

Going on Tahriib

*The causes and consequences of
Somali youth migration to Europe*



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Map 1. Somalia



Map 2. Approximate tahrrib routes taken by research respondents

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Summary

In Somaliland and Puntland,¹ accounts of young people embarking on the hazardous journey to Europe via the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean are widespread. In current parlance, these young people are said to be ‘going on *tahriib*’, with groups of friends and peers often undertaking this journey together. ‘Tahriib’, an Arabic word that has gained prominence and popularity in the Somali language, is mainly associated with illegal activities such as smuggling and trafficking. In the contemporary Somali lexicon, the word ‘tahriib’ is mostly used to refer to the emigration of young Somali men—and to a lesser extent women—leaving for Europe via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, and then across the Mediterranean Sea.

Although there is a lack of reliable statistics, perceptions on the ground suggest that incidences of young people going on tahriib are pervasive, with many households directly or indirectly impacted by this migratory trend. Tahriib has now become a cause of large-scale community outcry. In Somaliland, it is considered *aafo qaran* (a national disaster) and awareness campaigns to discourage young people from embarking on this journey are prevalent. In primary and secondary schools and on university campuses, talks and workshops about the dangers of tahriib are frequent occurrences. In mosques, sermons about tahriib, with some declaring it *haram* (prohibited) are not uncommon. Governments are also trying to find strategies to halt tahriib. In June 2013, for example, the president of Somaliland issued a decree to create a ministerial committee on tahriib—the Committee on Illegal Migration and Unemployment—mandated to curb the trend through employment generation. It is difficult to assess how effective these efforts are. It does seem clear, however, that the number of youth going on tahriib is not declining. As a government official in Hargeysa notes in despair, ‘It is a virus! Once it gets into their heads, there is no cure.’²

¹ Somaliland seceded unilaterally from Somalia in 1991. Puntland was declared an autonomous region of Somalia in 1998.

² Interview with government official, Hargeysa, 29 July 2015.

Five specific features about this journey set tahriib apart from previous migration trends in Somaliland and Puntland. First, it is largely a youth phenomenon, with the majority of people embarking on tahriib when they are eighteen to twenty-one years old. A small but significant minority leave when they are under eighteen, including children as young as fourteen years old. The majority of these young people are in secondary school or in the early years of their university education. Although incidences of young people travelling alone are not new in the Somali context, this journey differs in terms of the sheer number of young people going on tahriib.

Second, human smugglers nearly always facilitate the journey. Smugglers operating in Somaliland and Puntland have been adept in finding a way to make tahriib attractive and accessible to young people. In particular, smugglers operate a leave now–pay later scheme, removing a key obstacle and significantly lowering the initial costs.

Third, the deferred payment scheme operated by smugglers eliminates the need to involve other family members in the decision-making process. In previous forms of Somali migration, the emigration of a family member has been part of a household livelihood strategy, a way to diversify household income and minimize risks. In contrast, tahriib is largely an individual affair. Young people typically leave without informing their families and it can take many days—an average of 11—before families receive confirmation that their missing sons or daughters are on tahriib.

Fourth, the majority of young people on tahriib are held for ransom at some point during their journey, often more than once. Demands are then placed on their families in Somaliland and Puntland to release them. Although families are not involved in their children’s decision to go on tahriib, they quickly find themselves involved, spending an average of around USD 7,700 on tahriib-related expenses—mostly for ransom payments. It is common for households to borrow money or distress sell key assets such as land and livestock, at prices below the prevailing market rate to raise the required money. This leaves families vulnerable to future livelihood shocks.

Fifth, tahriib also carries a non-material cost for both the young people who undertake this journey and their families left behind. For young people, incidences of abuse and death are common, either at the hands of smugglers and other actors involved in facilitating this journey at different transit points or as a result of poorly equipped vehicles and vessels used to cross the Sahara and the Mediterranean. For the families left behind, the period of not knowing the whereabouts of a family member disrupts the household's routine, including established eating and sleeping patterns and school attendance.

While the potential for remittance receipts in the future could reverse some of the material losses tahriib causes households, securing refugee status is a lengthy process and is not guaranteed. This is partly due to the tightening of immigration rules in Europe, as well as the sheer numbers of people arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean—more than a million people in 2015—which has overwhelmed immigration regimes. In the past, most Somalis have been granted refugee status but this may change if European countries follow Finland's lead and declare Somalia a safe country, revoking Somali eligibility to apply for asylum under the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention.

1. Introduction

3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'The Sea Route to Europe: The Mediterranean Passage in the Age of Refugees', Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, July 2015.

4 'Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response–Mediterranean', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=105>.

5 Frontex (The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) manages the external borders of EU member states and was established in its current form in October 2004.

6 Figure 1 does not take into account the number of Somalis who enter undetected or are still en route.

7 For more information, see: <http://4mi.regionalmms.org/4mi.html>.

8 'Somalia: Unemployment Fuels Youth Exodus from Somaliland', *IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 22 November 2011.

Although there is a lack of reliable data, it is difficult, in the words of one respondent, 'to find a home that has not been impacted by tahriib. If it is not your child, it is a child of your brother or sister.' The pervasiveness of tahriib can also be gauged from numerous accounts of families struggling to cope with the flight of their young, who often leave without a word. A forty-eight-year-old mother succinctly summarizes this reality:

They are all leaving. All the young people are leaving. They die in the desert. They die in the sea. Thankfully, my son made it to Sweden. But they have locked him up for two years now. He was only sixteen years old and now he is wasting his life in jail.... I wish he were here with us going to school. Now he has nothing. No family and no education.... I thank God he is alive but we have lost everything. I have no gold, no land and he is in jail.

Europe is the primary destination for young people leaving Somaliland and Puntland on tahriib. During the first six months of 2015, Somalis (from Somalia and Somaliland) were among the top five nationalities migrating to Europe and accounted for five per cent of all sea arrivals.³ From January to July 2016, Somalis were among the top ten nationalities arriving in Italy via the Mediterranean.⁴ According to Frontex,⁵ the number of Somalis detected crossing the external European Union borders illegally has been rising since 2012. The statistics in Figure 1 (overleaf) list the estimated number of Somalis who have been detected crossing the external borders of the European Union.⁶

Correlating the number of Somalis entering Europe with the numbers leaving the Somali regions is a challenge. Although public perception indicates that incidences of young people going on tahriib are prevalent, reliable statistics are difficult to find. This is due to the clandestine nature of tahriib arrangements, poorly controlled borders in the Horn of Africa and the lack of dedicated

government or non-government institutions to monitor movements of people.⁷

Nonetheless, various estimates are available. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that between August and October 2011, some 3,500 young men and women left Somaliland heading to Libya.⁸ In 2012, approximately 300 to 350 young people are reported to have left Somaliland during the last three months of that year.⁹ In June 2013, the press in Somaliland estimates that 150 people per month were heading to Libya from Somaliland.¹⁰ A UNHCR-commissioned study on mixed migration estimates that some 500 to 3,000 people cross the Somaliland–Ethiopia border each month en route to Libya.¹¹

FIGURE 1. ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS: THE NUMBER OF SOMALIS DETECTED CROSSING EXTERNAL EUROPEAN UNION BORDERS, 2010–2015



Source: Frontex Quarterly Reports.¹²

Contextual meaning of *tahriib*

Tahriib is an Arabic word that has gained prominence and popularity in the contemporary Somali language—*wuu tahribay* (he has gone on tahriib) or *way tahriibtay* (she has gone on tahriib) are words frequently heard in conversations in Somaliland and

Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/94285/somalia-unemployment-fuels-youth-exodus-from-somaliland>.

9 'SOMALIA: Illegal Migration on the Rise in Somaliland', *IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 3 December 2012. Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=96948>.

10 Yusuf M. Hasan, 'Somaliland: President Silanyo Appoints Committee on Illegal Immigration and Unemployment', *Somaliland Sun*, 25 June 2013. Accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.somalilandsun.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3187:somaliland-president-silanyo-appoints-committee-illegal-immigration-and-unemployment-&catid=44:government&Itemid=647.

11 Altai Consulting, 'Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads. Mapping of Migration Routes from Africa to Europe and Drivers of Migration in Post-Revolution Libya', Tripoli: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 2013, 35. Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52b43f594.pdf>.

12 Reports by European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex), *passim*.

13 In this report, the word ‘tahriib’ is used as both a noun and a verb, which reflects its usage in Somali.

14 Hans Weir, *Arabic–English Dictionary. The Hans Weir Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, J. Milton Cowan, ed., Ithaca, New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1976.

15 Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, ‘Going West: contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya & Europe’, Mixed Migration Research Series: explaining people on the move, Study 5, Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, June 2014; Danish Refugee Council, “‘We Risk Our Lives for Our Daily Bread.’ Findings of the Danish Refugee Council Study of Mixed Migration in Libya’, Copenhagen: Danish Refugee Council, December 2013; and Altai Consulting, ‘Mixed Migration’.

16 These sites were selected for two reasons. First, both cities are closely linked to this journey—youth from Garowe almost exclusively transit through Hargeysa—and are locally known to be key operating grounds for the smugglers who facilitate tahriib. Second, as the capital of Somaliland (Hargeysa) and the administrative capital of Puntland (Garowe), most government and non-governmental institutions are located in these cities, which are also large urban centres. Hargeysa, the

Puntland.¹³ In Arabic, tahriib is mainly associated with illegal activities such as smuggling and trafficking.¹⁴ In the contemporary Somali lexicon, the word ‘tahriib’ is mostly used to refer to the migration of young Somali men—and to a lesser extent women—leaving for Europe via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, and then across the Mediterranean Sea.

It is not clear when tahriib started to be used within the Somali context but anecdotal evidence suggests it may have been in use in the 1970s to refer to the labour migration of Somalis to the Gulf States. Use of this word to describe the migration of young Somalis to Europe began to take hold during the mid-2000s, possibly because the number of young people leaving for Europe via this route increased.

In Somaliland and Puntland, tahriib is predominantly used to describe the journey to Europe, using the popular route via Ethiopia and Libya. There are, however, many other routes and destinations young people from the Somali regions follow that may also be referred to as tahriib; for example, going to southern Africa via Kenya and Tanzania or to the Gulf States via Yemen. The focus here is only on the movement of young Somalis to Europe via Libya.

Tahriib is frequently described as ‘dangerous’ and ‘illegal’. Use of the word ‘dangerous’ reflects the numerous risks associated with the journey. Getting from Somaliland or Puntland to Libya involves traversing remote, insecure and harsh environments. This journey is done entirely by road using poorly equipped vehicles. Human smugglers almost exclusively facilitate this journey and incidences of abuses and fatalities en route or in transit countries are extensively reported.¹⁵ Fishing boats, dinghies and inflatable rafts, often overcrowded and in poor condition, are used to ferry people across the Mediterranean to Europe, many of whom never make it.

In contrast, use of the word ‘illegal’ is not straightforward. Local perceptions about the legality of tahriib have less to do with the possession (or not) of valid travel documents. Rather it refers to social meanings linked to legal travel. Emigration arrangements that involve more formalized modes of travel, such as flying, are considered legal regardless of the legality of the travel

documents possessed by individuals embarking on that type of journey. People who fly to their destinations are described by the word *dhoof* (journey, travel or going abroad) instead of the word ‘tahrīb’. Phrases such as *wuu dhoofay* (he has gone abroad) or *way dhoofay* (she has gone abroad) tend to be used in the context of this mode of emigration. Describing the departure of a person using the word ‘*dhoof*’ is more prestigious and acceptable than using the word ‘tahrīb’.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey conducted in capital of Somaliland, Hargeysa, and in Garowe, in Puntland,¹⁶ in June and July 2015. The survey consists of interviews with 180 households known to have one or more family member on tahrīb.¹⁷ Among these households, 194 family members are reported to have undertaken tahrīb, including 12 households with 2 or more members who have left. The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 74 years old. Sixty-three per cent of all respondents are women, with 40 per cent the mothers of those who have gone on tahrīb. Siblings constitute 39 per cent of all respondents. Fathers comprise only 6 per cent of all respondents. The remaining 15 per cent are extended family members (uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents) and two spouses (wives) of those who have gone on tahrīb.

The findings presented in this report are based on a questionnaire¹⁸ of mainly open-ended questions addressing the socio-economic condition of the household, the characteristics of the individuals who have left, the nature of the journey and respondent perceptions about the reasons their family member(s) have embarked on tahrīb. Two additional sources also provide the data for this report. First, informal discussions with (mostly) young men,¹⁹ some of whom had attempted tahrīb and were either found and returned by their families or had returned themselves. Conducted in Hargeysa, these discussions aim to capture young peoples’ perceptions about tahrīb and, more generally, the challenges and opportunities related to their lives in Hargeysa. Second, interviews with officials in Hargeysa and Garowe working in key government ministries dealing directly or indirectly with

largest city in Somaliland, has an estimated population of 725,000 (Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development, Department of Statistics, ‘Somaliland in Figures 2012’, Hargeisa, Somaliland: Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development, 2013). Garowe has an estimated urban population between 70,000 and 120,000 inhabitants (Garowe Municipality, ‘District Participatory Planning and Budget Process: District Development Framework’, Garowe: Puntland, 2011). The findings presented in this report are strictly limited to Somaliland and Puntland.

¹⁷ Given the sensitive nature of the topic of tahrīb in Somaliland and Puntland, these interviews were conducted on the condition of full anonymity. The extracted quotes from respondents that appear in this report are therefore not attributed or identified—beyond occasional generic references to gender, age or family relation.

¹⁸ Informal conversations with household members in Hargeysa helped inform the questionnaire.

¹⁹ This study finds that a large proportion of those going on tahrīb are young men. Consequently, the findings presented in this report are biased towards the perceptions of young men compared to young women.

youth, family, social affairs and migration. These interviews aim to gauge the responses of the Somaliland and Puntland governments to tahriib, given the growing prevalence of this form of migration. All statistics and figures in this paper are based on the field data unless otherwise specified.

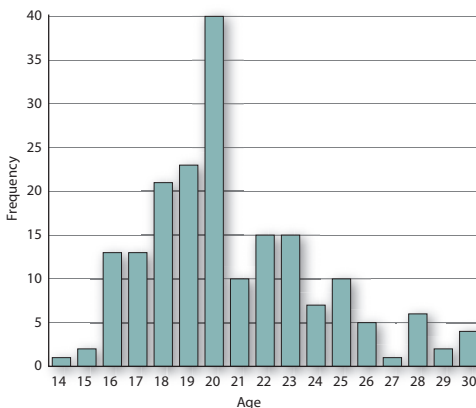
2. Who goes on tahriib?

Tahriib is almost exclusively a preoccupation of *dhalinyarada* (youth). The question of what constitutes youth in the Somali regions, however, is not straightforward. Age-based definitions used in official reports to categorize youth²⁰ have little practical significance. Youth and adulthood is determined by specific life milestones that an individual achieves. Marriage, for instance, is one of the most important criteria for marking the passage from youth to adulthood. A married person is not typically considered a youth. A married eighteen-year-old man is regarded as an adult, while an unmarried twenty-six-year old man may still be considered a youth.

Of the 194 individuals who are reported to have undertaken tahriib, approximately 90 per cent were twenty-five years old or younger at the time they did so. Half were aged between eighteen and twenty-one years old, 25 per cent were twenty-two to twenty-five years old and 10 per cent were over twenty-five years old. Some 15 per cent of those reported to have gone on tahriib were under eighteen years old when they left, with the youngest person in this group a fourteen-year-old boy. Figure 2 indicates age at the time of tahriib.

²⁰ Some official Somali definitions follow the United Nations, which defines youth as being between fifteen and twenty-four years old. Others describe youth as being between fourteen and twenty-nine years old. Some official Somaliland documents define a Somali youth as being between fifteen and thirty years old.

FIGURE 2. AGE AT THE TIME OF TAHRIIB

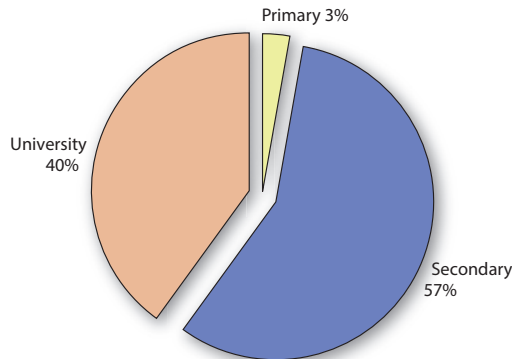


Of the 194 individuals who embarked on tahriib, nearly 80 per cent were male. Given the small sample of young women, it is not possible to confirm the prevailing perception that the proportion of young women going on tahriib is increasing. Looking at the year of departure for these 194 individuals, the total for each year consistently increased between 2011 and 2014. The number of those reported to have left in the first six months of 2015 follows this pattern. This trend reflects the number of Somalis who have been detected by Frontex crossing European Union borders (see above).

Educational status

Almost two-thirds of the young people who have gone on tahriib are under twenty-one years old. It is highly likely that these individuals were still attending educational institutions when they left home. In fact, about 60 per cent left while they were attending educational institutions. Of these, 57 per cent were in secondary school, 40 per cent at university and the remaining 3 per cent in primary school. Figure 3 illustrates the level of education at the time of tahriib.

FIGURE 3. LEVEL OF EDUCATION AT THE TIME OF TAHRIIB



These results challenge a widely held assumption by government officials and donor agencies that the majority of those leaving are unemployed university graduates. This group is often singled out for interventions because of concerns about brain

drain, which is reflected in a press statement released on behalf of the Somaliland government by the presidential spokesperson in June 2013:

As you are aware the country is facing innumerable difficulties as a result of an increase in illegal migration by a large number of youths that is not only creating a big brain drain but causing the [loss of] lives of many in the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea among other places.²¹

This study indicates, however, that the majority of those who go on tahriib are in an age group that corresponds more closely to secondary school students or first and second year university students. Targeting university graduates thus ignores a whole swathe of youth in full-time education who are also—if not more so—disposed to undertake tahriib.

Socio-economic status

International migration is a costly endeavour and is thus associated with households and individuals endowed with social and material resources. Since this survey only targets households with one or more family member on tahriib and does not include households that tahriib has not impacted, firm conclusions about its correlation with household socio-economic status are not possible.

Furthermore, the leave now-pay later scheme smugglers employ alters the journey's initial costing structure, making household socio-economic status a less useful tool to gauge the likelihood of a young person undertaking tahriib. Still, the reported average monthly incomes of surveyed households offer a general picture of the relative socio-economic condition of affected households.

The 180 households' socio-economic status is gauged by comparing their reported average monthly incomes to the amount of income required to sustain livelihoods in Hargeysa and Garowe using the concept of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) developed by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU)–Somalia.²² The MEB represents the basic food and non-food items a household of six to seven members requires

22 The FSNAU–Somalia provides evidence-based analysis of Somali food, nutrition and livelihood security in order to enable both short-term emergency responses and long-term strategic planning to promote food and livelihood security for Somali people. The organization is based in Nairobi, Kenya. For more information, see: <http://www.fsnau.org/>.

23 For detailed information on the contents of the MEB and the pricing data for each expenditure item, see: <http://www.fsnau.org/sectors/markets>.

24 This approach is similar to the methodology utilized in a study of remittance receipts in Somaliland and Puntland. See: Laura Hammond, 'Family Ties: Remittances and Livelihoods Support in Puntland and Somaliland', Nairobi: Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit—Somalia, June 2013.

to sustain minimum livelihoods in different parts of the Somali regions, calculated on a monthly or quarterly basis using pricing data from major markets in the Somali regions.²³

Based on pricing data for July 2015, the FSNAU calculates the minimum amount of income required to purchase the MEB in Garowe and Hargeysa to be USD 186 and USD 125, respectively. The MEB, however, excludes other expenditure items (such as transportation, communication and electricity) vital to urban livelihoods in these two cities, so the cost of the MEB used here is inflated by 50 per cent to better reflect this.²⁴ This raises the monthly cost required to purchase the MEB in July 2015 in Garowe and Hargeysa to USD 279 and USD 188, respectively.

The 180 surveyed households are categorized into three wealth groups—poor, middle and better-off—based on how far their monthly incomes are from the inflated cost of the MEB. Table 1 summarizes the threshold incomes for each wealth category and the percentage of households with reported average monthly incomes that fall within each wealth group.

TABLE 1. WEALTH GROUPS THRESHOLDS AND HOUSEHOLD WEALTH BREAKDOWN

<i>Threshold levels—monthly incomes</i>		<i>Proportion (%)</i>
Poor	Up to the cost of the MEB (original FSNAU cost of MEB + 50%) Cost of MEB for Garowe = USD 279 Cost of MEB for Hargeysa = USD 188	20
Middle	Greater than cost of the MEB and up to three times the cost of the MEB for each site	43
Better-off	Greater than three times the cost of the MEB for each site	37

The sample size (N=180) represents the total number of surveyed households.

The proportion of households in each wealth category suggests that individuals who go on tahriib come from households across the spectrum of wealth groups. Although only 20 per cent of young people come from poor households with incomes less than or equal to USD 279 in Garowe and USD 188 in Hargeysa, this

group also contains households with reported monthly incomes well below the minimum amount required to purchase the MEB in their respective locations. This indicates that some young people who have gone on tahriib are from extremely poor families, which may not be able to afford even the very basic food and non-food items.

It is important to note that socio-economic status is not based on income alone. Other social connections and networks are also crucial in facilitating international migration within the Somali context. This is particularly key: Even for households falling into the middle and better-off categories, incomes are not sufficiently high to facilitate international migration. Across the 180 households, the average monthly income is around USD 400, with significant variation. Some 45 per cent of the households report an average monthly income of USD 300 or less. Within this group, about one quarter report monthly incomes of USD 200 or less.

Extended family and relatives play a crucial role in supporting a household during tahriib, for example meeting the need to raise funds quickly to payoff ransom demands. Table 2 summarizes other socio-economic indicators in order to give an aggregate view of the characteristics of households to which young Somalis who have embarked on tahriib belong.²⁵

25 The average household size refers to the number of individuals, including relatives, who were residing in the household at the time of data collection. Dependents refer to those household members who were not contributing to the household income at the time of data collection. Female-headed households refer to those that reported having a female head of the household as a result of the death of a husband, divorce or separation.

TABLE 2. HOUSEHOLD SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

<i>No. of households surveyed (N)</i>	<i>Average household size</i>	<i>Average number of dependents</i>	<i>% of female-headed households</i>	<i>% of households receiving remittances</i>	<i>Average monthly household income</i>
180	7	6	35	41	USD 401

3. Tahriib routes and practicalities of the journey

26 ‘Central Mediterranean Route’, Frontex. Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/central-mediterranean-route>.

27 This study was not designed to interview individuals who made this journey all the way to Libya or Europe. Consequently, specific information about tahriib routes, e.g. towns and cities transited, has not been collected.

28 While the Ethiopia–Somaliland border town of Tog-Wajaale is reported to be a popular exit town, arrests and returns of youth to Somaliland by border authorities there have led youths and smugglers to find other crossing points on the long border between the two countries. Source: Interview with the Director General of Security, Somaliland Ministry of Interior, Hargeysa, 29 July 2015.

Young people from Somaliland and Puntland use one principal route for tahriib: Through Somaliland to Ethiopia and onto Sudan, Libya and then across the Mediterranean to Italy or Malta. According to Frontex, this route—commonly referred to as the Central Mediterranean Route or the East African Route—is popular for mixed migratory flows from the Horn of Africa.²⁶

Specific routes taken to cross from one country to another can vary and often change rapidly depending on a number of factors, such as conflicts in different parts of Sudan and Libya and strategies to avoid authorities.²⁷

Three primary observations can be made about tahriib routes from Somaliland and Puntland. First, the majority of households in both Hargeysa and Garowe—nearly 90 per cent—report that their relative had used the Central Route. Households in Garowe report that their relatives travelled first to Hargeysa before crossing into Ethiopia.²⁸

Second, young Somalis also take other routes to reach Libya. About 16 individuals from Garowe (8 per cent) are reported to have followed a route via Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, then onto Libya, instead of the popular route through Ethiopia. One individual in this group is reported to have travelled via Kenya and Tanzania before crossing into Uganda and South Sudan. It is not clear what influences these few young people to take this route instead of the popular Ethiopian route, especially given the insecurity in South Sudan.

Third, there are now other emerging routes that involve commercial flights. Although only five of the 194 individuals on tahriib are reported to have utilized these routes, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are becoming increasingly popular for young people with social and economic resources. The families of the five individuals who used the flying route report that their family members had either flown directly to Turkey from

Mogadishu or found a way to get to Iran and Syria via transit countries. From Syria and Iran, these young people are reported to have made their way to Turkey, probably by road and by foot for some stretches. Once in Turkey, Somalis join a large number of other migrants and refugees who cross the Mediterranean using the Eastern Mediterranean Route into Greece. According to Frontex, although it is mostly Syrians and Afghans who travelled this route in 2015, Somalis and other migrants from sub-Saharan Africa also used it.²⁹

29 'Eastern Mediterranean Route', Frontex. Accessed 27 July 2016, <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route>.

Since it is very difficult to obtain visas or to fly using a Somali passport, it is likely that those young people who took the air route have significant resources. This not only allows them to cover transportation costs but also enables them to overcome the difficulties of travelling with a Somali passport. However, getting a Turkish visa and travelling to Turkey using a Somali passport is much easier compared to other countries, including neighbouring countries in the Horn and East Africa.

Table 3 and Map 2 detail the various routes taken by the 194 individuals who have gone on tahriib, as their families or relatives have recounted. Three individuals are also reported to have used different routes, which is indicated by the category 'Other'. Two travelled from the Somali regions to Libya on the main route but then left Libya for Egypt and crossed the Mediterranean from there. The other individual is reported to have followed a completely different route, as his intention was to reach the United States.

TABLE 3. TAHRIIB ROUTES

<i>Routes used</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
Somali regions–Ethiopia–Sudan–Libya–Italy	88
Somali regions–Kenya–Uganda–South Sudan–Sudan–Libya–Italy	8
Somali regions–Turkey–Greece	1
Somali regions–one or more transit countries–Syria–Turkey–Greece	1
Somali regions–one or more transit countries–Iran–Turkey–Greece	0.5
Other	1.5

The sample size (N=194) represents the total number of individuals who embarked on tahriib. Components do not sum to totals because of rounding.

30 Sahan Foundation and IGAD Security Sector Program, 'Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa—Central Mediterranean Route', February 2016.

31 Interview with Director General of Security, Somaliland Ministry of Interior, Hargeysa, 29 July 2015.

He travelled through China, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador before making his way to Mexico and on to the United States. Although he is the only individual to have followed this route and destination, discussion with young people in Somaliland suggests that a few young Somalis do indeed travel this very long journey, which involves a mixture of air and road travel, to enter North America.

Human smugglers

One critical feature of tahriib movements, especially those utilizing the route through the Libyan desert, is the involvement of people-smugglers. They operate in major towns—especially in Hargeysa, given its close proximity to Ethiopia—and in transit countries along the route, through highly organized transnational networks with kingpins based in Libya and within the Horn of Africa.³⁰

Young Somalis make use of smuggling services in two primary ways. Some decide to make the first leg of their journey, from the Somali regions to Ethiopia, on their own and then find a smuggler once they reach Ethiopia. This choice is often determined by the circumstances surrounding the departure. A sudden departure, for example, may not allow time to find a smuggler. A prevailing perception is that there are many smugglers operating in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, making it easy to find one. A seventeen-year-old youth in Hargeysa who had never attempted tahriib explains, 'When you get to some hotel, you just ask the people working there.'

Others use smuggling services from the first leg of their journey. Getting in touch with smugglers is relatively easy because information about reliable ones is rapidly shared between friends and peers in and outside the Somali regions. A smuggler's reputation can influence the amount of business he secures in Somaliland and Puntland.

Incidences of smugglers directly approaching young people are common. A government official in Somaliland notes that there are reports of smugglers operating on school premises.³¹ It appears that some smugglers manipulate school-age children and sow the seed of tahriib. It is common knowledge that once smugglers manage to convince their young clients to go on tahriib, they will

often lock them up in houses in Hargeysa, while they find other clients in order to maximise profits. Once locked up, individuals may not be able to leave, even if they change their minds.

There is a constant flow of information, mainly through social media, between young people on tahriib, those who have made it to Europe and those in Somaliland and Puntland, where advice about smugglers is shared. Young people who decide to approach smugglers directly thus have a choice as to which smugglers to use and which ones to avoid. Because the success of their business overwhelmingly depends on positive recommendations, not all smugglers are cruel nor do they all systematically abuse their clients.

Research on smugglers operating along the migration corridor connecting Eritrea and Europe has revealed that the relationship between smugglers and migrants is not always a negative one, with some Eritrean migrants commenting on smugglers being honest and respectable.³² Smugglers are not, however, the only actors involved in the journey. There are also the drivers of the vehicles transporting people between different points along the route, enforcers who demand payments, and intermediaries, go-betweens, and other agents who operate along the route—all of whom form different types of relationships with migrants.³³

Leave now–pay later

The leave now–pay later scheme is a highly effective business practice, given the prevalence of tahriib in the Somali regions. Smugglers operating in Somaliland and Puntland have recognized that one of the biggest barriers their potential clients face is insufficient funds for upfront payments. Income earning opportunities for young people in these regions are extremely limited and credit facilities for young people are non-existent. This scheme enables young people to commence their journeys without having to worry about finances. It also exploits Somali social norms. Among Somalis, household resources are not limited to the immediate household. It is common practice for relatives inside and outside the country to join together in times of need to support one another. This social context—with a few exceptions—serves to guarantee smugglers their payments.

32 'Round Table: Responses by Milena Belloni', Algebra Lab, 28 March 2016. Accessed 19 May 2016, <http://allegralaboratory.net/round-table-responses-by-milena-belloni/>.

33 Algebra Lab, 'Round Table'.

34 Jørgen Carling, 'Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28/1 (2002).

35 Gunvor Jónsson, 'Migration, identity and immobility in a Malian Soninke village', in *The Global Horizon. Expectations of Migration in Africa and the Middle East*, eds. Knut Graw and Samuli Schielke, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2012.

The leave now–pay later scheme also works to lower significantly the direct costs young people associate with tahriib. Though aware that their families and relatives will bear a financial burden at a later stage, they nonetheless perceive the direct costs of tahriib to be relatively low. Consequently, any young person wanting to leave can do so quite easily.

The particular Somali context is distinct from the experience of other countries with a long tradition of migration. In Cape Verde, for instance, people have been characterized as being in a state of involuntary immobility—wanting to leave but being unable to do so.³⁴ In Mali, a similar situation is observed: While emigration has been crucial for the Soninke and the urge to migrate prevalent, young men are mostly unable to do so.³⁵

Magafe: *The debt collector*

Tahriib is not, however, a free journey. The leave now–pay later scheme only postpones payment until a certain transit point is reached. At that point, a debt collector—colloquially known as a *magafe*—holds the young person hostage until the family back in Somaliland or Puntland pays the required ransom, after which the individual undertaking tahriib is allowed to proceed.

Magafe is a Somali word that roughly translates as 'the one who never misses'. It describes a key person—or several people—within the structure of the tahriib journey. This word is feared within the Somali regions. Its mention causes visible despair among people, even among those who have not directly experienced tahriib.

The *magafe* is responsible for holding individuals hostage to extract the highest amount of ransom from their families back home. Reports of young people being punished while they are on the phone to their families are common. Of the 180 households interviewed, 153 households indicate that their family members were held for ransom, mostly between Sudan and Libya or in Libya. A few households also report incidences of individuals being held in Italy.

Since different smugglers operate on different parts of the route, young Somalis can be passed from one smuggler to another. Arrangements and agreements made at the start of the journey can

change significantly along the route. Even when individuals pay ransom to one *magafe* and are released to continue their journey, they are often taken hostage by another *magafe* en route. Of the 153 households that report their family members had been held hostage during the journey, 60 per cent claim these individuals were held hostage more than once along the route.

Whatever demands a *magafe* makes must be complied with according to the timeframe he sets. Non-compliance can have significant and devastating consequences, as this respondent explains:

The imam in our mosque announced one day after prayer that he needed help to raise money to pay ransom to [a] *magafe* holding his son. Everybody in the mosque chipped in. Two days later he announced that he had to give the money back. Before he could send it he found out that his son had already been killed.

Clear descriptions of the numerous *magafe* who operate along the tahriib route are difficult to obtain. Apart from the fact that the *magafe* is always described as being a man, other details varied greatly. In terms of nationality, for example, the *magafe* could be a Somali, an Arab or an Ethiopian. Evidence suggests that different *magafe* operate at different points along the lengthy tahriib route and that they are of different nationalities.³⁶

Of the 153 households with relatives who were held hostage, the overwhelming majority report that they used money transfer companies (*hawala*) operating locally in Hargeysa or Garowe to send money to the *magafe* (87 per cent). A few households, 3 per cent, indicate that they were directed by the *magafe* to give the money to someone in the local vicinity.

Table 4 lists the countries to which the households that used local *hawala* companies wired the ransom. The bulk of the ransom money was sent to Libya, followed by Sudan. This correlates with reports from the households that the majority of their young family members were held hostage between Sudan and Libya, or in Libya.

TABLE 4. TO WHICH COUNTRY DID YOU SEND THE RANSOM MONEY?

<i>Country</i>	<i>Proportion of total responses (%)</i>
Libya	48
Sudan	38
Italy	9
Dubai	2
Ethiopia	2
Other (Egypt and Zambia)	1

Households give multiple responses because they sent money more than once, sometimes to different countries each time.

4. What drives tahriib?

Young people in both Somaliland and Puntland are well informed about the dangers associated with tahriib. They are also aware of the huge financial burdens that can befall their families after they leave. These factors do not, however, seem to deter young people from embarking on the journey.³⁷ What, then, compels young people to go on tahriib?

Youth (un)employment

In both Somaliland and Puntland, the reasons individuals go on tahriib are almost exclusively attributed to youth unemployment. Government officials and donor agencies operating in these regions consistently cite youth unemployment as a key driver for tahriib. In June 2013, the president of Somaliland issued a decree to create a ministerial committee—the Committee on Illegal Migration and Unemployment—mandated to curb tahriib through employment generation.³⁸ Similarly, multilateral agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have focused interventions on employment generation. In 2013, IOM initiated a programme to provide training and internship placements for unemployed university graduates. In 2015, IOM notes:

While educated youth feel entitled and empowered by their education, they are frustrated that their education does not translate into expected work opportunities. IOM has been working with local authorities and local universities to identify skill gaps in the public sector and match these gaps with the skill set of unemployed graduate youth.³⁹

To an extent, the focus on employment makes sense, as youth employment figures in the region are low. According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) labour force survey carried out in Somaliland in 2012, only 5 per cent of youth (from fifteen to twenty-four years old) were employed. Youth unemployment is potentially exacerbated by the prevailing mismatch in perceptions

³⁷ A similar scenario was found in the case of potential Ethiopian migrants. A study by the RMMS found a high level of awareness within the would-be migrants group yet a high willingness to leave. See: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, 'Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants', Mixed Migration Research Series: explaining people on the move, Study 6, Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, June 2014.

³⁸ Hasan, 'Somaliland: President Silanyo Appoints Committee'.

³⁹ International Organization for Migration, 'IOM Combats Irregular Somali Migration with Youth Employment', 7 March 2015. Accessed 15 March 2015, <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-combats-irregular-somali-migration-youth-employment>.

40 Samuel Hall, 'Investing in Somali Youth: Exploring the Youth–Employment–Migration Nexus in Somaliland and Puntland', commissioned by IOM Somalia, Nairobi: Samuel Hall, 12 August 2015.

41 International Labour Organization, 'Labour Force Survey Somaliland 2012: Report on Borama, Hargeisa and Burao'. Accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@africa/@ro-addis_ababa/@sro-addis_ababa/documents/publication/wcms_234412.pdf.

42 See ILO interactive map for youth unemployment across the globe: http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/WCMS_244259/lang-en/index.htm.

43 I.M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone. The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1994.

44 Although paternal blood links are crucial in determining membership in a certain clan or sub-clan, maternal relations are equally critical in facilitating many aspects of livelihoods.

and skills between what young people bring to the labour markets and what employers expect.⁴⁰ Country-wide employment figures in Somaliland are not much better, with only 23 per cent of the working age population (from fifteen to sixty-four years old) in employment.⁴¹

The high level of youth unemployment is not, however, unique to Somaliland and Puntland. Youth unemployment rates in many sub-Saharan Africa countries are high owing to the demographic youth bulge and the structure of economies in the region, which continue to be biased towards the export of primary commodities with limited job creation capacity.⁴² Why, then, do Somali youth—unlike Kenyan or Tanzanian youth—respond to the lack of employment opportunities by making the dangerous journey to Europe?

Social pressure

When asked why family members went on tahriib, respondents frequently comment: 'He left because he wanted to improve his life', 'He left because we were poor' or 'He left because he could not find a job'. In simplistic terms, these responses could be grouped as economic reasons. Young Somalis are leaving because of the limited economic opportunities available at home. Although this might be true at the macro level, at the individual level the decision to go on tahriib appears to be a result of the merging of economic factors with wider social and cultural processes. Unemployment alone does not trigger tahriib. Rather, what it means to be unemployed—a word that is highly charged with context-specific innuendos and socially constructed and construed meanings—is what may drive young people to leave.

A brief analysis of Somali society helps elaborate this point. Somali society is structured along a segmentary lineage system where each individual is born (or adopted) into a specific group and sub-group widely referred to as clans.⁴³ For the majority of Somalis, particularly those residing in northern Somali regions, clan membership is determined by paternal blood links.⁴⁴ Through a system of *abtirisiimo* (the reckoning of the agnatic male ancestors), each Somali is able to place him or herself within a specific clan and sub-clan. Using *abtirisiimo* also allows Somalis to establish

how closely related they are to each other—the fewer the numbers of agnatic male ancestors invoked before a common one is met, the more closely related the individuals are.

Apart from placing individuals within specific segments, this system also defines a set of mutual responsibilities and obligations that members of each clan group have for each other, as well as for members of other clans. Some of these obligations, such as participating in the contribution and the collection of *diya* (blood) payments are specified in *xeer* (Somali customary law), while others are social norms based on long-established systems of mutual reciprocity.

Within the clan and *xeer* system, there are, therefore, specific (gender-biased) obligations to which each member must adhere. Each adult man, for instance, is expected to be able to contribute (mentally, financially and physically) to his kin group whenever he is called upon. Failure to fulfil these social obligations could result in the loss of respect, trust and status—not only for the individual man but also his close relatives. Respect, trust and status are crucial components of social capital that are vital for sustaining livelihoods in Somali society. There is, therefore, a significant amount of social pressure, specifically directed at men, to satisfy their set obligations. For example, since men are responsible for the wellbeing of their family members, when a man is unable to provide for them, he is seen as having failed. In social terms, this man is considered to have lost his *ra ganimo* (manhood).⁴⁵

The protracted period of war and uncertainty have significantly changed the structure of the labour markets in the region. In particular, this has reduced the number of public sector jobs that used to employ a large number of men, resulting in higher levels of unemployment among the male population. Social expectations, however, have not caught up with this reality. Men are still expected to fulfil their traditional responsibilities and are socially penalized for not doing so.⁴⁶

Although most individuals embarking on tahriib are young unmarried men who would not be considered adults in a Somali context, they are still affected by these social expectations, even if indirectly through their fathers and other adult family members. Faced with unemployed fathers who are neither able to satisfy the

45 See discussions in Judith Gardner and Judy El-Bushra, 'The impact of war on Somali men and its effects on the family, women and children', Rift Valley Briefing Paper, Rift Valley Forum, London: Rift Valley Institute, February 2016.

46 Gardner and El-Bushra, 'Impact of War'.

demands of their kin nor the needs of the immediate family, it is not uncommon for young men to feel pressured to assume these responsibilities and restore the male status in the family. This is especially the case if the young man is *curadka* (the first born son in the family). Young women can also face these pressures, especially if there are no immediate male members in the family to take on these responsibilities. For young men in particular, failure to sufficiently fulfil these responsibilities could push them to tahriib, as these respondents indicate:

He is the oldest child in the family and he felt responsible to take care of us. The family is very poor. He was very worried.

His father became sick and could not take care of the family. The responsibility fell on him. He used to get a small income but it was not sufficient to cover our needs.

The family was not doing well economically. The needs of the family made him leave.

For a young Somali man, being unemployed or facing the prospects of being unemployed has a much larger connotation than the mere act of not being employed. On the one hand, it means being unable to fulfil social obligations to support his immediate family and kin, and not being able to secure respect, trust and status within the household and wider kinship relations. On the other, being able to secure a decent job that allows a young man to fulfil his social duties delivers not only monetary resources but also crucial social resources.

Peer pressure: 'Why are you still in the dustland?'

By framing it as a youth phenomenon, tahriib has gradually become part of Somali youth culture, a practice shared by youth across different social strata. Young people often use the word 'we' to describe why young people undertake tahriib, as one respondent explains, 'If we just sit here and wait, nothing happens. We have to go. We have to go try our luck in life. We can't wait forever.' Tahriib is often invoked by young people as a collective response to the wide range of social and economic challenges

they face growing up in the Somali regions. It is a way out—an exit strategy.

Framing it as a youth movement and invoking it as a collective response can, however, restrict the ability of young people to form independent views of tahriib. In fact, it puts pressure on young people to join their peers and friends on tahriib. Incidences of large groups leaving together are not uncommon. For example, in July 2015, a group of young men from a Hargeysa football team left together. Similarly, in 2009, a group of male Borama secondary school classmates left together.

Peer pressure is frequently cited as an important driver of tahriib. A mother notes that her son had left because ‘all his friends were leaving together so he had to follow them’. Another says her son ‘was a good child who did not use to think about tahriib but his friends convinced him to leave’. In some instances young people are pressured to follow their friends because they do not want to undertake tahriib alone. Having friends on the journey can provide support. They can also inform families back home if an individual does not make it.

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp facilitate peer pressure. The availability of broadband Internet in households, university campuses and the ubiquitous Internet cafes in major towns means that digital communication is relatively accessible across the Somali regions—for those who can pay. There are improved connectivity speeds, especially in Somaliland, where fibre optic broadband is now available. Smartphones mean that young people are continuously connected with their peers outside the country. As young people often note in conversation, topping up Internet on their smartphone is one of their biggest expenditures.

Discussions with young people in Hargeysa reveal that exchanges on social media sites constantly expose them to the lives of their peers who have gone on tahriib and reached Europe. Although it is widely known that the beautiful images posted on social media sites by those who have reached Europe do not show the reality of their lives, the images nonetheless provide powerful incentives for young people to leave. Their significance increases if those posting pictures have only been gone for a short while,

with people at home still able to remember these individuals' lives before going on tahriib.

When my friend left, we did not hear from him for 21 days. Then he started posting pictures of himself in Europe standing in front of tall buildings ... beautiful green grass and flowers.... He always posts pictures on Facebook and says to me why are you still in the dustland?

Those who have made it to Europe use these digital avenues to persuade their friends back home to leave. Those still at home are forced to defend their decisions. In this context, an unwillingness to leave because of fear of the risks associated with tahriib is considered cowardly. This type of pressure is particularly pertinent for young men as it directly touches on important socio-cultural stereotypes of Somali masculinity.

This type of pressure is not only found among the youth. Although many families in Somaliland and Puntland would categorically stop their sons and daughters from risking their lives by attempting such a journey, there are many subtle cues (especially directed at young men) within society that contradict this. To some extent, these cues also sanction such endeavours as courageous acts. A mother whose son left when he was sixteen years old reveals this dilemma. Although very emotional and voicing disapproval about her son's departure, at the same she shows a great deal of admiration.

He was only sixteen years old and now he is wasting his life in jail.... I wish he were here with us going to school. Now he has nothing. No family and no education.... He was a strong-headed boy and very brave. He saw his father doing nothing and decided he would fight for his life and help his family. He was very brave. He even left his older brother here. He decided to make something for himself.

Peer pressure, real or imagined, can influence young Somalis to undertake tahriib. The question is whether they are also aware of the difficult conditions in Europe, especially in entry countries such as Italy and Malta, and whether they know that the likelihood

of success—obtaining legal residency, employment and so on—is, at best, uncertain.

Discussions with young men in Hargeysa reveal that although a level of awareness about these realities exists, they remain hugely optimistic. They perceive these difficulties to be temporary because they are aware that all Somalis eventually tend to be accepted as refugees. Current developments in Europe, however, challenge this assumption. In May 2016, for example, Finland declared Somalia to be a safe country, revoking Somali eligibility to apply for asylum on the grounds of humanitarian protection under the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention.

'There is nothing to do!'

The sentiment 'there is nothing for him to do here' highlights another important driver of tahriib that households frequently identify. Although this makes sense given high levels of unemployment in Somaliland and Puntland, it contradicts the fact that the majority of those who embark on tahriib had been studying in either secondary school or university at the time of departure. To understand this contradiction, it is necessary to look at changing perceptions about the value of education.⁴⁷

From the early 2000s, education has been one of the fastest growing sectors across the Somali regions. Compared to the period before the war, large numbers of young Somalis now have access to education, provided they are able to pay the fees that the majority of private post-primary providers charge. By 2013–2014, Somaliland boasted more than two dozen universities. A crude calculation of the 5.8 per cent tertiary level gross enrolment rate puts Somaliland on a par with or above many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁸

The growth of the higher education sector was a welcome development in the region, with tremendous expectations placed on post-graduation outcomes. In Somaliland, the establishment of the first university, Amoud University, in 1998, was hailed as a sign of a brighter future for Somali youth. This perception, however, started to change towards the end of the last decade as the number of universities grew rapidly and chaotically, with growing doubts about the quality of education provided. The ambiguity associated

47 This section draws heavily on the author's research on higher education in Somaliland. See: Nimo-ilhan Ali, 'Rethinking the Higher Education–Development Nexus: The Case of Somaliland', PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 2016.

48 Ali, 'Rethinking', 10.

with recognition outside the region of Somaliland issued degrees brought additional concerns. Furthermore, post-graduate expectations were not met. Although graduates were able to secure jobs, these were mainly in the expanding education sector, where employment arrangements are highly casual and graduates have to hold multiple teaching jobs across different schools to make ends meet.

These challenges do nothing to discourage demand for higher education, which continues to grow. This is not a contradiction. For many young people it is better to be doing something than nothing at all. This is particularly crucial for young men, given the high social expectations about their role in society. In fact, university graduates indicate that the worry of doing nothing was a strong motivation for attending university.

This is also reported as a motivating factor for tahriib. A mother in Hargeysa notes, ‘He was worried that he would not be able to go to university [after secondary school] because of lack of income. He could not even get money to buy food during break time.’ Another notes that her daughter had also undertaken tahriib because she had nothing to do: ‘She wanted to study but we could not find money to pay for her. She tried to find a job but could not find one either.’

Being idle thus encompasses the view that one is not pursuing a worthwhile endeavour—even though the individual may be attending secondary school or university—and the actual fact of having nothing to do. Both these scenarios can be powerful motivations for undertaking tahriib.

The desire to obtain a foreign education

The desire for foreign education is an important driver for tahriib. Speaking about her son, a mother in Garowe remarks, ‘He said that the quality of the education universities provided is not good enough and that he wanted to go to a university in developed countries.’ Another mother in Garowe notes her son left after he finished secondary school because ‘he said he wanted to go to a university abroad and we could not do that for him so he decided to tahriib’.

This perception is encouraged by the high social and economic currency attached to foreign degrees. Such degrees—not only from western countries but also from other African countries (Uganda, Kenya and Sudan) and Asian universities (India, Pakistan and Malaysia)—are highly respected in the Somali regions. Holders of these degrees are preferred in the local labour market. Employers often comment that individuals trained outside the Somali regions have a better command of the English language and are attuned to western work ethics, such as punctuality and prioritization.⁴⁹

Young Somalis from households with social and economic resources are often sent outside the Somali regions to pursue higher education and take advantage of their foreign degrees in the local labour market upon their return. Since this group of young people can exit the education system in the Somali regions, they lack the incentive to demand improvements at home.⁵⁰

Consequently, young people from poor households are left with a system they can do little to improve. It would be incorrect, however, to conclude that all young people accept the status quo. It is clear that tahriib has provided some who do not have social and economic resources to study outside the Somali regions with an alternative. If they do make it to Europe, the return of getting a European degree is potentially greater than from those gained from regional or far-eastern universities.

Passports and pay outs

Going to Europe can also result in obtaining a foreign passport. Household responses reveal two primary reasons why the desire to obtain a foreign passport is a motivation for tahriib. These are referred to here as ‘the diaspora effect’ and ‘the failed state and war-on-terror effect’.

THE DIASPORA EFFECT

Having a foreign passport is associated with better opportunities at home upon return. A mother in Garowe, for example, explains that her son left because, ‘People who tahriib get passports, come back and snatch away all the opportunities. So he wanted to get a passport, too.’ Examples of people coming back with foreign passports to ‘take away all the opportunities’ are rife in the Somali

49 Ali, ‘Rethinking’, 185.

50 Hirschman’s concept of exit, voice and loyalty is a useful framework for understanding choices. See: Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

51 Peter Hansen, 'Revolving Returnees in Somaliland', in *Living Across Worlds: Diaspora, Development and Transnational Engagement*, ed. Ninna N. Sørensen, Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2007.

52 Nimo-ilhan Ali, 'The Quest to Become a "Qurbajoog"', *Horn of Africa Bulletin* 27, no. 5 (2015), 5.

53 Hansen, 'Revolving Returnees', 137–139.

54 Hansen, 'Revolving Returnees', 138.

regions largely because the number of Somali diaspora returning home for short visits during the summer months or for longer periods has been increasing.⁵¹

The commercial flight data for Somaliland suggests that the number of people visiting the region since the beginning of 2010 has risen significantly compared to the previous decade.⁵² This trend correlates with the sustained stability and development in the region, as well as an increase in the number of Somali diaspora obtaining citizenship in their host countries, giving them the flexibility they need to travel home.

Some diaspora, equipped with foreign education and foreign language proficiency, return home to take advantage of—sometimes lucrative—job opportunities available in the business, non-governmental (development) and public sectors.⁵³ In government, heads of state of both Somaliland and Puntland, ministers and director generals are often members of the diaspora. Most importantly, these diaspora have choices: Possessing foreign passports, they have an exit strategy and can leave any time when things do not go their way.⁵⁴

The apparent ease of the diaspora to achieve success, combined with the limited opportunities available to young people in the Somali regions, has created a narrative of success for those who leave. Among young people, aspirations of social mobility include the strategy to leave Somaliland and return when equipped with the right resources, such as a foreign education and passport. In this environment, *tahriib* becomes an important livelihood strategy. A sixty-one-year-old mother in Garowe points out that since her son had safely entered Germany she expects his life to improve dramatically upon his return to Puntland: 'My son will be the president of this country when he returns as he will have a foreign passport.' This statement encapsulates a popular saying among Somali youth: *tahriibta maanta wa qurba joog berito* (the person going on *tahriib* today is a diaspora of tomorrow).

THE FAILED STATE AND WAR-ON-TERROR EFFECT

Respondents also see having a foreign passport as a way to overcome perhaps one of the most pervasive factors limiting the mobility of young Somalis. As Somalia has been without an

internationally recognized government for over two decades, the Somali passport has consequently lost its validity. In addition, the external perception of Somalia as both a failed state and terrorist haven has made travel with a Somali passport—including for those Somalilanders who still use a Somali passport—increasingly difficult and sometimes impossible.

The activities of the militant group al-Shabaab in neighbouring countries have added further difficulties for young Somalis to travel legally within the Horn and East Africa region. This is particularly the case for young Somali men, who often resort to buying other passports, mainly from Ethiopia and Djibouti. To be able to do so, however, requires social and material resources that many do not possess. As one mother explains, ‘We wanted to buy him a passport [so he could travel legally] but when we could not, he decided to tahriib.’ Of her daughter who left, another mother notes, ‘Her aunt abroad had been trying to take her in a legal way but she could not do it. We, too, tried to find another passport but the girl could not wait and [decided to] tahriib.’

Perceptions: Low costs and high returns

The perception among youth that ‘it does not cost anything to tahriib’ is another key driver. The leave now–pay later innovation smugglers now use, removes the up-front costs to emigration. Although young people are acutely aware that tahriib is not free and the cost is merely postponed until it befalls their families at a later date, they do not calculate this when they contemplate leaving. When asked about this, young people simply answer: ‘My family will find the money’, ‘Our relatives will help’ or ‘My family will find a way’.

Tahriib is also associated with risks and threats to life. While young people did indeed consider the risk to life as an important cost component, they point out that this is something they had little control over. A nineteen-year-old man in Hargeysa explains that as a Muslim ‘you die when and where you were destined’. As this same young man observes, ‘Death can happen even if you stay here.’ These perceptions that death has little to do with tahriib *per se* lowers its dissuasive power. This stands in stark contrast to

the patently visible benefits of emigration in the significant social and economic privileges enjoyed by returnees or visiting diaspora.

Tahriib's perceived low costs combined with the potential for pay back in the form of better education, job opportunities and status—including foreign citizenship—makes it an attractive and easily accessible option. As a consequence, it is common for young people to use tahriib as a way out of a broad range of scenarios, including minor quarrels with siblings or parents.

Why, then, are not even larger numbers of young people leaving? The decision-making processes behind tahriib help explain this.

5. Deciding to leave and acting on it

Tahriib challenges the prevailing economic models of group migration as a household livelihood strategy that involves ‘spreading risks and co-insurance’, with the potential of future remittances an important factor in the individual’s decision to migrate.⁵⁵ The decision to go on tahriib, in contrast, is largely made away from the household members, who are often unaware what a family member is planning until the individual leaves. Among the 194 individuals who have gone on tahriib, almost 90 per cent left without informing their families.

There are two key reasons why young people planning to go on tahriib do not involve their families in their decision-making process and do not inform them of their departure. First, the journey’s dangers including abuses and fatalities occurring en route are widely known. Second, it is largely households rather than individuals who bear the cost of their members going on tahriib. Once they know that a young family member has embarked on tahriib, the family will try to intercept them before they reach Addis Ababa, after which it becomes difficult to find them.

The leave now–pay later policy that smugglers operate obviates the need for young people planning to go on tahriib to involve their families to secure the significant amount of financial resources usually associated with international migration. Given the absence of credit markets in both Somaliland and Puntland, family and relatives are the main—if not only—source of finance for unemployed young people.

Abdi (pseudonym), a nineteen-year-old university student who attempted to go on tahriib but who was intercepted at the Somaliland–Ethiopia border and returned back to Hargeysa, provides insights into the decision-making process. This exchange took place before his attempt to tahriib.

INTERVIEWER: You said you know many people who have gone on tahriib. Are you also planning to leave?

55 Hein de Haas, ‘Remittances, Migration and Social Development: A Conceptual Review of the Literature’, Social Policy and Development Programme Paper. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, October, 2007.

56 Aspirations to go abroad among the Somali population are reported in a number of other studies, for example, dreams of resettlement amongst Somali refugees at Dabaab refugee camp in Kenya. See: Cindy Horst, 'Buufis amongst Somalis in Dadaab: The Transnational and Historical Logics behind Resettlement Dreams', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, no. 2 (2006): 143–157.

- ABDI: It is not about planning to leave. You don't need to plan.
- INTERVIEWER: What do you mean?
- ABDI: When your day comes, you just leave. You don't need to plan.
- INTERVIEWER: But surely you need to plan. Maybe get some money and information?
- ABDI: I already know everything I need to know.
- INTERVIEWER: How about money?
- ABDI: I don't have to worry about that. I will not need much.
- INTERVIEWER: So are you saying you have already made the decision to tahriib?
- ABDI: We all know we want to leave but I don't know when I will leave.
- INTERVIEWER: Are you waiting for a specific date?
- ABDI: No. I'm just waiting.
- INTERVIEWER: But waiting for what?
- ABDI: I'm just waiting.

The exchange highlights two important features about the decision-making process surrounding tahriib. As Abdi indicates, the decision to leave Somaliland is one that the majority of young men have already made. The question for him is thus not about making a decision whether to leave but rather when to leave.⁵⁶

The decision about when to leave appears to be the most uncertain aspect of the broader decision-making process. There seems to be some sort of waiting period. A few days later, Abdi offers a glimpse of what goes on during the crucial period.

- INTERVIEWER: I waited for you on Sunday. What happened?
- ABDI: I went to Borama [a town west of Hargeysa].
- INTERVIEWER: Your aunt told me you tried to tahriib.
- ABDI: No! I did not.
- INTERVIEWER: Oh. I'm sorry. I thought your uncle and father caught you in Wajaale [the Ethiopia–Somaliland border town].
- ABDI: They did not catch me. The police caught us and put us in jail and informed my father.

INTERVIEWER: What's going to happen to you now?
ABDI: Nothing.
INTERVIEWER: Would you try again to leave again?
ABDI: No.
INTERVIEWER: Why not? You don't want to leave Somaliland again?
ABDI: I want to leave.
INTERVIEWER: So you will tahriib again?
ABDI: No. My family are going to send me to university in Ethiopia.
INTERVIEWER: I'm a bit confused. Last time we talked, you said you did not know when you were planning to leave. But you left four days later. Did you not want to tell me?
ABDI: I didn't know I was going to leave on Sunday.
INTERVIEWER: When did you know that you were going to leave on Sunday?
ABDI: On Saturday night.
INTERVIEWER: I don't understand. What happened on Saturday night that made you decide that you would leave on Sunday?
ABDI: My uncle gave me an answer.
INTERVIEWER: Which one? And what answer?
ABDI: You know him, the tall one visiting us from Norway with his son.
INTERVIEWER: Yes. I know him. But, what answer did he give you?
ABDI: When he came, I told him I wanted to go to university in Turkey. It is not expensive there. You only need USD 4,000 for the first year then they give you a scholarship. He said he would not give me anything and it is not true that it only costs USD 4,000 and that when I get there I will find out it is much more. He doesn't know anything! So many people I know have gone and they have told me it is only USD 4,000. He says he doesn't have money but since he came here he has spent

more than USD 3,000! If he didn't have money, how come he is looking for a second wife?

INTERVIEWER: He told you this on Saturday?

ABDI: He told my father first.

INTERVIEWER: Then what did you do?

ABDI: I went to my friend's house. He had USD 150 dollars, enough to get us to Ethiopia.

INTERVIEWER: Then you left?

ABDI: On Sunday morning we left.

INTERVIEWER: Your friend came with you?

ABDI: Yes.

Three observations can be made from this exchange. First, although in the earlier conversation Abdi notes that 'we all know we want to leave', this statement does not mean 'we all know we want to tahriib'. During subsequent discussion, it becomes apparent that while Abdi has known for a long time that he wants to leave Somaliland, this does not mean that he is ready to leave via the tahriib route. Abdi's ambivalence shows that although aspirations to leave Somaliland and Puntland are widespread within the youth population, tahriib might not be the most preferred exit route. It is highly plausible that young people opt for a waiting period, hoping for alternative means to leave to emerge. When Abdi finds out that his uncle is not willing to send him to Turkey, the hope of leaving Somaliland through other means is eliminated, and tahriib becomes the only route for leaving—one with little or no initial monetary costs.

Second, although Abdi is not successful in his attempt to tahriib, he remains steadfast in his plan to leave Somaliland. Similar to the period prior to his attempted departure, he is content to wait for the new promise made by his parents to materialize. It is worth noting that incidences of parents bargaining with their children (in particular sons) not to attempt tahriib again, or not to tahriib in the first place, are common. In the streets of Hargeysa, for example, there are a large number of taxis driven by young men that are locally referred to as '*hooyo ha tahriibin*', which can be roughly translated as a mother begging: 'My child, do not tahriib!' Parents hope that these taxis will provide young men with vital income-earning opportunities, as well as

re-orient their aspirations for social and economic mobility from outside to inside Somaliland. It is difficult to know how successful these types of strategies are. In the case of Abdi, if the promise of sending him to Ethiopia to pursue further education does not materialize, and if tahriib continues to operate on a leave now–pay later basis, it is highly likely that he will again opt to tahriib.

Third and related, although aspirations to leave are widespread, young people seem to be quite flexible with regard to their destination. While some destinations are preferred over others—such as Europe over neighbouring countries—young people suggest that provided they can leave and go somewhere where they will be able to do something, where they go is irrelevant. For Abdi, going to Ethiopia instead of Turkey, is deemed acceptable as long he has the opportunity to obtain a foreign degree.

Departure triggers

Aspirations to leave and the actual act of leaving are not necessarily sequential. Not every young person who wants to leave Somaliland and Puntland acts on this desire, the perceived low costs associated with tahriib notwithstanding. In fact, as with Abdi, it is often the case that young people choose to wait for a time to see what other opportunities emerge.

There are a variety of factors that push individuals to finally undertake tahriib. Some of these are simply the result of seeing images of family and friends on Facebook enjoying life in Europe. For the majority, however, the decision to leave is a result of anger, disappointment or frustration brought about by specific events. Arguments with family members, for example, are a trigger for some. As one young man notes, his brother went on tahriib because ‘he quarrelled with our mother and his anger made him leave’. A mother in Hargeysa elaborates, ‘He was troublesome. He dropped out of school and we had to jail him twice.⁵⁷ When he came out the last time he was very angry and left.’ In the case of Abdi, the anger and disappointment upon discovering going to Turkey was no longer a possibility, and the subsequent realization that tahriib was his only way out, brought an end to his waiting period.

57 In Somaliland it is common practice that families pay a prison to detain a troublesome younger male family member. These are *ad hoc* arrangements made between families and prison wardens.

Frustration and disappointment (*niya jab*) linked to fluctuations in remittance income can also hasten tahriib departures. A mother in Hargeysa explains, 'We used to get his university fees from abroad but the fees did not always arrive on time. One semester the fees were so late that he was not allowed to sit his exams. He tahriibed from the anger of that day.' Wider social injustices are reported to be another source of frustration and disappointment, along with nepotism in recruitment for jobs. As the sister of one individual who had left from Hargeysa says:

He was promised a job in the ministry but in the end he did not get the job. Another person was given the job. The anger and disappointment he felt made him tahriib. He actually used the money that the minister gave him to make up for not giving him the job to tahriib.

6. The family left behind

Although families are not directly involved in decision-making processes about tahriib and are often unaware when a family member departs, they become deeply involved after the individual leaves. When this happens depends on how quickly they learn that the relative has left. This can take time, as individuals embarking on tahriib use a range of strategies to avoid detection or avert suspicion, as these respondents illustrate:

He told us that he was going to attend a workshop in Hargeysa for the next two weeks and we thought he was there.

He told us that he was going to the rural area and we thought he was staying there.

He told me that his friend invited him over for lunch and that they were going to play football at night so he was going to spend the night at his friend's house. In the morning, the family he had supposedly spent the night with came to us looking for their son, saying they had not seen my son or theirs. When we searched for them, we found out they had gone on tahriib.

He told us he was going to visit his uncle in the morning. By nightfall, his friends told me he went on tahriib.

She was supposed to be staying with her aunt the two days before she left. Her aunt called and said she wasn't with her. After we searched for her, we found out she had gone on tahriib.

When households suspect that a family member may have gone on tahriib, they can spend significant amounts of time and resources trying to intercept them before they reach Addis Ababa. They may mobilize themselves and head to the Ethiopia–Somaliland border, collect information from peers and friends of their sons or daughters or utilize their own extensive social networks to alert friends and relatives residing in towns and cities along the route to Addis Ababa.

If they are too late to intercept them, families have no choice but to wait for news. This is an extremely difficult period, especially when a young woman goes on tahriib, due to the widespread stories of abuse women face on the journey. Culturally, a young Somali woman travelling alone is generally not looked upon favourably. A woman in Hargeysa notes that the disappearance of her sister caused a great deal of worry. As she says, '*gabadhu waa hilib bisil*' (a young woman is like a piece of meat that is ready to eat), a statement that portrays the vulnerability of young women.

During this waiting period, households try to find out where their family member is and whether he or she is safe. They speak to friends of their sons or daughters and monitor their Facebook accounts. Some take more extreme measures, as this sixty-four-year-old grandmother comments, 'I went to seek information from fortune tellers, something that could in effect make me a non-Muslim. Some of them [fortune tellers] told me that she was kidnapped and others told me she had died. I almost went crazy!'

On average, it takes up to 11 days before households receive information about the whereabouts of their sons or daughters. Just over half (55 per cent) of the households waited for up to seven days, while the other half waited between two and three weeks before hearing any news.

Finding out

Eventually households do find out that a son or daughter has gone on tahriib. Most report that at some point the individual called them directly, usually from Ethiopia or Sudan, before crossing the Sahara Desert. Other families receive this information via third parties—relatives, friends, peers, friends of friends, relatives of friends and so on. A small number indicate they received the first news about the whereabouts of a family member in a phone call from a *magafe*, saying their sons or daughters were being held hostage.

How households respond to the news varies, depending on how it is received. Those who receive the information directly from their sons or daughters plead for them to return, with most refusing to do so. Some young people on tahriib do consent to come home, if the family sends money to pay for the return

journey. Such agreements, however, are not always honoured by the person on tahriib, as a father in Garowe explains, ‘We asked him to return and we sent him money [for transportation from Ethiopia] but he carried on to Sudan.’ A mother in Garowe relates a similar experience when her son made contact from Ethiopia: ‘I asked him to come back and he agreed so we sent him money for him to come back but he used that money to go on. He called us when he reached Sudan.’ On these occasions, families largely accept what has happened and pray to Allah to help their children.

In all instances, particularly when a *magafe* calls, the household begins mobilizing money for the inevitable ransom demand. The pattern of someone on tahriib being kidnapped and held for ransom is almost routine. Family members are acutely aware that when the time comes—when a *magafe* calls—they have to have the money on hand, ready to send.

Rushing to mobilize ransom

Most households report that they start looking for funds as soon as they learn the whereabouts of their children but few manage to raise the required amount by the deadline imposed by the *magafe*. If they are better prepared the first time, more often than not they are unprepared for a second call. Although the bulk of the money households spend is sent to pay a *magafe*, some report that they also sent living expenses for their sons or daughters, particularly when they reach Libya and wait to cross the Mediterranean. Table 5 indicates that the total amount a household pays varies

TABLE 5. TOTAL AMOUNT OF MONEY HOUSEHOLDS PAY FOR TAHRIIB

<i>Monetary amounts (USD)</i>	<i>Proportion of households (%)</i>
1,000 – 5,000	20
>5,000 – 10,000	69
>10,000 – 15,000	9
>15,000	3

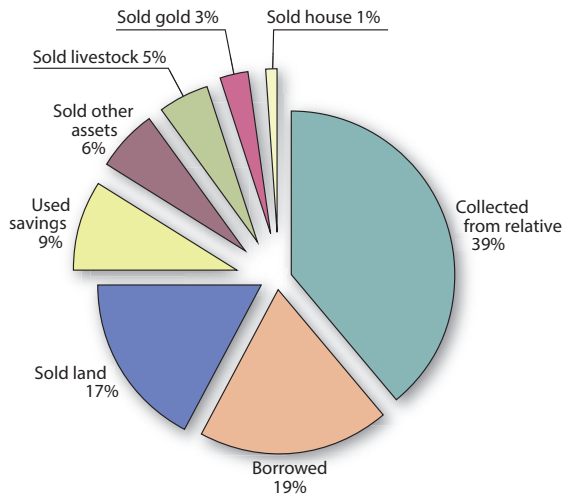
The sample size (n=153) represents the total number of households with family member(s) held for ransom. Components do not sum to totals because of rounding.

significantly, ranging from USD 1,000 to as high as USD 18,000, with an average spend of around USD 7,700.

Sources of funds

Given that the average monthly income across the households is around USD 400, with 45 per cent of households reporting monthly incomes of USD 300 or less, households use multiple sources to raise funds. Some ask relatives, others borrow and some use savings or sell assets. Figure 4 shows the proportion of households that use each of these strategies.

FIGURE 4. SOURCES OF FUNDS TO PAY RANSOM



Total number of households used in this graph (n=153) is those with family members who were held for ransom. Since households used multiple sources to raise funds, the percentages reflect the multiple responses given and not the number of households.

The fact that the majority reach out to relatives to raise the ransom reflects the structure of Somali society. It is common for households to contact close relatives when a problem befalls them and relatives are socially obligated to help if they are in a position to do so. Since slightly more than 40 per cent of the 180 households surveyed report receiving remittances from abroad, it is highly likely that they also approached their relatives for

support. In times of emergency, households frequently request extra support from their relatives abroad.⁵⁸

The range of monetary sources used by households, however, indicates that they are unable to secure the full amounts solely from relatives, who are themselves likely to have their own financial constraints. It is also unlikely that households could ask the same relatives for help more than once. Although social obligations are central to Somali livelihoods, asking for large amounts of money or frequent requests for help, quickly strain relations between relatives.

Consequently, households borrow from friends and other acquaintances. Only two households report that they borrowed money from a financial institution, using their houses as collateral.⁵⁹ Many drew on savings.⁶⁰ Households also sold assets. Land, gold and livestock are the most frequently reported sales but others also sold cars, businesses and even firearms. Four households report that they sold their houses and moved into rented accommodation.

The need to raise money quickly to meet the ransom deadline and prevent their relative from being hurt or killed, pushes households to distress sell assets under market value. An older woman who sold her land in Hargeysa for USD 2,500 recalls that she did not have the luxury to negotiate: 'We sold it at the price they were willing to give us.' A sixty-year-old mother in Hargeysa who also sold land (and was helped by relatives and borrowed from friends) to raise the USD 7,000 ransom she needed reflects, 'If the person is in a hurry, he does not care how much he loses and just takes whatever he is offered.'

58 Hammond, 'Family Ties'.

59 Access to credit is extremely difficult in most Somali regions. In Somaliland, for example, there were no commercial banks that could facilitate credit at the time of this research.

60 This is particularly interesting because the prevailing perception is that the propensity to save is very low in the Somali context due to relatively low levels of income and frequent requests to support relatives in need.

7. Implications for households

Psychological impacts

The emotional distress household members experience when a family member undertakes tahriib is considerable, and varies according to the stage of the journey. The initial period of not knowing the whereabouts of a family member is particularly difficult.

This period also significantly changes the normal household routine. As a mother in Hargeysa recalls when her sixteen-year-old daughter left, 'I stopped going to work. I almost went crazy.' A forty-eight-year-old mother in Hargeysa, whose son had gone on tahriib when he was sixteen years old, recalls her experiences during this time.

For two weeks we did not know where he was. We did not know whether he was dead or alive. We did not eat, we did not sleep and no one went to school.... I went crazy.... One day I finished showering and walked all the way to my room naked. If it weren't for the screams of my children, I would not have realized I was naked.

Once households know the whereabouts of family members, the rush to raise funds begins, giving rise to a host of other pressures and worries. Nevertheless, having this information is a relief and household members no longer feel helpless. As a father from Garowe says, 'When I found out where he was, I was happy. I had thought he died before that. So I went to the rural area and brought with me the camels I would have to sell for his ransom.'

Predictably, the death of a family member en route can be devastating. A young woman in Garowe relates that when her brother died on the journey, his 'mother died of a heart attack and his wife went crazy'. Because tahriib is a long journey full of uncertainties, when households find out where the individual is, they do not necessarily rest until that person is safely in Europe.

Even then, tahriib's impact can still be felt. A mother in Hargeysa, for example, explains that although her son is now in Germany, 'somewhere in me still hurts whenever I remember this period'.

Direct economic impacts

More than two-thirds of the 180 households report that they were financially worse off as a result of tahriib, identifying three direct impacts. First, almost a third of the households had to sell assets under market value to cover ransom and other expenses. Since households used some of these assets for income generating activities, their sale also directly impacted their capacities to sustain livelihoods and to deal with future emergencies, as these respondents indicate:

It was the only asset we had. Now we don't have anything else in case of future problems.

It had a negative financial impact on us because we lost our house and now we have to pay rent every month.

We used to get money but now we have sold the taxi we used to earn a living with.

Second, about 19 per cent of the households report that they borrowed money, and the subsequent debt repayment affected household finances. Most note they paid off their debts little by little in monthly instalments, which affected their income and their ability to consume and save. Loan repayments affected their ability to afford to pay their *biil* (basic household expenses). A fifty-year-old mother in Garowe notes, 'We have to deduct money from our [usual] income to repay debts, as we don't get money from anywhere else.' For households that used to save, they report this is no longer possible: 'We don't save money now. We use the money we get to repay debts.'

Third, direct financial impacts are even greater when the individuals who undertook tahriib had been contributing to the household income. A fifty-one-year-old mother in Garowe notes that her son 'used to drive a bus and earned a living for us'. In Hargeysa, a sister indicates that her brother who went on tahriib 'used to own a shop that is now closed'. In Hargeysa, a

fifty-eight-year-old mother comments that her son ‘used to work in construction and used to give us money’.

Loss of labour

Households note that the loss of labour is another key impact of tahriib. This can be felt both in the loss of income and in relation to the fulfilment of specific household tasks, especially when young women undertake tahriib.

She used to take care of the whole house. Now I have had to stop selling vegetables in the market and take care of the house.

She used to do all the housework, including cooking, cleaning and so on.

She didn’t used to go to school therefore she was responsible for taking care of the house and the grandmother.

Although the proportion of young women who left is less than a quarter, the loss of their labour in the household is strongly felt. Some households respond by assigning the tasks to younger female siblings, who may then have to drop out of school. In the case of the young woman who was responsible for caring for her grandmother, her younger siblings devised a system allowing them to continue going to school, as one of them explains:

When my sister left, we did not have anyone to watch after my grandmother and the house. One of us, my sister and I, was supposed to drop out of school to take care of my grandmother. But we did not want to drop out. So we decided to alternate the days we go to school. If I go today, my sister stays at home. The next day she goes and I stay and take care of the house and grandmother. If we alternate the days we miss school, the school will not kick us out and we can both still go to school.

Strained relations

The significant emotional distress household members experience when family members undertake tahriib can also create tensions among those who remain. It is common for household members, especially parents, to blame one another for being the cause of the

departure or failing to prevent it. Family relations can be further strained if the individual died en route. As a woman in Hargeysa recalls, 'After our son died, my husband accused me of previously knowing that he wanted to tahriib. That conflict is still going on.'

Because many respondents reach out to their relatives for help, it is unsurprising that some of those relationships are strained as a result. As a respondent in Hargeysa comments, 'Most of my relatives don't answer my calls. They think I'll ask them for money.' Consequently, some households doubt whether they would approach their relatives again if future emergencies arose. As another respondent indicates, 'We don't have the courage to go and ask them to help again.' Relations are also strained when relatives do not offer support, as this mother explains, 'My relationship with a lot of my relatives is not good now. They had money but they refused to help me.'

In their footsteps

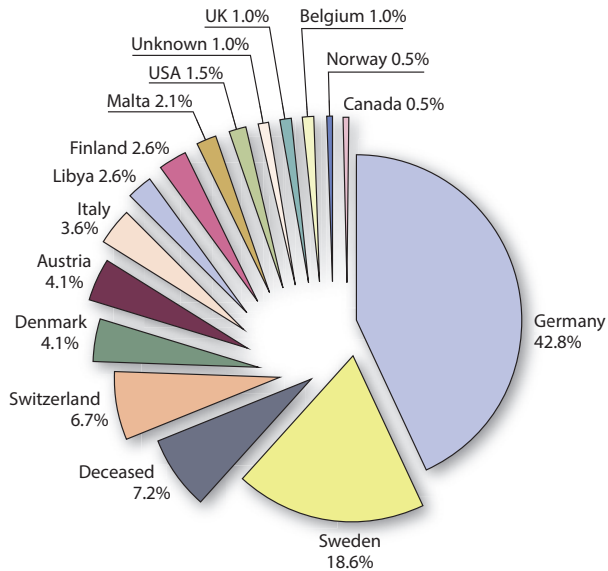
The migration of an older sibling can encourage younger ones to follow suit. Younger children are frequently heard talking about going on tahriib. A mother in Hargeysa cries, 'My younger son also wants to tahriib. I can barely control him! Whenever he sees his brother in Germany posting pictures on Facebook, he gets mad and wants to leave.' This can generate anxiety among parents, who respond in various ways. Some report living in constant fear: 'If the younger ones aren't seen every two hours, we search for them. We have to know their whereabouts at all times.' Others express resignation. After a younger sibling attempted tahriib numerous times but was intercepted at the border with Ethiopia, his mother says there is little she can do because 'the last camel walks the same way as the one in front of it'.

8. Where do they end up?

The considerable material and non-material costs associated with tahriib both to the individual and to the family left behind, raises an important question. Do these young people actually reach Europe?

Among the 180 households, 178 respond affirmatively when asked if they know the whereabouts of the family member who went on tahriib. In fact, the majority of these are in regular contact, using smartphone apps like WhatsApp and Viber and social media sites such as Facebook to communicate. Figure 4 shows the known whereabouts of the individuals who went on tahriib.

FIGURE 5. WHEREABOUTS OF THOSE WHO UNDERTOOK TAHRIIB



Sample size ($N=194$) represents the total number of individuals who embarked on tahriib. Components do not sum to totals because of rounding.

The fact that nearly 90 per cent of the 194 individuals who embarked on tahriib reached Europe highlights why young people remain keen to pursue this journey, especially since the majority ended up in Germany and Sweden, two of the most preferred destinations among young people. The percentage of those still in countries that are considered to be transit countries, such as Libya (as well as Italy and Malta), is also relatively small, thus reinforcing the aspirations of young people in the Somali regions to tahriib.

However, a large number—just over 7 per cent—died en route and an additional 1 per cent went missing. The total proportion of dead and missing young people who went on tahriib is significantly higher compared to reported percentages of migrants who died or went missing crossing the Mediterranean in 2015. Of a total of about one million people, close to 4,000 people died or went missing.⁶¹ It is plausible that the number of reported dead or missing individuals who went on tahriib is lower than the reality.⁶²

61 'IOM Counts 3,771 Migrant Fatalities in Mediterranean in 2015', International Organization for Migration. Accessed 6 January 2016, <http://www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015>.

62 Due to sensitivities surrounding this issue, households that were known to have lost a family member on tahriib tended to be avoided, thereby further skewing data linked to deaths.

9. Conclusions

A number of interrelated factors motivate Somaliland and Puntland youth to go on tahriib. Economic factors such as youth unemployment are important drivers but do not provide the sole impetus to leave. Pressures for—especially male—youth to meet social obligations (including those from peers), underemployment and inactivity, perceptions about the low quality of education and difficulties associated with the use of Somali passports are all reported reasons for going on tahriib. The leave now–pay later scheme smugglers offer has significantly lowered the initial cost of departure, making the choice for youth to leave simpler than struggling against the wide range of challenges they face at home in the Somali regions.

Although international migration is not new in Somaliland and Puntland, tahriib presents households in these two regions with a dilemma. The pros of going to Europe associated with a host of positive returns both to the individual and the family left behind, are weighed against the cons of going on tahriib associated with significant material and non-material costs, some of which can have long lasting effects. These costs explain why tahriib is causing such huge community uproar and is referred to as a national disaster in the Somali regions.

A significant number of those who embark on tahriib do nevertheless reach Europe. If these individuals are then able to secure refugee status, allowing them access to welfare benefits or employment, and they start to send remittances back home to their families, the material costs associated with tahriib can be eased. The economic and social advantages of diaspora who return to the Somali regions, even for a short time, can also recuperate losses associated with tahriib.

The likelihood of seeing these returns quickly is slim—owing to the sheer number of people arriving in Europe, especially since 2015. The large number of migrants has not only overwhelmed immigration regimes, leading to extremely long processing

periods, but has also resulted in a tightening up of immigration rules across Europe—with Finland already declaring Somalia a safe country for return—making it harder for Somalis to apply for asylum and gain legal status.

10. Policy considerations

The research gives rise to the following policy considerations.

Awareness campaigns. Existing campaigns are largely designed to inform young people about the dangers associated with tahriib. Yet young people in both Somaliland and Puntland are already well aware of the hazardous nature and costs of tahriib. Creating messages that clearly highlight the value of young people and the vital role they can play at home in the development of their communities and country may convince some to stay.

Youth inclusion. A widespread perception among youth that ‘we are not doing anything here’ highlights the relative exclusion young people from the Somali regions face in society. The involvement of young people in decision-making bodies—a youth quota in parliament or at the local government level—and the representation of young people in professional and business associations, civil society organizations and faith-based groups could significantly improve youth perceptions about their value to Somaliland and Puntland society.

Higher education. The perception that degrees provided by local universities are of inferior quality discourages young people from starting or completing their studies and encourages them to embark on tahriib instead. This dynamic is reinforced by employers who prefer graduates from foreign universities. Better links between higher education institutes and employers may improve post-graduation outcomes. In particular, employers could support universities’ provision for learning and improving the English language, as well as soft-skills training (for example, communication and time management), to ease the university-to-work transition.

Representation of the diaspora. The apparent success in social, economic and political spheres enjoyed by returning members of the diaspora serves as a powerful incentive for young people to

go on tahriib. Mentoring programmes that attach locally educated young people to members of the diaspora who are employed in high-level positions in government institutions, international aid agencies and in the private sector (for example chambers of commerce and other professional or business associations) could be established. This strategy could also work to prevent operational gaps when, as often happens, diaspora workers move on.

Raising the cost. The leave now–pay later scheme that smugglers operate significantly lowers the initial costs of tahriib and inflates the perceived benefits young people associate with it. Improved legislation covering human smuggling activities and cooperation with neighbouring countries on monitoring smugglers across borders could reduce the currently favourable economics of tahriib. It is essential, however, not to criminalize tahriib, especially in Somaliland and Puntland. Any efforts to impose punishments on young people who attempt this journey or their families could increase migratory outflows and may push young people to attempt even more dangerous routes.

Support for families. Support to households impacted by tahriib is urgently needed. Although families rely on their social networks for support, the growing prevalence of tahriib is straining this system. The fact that many households distress sell key assets suggests these households are susceptible to future livelihood shocks. Persistent drought in the Somali regions exacerbates these risks. Existing policies to assess household vulnerability and resilience could better account for the extra burdens imposed on families by tahriib.

Understanding migration routes. The international focus on the migration crisis, especially the migration of young people to Europe via the popular Central Mediterranean Route, obscures other migration routes and destinations used by youth in the Somali regions. It is likely that the number of young Somalis travelling to neighbouring countries and other countries in Africa is much larger than the number heading to Europe. Internal migratory patterns within the Somali regions also play a crucial role in determining out-migration patterns.

Glossary of acronyms, words and phrases

<i>abtirisiimo</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) the reckoning of the agnatic male ancestors
<i>dhoof</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) journey, travel or going abroad
Frontex	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
FSNAU–Somalia	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit–Somalia
<i>hawala</i>	(<i>Arabic</i>) traditional system for making money transfers in Arabic countries and South Asia
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
<i>magafe</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) a debt collector who secures ransom money; literally translated as ‘the one who never misses’
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket; represents the basic food and non-food items a household of six to seven members requires to sustain minimum livelihoods in different parts of the Somali regions
<i>tahriib</i>	(<i>Arabic</i>) mostly used to refer the emigration of young Somalis leaving for Europe via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, and across the Mediterranean Sea; mainly associated with illegal activities, for example smuggling and trafficking
RMMS	Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<i>xeer</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) customary law

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'An enlightening exposé of the motives and societal pressures that spur irregular migration, in this particular case, from Somaliland and Puntland. This study could not be timelier given that people smugglers and migrant traffickers have proven themselves to be extremely adept at continuously adjusting their methods to changed and changing policy contexts. Policymakers in both countries of origin and destination would be well-advised to consider the complexities that inform decisions to emigrate using illegal channels if effective solutions to deter this dangerous form of migration are to be found.'

—Maureen Achieng, Chief of Mission to Ethiopia and Representative to the African Union, UNECA and IGAD Addis Ababa Special Liaison Office, IOM

More than one million people arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean in 2015. In Somaliland and Puntland, accounts of young people embarking on the hazardous journey via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, are widespread. In current parlance, these young people are said to be 'going on *tahriib*'. Unlike previous migrations, *tahriib* is unique in that it is largely a youth phenomenon. The young who make the decision to go are usually facilitated by human smugglers who offer deferred payment schemes to encourage migrants to leave. The journey is perilous. Being held for ransom, abuse and death in the desert and at sea are commonplace. *Going on Tahriib* is based on interviews with households in Somaliland and Puntland as well as young people and government officials. The report examines the causes and consequences of *tahriib*, why young people decide to go on *tahriib*, and the often serious effects on the families left behind. It is crucial to understand this phenomenon and the motivations of those who attempt this journey as uninformed policies may push even more young people to attempt the precarious journey.



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