

ACTIVITY: Murder

CASE: [GSAF 2007.03.22](#)

DATE: Thursday March 22, 2007

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Aden off Ras-Alkalb, Yemen.

NAMES: Unknown

DESCRIPTION: Ethiopian and Somali refugees

BACKGROUND

HISTORY: For the entire four-month period of the so-called smuggling season thousands of refugees have fled from East Africa to Yemen during calm sea conditions. They set forth in fragile, overcrowded boats and many do not survive. Since early September 2006, staff of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) have transported refugees to their reception center near Bir'Ali in southern Yemen for medical care, food and assistance from UNHCR and its partners. The refugees include Somalis, Ethiopians and Sudanese. UNHCR has repeatedly called for international action to tackle the root causes of the smuggling, including protection for the victims and prosecution of smugglers. The migrants are mostly men who cite insecurity, drought and economic hardship reasons for leaving. Smugglers, usually Somali, often drop migrants in deep waters because Yemeni authorities have increased sea patrols closer to shore.

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ENVIRONMENT: The Gulf of Aden is a deepwater basin that forms a natural sea link between the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. Named after the seaport of Aden, in southern Yemen, the gulf is situated between the coasts of Arabia and the Horn of Africa. To the west, it connects with the Red Sea through the Bab el Mandeb sound. Its eastern geographic limits are defined by the meridian of Cape Guardafui (51°16'E). The Gulf of Aden is about 900 km long, and 500 km wide at the eastern end, between Ra's Asir in Somalia and the city of al-Mukalla in Yemen. Opposite the Somali port of Bosaso the Gulf of Aden is some 350 kilometres wide and it is from Bosaso in Puntland, Somalia, that most refugees make the perilous crossing aboard smugglers' boats.

NARRATIVE: The UNHCR said that at least 29 people were confirmed dead and 71 others reported missing after knife-wielding smugglers forced some 450 Somalis and Ethiopians into stormy seas off the coast of Yemen on March 22, 2007. The incident, the latest in a series of tragedies involving smugglers' boats carrying people across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia, occurred along a remote stretch of Yemen coastline. Some of the 293 survivors and other witnesses were cited as saying that four smugglers' boats carrying about 450 passengers approached the coastline early Thursday morning in rough seas and strong currents. The smugglers forced their passengers overboard far from shore so they could make a speedy departure after being spotted by Yemeni security forces. "Some of the survivors said those who resisted were stabbed and beaten with wooden and steel clubs, then thrown overboard *where some were attacked by sharks. Several recovered bodies*



showed signs of severe mutilation," the UNHCR press release said. Survivors also reported that several Ethiopian women and at least one Somali were raped and abused by the smugglers during the voyage from Bosaso in Somalia's Puntland region. Survivors also alleged that some Yemeni security forces confiscated their money once they crossed the Gulf of Aden and reached shore.

UNHCR records show that some 26,000 people made the perilous voyage across the Gulf of Aden in 2006, and that at least 330 died. Another 300 were reported missing and believed dead. Since the first of this year, at least 4,400 people have landed on the Yemeni coast. Many remain missing. The UNHCR press release, added that it brought the total number of dead and missing so far this year is 262 after attempting the crossing by boat to Yemen to escape violence and anarchy in Somalia.

Two more boats carrying 330 Somalis and Ethiopians arrived in Yemen on Saturday, but no casualties were reported.

INJURIES: Fatal.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified.

SOURCES: <http://lfpres.ca/newsstand/News/International/2007/03/27/3843900-sun.html>
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/KHII-6ZP367?OpenDocument>



Bir'Ali