

... 27 years old. He passed
... he was about 27 years
and tortured by soldiers
... of origin. He's scared
... because he was

Human Smuggling - No victimless crime: Voices from those on the move

A compilation of quotes and stories from migrants and refugees migrating out of the Horn of Africa

This series produced by RMMS showcases key issues in mixed migration, highlights new research and discusses emerging trends.

Written By: Migrants on the move & 4Mi monitors; compiled by RMMS East Africa and Yemen¹

Abstract: *This paper presents a selection of quotes and stories, taken from a collection of 655 quotes by migrants and asylum seekers who are on the move along various migration routes out of the Horn of Africa. Instead of writing about these migrants, this paper gives a direct voice to the migrants and therefore gives full authorship to the migrants themselves, and to those who interviewed them. The selected quotes have been taken from interviews conducted with almost 3,500 migrants from Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea in various locations between late 2014 and April 2017 and are presented thematically in this paper. All quotes refer to human rights and protection issues during migration journeys and provide a vivid account of the various and harsh abuses migrants are facing during their migration trajectories. The quotes also point to high levels of involvement of certain state officials in both the facilitation of migration as well as various forms of abusive practices towards migrants. They illustrate that human smuggling, having many similarities with human trafficking, is very far from being a victimless crime.²*

¹ Text and compilation by Bram Frouws (Coordinator) and Olivia Akumu (Senior Project Officer) of RMMS East Africa & Yemen. Citation: RMMS East Africa and Yemen (2017). *Human Smuggling – no victimless crime: voices from those on the move*. RMMS, Nairobi.

² All quotes used are self-reported by migrants, and RMMS and DRC cannot verify the accuracy of any quote in this report. RMMS aims to be an evidence based resource and therefore encourages anyone who disagrees with the presentation or can offer clarifications regarding migrant quotes to contact RMMS directly at info@regionalmms.org.

1.

Introduction

In 2014, the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) introduced a new data collection project named the Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative, or 4Mi - an innovative, low-cost approach to collect and analyse data on mixed migration flows along major migration corridors out of the Horn of Africa. Through a network of monitors (enumerators) stationed at key migration hubs through which migrant smuggling and migrant movement occurs, 4Mi collects a wealth of primary information directly from migrants on the move. Monitors interview migrants (and smugglers) on a continuous basis, using a mobile-based survey application to collect in-depth information on the profiles of migrants, drivers of migration, journey conditions, protection risks, destination countries, and the role of smugglers. Monitors are located in hubs, from Norway to South Africa, while the project is expanding globally to cover other migration routes in West Africa, North Africa and Central and South Asia.

Between the November 2014 and April 2017, the 4Mi East Africa and Yemen programme interviewed almost 3,500 migrants and over 150 smugglers, with the largest numbers interviewed in Egypt, South Africa, Djibouti, Uganda, Somalia, Kenya and Libya.

While primarily designed to collect comparable data, using coded and quantifiable interview questions, the 4Mi monitors also collect qualitative statements from the migrants about their experiences along the journey on a continuous basis. Taken together, the almost 3,500 interviews so far (interviews are ongoing) provided a rich and revealing collection of 655 quotes from migrants on the move.³

So far, results from the 4Mi project have mostly been presented in the form of numbers and percentages. While useful and necessary to build up a more solid and evidence-based understanding of mixed migration, the individual stories might get lost and it is easy to forget that behind every single number, there is a human being, someone who decided to leave everything behind and take incredible risks, in order to escape the circumstances back home and to find a better life elsewhere.

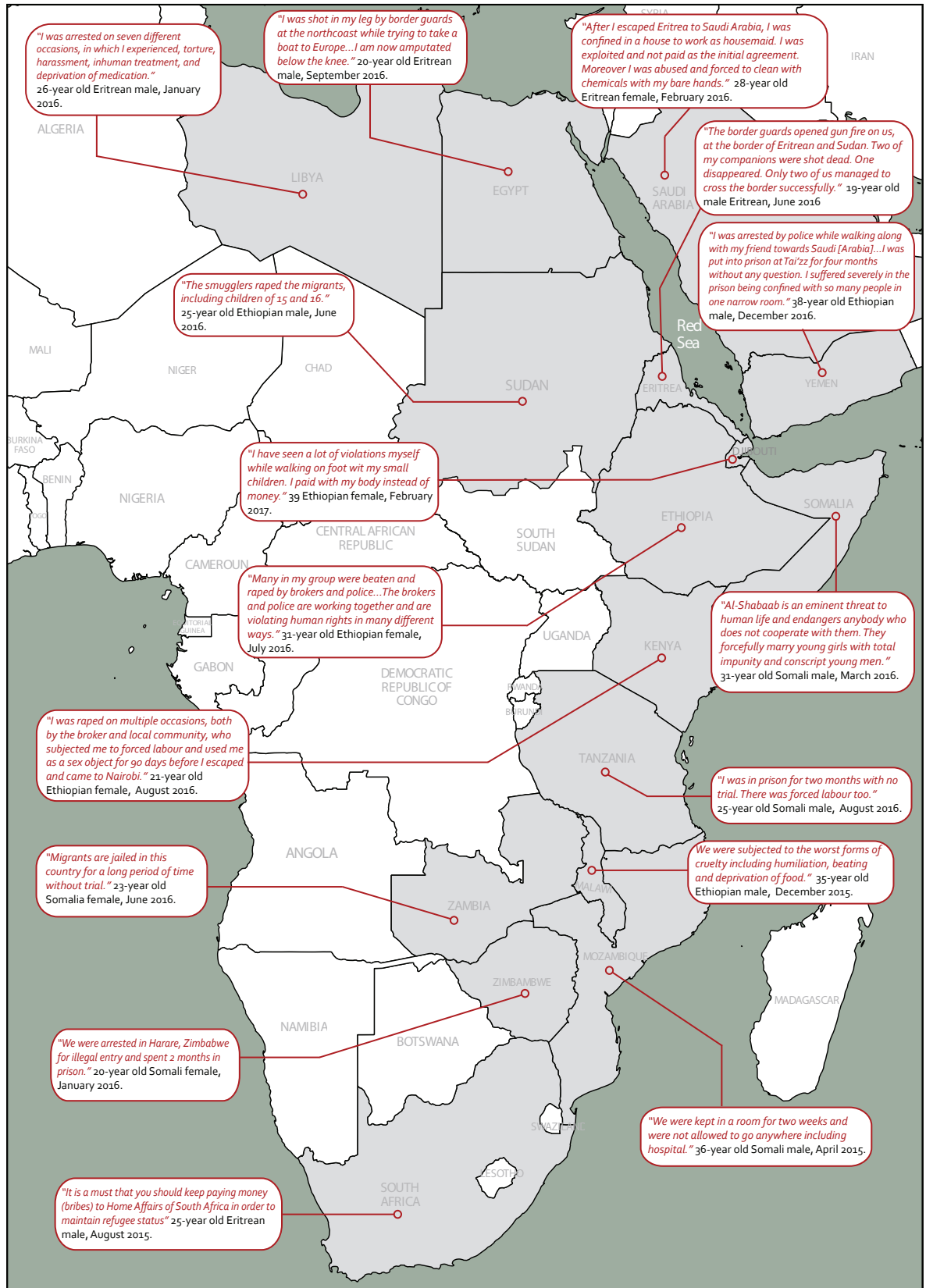
Putting aside the legal and policy discussions around the status of these people, whether these migrants have a right to asylum and residence in destination countries, what should happen to those whose asylum claims are rejected and whether some of these migrants have deliberately chosen to take all the risks of migration – knowing that in some cases they may have little chance to be allowed to stay in their chosen destination countries – ultimately, basic human rights are non-negotiable. The quotes that are presented in this paper speak to the extent to which these human rights are violated all along the route.

In recognizing this and the work of the 4Mi monitors who have collected the stories of these migrants under difficult circumstances and in remote locations, full authorship of this paper is given to the migrants themselves and the 4Mi monitors.

All quotes presented below are structured thematically and refer to human rights and protection issues during migration journeys. These quotes provide a shocking and vivid account of the various and harsh abuses migrants are facing during migration. The quotes also point to high levels of involvement of certain state officials in both the facilitation of migration as well as various forms of abusive practices towards migrants.

³ Similarly, 152 interviews with migrant smugglers provided a collection hundreds of quotes from smugglers on how they operate within wider smuggler networks, changing trend and routes, security issues and the business model and economics around migrant smuggling. A selection of these quotes will feature in an upcoming RMMS briefing paper on migrant smuggling.

2. Migrant quotes



Map 1: Quotes from migrants along mixed migration routes from the Horn of Africa and Yemen

Background

The migrant quotes presented below, cover several topics, with a particular focus on protection issues such as migrant deaths, sexual abuse, physical abuse and kidnapping and ransom incidents.⁴ Each thematic section includes short introductions with references to other recent research publications for background reading. While clustered thematically, there is significant overlap between these quotes. For example, in many cases sexual abuse and violence is committed by either traffickers or smugglers or by state officials; sexual violence is also used as a means of torture when migrants are being held for ransom until someone pays for their release.

For every topic and every quote, there are dozens of similar quotes in the collection of 655 quotes. More significantly, for every single migrant story collected through 4Mi interviews, there are thousands of similar, but untold migrant stories.

Finally, while this paper presents the qualitative stories of migrants on the move, an upcoming RMMS Briefing Paper (to be released by July 2017) on protection, will present more quantitative data on protection issues, based on almost 3,500 interviews with migrants on the move.

Reasons for leaving

Migrants leave their countries of origin for various reasons, including conflict, persecution, poverty, poor governance and a weak protection space. Often the reasons for leaving are mixed and multiple and may change along the way, especially in the context of refugees engaging in so-called onward movement. As noted in the recent [MEDMIG research report](#) on migration to Europe, there is often a complex and overlapping relationship between ‘forced’ and ‘economic’ drivers of migration to Europe.⁵ Many of those who left their home countries primarily due to economic reasons effectively became refugees and were forced to move due to the situation in Libya and elsewhere. Others who decided to leave their homes due to conflict subsequently decided to move on again because they were unable to make a living or access healthcare and education.

Data from the 4Mi project confirms the mixed nature of migration drivers. Asked about the primary reason for leaving their country of origin, migrants (from all three countries taken together) interviewed by the 4Mi project, cite political factors (36 percent; including oppression, tribal or ethnic discrimination, forced military service and corruption) as the most common reason, closely followed by ‘no single dominant reason but various competing reasons’ (20 percent), economic factors (17 percent), a positive perception about migration (10 percent), personal, family and community circumstances (7 percent) and general personal or family safety factors (including conflict) (6 percent).

While the 4Mi survey directed migrants to speak out about their experiences along the way, some of their quotes directly relate to why they started their journey in the first place. As the quotes below highlight, in the case of Somalia, among various reasons for leaving the continued presence by Al Shabaab [remains a threat to the security situation](#) in Somalia and is one of the main reasons for leaving.⁶

“Al Shabaab is very brutal to members of the local community they perceive as not supporting their cause. Also government militia are hostile and many times have taken our belongings by force.”
43-year-old Somali male, interviewed in South Africa about experiences in Somalia. April 2015.

“My husband was killed by Al Shabaab terrorist group in 2007. I have a daughter from him. I carried her with me on the journey. While with my daughter, I have faced violations that I would rather not talk about. I have spent all the money I had, then I was out of money. Migration is full of challenges, especially for young girls.”
27-year-old Somali female, interviewed in Djibouti about experiences in Somalia. September 2016.

Many of the interviewed Eritreans refer to conscription to the National Service, which has been a predominant factor in Eritrean asylum applications. This system, established by law in 1995, requires every adult Eritrean to undertake an 18 month period of National Service. In practice, [as noted by Amnesty International](#), conscription has been extended indefinitely for a significant proportion of conscripts.⁷ Eritreans [interviewed by 4Mi](#) indeed predominantly cite forced conscription and oppression as the primary push factors.⁸

“People, the unfortunate ones, often get shot on sight, get arrested, and thrown into prisons where they would be tortured just because they tried to escape oppression and unlimited national service. People often get arrested without any court order and without court hearings and will remain in prisons for an undecided period of time.”
37-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Malta about experiences in Eritrea. October 2015.

⁴ All quotes have been entered as free text in a mobile survey on smartphones. For ease of reading, spelling errors have been corrected by RMMS and in some cases the flow of text has been slightly altered, while leaving the meaning of the quote intact and staying as close as possible to the authentic entry.

⁵ MEDMIG, 2016. Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015. Available at: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/PR-2016-MEDMIG_Destination_Europe.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁶ William Avis and Siân Herbert, 2016. Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Somalia. Available at: <http://www.gsdr.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Fragility_Migration_Somalia.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁷ Amnesty International, 2015. Eritrea: Just deserters: Why indefinite National Service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees. Available at: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁸ Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism-4Mi <<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/4mi.html>>

Finally, increasingly, Ethiopians leaving their country refer to political unrest and oppression. In October 2016, the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency following months of often violent anti-government protests, particularly in the Oromia region. Government reports indicated more than 11,000 people had been arrested in connection with the unrest and [some reports](#) suggest that the government crackdown was targeting Ethiopians of Oromo ethnicity.⁹ An [increasing proportion of Ethiopian arrivals](#)¹⁰ in Yemen identified themselves as Oromo in 2016 (between 87 and 95 percent between October and December, a stark contrast from [figures in 2014](#)¹¹—then around 50 percent), [indicating a possible correlation](#) with the increased numbers.¹² Several human rights organisations, including [Human Rights Watch](#) have expressed concern over human rights violations in Ethiopia, noting this has indeed contributed to thousands of Ethiopians fleeing the country in search of safety and protection in neighbouring countries.¹³

"The human rights violation in Ethiopia is very bad and smugglers and police are violating the human rights of migrants to travel freely through their country. The smugglers and police are beating and raping women and even burned one woman, because she refused to satisfy their needs. They also forced migrants to take drugs to Sudan, which is illegal in that country."

22-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Ethiopia. July 2016.

"The general feeling when you are at the border town of Moyale [between Ethiopia and Kenya] is that if suspected of leaving the country, the authorities will arrest you and put you in jail or at least interrogate you, especially if you are from the Oromo ethnic group. So to avoid the trouble, one has to maintain a low profile throughout the journey."

37-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Kenya about experiences in Ethiopia. May 2015.

"Forceful conscription by the Liyou Police [a paramilitary police force in Ethiopia] is the order of the day and if you refuse you will either be killed or arrested. Women are raped at an alarming rate. This is the very reason I left my country."

28-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in South Africa about experiences in Ethiopia. May 2016.

Sexual abuse

Sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is one of the most common and serious risks facing migrants in mixed migration flows, as reported in numerous studies in recent years. A [briefing paper](#) by the Mixed Migration Platform (MMP),¹⁴ based on reports by [UNWOMEN](#),¹⁵ the [MEDMIG project](#)¹⁶ and [IOM](#),¹⁷ suggests that "refugee women and girls, particularly sub-Saharan Africans, face significant societal, sexual, and gender-based violence," often at the hands of smugglers. According to the MEDMIG researchers, "over 80 percent of Nigerian women interviewed in Europe described experiences of exploitation including having to engage in transactional sex to pay for their journeys, as well as sex trafficking". [Amnesty International](#) reported in 2015 on the rape and sexual abuse of women by smugglers or criminal groups along migration routes through Libya.¹⁸ Similarly, according to a 2016 [UNICEF report](#), both girls and boys are sexually assaulted and forced into prostitution while in Libya, and some of the girls arrived pregnant in Italy after having been raped.¹⁹

"I was handed over by smugglers to traffickers, while traveling from Shagarab refugee camp to Khartoum in a place called Hajer. I was forced to pay a ransom of USD 3,000 for my release. I was tortured all over my body, and raped several times by as many as three men a day for about one month, because I initially was fighting to defend myself. However I couldn't. I was released after one month, because my relatives paid the ransom. I went to Khartoum and I found myself pregnant as a result of the rape."

27-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. July 2016.

- 9 *The Guardian*, 2017. How long can Ethiopia's state of emergency keep the lid on anger? Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/12/ethiopia-state-of-emergency-anger-oromo-people>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 10 RMMS, 2016. Mixed Migration Monthly Summaries. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/data-trends/monthly-summaries>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017)
- 11 RMMS, 2014. Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Blinded_by_Hope.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2016).
- 12 RMMS, 2016. Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: End of year trend summary and analysis. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/trends/RMMS%20Mixed%20Migration%20Annual%20Trends%20Analysis%202016.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 13 Human Rights Watch, 2017. Letter on Ethiopia to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs / Vice-President of the European Commission Mogherini. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/24/letter-ethiopia-eu-high-representative-foreign-affairs/vice-president-european>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 14 Mixed Migration Platform, 2016. Women and girls on the move: A gender analysis of mixed migration from the Middle East to Europe. Available at: <http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/20161215_mmp_briefing_paper_womens_migration_to_the_eu_december_2016_o.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 15 UN WOMEN, 2016. Gender assessment of the refugee and migration crisis in Serbia and FYR Macedonia. Available at: <<http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eoca/attachments/publications/country/serbia/gender%20assessment%20of%20the%20refugee%20and%20migration%20crisis%20in%20serbia.pdf?vs=3308>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 16 Heaven Crawley, Franck Düvell, Katharine Jones, Simon McMahon and Nando Sigona, 2015. Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015. Available at: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/PR-2016-MEDMIG_Destination_Europe.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 17 IOM, 2016. Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/smuggling_report.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 18 Amnesty International, 2015. 'Libya is full of cruelty': stories of abduction, sexual violence and abuse from migrants and refugees. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/libya_is_full_of_cruelty.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).
- 19 UNICEF, 2016. Danger every step of the way: A harrowing journey to Europe for refugee and migrant children. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/childrenonthemove/files/Child_Alert_Final_PDF.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2016).

A [February 2017 report by UNICEF](#) on the journeys of children and women, found that nearly half the women interviewed reported they had suffered sexual violence or abuse during the journey.²⁰ In a 2014 report on Ethiopian migration, [RMMS reported](#) that at least 49 percent of interviewed Ethiopian returnees from Saudi Arabia had either experienced or witnessed sexual abuse, including rape, while also revealing that 59 percent of returned female Ethiopian migrants had taken contraceptives in anticipation of possible rape.²¹

*"I and my daughter traveling with me were raped by migrants and local people. Which is a dark memory."
43-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Djibouti about experiences in Ethiopia. November 2016.*

Every Eritrean woman [interviewed by Medicin Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#) teams on its search and rescue vessels in the Mediterranean has either directly experienced, or knows someone who has experienced, sexual violence, including rape, often inflicted by multiple perpetrators.²²

"The Sudanese police and local community sexually abused me in a village called Hafir [Sudan]. They threatened to return me to Eritrea unless I offered them their desire. It was psychologically degrading, especially because my children know about it."

38-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. September 2016.

"I was raped on multiple occasions, both by the broker and local community, who subjected me to forced labour and used me as a sex object for 90 days before I escaped and came to Nairobi."

21-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Kenya about experiences in Kenya. August 2016.

"The rape of younger boys by force by the brokers touched my heart and it was a human rights violation."

57-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. November 2015.

4Mi data clearly confirm the high prevalence of sexual abuse on all migration routes out of the Horn of Africa. Out of the almost 3,500 4Mi respondents, 1,346 say they have experienced or witnessed sexual abuse, while 455 have actually experienced sexual abuse themselves. In total (witnessed and experienced) this involves 778 cases of rape and 90 percent of the victims are reported to be female.

"I have seen a lot of violations myself while walking on foot with my small children. I paid with my body instead of money."

39-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Djibouti about experiences in Djibouti. February 2017.

The selection of quotes and stories in this section again confirms the level of sexual violence towards migrants on the move. Moreover, because of the usual [underreporting](#) of sexual violence, it is likely the actual prevalence of SGBV is even worse than what is regularly reported in research.²³

"The two friends I was traveling with were separated from me by the Ethiopian police at Mega [a town in southern Ethiopia] after they failed to produce their residential ID card. They only had student ID cards and their university meal cards with them. When their journey was cut short at Mega, I continued the rest of the journey alone after the police dismissed me because I was a minor. On my arrival in Moyale I had no relatives so I stayed at the bus station until a man I believe to be either a broker or a smuggler by the name Kamal took me to his house with false promises of helping me. He later raped me and threatened to kill me if I would reveal what happened to me. After abusing me for a week, he arranged for my journey to Nairobi with a bus driver. It was quite a dehumanizing experience to be abused by someone old enough to be your father. He took advantage of my age and femininity to get away with it."

17-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Kenya about experiences in Kenya. January 2016.

"I and my boyfriend were traveling through Forto Sawa [Eritrea]. Unfortunately we were captured by border guards. They separated us. I was raped by four soldiers the whole night. They set me free the next morning. But I lost my boyfriend."

19-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. June 2016.

Migrant deaths and killings

According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), more than 60,000 migrants have died during their migration journeys since 1996, adding that this is a conservative estimate based on available data.²⁴ The real number is unknown, as many deaths are never registered especially in remote parts of the world. In 2013, after the October 2013 tragedy when over 400 migrants died in two shipwrecks near the Italian island of Lampedusa, IOM started its [Missing Migration Project](#), trying to track the deaths of migrants along migratory routes across the globe.²⁵ Most focus in recent

²⁰ UNICEF, 2017. *A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route*. Available at: <<https://www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f-12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²¹ RMMS, 2014. *Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants*. Available at: <http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Blinded_by_Hope.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²² Medicin Sans Frontières (MSF), 2016. *Dying to reach Europe: Eritreans in search of safety*. Available at: <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/report_dying_to_reach_europe.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²³ RMMS, 2016. *The Least Condemned Crime: Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Migrants and Asylum Seekers on the Move in the Horn of Africa*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/52-the-least-condemned-crime-sexual-gender-based-violence>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²⁴ IOM, 2016. *Fatal Journeys Volume 2: Identification and Tracing of Dead and Missing Migrants*. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/fataljourneys_vol2.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²⁵ Missing Migrants, 2017. *Migrant Fatalities Worldwide*. Available at: <<https://missingmigrants.iom.int/latest-global-figures>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

years has been on deaths at sea, particularly the Mediterranean, where the number of recorded migrant deaths, despite the increased attention and the presence of rescue ships, has been rising from 3,700 in 2015 to more than 5,000 in 2016. Around the world, more than 7,500 migrants lost their lives in 2016. As of 15 May 2017, already 1,905 deaths have been recorded globally.

While most attention has been focussed on the Mediterranean Sea crossing, migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa arriving in Libya, Egypt or Europe [consistently indicate](#) that even more people might die while crossing the Sahara Desert than while crossing the Mediterranean, but reliable data on migrant deaths on land routes have so far been unavailable.²⁶

*"My child died in the Libyan desert and we were detained in containers."
24-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Ireland about experiences in Libya. December 2015.*

"The government security agents and border guards, including the police are working with the smugglers and human body/organ traffickers. Two women died because of excessive sexual abuse and three died because of excessive physical abuse and the lack of medical care."

25-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. June 2016.

4Mi data indeed suggests that the number migrants and refugees dying before reaching the shores of Egypt and Libya is even higher than the number of deaths at sea, pointing to a large number of what RMMS called [forgotten fatalities](#).²⁷ Between late 2014 and early 2017, the 4Mi project interviewed 3,572 migrants, who together reported they [witnessed 2,522 migrant deaths](#), primarily in Libya (1,059), Sudan (1,001) and Egypt (126).²⁸ While there is the possibility of double counting (with interviewed migrants reporting the same incident twice) and inaccurate reporting (there is no system in place to verify reported deaths), the relatively small number of migrants interviewed by 4Mi monitors over a period almost 2.5 years, suggests that the 2,522 figure is a conservative estimate of those who actually lost their lives. The most common causes of death are reportedly as a result of sickness or a lack of access to medicines, starvation, and injuries sustained in vehicle accidents, while there are also reports of deaths due to violence, physical and sexual abuse.

A substantial number of these deaths due to violence may already happen very early on in the journey, especially for Eritrean refugees trying to leave their country. According to [Amnesty International](#)²⁹ and [various other sources](#),³⁰ a "shoot-to-kill" policy remains in place for anyone evading capture and attempting to cross the border from Eritrea into Ethiopia. A large number of quotes by Eritrean migrants directly refer to fellow migrants being killed by Eritrean border guards when they were trying to cross the border.

"While on our way from Haikota [Eritrea] to the border of Sudan, soldiers encountered us and tried to seize us, but we ran away from them to escape. They opened fire on us and two of our friends were shot dead. The other three arrived in Sudan safely."

22-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. November 2016

"The border guards opened gun fire on us, at the border of Eritrean and Sudan. Two of my companions were shot dead. One disappeared. Only two of us managed to cross the border successfully."

19-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. June 2016

Accidents

In addition to the fatal accidents during the Mediterranean Sea crossing, discussed above, vehicle accidents are a common cause of death or injury, [especially during the Sahara crossing](#) from sub-Saharan Africa towards North Africa.³¹ Migrants are often placed in open-back vehicles, driving at high speeds through the desert. They may fall out of the vehicles and die or sustain injuries from other road accidents, in pick-ups that are often overloaded. In a [study on African transit migration through Libya](#), it was reported that passengers often fall out of the back of pick-ups and are injured as the trucks descend sand dunes.³² Commonly, the drivers do not stop for those who have fallen out. Furthermore, drivers have been known to abandon migrants in the desert when vehicles breakdown, leading them to die of hunger and thirst, such as in an incident in Niger in 2013, where [reportedly 92 migrants](#), almost all women and children, died after smugglers left them behind.³³

²⁶ RMMS, 2016. *Mixed Migration Monthly Summary*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/trends/RMMS%20Mixed%20Migration%20Annual%20Trends%20Analysis%202016.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017)

²⁷ RMMS, 2016. *Forgotten fatalities: the number of migrant deaths before reaching the Mediterranean*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/18-forgotten-fatalities-the-number-of-migrant-deaths-before>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²⁸ RMMS, 2016. *Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: End of year trend summary and analysis*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/trends/RMMS%20Mixed%20Migration%20Annual%20Trends%20Analysis%202016.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

²⁹ Amnesty International, 2017. *Eritrea 2016/2017*. Available at: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/eritrea/report-eritrea/>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

³⁰ Mirjam van Reisen, Meron Estefanos, Conny Rijken, 2012. *Human Trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between Life and Death*. Available at: <http://www.ehrea.org/report_Human_Trafficking_in_the_Sinai_20120927.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

³¹ RMMS, 2014. *Going West: contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya & Europe*. Available at: <http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Going_West_migration_trends_Libya_Europe_final.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

³² Sara Hamood, 2006. *African transit migration through Libya to Europe: the human cost*. Available at: <<http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/hamood-libya.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

³³ Laura Smith-Spark and Arwa Damon, 2013. *Sahara desert deaths: 92 migrants perish in Niger after vehicle breakdowns*. Available at: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/31/world/africa/niger-bodies/>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

"I've heard about many migrants who have been killed by car accidents, because the smugglers drive a car overloaded and at high speed. Three people in my group were killed by a car accident, because the driver was drunk and eight others got seriously injured."

28-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. May 2016.

"Because of the brokers carelessness many migrants were killed in a car accident in the Sahara desert."

24-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. February 2017.

The 4Mi data on reported migrant deaths in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that vehicle accidents are the fourth most common cause of death (11 percent of reported deaths). As IOM noted in its 2014 [Fatal Journeys](#) report, migrants die in the desert, among other reasons, in vehicle accidents due to overcrowding, bad roads and dangerous driving.³⁴ As most, but not all, migrants move through deserts under the aegis of smugglers or independent transporters, IOM argues their deaths cannot be merely seen as accidents. Smugglers are culpable directly or indirectly for many, if not most, of the fatalities. Some of the quotes in this section, indeed refer to carelessness of smugglers when driving through the desert.

"About five pick-ups full of immigrants were there – about a three hours drive from Hajer [Sudan]. Traffickers shot on us while we joined the others. One of the pickups crashed and about 12 people were heavily injured."

15-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. October 2015.

"We were 32 people departing by a small boat, to cross the Nile River to travel from Shagarab refugee camp to Khartoum. Suddenly the boat sank, and nine people died. The rest of us who crossed and survived from the river, were trafficked by Sudanese people. They beat us. Fortunately me and one man were able to escape, leaving the other 21 people behind."

26-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. May 2016.

Children's experiences

In its most recent report on child migration ([A Child is a Child](#)) UNICEF concluded that serious gaps in the laws, policies and services meant to protect children on the move further leave them bereft of protection and care.³⁵ Deprived, unprotected, and often alone, children on the move can become easy prey for traffickers and others who abuse and exploit them. As described in the RMMS report [Young and on the Move](#), the protection risks faced by children and youth on the move are multiple.³⁶ While the threats that children and youth encounter could be similar to the threats adults encounter, specific vulnerabilities – such as their separated/unaccompanied status, lack of documentation, lack of language skills, lack of a support network, limited awareness about the area and limited funds – could further compound these risks. Moreover, children, by virtue of their level of physical and emotional development and social status, are recognised as especially vulnerable to protection risks.

"The migrants were harmed by brokers, police and others. All migrants were beaten and women were raped, including children of 13 and 14 years old, by border guards and brokers."

45-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. September 2016.

"The Eritrean border guards caught us while crossing the border from Forto Sawa. They beat us brutally, and raped us. They also sold us to Rashaida traffickers the next day."

18-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. May 2016.

An April 2017 [report by UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR](#) lists family separation, detention, sexual and gender based violence, exploitation, as well as physical and psychological harm as the specific protection risks facing refugees and migrant children.³⁷

"The smugglers raped the migrants, including children of 15 and 16."

25-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. June 2016.

"The Sudanese brokers and border guards are very cruel and dangerous. They don't care for human life. So four migrants died because of their excessive physical abuse and rape, including a child of 14 years old. They also burned some of the migrants and transferred to the other smugglers."

32-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. September 2016.

According to a [UNICEF study](#) published in February 2017, most of the children arriving in Europe report verbal or emotional abuse, while about half had suffered beating or other physical abuse.³⁸ Girls reported a higher incidence of abuse than boys. Furthermore, of the 5,000 deaths at the Mediterranean Sea crossing, there were an estimated 700 children, [according to UNICEF](#).³⁹ In a recent IOM survey, [quoted by UNICEF](#), over three-quarters of 1,600 children

34 IOM, 2014. *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/fataljourneys_countingtheunaccounted.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

35 UNICEF, 2017. *A child is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_95956.html> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

36 RMMS, 2016. *Young and on the Move: Children and youth in mixed migration flows within and from the Horn of Africa*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Young%20and%20on%20the%20Move%20Sep%202016.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

37 UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR, 2017. *Refugee and Migrant Children- Including Unaccompanied and Separated Children - in the EU*. Available at: <<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/55971>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

38 UNICEF, 2017. *A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route*. Available at: <<https://www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f-12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

39 UNICEF, 2017. *A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route*. Available at: <<https://www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f-12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

aged 14–17 who arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean route reported experiences such as being held against their will or being forced to work without pay at some point during their journeys – indications that they may have been trafficked or otherwise exploited.⁴⁰ The selection of quotes in this section refer to direct experiences of children themselves, or include witness accounts by adults about what is happening to children on the move.

*"I was confined in an underground store. With little food. And being abused and beaten in demand of ransom."
17-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Egypt. March 2016.*

"We were around 20 people and were kidnapped and taken to an unknown place in the Sudan desert. We arrived at a house and were forced to share a small room with about 90 people. We were then tortured and forced to call our family back at home for ransom. They said if my family failed to pay within 4 months they would remove our organs. They showed us the bodies of dead people whose organs had been removed. We were physically and psychologically tortured and treated like animals and were given white boiled rice once a day. We could not shower for 3 months until my money was paid. Many females were sexually abused and we could hear them crying. All the way from Khartoum to Aswan smugglers were beating us and were not given enough food and water. They threw the dead body of our friends in the desert and they didn't bury them."

16-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. October 2016.

Detention

Under international law, immigration detention is only ever meant to be used as a measure of last resort, and only where necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to a legitimate government objective. However its use as a means of regular immigration control by states is widespread, and is often a measure of first resort. Research by the [International Detention Coalition](#) on immigration detention in Africa concludes that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers risk arbitrary, unlawful, indefinite, and/or multiple periods of detention in contravention of international and regional obligations.⁴¹ Research conducted by RMMS on immigration detention in the East Africa and Yemen region in its study [Behind Bars](#) confirmed this view, finding that in most countries undocumented migrants are generally detained, either by law or as *de facto* policy.⁴² RMMS field research in early 2015, described in a [2017 RMMS Briefing Paper](#), found that 68 percent of interviewed migrants on the route from the Horn of Africa towards South Africa reported being detained.⁴³ Even while Ethiopians are allowed visa-free travel into Kenya, arrests of Ethiopian migrants in Kenya [are reported on a weekly basis](#).⁴⁴ Data collated from various media reports – in the absence of comprehensive government data – show that more than 1,000 Ethiopian migrants have been arrested between November 2015 and May 2016 in various urban areas in Kenya, [while the actual figure is likely to be higher](#).⁴⁵

"Immediately you alight from the vehicle in Moyale, brokers start harassing and intimidating you that they will inform the police. Unless you bribe them, you will most likely be traced and arrested, especially if you don't have valid traveling documents."

39-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Kenya about experiences in Kenya. June 2016.

A range of agencies, including [Human Rights Watch](#),⁴⁶ the [UN Support Mission in Libya \(UNSMIL\)](#) and [UN Human Rights Office \(OHCHR\)](#),⁴⁷ [MSF](#)⁴⁸ and the [Overseas Development Institute](#)⁴⁹ have reported on the conditions in migrant detention centres in Libya in recent years, all referring to a pattern of torture, forced labour, sexual violence, arbitrary detention and otherwise inhumane conditions. The [Global Detention Project](#) describes how migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are finding themselves systematically exposed to arbitrary and indefinite detention. Concerns highlighted, as described by the Global Detention Project include the increasing absence of oversight at detention facilities, the involvement of militias in detaining foreigners, the lack of any legal process providing for detention, corruption and

⁴⁰ UNICEF, 2017. *A child is a child: Protecting children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_95956.html> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴¹ [International Detention Coalition](#), 2015. *There are alternatives*. Available at: <<http://idcoalition.org/publication/view/there-are-alternatives-revised-edition/>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴² RMMS, 2015. *Behind bars: the detention of migrants in and from the East & Horn of Africa*. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Behind_Bars_the_detention_of_migrants_in_and_from_the_East__Horn_of_Africa_2.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴³ RMMS, 2017. *Smuggled South: An updated overview of mixed migration from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa with specific focus on protections risks, human smuggling and trafficking*. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/images/briefing/Smuggled_South.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁴ IRIN, 2016. *Go South young man: Migration in the developing world*. Available at: <<https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/04/22/go-south-young-man-migration-developing-world>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁵ RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2016. *EU/NATO: Europe's Plan Endangers Foreigners in Libya*. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/06/eu-nato-europes-plan-endangers-foreigners-libya>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁷ [UN Support Mission in Libya \(UNSMIL\)](#) and [UN Human Rights Office \(OHCHR\)](#), 2016. *UN report urges end to inhuman detention of migrants in Libya*. Available at: <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21023&LangID=E>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁸ MSF, 2017. *MSF Warns of Inhumane Detention Conditions in Libya as EU Discusses Migration*. Available at: <<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/msf-warns-inhumane-detention-conditions-libya-eu-discusses-migration>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁴⁹ [Overseas Development Institute](#), 2016. *Migrants and refugees in detention centres: the humanitarian consequences of Libya's governance breakdown*. Available at: <<https://www.odi.org/publications/10572-migrants-and-refugees-detention-centres-humanitarian-consequences-libya-s-governance-breakdown>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

“unacceptable” conditions at most facilities.⁵⁰ Women held in detention centres in western Libya, accessed by [UNICEF](#), reported harsh conditions such as poor nutrition and sanitation, significant overcrowding and a lack of access to health care and legal assistance.⁵¹

“I was arrested on seven different occasions, in which I experienced, torture, harassment, inhuman treatment, and deprivation of medication. There were two women inmates whom the prison guards took to rape them and we never saw them again. Finally, I paid a bribe of USD 1,200 to get out of the prison.”

26-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Malta about experiences in Libya. January 2016.

[Arbitrary detention](#) is common throughout the region and along migration routes beyond.⁵² The [principle of habeus corpus](#) is a safeguard against arbitrary detention and means that a person under arrest should be brought before judge or into a court soon after their arrest.⁵³ However, in the case of immigration detention this principle is often not applied and migrants stay in detention centres or regular prisons without trial and for long periods of time. In [Israel](#), for example, asylum seekers are regularly detained in the Holot detention facility located in the Negev desert for a period of up to one year, while under a previous version of Israel’s Prevention of Infiltration Law, Israel could detain asylum seekers indefinitely.⁵⁴

“Migrants are jailed in this country for a long period of time without trial.”

23-year-old Somali female, interviewed in Kenya about experiences in Zambia. June 2016

Migrants and asylum seekers [are also routinely arrested](#) and detained upon arrival in Yemen’s coastal areas, with key concerns around the poor conditions in detention centers, the detention of vulnerable groups such as children (detained with adults) and failure by authorities to follow due process while detaining migrants and asylum seekers.⁵⁵ Additionally, migrants and asylum seekers in Yemen, Ethiopians in particular, are often kidnapped and held in migrant detention centres by traffickers, torturing them to extort payment from their families, with the complicity of local officials, as [reported by Human Rights Watch](#) in 2014.⁵⁶

“My friend and I were separated from the group after landing on the coast of Yemen. We were arrested by police as we were walking towards Saudi Arabia and put into prison in Tai’zz for four months without being given any reason for my arrest. I suffered severely in the prison being confined with so many people in one narrow room. I think it was inhuman and a violation of our fundamental rights, to have put us in prison for such a long time with no questions and without presenting us to court even if we were believed to have been found out doing or acting on wrongly against the law.

Besides, they were very indifferent to us with whatever aspects and treated us rudely until we, along with other 300 people who were arrested and jailed with us in the same way, were finally send back to Ethiopia by plane.”

38-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Djibouti about experiences in Yemen. December 2016.

Physical abuse

Since 2015, MSF has provided assistance to more than 65,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants as they try to reach Europe – in Ethiopia, in Libya and at sea. Every [Eritrean interviewed by MSF teams](#) on its search and rescue vessels in the Mediterranean Sea has reported being either a direct victim or a witness to severe levels of violence, including torture, in multiple locations throughout their harrowing journey from Eritrea to Europe.⁵⁷ Those interviewed by 4Mi often said the same:

“When travelling we were extremely crowded, suffocated and were given water mixed with fuel which caused sickness.”

20-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Egypt. October 2015.

In April 2017, [the Guardian](#)⁵⁸ reported, based on information from [IOM](#),⁵⁹ that West African migrants in Libya are being bought and sold openly in modern-day “slave markets” in Libya. While, as concluded in the article, trafficked people

⁵⁰ Global Detention Project, 2015. *Libya Immigration Detention*. Available at: <<https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/africa/libya>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵¹ UNICEF, 2017. *A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route*. Available at: <<https://www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f-12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdf>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵² RMMS, 2015. *Behind bars: the detention of migrants in and from the East & Horn of Africa*. Available at: <http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Behind_Bars_the_detention_of_migrants_in_and_from_the_East__Horn_of_Africa_2.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵³ Eleanor Acer, Jake Goodman, 2010. *Reaffirming Rights: Human Rights Protections of Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees in Immigration Detention*. Available at: <http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=imbr_2010> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁴ RMMS, 2016. *Between a wall and hard place: Examining Israel’s voluntary departure policy for African asylum seekers*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/3-between-a-wall-and-hard-place-examining-israel-s-volunt>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁵ RMMS, 2017. *Key mixed migration characteristics*. Available at: <<http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/country-profiles/yemen>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2014. *Yemen: Migrants Held at ‘Torture Camps’: Hold Traffickers, Officials accountable for Role in Abuses*. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/25/yemen-migrants-held-torture-camps>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁷ MSF, 2016. *Dying to reach Europe: Eritreans in search of safety*. Available at: <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/report_dying_to_reach_europe.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁸ *The Guardian*, 2017. *Migrants from West Africa being ‘sold in Libyan slave markets’*. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/10/libya-public-slave-auctions-un-migration>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁵⁹ IOM, 2017. *IOM Learns of ‘Slave Market’ Conditions Endangering Migrants in North Africa*. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-learns-slave-market-conditions-endangering-migrants-north-africa>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

passing through Libya have previously reported violence, extortion and slave labour, the new testimony from IOM suggests that the trade in human beings has become so normalised that people are being traded in public.

"I don't know how I can explain the harassment and physical abuse we received. And also I don't want to remember the situation. But in short we were beaten, burned, and the women raped by force."

42-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Egypt October 2016.

"I was shot in my leg by border guards at the north coast while trying to take a boat to Europe. I was thrown at the seashore, but luckily saved by individuals passing by. I was taken to hospital. It was a sad incident. I am now amputated below the knee."

20-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Egypt. September 2016.

Data from RMMS's 4Mi project corroborates reports from migrants about a vast range of abuses experienced during their migration journeys. Of almost 3,500 interviews, respondents indicated that they had experienced, witnessed or heard about instances of physical abuse in 2,416 occasions. The types of physical abuse reported covered a whole range of behaviour stretching from deprivation of food and water and confinement, to extreme physical abuse and organ harvesting. Smugglers, police officers, and border officials are reported to be the biggest perpetrators of such abuse.

"We were transported in a container for two days as if we were goods."

24-year-old Somali male, interviewed in South Africa about experiences in Zambia. January 2017

"After I escaped Eritrea to Saudi Arabia, I was confined in a house to work as housemaid. I was exploited and not paid as the initial agreement. Moreover I was abused and forced to clean with chemicals with my bare hands."

28-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Saudi Arabia. February 2016.

"We were subjected to worst forms of cruelty including humiliation, beating and deprivation of food."

35-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in South Africa about experiences in Malawi.

Kidnapping and ransom

The kidnap and subsequent torture of migrants for ransom is a tactic often used by criminal groups to extort large sums of money from their captives and/or their families to secure their release. Men and women are reportedly held in appalling conditions for weeks to months and repeatedly abused and tortured, often while on the phone to their relatives, until they are able to raise the funds to set them free. Female captives are particularly at risk from sexual violence. This phenomenon has been reported widely by a number of actors, and has been linked by academics to [falling within the definition of human trafficking](#),⁶⁰ and demonstrates the sliding scale of acts that [blur the defining lines between human smuggling and human trafficking](#),⁶¹ for example when migrants may voluntarily agree to be smuggled but become victims of trafficking along the way.

"People often go missing, get hijacked, held captive for ransom, and even abused by the police and some locals. The chances of facing these inescapable facts are 50 - 50."

31-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Malta about experiences in Sudan. October 2015.

"There were people who were living in the camp next to me who were abducted by traffickers and later were taken to the Sinai desert where they were held for ransom. Unfortunately, most of them did not make it through the brutal tortures."

30-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Malta about experiences in Sudan. October 2015.

Between 2012 and 2014, [Human Rights Watch](#)⁶² researchers from Tilburg University in two separate reports (["Refugees between Life and Death"](#)⁶³ and ["Sinai and beyond"](#)⁶⁴) and other agencies reported extensively on the abduction and torture of thousands of Eritrean migrants in the Sinai desert between Sudan and Egypt between mid-2010 and November 2013. It is estimated between 25,000 and 30,000 people were victims of trafficking in the Sinai between 2009 and 2013, with between 5,000 and 10,000 who are estimated to have died within the context of trafficking. In some cases, these abductions were facilitated by collusion between traffickers and Sudanese and Egyptian police and military who would hand over victims to traffickers in police stations, or turn a blind eye to vehicles crossing check points with captured migrants aboard.

With irregular flows into Israel from Egypt having almost dried up by 2013, and amid ongoing Egyptian military operations against Islamist militants in the region, trafficking operations in the Sinai are believed to have subsided. However, new abductions in Sudan are still being reported, and interviews in Cairo as part of RMMS field research on smuggling and trafficking in 2016, suggested that some of the kidnap-for-ransom operations that were previously

60 Mogos O Brhane, 2015. *Trafficking in Persons for Ransom and the Need to Expand the Interpretation of Article 3 of the UN Trafficking Protocol*. Available at: <<http://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atrjournal/article/view/93/113>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

61 RMMS, 2015. *Beyond Definitions: Global migration and the smuggling–trafficking nexus*. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/images/DiscussionPapers/Beyond_Definitions.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

62 Human Rights Watch, 2014. *"I Wanted to Lie Down and Die" Trafficking and Torture of Eritreans in Sudan and Egypt*. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

63 Mirjam van Reisen, Meron Estefanos, Conny Rijken, 2012. *Human Trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between Life and Death*. Available at: <https://www.menshandelweb.nl/system/files/documents/14%20apr%202014/Report_Human_Trafficking_in_the_Sinai_Final_Web%281%29.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

64 Mirjam van Reisen, Meron Estefanos, Conny Rijken, 2013. *The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond*. Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.il/Units/Trafficking/MainDocs/Small_HumanTrafficking-Sinai2-web-4.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

taking place in the Sinai have been displaced southward, closer to the border with Sudan. Qualitative and quantitative findings from 4Mi support this notion.

"I was held captive around Kassala, Sudan and paid USD 3,000 for my release. Moreover I was abused physically and psychologically by Rashaida tribesmen."

26-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. December 2015.

"Me and my companions we held captive for ransom for one month in the deserts of Sudan. Most of us girls were tortured and raped until we paid the ransom."

18-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. May 2016.

"A smuggler handed me over to traffickers while traveling from Shagarab refugee camp to Khartoum. I was held captive for three months at a place called Hajer near Khartoum. The traffickers forced me to call my family to pay a ransom of USD 3,000 in order to release me. During my captivity, I was abused, raped periodically by more than two men in a day. The moment I tried to defend myself, the traffickers were torturing and threatening to kill me."

25-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. July 2016.

"I was trafficked by the smugglers, from around Shagarab refugee camp, taken to Hajer. I was joined by other people in an underground. There I was tortured, raped and abused extremely, until I wished to die. All the traffickers need was ransom for my release. My family paid their demand and saved my life"

22-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. June 2016.

On the eastern route between the Horn of Africa and Yemen, the phenomenon of hostage taking is almost systematic, with incidences of hostage taking being reported by new arrivals on a [monthly basis](#).⁶⁵ Ethiopian migrants interviewed in Yemen by UNHCR protection monitoring teams recount that they are frequently targeted, abducted and held in trafficking "dens", where they are tortured and/or sexually abused until their families raise the required ransom fees for their release. In 2014, RMMS documented the [disappearance of thousands of Ethiopian women and girls](#) between 2011 and 2013 who were suspected to have been abducted and trafficked in the same way by these criminal groups.⁶⁶ According to [Human Rights Watch](#) the criminal gangs sell migrants from one group to the next through a syndicate, with a network extending to Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia.⁶⁷

Of almost 3,500 respondents, 4Mi data shows that migrants had been held against their will with a demand for ransom on 1,119 separate occasions. The majority of these incidents occurred in Sudan (334), Ethiopia (193), Egypt (139) and South Africa (125). Smugglers were responsible for 60 percent of these holdings, with state officials being responsible for 13 percent.

"They tied my hands and legs for two months in a small village called Hafir of Sudan. The traffickers tortured me for about four months asking a ransom for my release."

37-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. September 2016.

"There were people whose fate was to be killed in the most heinous manner, with their limbs being mutilated, their backs burnt with melting rubber, and their necks cut with swords just to make the other kidnapped ones push their relatives to pay ransoms for their release."

28-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Malta about experiences in Egypt. November 2015.

"The police, border guards and smugglers have strong relationships – they even have branches in the Sinai desert. They kidnap migrants and transfer them to human body traffickers and also imprison many migrants. They beat all of us for additional money and raped women, and children the age 16, forcefully. The police and border guards arrested migrants who had escaped from smuggling prisons and returned them back to the smugglers. Also the police and border guards are working with the drug traffickers from Metema border town of Ethiopia to Sudan, Khartoum."

28-year-old Ethiopian female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. November 2016.

Corruption, collusion and involvement of state officials in abuse of migrants

The nexus between irregular migration and corruption and/or collusion of state officials is well established. According to a 2013 study by the [United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC), the massive profits generated by migrant smuggling operations make corruption possible on a large scale.⁶⁸ [Research shows](#) that in many transit and destination countries where government officials are poorly remunerated, refugees and migrants can represent a significant source of additional income for border protection and immigration officials.⁶⁹ Inversely, the impunity in which these operations exist seriously undermine the ability of national, regional and international efforts to curb the smuggling of migrants and other transnational crimes such as trafficking in persons, narcotics and firearms.

⁶⁵ RMMS, 2017. *Mixed migration monthly summaries*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/data-trends/monthly-summaries>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁶⁶ RMMS, 2014. *Abused & Abducted: the plight of female migrants from the Horn of Africa in Yemen*. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Abused___Abducted_RMMS.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2013. *Yemen's Torture Camps: Abuse of Migrants by Human Traffickers in a Climate of Impunity*. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/05/25/yemens-torture-camps/abuse-migrants-human-traffickers-climate-impunity>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁶⁸ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2013. *Corruption and the Smuggling of Migrants*. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2013/The_Role_Of_Corruption_in_the_Smuggling_of_Migrants_Issue_Paper_UNODC_2013.pdf> (last accessed 26/05/2017).

⁶⁹ OECD, 2015. *Responses to the refugee crisis; Corruption and the smuggling of refugees*. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/corruption/Corruption-and-the-smuggling-of-refugees.pdf>> (last accessed 26/05/2017).

"In Komatipoort [South Africa] area the state officials are directly involved in smuggling of the migrants across the border. In fact I was surprised to see migrants are ferried across the border using a police van and later they are dropped at a certain house in Naas Township or Malelani without food for some days and each migrant will be set free after he pays 8,000 Rand, or equivalent of USD 800."
4Mi monitor, South Africa, February 2016.

"The relationship between the police, border guards and the smugglers made the situation very difficult. The journey from Gallabat to Khartoum by foot and lorry was the worst of all. The border guards and police in Al Qadarif arrested migrants and asked for money and also raped the women including children aged 15 and 16. They kidnapped the women and separated families because of extra payment and transferred them to the Sinai desert."
27-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. December 2016.

The extent to which public officials interact with human smuggling operations varies, ranging from turning a blind eye to smuggling operations or abuses being conducted by others, or actively participating in these acts themselves. The [circumventing of official asylum procedures](#)⁷⁰ for bribes by South African immigration officials and the abuse of asylum seekers and migrants [arriving in Europe via the Western Balkan route](#)⁷¹ has been well documented.

"Yes there were high levels of human rights abuses in Sudan. The smugglers and government officials are strongly working together for their personal benefit. When migrants escape from smugglers the police or border guards arrest and bring back them back to the smugglers. Then the smugglers do what they like. The border guards and military were take money from migrants and leave some migrants in the Sahara desert."
32-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about his experiences in Sudan. February 2017.

Data from the 4Mi project shows that 27 percent of respondents indicated that government officials, including police, immigration officers, coastguard and military officers were unofficially involved, paid or rewarded in some way where human smuggling operations were happening under their watch. The receipt of bribes was by far the biggest form of involvement, accounting for 51 percent of responses, but also included officers turning a blind eye to smuggling activities (15 percent) and extorting migrants (10 percent), among others.

"They [smugglers] phoned their police friends to give directions to where they were keeping us and when we all got caught, they said we had to add extra money, so that they could rescue us and they give the police like USD 300 and take the rest."
41-year-old Somali male, interviewed in Denmark about experiences in Zambia. December 2015.

Reports from migrants also indicated that state officials were at times responsible for perpetrating human rights abuses against them, including physical and sexual abuse, robbery, and holding them for ransom.

"I don't have the words to describe the human rights abuses in Sudan. When we started our journey from Gallabat to Khartoum we were around 45 people loaded on a pickup car and some on others, and they started beating and harassing the migrants. One night they started raping female migrants forcefully one by one and also arranged for the police officers to rape the women migrants. However, when the migrants refused obey, they beat the migrants and arranged for them to be sold to other smugglers or kidnappers. So because of the excessive raping and physical abuse many migrants died in the Sahara desert near the Sudan-Egypt border. They also robbed us of our money and other property. There is excessive human rights abuse in Sudan."
41-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. April 2016.

"The two cars we were travelling with were shot at and many people were shot and others fell out of the car. We think it was Egyptian border police. We couldn't see anyone, only shouting. People are still missing in the desert."
23-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Egypt. October 2015.

"The police, border guards and military were violent towards migrants. Together they would imprison, beat and rape women including girls of 14 years old. They would also push migrants to carry cannabis and khat into Sudan, where it is illegal. When migrants refused to do that and asked to go back to their homes, no one heard what they said. The police and border guards were directly involved in trafficking human beings."
25-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Ethiopia. November 2016.

"The police and border guards abused migrants' rights by arresting them [when they had escaped] and handing them back to smugglers. They also raped the women by force and the smugglers also killed some migrants in the Sahara desert. In the Sinai desert human body organ traffickers received them before they died."
27-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Sudan. December 2016.

"The government border guards and police offices are directly involved in the smuggling business and they are abusing the rights of migrant to move in their countries. They are beating the migrants and raping women for extra money and also arranging for other smugglers those are kidnapping the migrant for their evil work of human being body trafficking. Also the police and border guards are working with the Sudanese border guards on arrangements for human body traffickers."
36-year-old Ethiopian male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Ethiopia. September 2016.

⁷⁰ RMMS, 2015. Protection for sale: the big South African asylum racket. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/40-protection-for-sale-the-big-south-african-asylum-racket>> (last accessed: 26/05/2017).

⁷¹ OXFAM, 2017. A Dangerous 'Game'. Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-dangerous-game-pushback-migrants-refugees-060417-en_o.pdf> (last accessed: 26/05/2017)

"I and my fiancée started our journey to flee the country. However after we reached the border of Sudan, the border guards opened gun fire on us. My fiancée was shot dead and I was caught by the border guards. Three soldiers molested me one after the other. The next day they left me to go."

27-year-old Eritrean male, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. September 2016.

"While traveling with my husband near the border to Sudan, we were captured by Eritrean border guards. The soldiers separated me and sexually abused me, while my husband was frustrated and tried to rescue me. However they shot him in the head and he died. They let me go and I resumed my journey to Sudan."

33-year-old Eritrean female, interviewed in Egypt about experiences in Eritrea. December 2016.

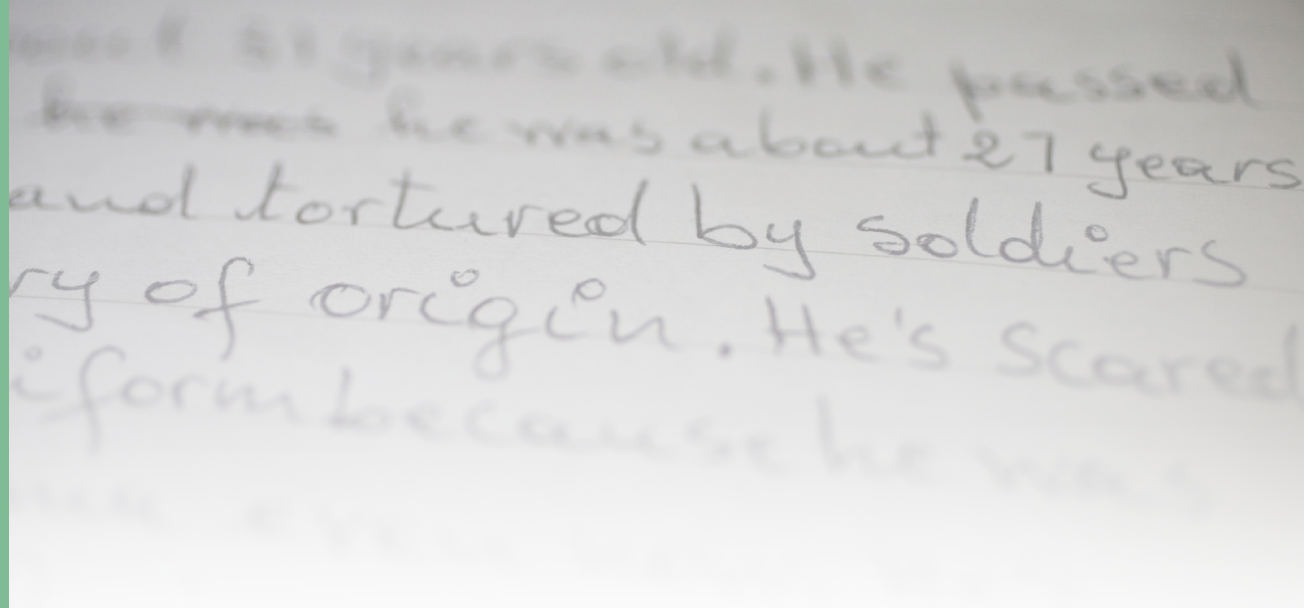
3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to present the stories of migrants on the move along different routes out of the Horn of Africa in an uncensored way. The presented quotes were not collected or selected in a scientific manner nor are they necessarily representative of the experiences of different migrant groups that are part of these mixed migration flows. However, the findings presented through these quotes are fully corroborated by research reports by many other agencies and are based on an unusual large number of interviews with migrants. While an upcoming RMMS paper on protection issues will present the quantitative results of almost 3,500 migrant interviews, this paper highlighted the importance of presenting not only numbers and percentages, but also the personal stories behind these numbers.

In line with the overall focus of the RMMS, the 4Mi project strongly focuses on protection issues and this paper deliberately presented the findings related to protection and human rights abuses, to highlight how the rights of people on the move are often violated every step of the way. Thereby, it presents a particularly bleak picture of migration. While the human rights abuses, and the level of complicity of state officials in perpetrating some of the abuses, are indeed unacceptable, this is not to say that migration only has negative consequences. There are many [positive sides](#) to migration too, as it can be an effective poverty-reduction strategy and has many beneficial effects for countries of origin, destination countries and for migrants themselves.⁷²

Some of the migrants whose stories are included in this paper, might in the end have improved their situation and/or be better able to provide for their families back home, although the price could be considered unreasonably high. They may even be able to argue later that it was a price worth paying, as many do. Indeed 4Mi data shows that in hindsight 47 percent of migrants would still have made their migration journey knowing what lay ahead – 11 percent would not, and 32 percent were undecided. Nevertheless, RMMS would suggest that these violations and the impunity surrounding them are unacceptable – not least as many are perpetrated directly by state officials or where state officials have turned a blind eye or profited from the violations. Finally the stories recounted in this paper highlight the importance of collecting this information on a continuous basis and making sure the experiences of migrants – often in remote locations along the migration routes – are told.

⁷² RMMS, 2015. *A Certain Catalyst: an overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with special focus on the Horn of Africa region.* Available at: http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/A_Certain_Catalyst_Sg_Nov_2015.pdf (last accessed: 26/05/2017)



The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS): Formed in 2011 and based in Nairobi, the overall objective of the RMMS is to support agencies, institutions and fora in the Horn of Africa and Yemen sub-region to improve the management of protection and assistance to people in mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa and across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea in Yemen. The Steering Committee members for the RMMS include UNHCR, IOM, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), INTERSOS, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, IGAD, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union. The RMMS is a regional hub aiming to provide information and data management; analysis and research; support and coordination; and support to policy development and dialogue. It acts as an independent agency, hosted by the DRC, to stimulate forward thinking and policy development in relation to mixed migration. Its overarching focus and emphasis is on human rights, protection and assistance.

See our websites www.regionalmms.org and <http://4mi.regionalmms.org>

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Cover photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos

