



Statement on the death of 42 migrants off the coast of Djibouti

At least 42 migrants died on their return journey from Yemen on 12 April 2021, after their boat capsized off the coast of Djibouti.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the boat commandeered by people smugglers transported approximately 60 migrants, including many children. The migrants originated from the Horn of Africa and were attempting to return home after their migration journey along the Eastern Route was cut short in war-torn Yemen.

This tragic incident is far from isolated. Over the past year, the situation in Yemen and border closure with Saudi Arabia prompted the spontaneous return of Ethiopians from Yemen through Djibouti, with over 5,180 returns between May and November 2020 and 2,343 in March 2021 alone. Returnees report extreme violence at the hand of smugglers, armed groups, government authorities but also other migrants. Migrants returning through Djibouti are dropped off the coast of Obock and, in addition to the dangers of travelling by boat, the 50 kilometres journey through the desert often results in loss of lives.

The situation of migrants along the Eastern Route – the busiest mixed migration route in the world – is alarming as the route has become more perilous in recent years. Movement is highly regulated by smuggling networks and human rights abuses are frequent and well documented, including detention and physical abuse.

DRC aims to scale up its mixed migration programming along the Eastern Route with cross-border protection monitoring and assistance, as well as advocacy on the rights of migrants and refugees.