing a threat to individuals and their families, communities and the states. The threats are not limited to the

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<sup>34</sup>Reitano (2015) *ibid*

<sup>35</sup> The smugglers are ErmiasGhermay (considered Ethiopian) and MeredMedhanieYehdego (Eritrean), according to Italian police investigation reports (GLAUCO 2 Operation, classified)

region but also to other transit and destination countries. It requires a comprehensive and coordinated local, national, regional and international response. States should give due political attention to the threats, aligning short-term law enforcement and protection responses with long-term economic development and effective governance. Long-term responses need to transform the very reactive measures to proactive and holistic approaches. Law enforcement measures and border protection measures are not enough, but should combine rights approach responses such protection of victims, provision of alternative livelihood mechanisms to vulnerable groups and coherent behavioural change oriented communications to vulnerable groups of society.

Given the transnational and organised nature of the problems, cross-border and regional cooperation and coordination is necessary. Regional law enforcement including but not limited to joint investigations, exchange of information and criminal intelligence, joint operations and mutual legal assistance are critical to the success of fighting human trafficking and smuggling. All state and non-state actors should work hand-in-hand in spite of any differences to prevent the menaces in a proactive manner addressing the root causes and aggravating factors.

**Disclaimer /Note:**

The article was meant to be published in the Horn Bulletin of the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) but was not published because of timing. It was posted in the LPI website without recognizing the identity of the author of the paper. The author is a former police commander with the Ethiopian Federal Police and is now working with IGAD Security Sector Programme as head of Transnational Organised Crime Pillar. The opinions and views expressed in this paper represents only that of the author. He can be reached at [tuemayaregawi@gmail.com](mailto:tuemayaregawi@gmail.com)