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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Research Report

Topic 2: The question of stopping the flow of refugees from the Horn of Africa region by 2050.



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Introduction

The destabilized conditions of Somalia and Yemen has caused a high number of Internally Displaced People and refugees in the area around the Horn of Africa. As many refugee camps have overfilled, traffic by improvised sea vessels across the Gulf of Aden has begun, at great risk to the lives of those aboard due to lack of safety equipment and trained crewmen. Armed conflicts, droughts and the risk of famine have all contributed to the destabilized conditions in many of the countries in the region. The projections for the conflicts and the number affected are only expected to rise in the upcoming years, thus requiring a united and broad response to the issues at hand in order to effectively limit the damages.

Key Terms

Gulf of Aden: The Gulf connecting Africa and the Middle East at the Horn of Africa. Bordering countries include Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen.

Internally displaced person [IDP]: A person who is forced to abandon his home or region but remains within his country of origin.

Displaced person [DP]: A person who is forced to abandon his home, region or country, often due to armed conflict or ethnic cleansing.

Houthis: A Yemeni radical Islamic political movement known to use terror and armed attacks in order to promote its cause.

Background Information

Since 1986, Somalia has experienced significant internal conflict as result of the growing unrest and increasing civil war. The civil war that erupted has seen the sitting government of the Somali Democratic Republic consolidate with the armed rebel groups in negotiations that led to the de facto independence of Somaliland in 1991, although this region lacks formal recognition from the majority of the countries in the world as well as the United Nations. This independence led to a short interwar-period overseen by the United Nations Operation In Somalia I (UNOSOM I). Due to the absence of

a central government following the civil war, regional governments instead took leadership over the country.

A Transitional National Government was established in 2000, and radical islamist groups have continued to carry out attacks towards the national government and civilians ever since. Due to the prolonged existence of the conflict, which has varied in intensity but remained destabilizing and lethal for the country and its citizens, Somalia has suffered both economically and agriculturally, causing small food supplies for the general public. During later years, especially since 2010, the terrorist attacks have increased in both numbers and size as conditions in the country have deteriorated. Several droughts have plagued Somalia, with one of the severest in February 2017. According to local media, more than 6 million people, making up approximately half of the entire population of Somalia, have been facing food shortages and left with contaminated water supplies¹.

Due to the inherent risk of famine and the conflicts in the country that have raged for over 30 years, many Somalians have become Internally Displaced People (IDP's) or refugees to neighboring countries. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees Somalia Situation Supplementary Appeal of 2017 ² estimates that 1,5 million people are IDP's internally in Somalia, and that nearly 900.000 are refugees in neighboring countries. This estimate means that more than 2,4 million people are directly affected by the situation in the country to the extent that they have had to abandon their home as of 31st of March 2017. The amount of people affected by the crisis is rising at an alarming rate, and projections put the amount of people directly affected as IDP's or refugees at 3 million by the end of 2017, affecting over 600.000 more people than in March.

Many citizens have, in an attempt to secure personal livelihood, chosen to flee across the national border to Djibouti, Ethiopia or Kenya. As refugee camps have become crowded and underfinanced, and a lack of supplies has occurred in these camps, some people have instead opted to cross the Gulf of Aden on improvised or cheap sea vessels of questionable quality and without proper safety equipment or trained crewmen. Due to these unsafe circumstances, it is connected with considerable risk of life to cross the Gulf in the vessels, and many have fallen victim to drowning accidents. Due to the large area in question, many of these accidents are never discovered or reported, making estimates of the total deaths inaccurate.

¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2017/02/drought-somalia-time-running-170213111737077.html>

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58247>

Since the Yemeni revolution of 2011, where former President Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned in connection with the Arab Spring, the government of Yemen has been in an unstable position. The new president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was having difficulties with uniting the very differing Yemeni political movements. Especially the Houthis, an Islamic religious and armed movement, proved difficult to cope with, as they had been spreading insurgency in the northern part of Yemen. The Houthis have ever since gained territory, and upon arrival in the capital of Sana'a, the president was forced to resign after the presidential palace came under attack. Following these events, the Houthis took control over the government and declared themselves to be the controllers of Yemen.

From the coastal city of Aden, president Hadi continued his presidential duties as the legitimate president of Yemen, and attempted to regain the lost territory. Eventually, he was forced into exile in Saudi Arabia, and gained military help from their Air Force. The conflict, which has evolved into a civil war, makes for very unstable living conditions in Yemen. This has caused a large increase in the number of IDP's residing in Yemen, and some refugees have begun seeking outside the national borders. They are in fact taking the opposite route across the Gulf of Aden of those fleeing Somalia, and it is currently estimated that approximately 100.000 refugees³ have taken this route using vessels of similar standards to those in Somalia. This flow of refugees across the Gulf of Aden on the Horn of Africa is steadily increasing, and without proper funding and global initiative to stop the conflicts at the root of the issue, this is projected to continue at uncontrollable rates.

Relevant Countries

Somalia: Somalia would likely speak in favor of a United Nations humanitarian aid mission dedicated to the current escalation of the issues at hand, as well as a major budget increase for immediate relief to prevent a famine.

Yemen: Yemen would be in favor of a United Nations peacekeeping-programme within its own borders to protect its citizens from the Houthi-rebels. It may also be in favor of a United Nations coalition, as determined by the Security Council, dedicated to stopping the spread of the Houthi-rebellions which have invoked questionable living standards in Yemen. This decision is however connected with much controversy, and delegates should carefully consider this opinion.

³ <http://data.unhcr.org/yemen/regional.php>

Djibouti: Djibouti would be in favor of increased United Nations humanitarian aid spending as it has seen its local supplies of food and water diminished due to the large increase in demand. It would also be in favor of an increase in refugee camps as set up and supervised by the United Nations.

Ethiopia: Having accepted a large number of refugees, Ethiopia would be in favor of increased United Nations humanitarian aid spending to help lessen the burden on its local economy. It would also be in favor of an increase in refugee camps as set up and supervised by the United Nations to help ease the current overcrowded camps.

Relevant Organizations

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The UNHCR helps secure the rights of refugees and IDP's affected by the situation and actively monitors the situation.

International Crisis Group: The International Crisis Group actively monitors and communicates the local situations by using field journalists. It also carries out field research in the affected areas and uses these analyses to advocate solutions to high-level officials.

World Food Programme: The world food programme attempts to combat the risk of famine in Somalia and Yemen as a result of the long-lasting conflicts.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA): The UNOCHA is responsible for bringing the local humanitarian actors attempting to better the situation together and to coordinate the response in the event of an emergency.

Relevant UN Resolutions

Security Council Resolution 2346 (2017): Resolution 2346 extends the mandate for the United Nations assistance mission in Somalia. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12760.doc.htm>

Security Council Resolution 2244 (2015): Resolution 2244 adopts a weapons embargo towards Somalia and Eritrea in an attempt to limit the violent conflict after the prolonged fighting. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12094.doc.htm>

A/71/L.1

Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted by the General Assembly in 2016. The declaration aims to increase international cooperation and shared responsibility on the increasing number of DP's and IDP's, in order to resolve the issue. <https://undocs.org/A/71/L.1>

UNHCR 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Delegates should find themselves familiar with this convention, as it has information regarding the legal status of refugees and their individual rights. <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

Possible Solutions

The issue the flow of refugees from the Horn of Africa is a complex matter caused by multiple national conflicts. As a result of this, the flow of refugees is a two-way flow, which further complicates the issue. Refugee camps have to be set up in multiple countries, many of whom suffer from questionable conditions. In order to effectively combat the issue, the chair wishes for the debate to revolve around establishing national security for the IDP's and refugees involved, possibly by suggesting UN Safe-Zones for refugees to be set up. These suggestions, should they be passed by the committee, would require to be debated and passed in the Security Council (SC). By establishing national security for the DP's, they would not have to embark on the dangerous journey across the sea. The committee could also debate the issue of securing the DP's and refugees by granting them a place in the UN Resettlement Program or creating a new aid mission dedicated to transferring refugees in this region to safe countries. This would require broad international support due to the logistical issue, as well as national support of the nations wishing to participate in aiding the refugees.

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