

## **YEMENI CRISIS: MIGRATION PATHWAYS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Population geography uses stats and data to answer questions about migration patterns and the factors causing migration. Because of the Yemeni Crisis, Yemen migration is at a pivotal stage as millions flee the terrorism and civil war. Using stats and data from Able 2014, Gapminder, and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), Yemen migration patterns were compared to before and after the crisis began. What the data shows is that migration increased to the northwest of the country and to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The data also shows migrants returning to East Africa. This shows that the increase in migration to northwest Yemen, the UAE and East Africa parallels the Yemeni Crisis.

### **INTRODUCTION**

From a geographical perspective, migration and bilateral migration are indicative of various push and pull factors that can either cause a population to move away from, or towards, a location. The correlation between these various factors and the patterns of migration represent a desire for populations to have better access to opportunities where their original location failed to meet the population's needs. Being able to account for and model migration patterns from one location to another gives geographers insight about the possible factors responsible for the migration in the first place. Studying these patterns, geographers may be able to more accurately recognize the factors causing the migration as it relates to the time period at which the migration rate changes.

Geographers wish to explore the dynamics of populations moving from one location to another not only to understand why the migration is occurring when it is, but

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also to address the challenges that populations face throughout the migration process. Why it is occurring can be attributed to factors such as better economic opportunities, seeking refuge, family and health, etc. Mapping the data helps put into perspective: migration in terms of sheer numbers, where populations are going, and the routes populations use to get there. Migration patterns can indicate the various push-pull factors causing populations to move, and the data will also allow for better preparation, accountability, and access to the migrating populations.

For the focus of this research, the study site is Yemen migration patterns and the Yemeni Civil War and Crisis. Because of the regional scale of the ongoing Yemen migration, there may be dozens of factors related to the migration tendencies of Yemen since so much is going on in this region politically, economically, and socially. Yemen has been facing instability since its modern unification in 1990. Political movements in both the north and south of Yemen felt marginalized by the central government and the corruption of then President Saleh. After Saleh stepped down due to international pressure in 2011, the transitional government struggled to amend a new constitution. In 2014, the transitional government was overthrown by the Houthis who are Shia rebels backed by Iran. Al-Qaeda has taken advantage of the political instability capturing territory. By January 2010, Yemen had declared war on al-Qaeda. Because of the crisis, Yemen has suffered economically with its average income plummeting since 2010 (Callimachi, 2013; Laub, 2015; Burki, 2015).

Forms of migration within the borders of Yemen and out of Yemen into the surrounding countries like the United Arab Emirates will reflect the causes of migration using migration statistics from Abel 2014 and average income data from Gapminder. The reason for the migration patterns, within and out of Yemen, are due to the ongoing crisis in Yemen as it relates to its political, economic, and social

climate. In addition, another migration pathway between East Africa and Yemen, were migrants from East Africa seeking refuge in other parts of the Middle East and Asia are impeded from their destination at Yemen (IOM, 2018) due to the crisis.

The following research will be organized in terms of migration data relating to key events in Yemen's ongoing crisis. Using the year 2010, the data will show how the still plummeting average income in Yemen coincides with the al-Qaeda insurgency of that same year and the Houthi military rebellion of the previous year. Next, the data will that populations migrating within Yemen are migrating to the northwest of the country far away from the frontline of the civil war in the south of the country. Then, the data will show how populations migrating out of Yemen and into the United Arab Emirates have increased in number since the Yemeni Crisis began. Finally, the data will highlight East African populations backpedaling away from Yemen throughout the bulk of the crisis. The data will come from publicly provided sources such as Abel 2014 and Gapminder. Additional data is provided by various organizations such as the IOM, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA), and the Task Force for Population Movement (TFPM).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview on research related to the subsequent themes. The first theme illustrates migration in Yemen. The literature will focus on internal and out-migration. The next theme illustrates the Yemeni Crisis starting with the al-Qaeda insurgency in 2010. The literature will then focus on the Civil War and finish with the ecological, health, and financial issues that are ongoing in Yemen. The last theme illustrates the geopolitical implications of the crisis from both a historical and contemporary perspective as it relates

to trade through the Bab el-Mandeb strait and political interests from regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

### ***Migration***

The work done by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with respect to the Yemen Migration Crisis, is paramount in establishing well-organized data and information relating to migration as a humane benefit to society. This research is compiled in their “Yemen: Migration Crisis Operational Framework” (IOM, 2017). The data they provided gives insight into internally displaced people, or IDPs. The data reveals most people are moving into the Northwest portion of the country for reasons from fleeing the civil war to ecological disaster. Ultimately, there is an urgent need for a permanent home amongst the migrants, but finding a permanent home starts with alleviating pressure amongst host communities.

Migrants and refugees are also moving to other areas outside of Yemen. From the years 2005 – 2010, the most notable countries of destination for Yemeni migration include the United Arab Emirates with 79,636 migrants received, and Saudi Arabia with 30,126 migrants received (United Nations, 2019). The reason for a drop-in migration to Saudi Arabia may be due to the blockade imposed by Saudi-led coalitions. In the National Academy of Sciences Inaugural Articles (NAS), research shows the various reasons why a country of destination is chosen repeatedly. In the “The dynamics of mass migration” (Massey & Zenteno, 1999) refer to a process called ‘path dependence’ and the tendency for movement along a particular migration route which results from early migrants’ efforts. This phenomenon reduces the costs and risks for later arrivals.

Lastly, according the Refugee Outreach & Research Network (RORN), the large number of migrants into Yemen coming from countries in the Horn of Africa are not excused from the turmoil and chaos going on in Yemen. In “Patterns

of Migration in, from and to Yemen” (Weissenburger, 2018), Yemen historically has had a more liberal view on migration, however now views migrants as a security threat. Also, there is mistreatment of African migrants as they face horrible conditions, abuse, and kidnapping on a systematic scale. As a result, the journey many African migrants make end up with them returning to their home country.

### *Yemeni Crisis*

Research done by The Associated Press(AP) indicates a known long-term plan for the al-Qaeda Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) franchise in Yemen. In “Yemen terror boss left blueprint for waging jihad” (Callimachi, 2013), not only has al-Qaeda been taking advantage of the political turmoil in Yemen and seizing land and small villages, but al-Qaeda is also looking to set up alternatives to governments in places where there is little to no government. The reality is terror groups have had difficulty at this point and al-Qaeda’s transition from anti-Western terror group to governing populations using Islamic law will face considerable challenges as they would be too ideological to sustain long-term power.

Next, the research done by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) illustrates how the political turmoil is at the foreground of the crisis. In the article “Yemen in Crisis” (Laub, 2015), the secession of southern Yemen not only sparked the civil war, but also set off a chain of events causing further destruction in the country. These events include Saudi intervention, the fleeing of Yemenis by land and sea, and failure of political factions on both sides to arrive at a resolution. As a result, Houthi rebels are stationed in the capital of Sana’a while Hadi, who is still internationally recognized as President of Yemen, resides in Aden. So as Houthi rebels consolidate power of the capital, support from neighboring countries does not seem to solidify their position.

To close out the issue on the Yemeni crisis, the focus will now turn to the humanitarian issues plaguing this country. The research done by the World Report illustrates the many health problems that are going on with very little to no intervention and aid. In “Yemen health situation ‘moving from a crisis to a disaster’” (Burki, 2015), the gravity of the situation is dire and humanitarian assistance is a must. According to Burki, with no access to drinking water, no decent sanitation, and no access to health care, the Yemeni population is looking towards a worsening future. This parallels the water shortages and financial instability with water tables dropping 1100 meters since 1970 and the income plummeting since 2010, the year Yemen declared war on al-Qaeda. The insurgency of al-Qaeda in Yemen indicates a major turning point in the Yemen Crisis.

### ***Geopolitics***

In terms of geography, the Bab el-Mandeb strait, located off the coast of southwest Yemen, is a crucial maritime chokepoint. Northeast African Studies agree, and the fact the strait leads to the Red Sea, Suez Canal and beyond illustrates how important this feature is in global trade. In “An Aspect of the Geopolitics of the Red Sea” (Kendie, 1990), the historical significance of this region is obvious as well. Because it links the Mediterranean world with Asia and Africa, trade routes have always been an important geopolitical marker of the Bab el-Mandeb strait. Past powers from ancient and colonial times have all vied for power over the strait. Now in modern times, it appears regional and global powers still have interests especially when it comes to the millions of barrels of oil that pass through the strait every day.

In colonial times, the Bab el-Mandeb strait became a focus for European powers. The Naval War College Review (NWCRC) illustrates how the strait, Red Sea, and Suez Canal played a major role in shaping the geopolitics of the region

and Yemen's history. In "The Strategic Importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Horn of Africa" (Remnek, 1990), colonization was stimulated by the need to protect and support maritime traffic along the trade routes from Asia and Africa into the Mediterranean. In Yemen, the British and Ottomans are the powers who had greatest influence over the country. The north was an administrative district of the Ottoman Empire until 1918 and the south was a colony of the British Empire until 1963. Consequently, the north-south divide persisted. To this day, the border between the two coincides with the Bab el-Mandeb strait highlighting the strategic importance of maintaining power of the Red Sea trade route post.

The geopolitical significance of Yemen not only depends on the millions of gallons of oil that passes through the strait every day, but it also revolves around the display of dominance by regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Yemeni civil war. The New York Times reports how both powers have been contributing financially and militarily. In "With Arms for Yemen Rebels, Iran Seeks Wider Mideast Role" (Schmitt & Worth, 2012), Iran appears to be taking a more discreet role in backing Houthi-rebels in the north, while Saudi Arabia is taking a more overt approach in backing the south. Moreover, because of the unjust treatment by Saudi Arabia, northern Yemenis welcome the support from Iran who has been more sympathetic of their cause.

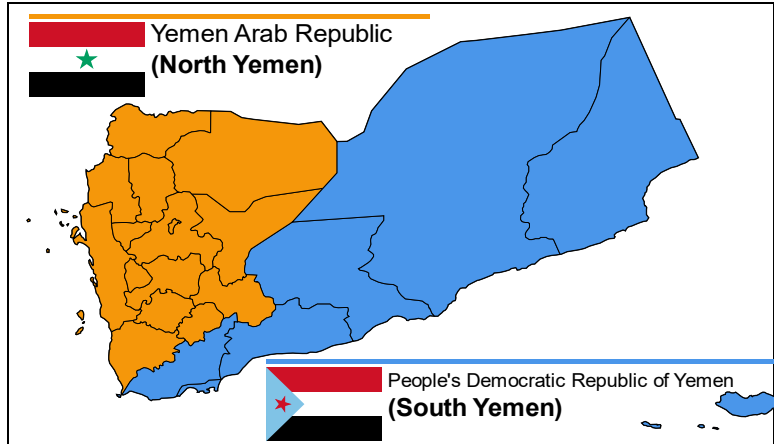


Figure 1. A map of the divide between North and South Yemen. Not only is this a political divide, but a historical divide between the Ottomans (North) and the British (South) and a religious divide between the Shia Arab (North) and Sunni Arab (South). Source: Wikipedia BY-SA 3.0 (2011).

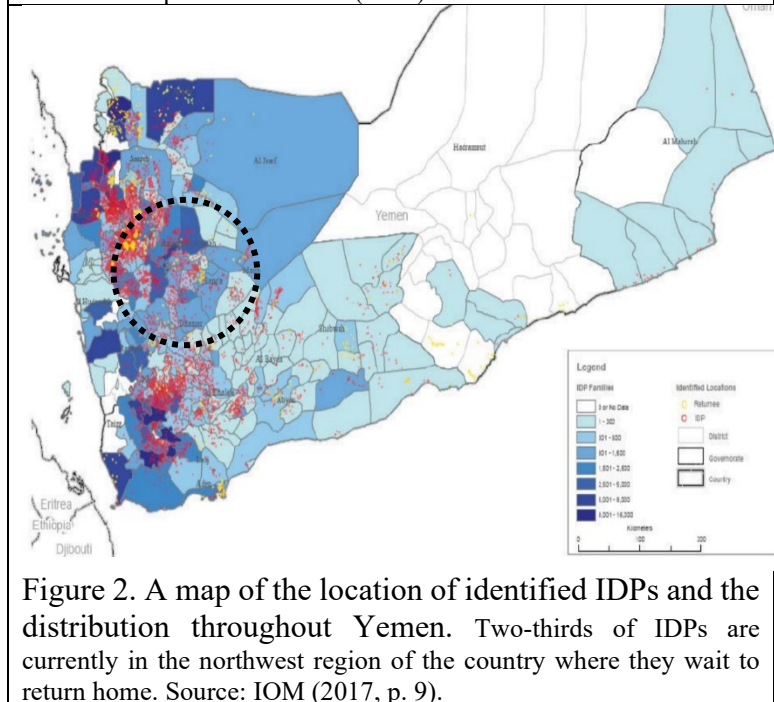


Figure 2. A map of the location of identified IDPs and the distribution throughout Yemen. Two-thirds of IDPs are currently in the northwest region of the country where they wait to return home. Source: IOM (2017, p. 9).



## STUDY SITE

Yemen is situated on the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula (Figure 3). It borders Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east. The bodies of water surrounding Yemen include the Red Sea to the west and the Arabian Sea to the south. Across the sea, to the east and southeast, lies the Horn of Africa. Yemen is a migration pathway within the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East. Migration not only occurs within the borders of Yemen, but also migration occurs from Yemen to the rest of the surrounding region like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In addition, many African migrants seeking refuge use Yemen as a migration route into the greater Middle East region. I chose this study site to assess how the location of Yemen itself, the Yemeni Crisis, and the Yemeni Civil War have impacted migration patterns in this region.

In a time of crisis, Yemen's location impacts migration patterns in comparison to other migration heavy regions like Saudi Arabia because of the various forms of migration occurring within Yemen and out of Yemen. Also, Yemen's location is a busy intersection for various populations since many migrants eventually wish to end up in the UAE. East African migrants may also use Yemen as a route but are then forced to turn around due to conflict. A bias of the study site is primarily related to the civil war which may influence the pattern of migration because most of the fighting is taking place in the south of the country. Internally displaced peoples (Figure 2) are more likely to migrate to the north of the country away from the fighting.



Figure 3. Map of the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding regions of East Africa and the Middle East. Map includes political boundaries, cities of interest, and bodies of water. Yemen is at a crossroads within Muslim world. Populations choosing not to stay in Yemen tend to head northwest towards Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

## METHODS

The migration pathways chosen to conduct the research on are the migration pathways from IDPs to the northwest portion of Yemen and from Yemen into the UAE. Data from these migration pathways measures individuals as they migrate from Yemen due to the Yemen Crisis and is compared to periods before the crisis occurred. What is evident is that both migration pathways have increased in numbers since the crisis in Yemen began.

Internal migration and data regarding Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) comes from Recent Location Assessments (RLM) conducted by the IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) across

Yemen. This included refugees at their new location and multiple displacements at identified returnee locations. The Task Force for Population Movement (TFPM) collected data using key informants at the community level to indicate the magnitude of needs for basic items and services such as food, access to income, drinking water, and shelter. Figures provided in the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) 2017-2018 Yemen issue (IOM, 2017) give visualizations on the data and stats. A chart from May 2015 to May 2016 shows IDP displacement trends using data from the TFPM. The report numbers, by month and year, range from 500,000 to 3 million. Significant data from the chart would be the minimum number of 545,719 internally displaced persons in Mid-May 2015 compared to the maximum number of 2,755,016 internally displaced persons in Apr 2016. The increase of over 2 million between the minimum and the maximum level of IDPs is important in understanding the increasing migration during the Yemeni Crisis.

Data regarding bilateral migrant flows were obtained from migrant stocks. Missing data was estimated using log-linear models. The Abel dataset is structured as an excel spreadsheet that is ready to download from the class resources. The data is divided up by 5-year intervals starting at 1990-1995 up until 2005-2010. For each 5-year period, the spreadsheet is divided up by 195 countries with estimated migration flows to each country for each 5-year period. Yemen is the 196<sup>th</sup> row. The UAE is column H. The total for Yemen migration into the UAE is contained within that cell where column H and row 196 intersect. Totals for each country's out-migration is the last column and totals for each country's in-migration is that last row. During 2000 - 2005, 19,931 Yemenis migrated to the UAE compared to 2005 - 2010, 79,636 Yemenis migrated to the UAE. The increase of 60,000 migrants into the UAE between 2000 - 2005 and

2005 – 2010 is important in understanding the increasing migration during the Yemen Crisis.

Gapminder is a Swedish foundation that serves as a fact tank for misconception about global development. Each data set, in this case income and life expectancy, has its own unique source and means of data collection. A link to a description of the sources is available next to each axis on the Gapminder website. For Income, the source for years since 2017 is from International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook. The income data is based off of GDP per capita adjusted for inflation and differences in the cost of living. A link to download an excel file with data countries, regions, and global total is available. It is version 25. Yemen income data will consist of the years 2009 to present. In 2010, average income was at \$4480 while in 2018, average income was at \$2430. The decrease in \$2000 is important in understanding the increase in migration due to the lack of economic stability during the Yemen Crisis. I use Life Expectancy as the other variable to show that while Yemen's life expectancy has stayed the same from 2010-2018, the average income has plummeted the most since the 1800s reflecting the economic and political instability currently within Yemen.

Data for East African migrant routes come in the form of data from the IOM UN Migration based on return routes from Yemen only. For the years between 2010 and 2018, 24,069 total migrants assisted to return home were split into country of origin and included 18,646 from Ethiopia, 3,889 from Somalia, 1,460 from Sudan and 74 from others such as Djibouti and Eritrea. Further specificities include the mode of migration route such as bus, plane, or boat, and from which Yemeni city did each migrant sail from such as the port cities of Aden and Hudaydah.

## RESULTS

Results from Yemeni IDPs coming from RLA conducted by IOM and UNHCR included IDP displacement trends from May 2015 to May 2016. By counting refugees and returning refugees at various locations across Yemen, TFPM was able to create a table showing the trends. According to the data collected in Figure 4, peaks in population span from October 2015 to April 2016. The highest recorded was 2,756,016 IDPs during April 2016. The Yemeni Civil War began March 2015 with fighting ongoing with the recent drone attacks on Saudi Oil facilities claimed by Houthi rebels in September 20. The increase of 2 million internally displaced persons at that time statistically coincides with migrants escaping the Yemen Crisis.

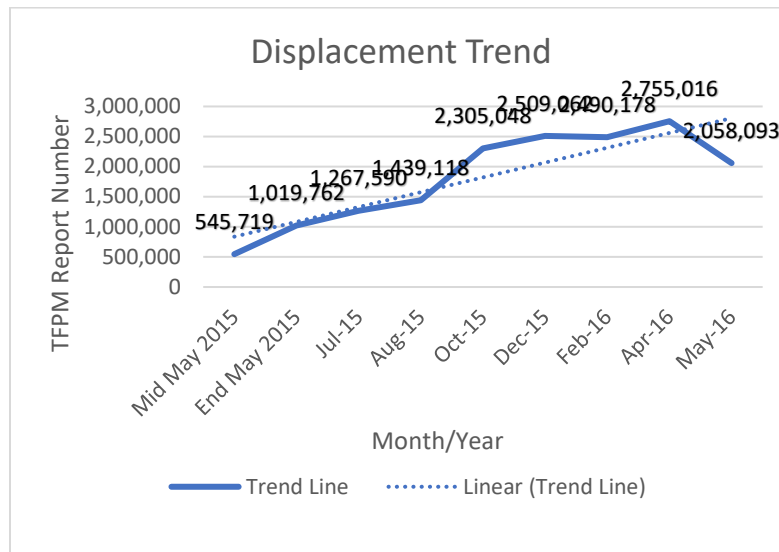


Figure 4. Graph of internally displaced persons in Yemen during a one-year period from May 2015 to May 2016. Increases in IDPs reach 2 million coinciding with migration away from the Yemen Crisis and civil war during that span of time.

Results from data provided by the IOM assesses IDPs migration within Yemen from January 2014 to September 2017. The data set, containing 3563 observations, is compared to historical averages and is presented as percentages (Figure 5). In addition, statistics on food prices and fuel prices are included as percentages of their historical average during the same time period. Spikes in IDPs arrivals occur from January 2015 to August 2015 with a max of 800% of historical IDPs arrivals at April 2015. Spikes in fuel prices occur from July 2015 to March 2016 with a max of 300% of historical wages at September 2015. Food prices stay relatively unchanged except for around February 2016. Wage data was unavailable for Yemen from this source. Internally displaced persons increased to 800% in 2015 coinciding with the same year the Yemen Civil War began. Migrants have fled migrating to other areas of Yemen primarily the northwest of the country.

Results explaining bilateral migration use data from the Abel 2014 dataset. It is regarding the time periods 2000-2005 and 2005-2010 which come at a key point in the evolution of the Yemeni Crisis as fighting against both Houthi rebels and al-Qaeda increases. From 2000-2005, 19,931 Yemeni migrants are reported to have migrated into the UAE. From 2005-2010, 79,636 Yemeni migrants are reported to have migrated into the UAE (Table 1). This 400% increase in migration to the UAE coincides with the al-Qaeda insurgency and closing of US and UK embassies in Yemen and the Houthi rebellion. While al-Qaeda's infiltration into Yemen was already present, these events escalated when Yemen declared open war on al-Qaeda in January 2010.

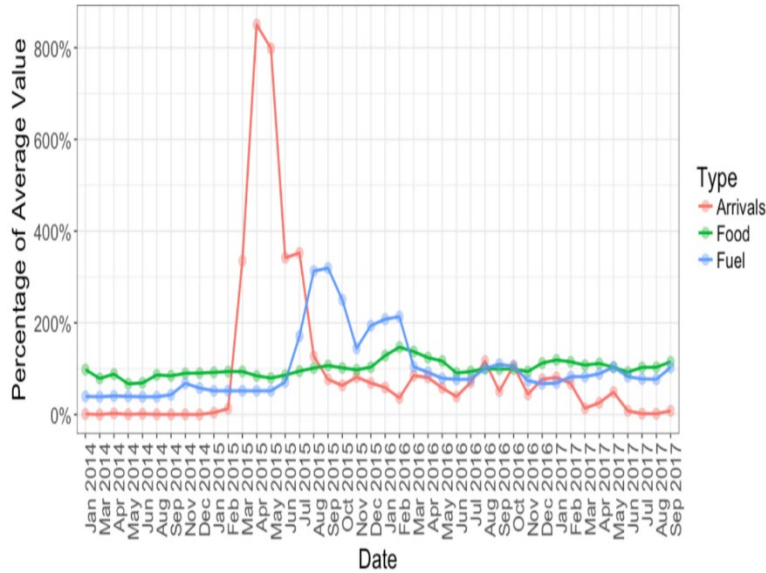


Figure 5. Graph showing increase in internally displaced persons as percentages of average value. An increase up to 800% compared to historical average values is shown in 2015 when the Civil War began.

Abel Dataset	2000-2005	2005-2010
Yemen (Origin) to the United Arab Emirates (Destination)	19,931	79,636

Table 1. Abel 2014 excel spreadsheet dataset comparing Yemen migration to the UAE for the 5-year periods of 2000-2005 and 2005-2010. An increase of 60,000 migrants moving to the UAE between the two time periods is indicative of the al-Qaeda insurgency and increasing clashes from the Houthi rebels in the Yemen Crisis.

Results from Gapminder show the average income of Yemen from 2010-2016 decreasing (Figure 6). Yemen had an increasing income rate until 2010. At this point income

was \$4,480 per person. In 2016 it dropped to \$2,330 per person, the lowest point during that 6-year period. The point at which the income level starts to decrease coincides with the al-Qaeda insurgency and closing of the US and UK embassies in 2010. Then it continued to decrease coinciding with the Houthi rebellion in 2014 and the civil war in 2015. The decrease in average income coincides with migrants escaping the terrorism and civil war surrounding the Yemen Crisis and the economic instability of a warzone.

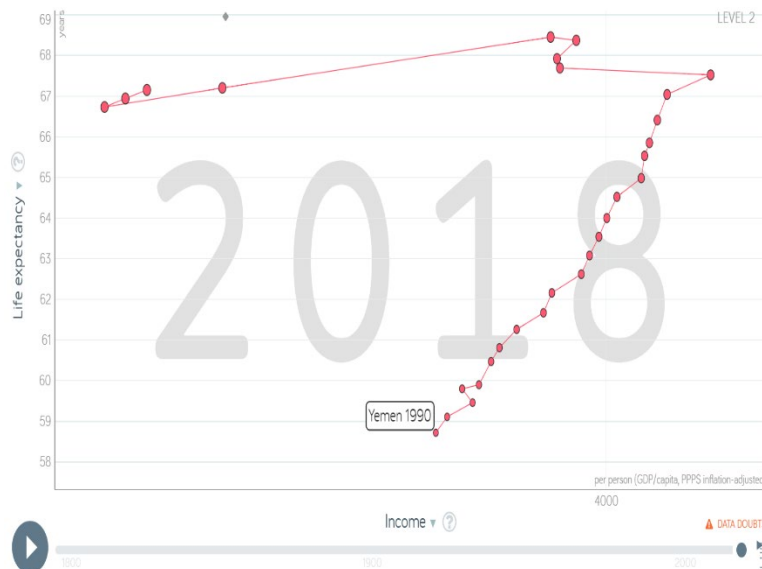


Figure 6. This graph shows the average income level plummeting from 2010 (the rightmost point) to its lowest point in 2016 (the leftmost point). Life Expectancy is used as a dummy variable to better visualize the plummeting average income level and has no other purpose. The increasing migration rates coincides with the decreasing average income due to the Yemen Crisis.



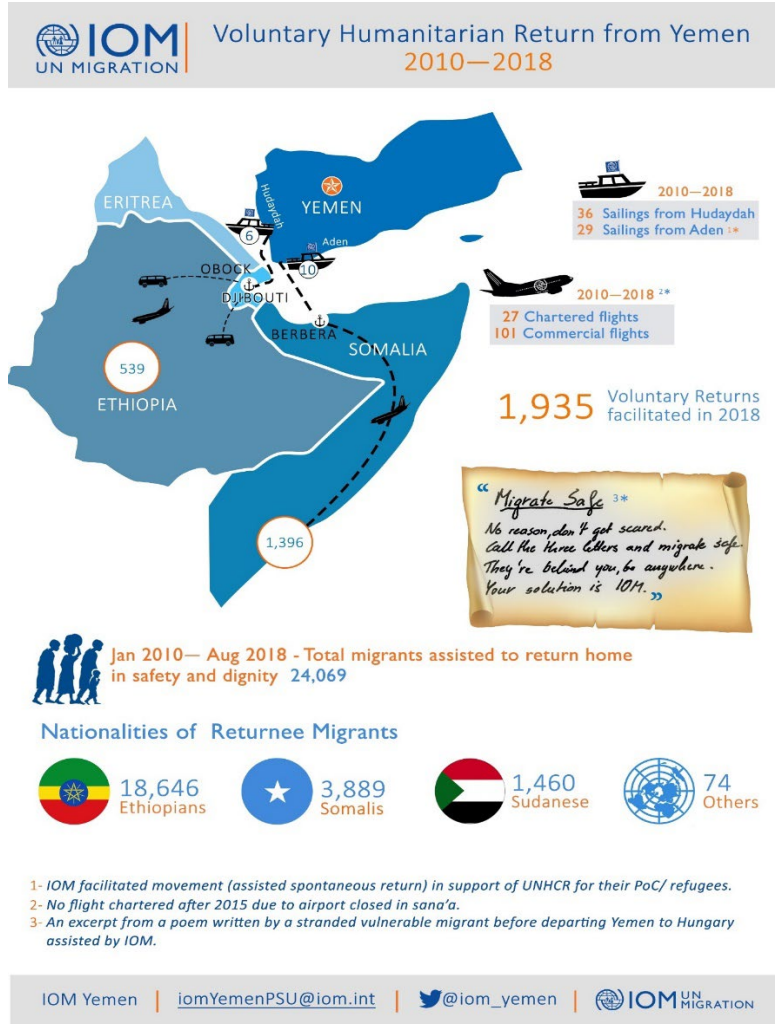


Figure 7. This map illustrates the uncertainty and lack of data regarding the true number of East African refugees returning home from their failed migration into the Middle East through Yemen. According to the IOM, only 24,069 returnee migrants have been accounted for. This means that the true number of East African migrants being redirected back home must be much higher.

## DISCUSSION

### *Interpretation of the Results*

The data provided by Abel 2014, Gapminder, and the IOM reflects individuals migrating along different pathways as they escape the Yemen crisis. The data reflects measurements taken by various organizations to keep track of the migration process. The chosen data reflects how more migrants are ending up in northwest Yemen (Figure 2) and the UAE (Figure 3) than before the crisis in Yemen began.

IDPs and refugees within Yemen are migrating to the northwest portion of the country. Data shows that most of the migrants are choosing the northwest region as their destination as opposed to other parts of the country. Northwest Yemen is far away from the civil war in the south of the country and far from any big cities that are major sites of political unrest, famine, and disease. Migrants moving outside of Yemen into the UAE have been increasing in numbers. From 2005 to 2010 the UAE have received 79,636 migrants compared to 19,931 from 2000 to 2005 (Table 1). The year 2010 coincides with key events in the Yemen Crisis. The US embassy closes in 2010 due to terrorist threats and the al-Qaeda insurgency in Yemen began. Then in 2012, the Yemeni Revolution culminated with then President Saleh leaving office.

East African migrants seeking refuge in the Middle East through Yemen are forced to return home due to the conflict in Yemen (Figure 7). However, the 24,069 returnee migrants that are accounted for is speculated to be much higher. The speculation of a higher number may be due to East African seeking migration pathways through unconventional means such as smuggling. In other cases, the returnee migrants may also be stuck in the middle of conflict zones and unable to find a way back home. In worst case scenarios, the returnee migrants may have been kidnapped, tortured and abused, or held for ransom.

### ***Limitations***

Biases regarding internally displaced persons might include those already located in northwest Yemen and migrated to a host community within the northwest region. This means that these internally displaced persons might have different factors other than the crisis such as to be with family or to get access to services. Migrants could also be migrating from other places into Yemen like those migrants leaving East Africa. Also, once the migrants from East Africa are in Yemen, many of them intend to migrate into other countries like the UAE. Due to the complexity of the Yemeni Crisis and the various problems going on in Yemen, it is hard to narrow down the exact reasons for why the migrants choose specific migration pathways. Unless the research was done on an individual basis, accounting for what one migrant's reason is for choosing their migration pathway versus another migrant's reason, perhaps more research would have resulted in similar results.

### ***Connections to Prior Scholarship***

Migration occurring in Yemen and other areas of the world like Syria will have similar reasons for out migration. These countries have domestic terrorism and political instability. Not all places have the same reasons for migration. For example, out migration in Mexico might be due to economic instability and wanting to seek better economic opportunities. When migration depends on each individual and each family, using migration statistics helps understand migration pathways because it measures the magnitude of these pathways showing which pathways are more significant. Mentioning 'path dependence' from the Massey & Zenteno article (1990) does explain the tendency for movement along particular migration pathways that early migrants have already established. Path dependence is then safer and cheaper for new migrants. The issue with path dependence, however, is new migrants are moving along

well known and heavily used paths, so it becomes harder to indicate the individual reasons for migrating in the first place. Migrants will have to choose between migrating along a heavily used and less expensive path, that may not even end up at the migrants' intended destination or have much harder access to a path that leads to the migrants' intended destination.

## CONCLUSION

Migration due to the Yemeni Crisis is an important topic within population geography. Yemeni people migrate away from war, terrorism, and economic instability. Yemenis are migrating regionally into northwest Yemen and into the UAE. Using publicly available data, migration rates were compared between time periods before and after the Yemeni Crisis began. Because the crisis is ongoing, migration continues due to the Houthi uprising, al-Qaeda insurgency, and civil war.

For migration within Yemen to the northwest of the country and migration from Yemen into the United Arab Emirates, statistical analysis has shown increases in migration rates for both migration pathways during the onset and ongoing Yemeni Crisis. As prior research has mentioned, it is inevitable that people in time of crisis are going to flee in hopes of finding safety. In the case of the Yemeni Crisis, internally displaced persons have fled to the northwest corner of the country far from the civil war in the south. However, terrorism and economic instability persist within the country. Migration to the UAE has become a new destination for migrants from Yemen during the crisis compared to before the crisis.

In addition, the complete breakdown of East African migrant routes through Yemen have exacerbated migrants seeking refuge by denying them their basic human rights and turning them away. With instability faced back home, East

African migrants may choose other pathways that have not yet been accounted for. Only those returning through conventional means such as boat, airplane, and bus, have seen a safe and dignified return. Those without that same access have gone through a much more hospitable journey than they already have been going through.

A question regarding the research has to do with how to more accurately access, collect, and communicate data regarding migration. In an ideal research scenario, the data would be updated daily. However, migration data on Yemen is much more difficult to collect especially due to the instability of the region. Being able to organize the data of the Yemeni Crisis into an attribute table can make a big difference in research and humanitarian aid. It would also be useful in preparation of future crises.

### **RECENT CHRONOLOGY (2020 – PRESENT)**

**January-February 2020** – Fighting amongst the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis resumes. Houthi forces launch missile attacks on military training camps and in Saudi Arabia’s southern provinces. They claim to “liberate” roughly 1,550 square miles of territory in the al-Jawf and Marib governorates from Saudi-led forces, a claim the coalition denies.

**March 2020** – Houthi forces capture the strategic city of al-Hazm in the al-Jawf offensive and Saudi forces retaliate with an air strike on Sanaa. This occurs as the United Nations preaches to maintain the cease-fire during the COVID-19 outbreak to prevent its spread in Yemen.

The Trump Administration announces a hold on the \$73 million in humanitarian aid to Yemen, fearing the Houthi rebels would take over the assistance.

**April-May 2020** – In April, Saudi Arabia begins a unilateral two-week cease-fire to mitigate the risks of the new coronavirus pandemic. Days later, Yemen has its first recorded case of COVID-19. Despite the cease-fire, the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition are accused of facilitating further attacks. In the south, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) starts to demand self-rule once again, breaking its agreement with the national government.

**June-November 2020** – In June, the STC deposes the official government in Socotra, with government supporters preaching the move as a coup d'état. The following month, the STC says it has redacted its claim to self-rule and will return to the power-sharing structure previously agreed-upon. In October, the warring sides in Yemen carry out the conflict's largest prisoner exchange. By November, Saudi Arabia and the Houthis have reportedly initiated under the table talks, with Saudi officials demonstrating their willingness to sign a cease-fire deal and end the Saudi air and sea blockade in exchange for the creation of a buffer zone between Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen and the kingdom's borders. The Houthis later fired a missile at the coastal Saudi city of Jeddah.

**December 2020** – The STC and the Hadi government officialize a consequent power-sharing agreement in Aden. Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed is reestablished as head of the Hadi government's new cabinet, with seats going also to both the STC and Yemen's Islah Party. Just weeks later, as the new cabinet begins to set up in Aden from Saudi Arabia, an assault on the airport kills at least two dozen people, and coincidentally no ministers. The Hadi government, the STC, and much of the international community condemn the Houthis for the attack and Saudi warplanes perform retaliatory raids on Sanaa.

**January 2021** – The Trump Administration takes advantage of the December attack to justify labelling the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). The Houthis are still able to garner support over 70-80 percent of the Yemeni population and threaten Marib, a stronghold near the northeast corner of their control zone.

**February 2021** – President Joe Biden declares revisions to US policy toward Yemen, including reversing the Houthi FTO designation, stating an end to US support for the Saudi-led coalition's offensive operations in the conflict, appointing Timothy Lenderking as a special envoy for Yemen, favoring the UN-led peace process, and giving assurances to Saudi Arabia regarding the defense of its territory. Houthi rebels engage in an offensive in Marib city, the final stronghold of government forces in the north and in proximity to some of northern Yemen's most potentially lucrative old fields. Marib hosts nearly one million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and serious conflict is expected to displace thousands more.

**March 2021** – Fighting between the Hadi government and the Houthis escalates in Marib governorate coinciding with ongoing Houthi missile and drone attacks against Saudi oil facilities, airports, and airbases. Saudi Arabia responds with airstrikes in Sanaa. The US condemns Houthi actions. Riyadh offers a ceasefire, which includes reopening of Hodeida seaport and Sanaa airport. Houthis deny the proposal.

**April-May 2021** – Strikes and counterstrikes are ongoing. The UN Security Council and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif support a ceasefire between the various Yemeni actors. In a discussion with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the US's Lenderking pushes for the Saudi-led coalition to lighten the grip of the blockade

on Hodeida and Sanaa. The Houthis reject meeting up with then-UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths about the de-escalation of the conflict.

**August 2021** – Amid the air attacks from Houthi rebels, the Biden Administration takes away its most advanced missile defense systems from Saudi Arabia. This follows a Houthi attack that harmed eight civilians and a commercial airliner on Saudi soil. The UN outgoing special envoy for Yemen announces nearly 20 million people, or two-thirds of the country's population, are completely reliant on humanitarian aid for daily needs. Five million “are one step away from succumbing to famine and the diseases that go with it,” he warns. As Houthis continue to gain ground against Hadi government forces in Marib, Oman proposes to host a peace deal between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis. Houthi negotiators reject to meet with the newly appointed UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, before the Saudi-led coalition commits to the full removal of the blockade on Hodeida and Sanaa.

**September 2021** – Houthi rebels capture Rahabeh, a key district in the south of Marib. Government forces had recaptured Rahabeh from Houthi control in July 2021. The Houthis continue to advance in the battle for Marib city. Government security forces kill three protestors in response to widespread protests across southern Yemen. Yemeni people take to the streets over the failure of Yemen's currency and lack of basic daily necessities. On September 18, Houthis murder nine people on charges of involvement in the Saudi-led coalition airstrike in April 2018. The strike killed Saleh Ali al-Sammad, the Houthi-aligned de facto president of Yemen. On September 27, a US official delegation (including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Timothy Lenderking, and the NSC's Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk) meet



with Mohammed bin Salman and Deputy Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman to urge for a diplomatic solution for the conflict.

**October 2021** – The United Nations Human Rights Council votes to not go through with renewing the mandate for the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE), the single independent body monitoring all parties involved in the conflict. Saudi Arabia is suspected of trying to shut down the investigation, which had reported possible war crimes committed by all parties in 2018. Conflict continues around Marib between Hadi government and the Houthis. On October 17, Houthis win control of the Usaylan, Bayhan, and Ain districts of Shabwa Governate and the al-Abdiyah and Harib districts of Marib Governate.

**November 2021** – Houthis gain control of the former premises of the US Embassy in Sanaa, capturing local employees. The United States demands their immediate release and to vacate the premises. Houthis capture the Marib's districts of al-Jubah and Jabal Murad, after last month taking of al-Abdiyah and Harib. Government forces begin preparing to defend their last remaining northern stronghold, Marib city. Some two-million civilians are now trapped in Marib Governorate. Coalition-aligned forces leave the port city Hodeida, allowing rebels to retake the city. A 2018 cease-fire agreement prevented conflict between the two sides, and government forces state they are troops from Hodeida to send them to reinforce the front lines.

**December 2021** – Due to inefficient international funding, the World Food Program (WFP) stops food aid to Yemen. In November 2021, WFP targeted 11.1 million for food assistance. The cost of food dramatically rises as the humanitarian situation falters.

**January – February 2022** – Houthi rebels begin a series of unprecedented attacks against the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, such as air attacks across the border and seizing a UAE vessel in the Red Sea. The Saudi-led coalition counters with a bombing campaign in Sanaa, an attack on a northern prison, and a strike on a telecoms facility in Hodeida culminating in a four-day internet blackout across the country. UAE-backed forces take back control of areas near Marib. On February 23, the US Treasury Department announces new sanctions against individuals participating in a funding network for the Houthis. The United Nations Security Council renews for one year its arms embargo on Yemen and a travel ban and asset freeze on actors who threaten the peace. The Council shames Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE that assaulted civilians and civilian infrastructure. (Four countries abstain: Mexico, Ireland, Norway, and Russia).

**March 2022** – On March 6, the Houthis achieve a deal with the United Nations to attend to the issue of an abandoned oil tanker in the Red Sea, the FSO Safer, that posed a threat of an enormous oil spill. The World Food Program declares that the humanitarian circumstance in Yemen is worsening because of the Russian war on Ukraine. Houthis continue attacks against Saudi oil facilities, while the coalition continues its strikes against Sanaa and Hodeida. GCC-sponsored talks in Riyadh begin between the various parties to the Yemen conflict. The Houthis decline to participate, stating that the talks should occur in a neutral country. Saudi Arabia announces on the same day the termination of all military operations in Yemen as of March 30.

**April 2022** – The UN brokered a two-month truce between warring parties that is to begin with the holy month of Ramadan. The agreement is a notable step toward peace, as the last nationwide coordinated cessation of hostilities was

during peace talks in 2016. As peace efforts gain traction with a two-month ceasefire, exiled President Abdrabbu Mansour Hadi transfers powers to a new Presidential Leadership Council. Led by Rashad al-Alimi, members of the council were selected at GCC-sponsored talks in Riyadh, and include individuals associated with the secessionist Southern Transitional Council as well as those formerly part of the government under Hadi. Hadi fires Vice President Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who has long been resented by the Houthis, and delegates his powers to the presidential council. After the transfer of power is announced, Saudi Arabia and the UAE say they will provide \$3 billion to support Yemen's decimated economy. Despite the two-month truce, Houthi forces resume attacks on the front lines of the battle for Marib which have been static since February, when UAE backed forces pushed Houthis out of the center of the Hareb district. Houthi rebels sign an "action plan" to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. A senior Houthi military official had said in 2018 that the group inducted 18,000 child soldiers into its army, some of whom as young as 10 years old.

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