



COMMITTEE Chair Report HRC

Addressing human rights violations
against migrants in Yemen

Chair: Matthew Scholten
Deputy Chair: Filip van Putten

Personal Statements

Chair – Matthew Scholten

Honourable delegates,

My name is Matthew Scholten, and I will be your chair for the 2024 edition of MUNISS in the Human Rights Committee. I am currently nineteen years old and am from Zwolle, Netherlands.

This will be my first year as a chair abroad. In 2018, I attended my first two MUNs as a delegate: MUNISS and LmunA- working in GA4 and UNESCO respectively. In 2019, this cycle would repeat itself- but moving into the Security Council. In 2020- right before the pandemic- I was lucky enough to squeeze in one more conference at MSKMUN in Athens, Greece- also in the Security Council. Finally, my own school organized an in-house MUN called “CAPMUN”, in which I played a role as Head of Media and chaired in the General Assembly. All of this together brings the tally to six events attended, and after a few years away from these excursions, it feels only right to come back to the place where it all started.



CAPMUN, 2021

Six years onward from my first Model United Nations, I couldn't be more excited to see what the next generation of delegates brings us! I intend to run your sessions as smoothly as I can together with Filip, creating a safe space for constructive debate and dialogue.

Good luck!

Deputy Chair – Filip van Putten

Honourable attendees of MUNISS,

My name is Filip Cornelis van Putten. I'm a nineteen-year-old Dutch-Czech student of theology, currently located in Zwolle. I will serve as your deputy chair this April.

I have participated four times in MUN, my first being, in fact, MUNISS 2018. I have also participated in LMUNA, in Arnhem; FirstMUN, in Hardenberg; MSKMUN, in Athens and I have served as chair during CAPMUN, in Zwolle.

Attending MUN conferences always leaves you with valuable memories and life experience. You practice communication, problem solving, making compromises, and speaking (formal) English, if you



aren't a native speaker. And most importantly of all, you make valuable connections with great people!

It has always been a pleasure for me to attend MUN, it is a valuable experience, and you learn a lot from attending it. In our committee we are going to dedicate ourselves to protecting human rights, a worthwhile endeavour indeed. I do hope all of you, dear delegates, will have a most valuable time in our committee!



Introduction

The last decade has seen an increase in migration from Ethiopia and Somalia to Yemen. Even though during and after the COVID-19 pandemic this number has significantly dropped, from 138,000 migrants in 2019 to 37,500 and 27,700 in 2020 and 2021 respectively, there are still great humanitarian concerns regarding the migrants entering Yemen. (IOM, 2022)

This is in part because of the ever-raging civil war in Yemen, causing safety risks for migrants, often unaware of the conflict. Furthermore, migrants also run the risk of being abused and extorted by predatory smuggling rings.

The biggest driving force for migrants traveling across the so-called “Eastern Route”- a maritime route between Djibouti and Yemen- is economic. Migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia are mainly looking for occupational opportunities in Saudi-Arabia and other Gulf-states, hoping they can have a better life there and be able to support their families still living in their country of origin. However, many migrants are bitterly disappointed to see their arrival in Yemen met with war, famine, violence, and poverty, and thus, often return home.

Glossary

Human Trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women, and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime.

KSA

Acronym for Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

CPJ

Committee to Protect Journalists.(CPJ, 2024)

Eastern Route

Migration route travelled by boat across the Gulf of Aden and then by land through Yemen to Saudi Arabia, the final destination country. Otherwise known as the “Yemeni Route”.

Tigray

People of central Eritrea and of the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia. (Britannica, 2024)

Gross National Income

The total amount of money earned by a nation's people and businesses. (Investopedia, 2024)

Amhara

Amhara, people of the Ethiopian central highlands. (Britannica, 2024)



UNHRC

United Nation Human Rights Council

Freedom of Press

The right of newspapers, magazines, etc., to report news without being controlled by the government. (Merriam-Webster, 2024a)

Freedom of Association

The right guaranteed especially by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to join with others either in personal relationships or as part of a group usually having a common viewpoint or purpose and often exercising the right to assemble and to free speech. (Merriam-Webster, 2024b)

HRW

Human Rights Watch. (HRW, 2024)



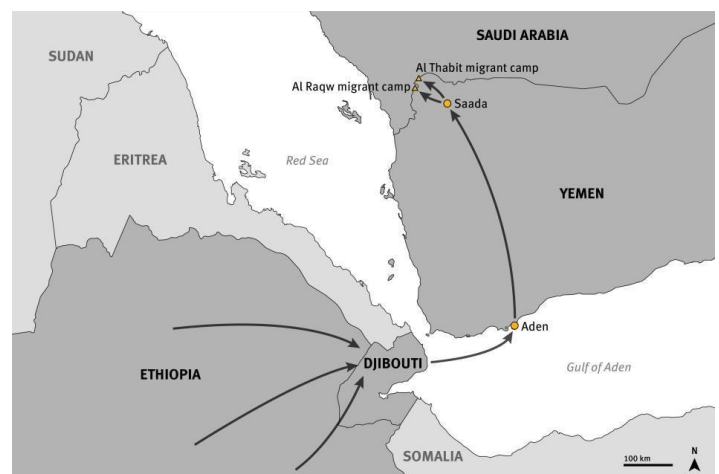
Issue Explanation

In order to better understand this matter, one must look at the roots of the conflict: why are people attempting to complete this dangerous migration route? The answer to that question starts with the dire humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. Approximately 750,000 Ethiopians live and work in Saudi Arabia. Generally, they have moved there for economic reasons- while the Ethiopian economy is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, it remains one of the poorest with a per capita gross national income of \$1,020. (World Bank, 2024) Besides the growth, development challenges such as armed conflicts hinder career and livelihood opportunities for Ethiopians.

As of recently, the outbreak of conflict in the Tigray region serves as another cause of further migration attempts into Saudi Arabia via the Eastern Route. According to Human Rights Watch, human rights and laws-of-war violations have all taken place in this northern region of the country. Massacres, sexual violence, and attacks on civilian objects have been executed by Ethiopian and allied forces. In the west, the Tigrayan population finds itself being ethnically cleansed by Amhara security forces. (HRW, 2023)

Prior to the outbreak of violence in the north, the human rights situation in Ethiopia was already particularly bleak. The country has violated rights such as Freedom of Press, such as Yayesew Shimelis' arrest in- referred to as "dubious" by the CPJ in 2020. (CPJ, 2020) Further offenses such as limitations on the freedom of association are regular occurrences in the state, such as the banning broadcast media, social media, protests, gestures, and restrictive travel measures for diplomats during Covid. (BBC, 2016)

Somalian refugees seek asylum in the KSA for similar reasons. The economy is among the weakest in Africa, and the country is still rebuilding its respective financial and economic institutions. The country further suffers from regular and intensive droughts, causing hunger crises and further limitations on its economic strength; further increasing rates of migration. (WFP, 2023) Out of the known 714,390 Somali refugees, eighty percent find themselves in neighbouring countries- 46,750 of them in Yemen. (UNHCR, 2023)



Eastern Route (Hardman, 2023)

Traveling across the Eastern Route- including barren mountainous border regions- has turned out to be a dangerous endeavour for migrants. Suspected of having implemented violent border policy- explicit or de facto is unknown- Saudi border patrol has regularly been involved in shootings and attacks on migrants attempting to cross the border into the KSA. In a large report by Human Rights Watch, many human rights violations were mentioned by interviewees and reports of deadly

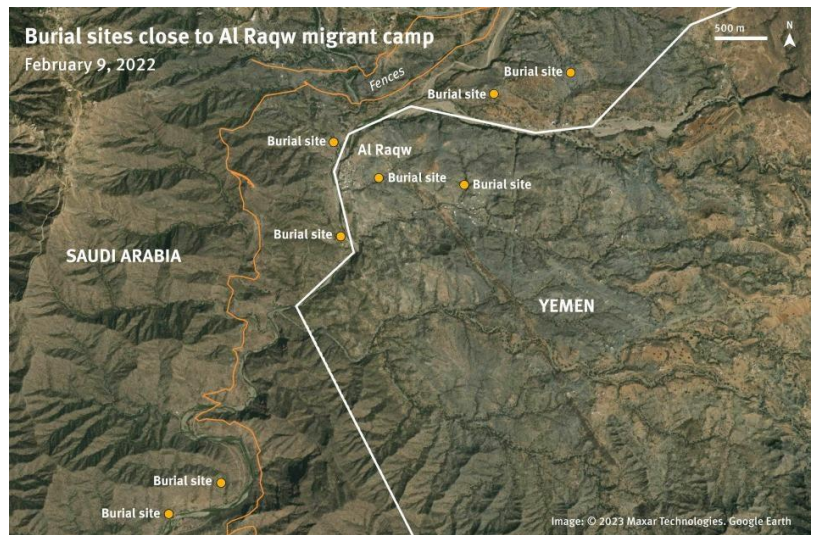
incidents were verified by the organization.(Hardman, 2023)
Across the migration route in the border area, HRW confirmed multiple burial sites and verified videos of hidden bodies in areas near Saudi border patrol.

Al Raqw- around which many of these burial sites are found- is one of the most populated camps along the route. It sits on an elevated bank by a river that effectively forms the Saudi-Yemen border. Crossing the border immediately places migrants in the KSA. Many attempted crossings take place here and has been referred to as the 'shortest road to death'. (Al Remy, 2022)

Further factors are the role smugglers play in the border crossings. Taking advantage of areas with weakened government control in Yemen and facilitating migration across a treacherous route- including overseas ventures in overcrowded boats- smugglers exploit the desperate migrants. Many of these migrants subsequently meet their demise at the hands of the Saudi border patrol. (Jason, 2023)



Hidden bodies by migration route. (Hardman, 2023)



Burial sites close to Al Raqw migrant camp (Hardman, 2023)

History of the Topic

There are some key moments in history regarding the countries from which the migration routes stem, that explain parts of the flood of migration (including important involved stakeholders):

Somali Civil War (1991-present):

- Somalia: the country directly affected by violent humanitarian conflicts and famine.
- Ethiopia: Streams of migration from Somalia into Ethiopia and the country has militarily intervened in Somalia in 2006.
- Kenya: migration flows, maritime security issues due to piracy, terrorism.
- Djibouti: migration flows, provides support for international operations in Somalia.
- United States: counterterrorism measures.
- AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia)
- UN: peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, international cooperation.
- ICRC: providing humanitarian aid during the civil war.
- Save the Children: providing protection and support for children by providing means to education, food, healthcare, etc.
- Oxfam: humanitarian aid.
- MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières): medical care and emergency assistance.

Yemeni Civil War (2015-present):

- Hadi Government: internationally recognized and facing the Houthi rebels in restoring its authority.
- Ansar Allah (Houthi Rebels): Controls most of northern Yemen, triggered the civil war.
- Saudi Arabia: provides military support against Houthi Rebels; conversely affected by migration streams into its territory.
- UAE: part of Saudi-coalition, providing military assistance against the Houthis.
- Iran: accused of supporting Houthis by supplying weapons; the country has ideological ties to the rebels.(Nakhoul & Hafezi, 2024)
- Al-Qaeda and Islamic State: exploiting the regional instability and committing terrorist attacks.(GOVUK, 2024)
- United Nations: humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping missions.

Involved parties in the matter that have acknowledged and/or are actively involved with the concerns about the Yemen-Saudi border situation as of 2024 include but are not limited to:

- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: denied accusations of violent policy toward migrants crossing the border as of 2023. (Spcommreports, 2023)
- The Republic of The Republic of Yemen
- UN(HRC/SC)
- HRW (Human Rights Watch): made the major report in which killings and incidents were documented with accusations made toward the KSA.



- Amnesty International: reported on further border incidents at the Saudi-Yemeni border.
- GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)
- Médecins Sans Frontières
- Oxfam



Any Previous Attempts

The United Nations has not passed any focused resolutions regarding this matter. It has, however, engaged in dialogue and passed resolutions at a broader scale by focusing on the humanitarian situation in Yemen specifically. The border conflicts aren't directly referred to but call for respect for international humanitarian law and protecting civilians. It is important to note that Yemen's political and humanitarian instability make the country susceptible to exploitation at the hands of smugglers and prevent stronger accountability mechanisms toward Saudi-Arabia due to issues including but not limited to fractured political landscapes, minimal diplomatic relations between nations, and lack of recognition of the issue.

Previous UN-resolutions aimed at but not limited to Yemen and the Houthi conflicts include:

- Resolution 2511 (United Nations, 2020)
- Resolution 2534 (UNSCR, 2020a)
- Resolution 2451 (UNDOCS, 2018a)
- Resolution 2402 (UNDOCS, 2018b)
- Resolution 2342 (United Nations, 2017)
- Resolution 2216 (UNDOCS, 2015)

In 2023, Human Rights Watch called for a 'UN-backed independent investigation into the killings and abuses against migrants and asylum seekers at the Yemen-Saudi border'. Due to the KSA not recognizing the matter, there have thus been no attempts to resolve the conflict between the nations of Yemen and the KSA. So far, the UN is yet to set up a related body or back an investigation into the matter. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia addressed the concerns, claiming to have 'discovered no evidence or information to confirm or substantiate the allegations.'

Previous resolutions aimed at, but not limited to solving the humanitarian situations in Ethiopia and Somalia:

- Resolution 2592 (Securitycouncilreport, 2021)
- Resolution 2551 (UNSCR, 2020)
- Resolution 2554 (Securitycouncilreport, 2020)
- Resolution 1827 (Securitycouncilreport, 2008)

Media Contribution



The media is actually almost exclusively the source of all information and criticism as the United Nations is yet to directly tackle the matter in the form of a resolution or by setting up a UN-body or backing an independent investigation.

The general public generally condemns the actions by Saudi border patrol, but it is difficult to truly gauge public opinion on a matter that is yet to really garner any real media attention. The border situation is partly fading out of public conscience due to the Houthi conflicts which mainstream media and international organisations and institutions are paying a lot of attention to. The conflict of Israel and Gaza in the same region also prevents further attention for this humanitarian issue. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that the condemnation of alleged Saudi border policy is common belief, despite that Saudi has a reputation and finds widespread critique for violating human rights such as those of homosexuals- which can be generally regarded as common belief.

As it currently stands, Human Rights Watch is the predominant media outlet reporting on the matter- with major outlets such as The Guardian and BBC reporting on their findings.



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