

## FAMILY LINKS

Trying to locate people and put them back into contact with their relatives is a major challenge for the ICRC, the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and the network of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and volunteers in the region and across the world.

### THE PLIGHT OF A YEMENI REFUGEE



A Somali Red Crescent (SRCS) official collects information from a Yemeni refugee in Berbera port. Yemenis who choose to flee to the northern regions of Somalia usually do so because of the presence of family members

*"We were used to gunfire sounds but it later changed to aerial bombardments coming down like rain. I had nowhere to run, no underground shelter to hide in. We had to flee Yemen for our safety," Amina, a Yemeni refugee, explains.*

\*Amina and her family decided to flee from Shumaili in Yemen having survived a harrowing 15 days of shelling. She describes how in her final days in Shumaili the place was utterly deserted with several structures reduced to rubble.

Since March 27th, over 5,000 people have arrived in Puntland and Somaliland having endured a perilous journey by boat from

different parts of Yemen. More arrivals are expected in the coming weeks.

In conflict situations, family members can be separated in the chaos adding to the anguish of relatives who struggle with uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones.

Amina lost contact with both her parents amid the confusion and arrived in Berbera, Somaliland, with little hope of seeing them again.

Through the help of the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) that has been receiving refugees and returnees from Yemen, she

was able to trace the whereabouts of her parents.

*"This was my happiest moment, I might be miles away from my parents but the moment I heard their voice, I knew there is a chance I might be reunited with them again," she said.*

The ICRC in collaboration with the SRCS have been trying to assist victims of the Yemen crisis to reestablish contact with their relatives. The work includes tracing people and seeking to clarify the fate of those who remain missing.

According to ICRC representative Ayman Touhami, who is present in Berbera port, there are some challenges given the growing number of new arrivals from Yemen.

*"There are difficulties accommodating the large number of arrivals at the reception centre in Berbera. Language is a barrier as the refugees do not speak Somali and it will take time for them to adjust to a foreign culture," he remarks.*

He adds, *"Some families have lost their loved ones in the crisis and are visibly depressed upon arrival. Losing a loved one is not an easy thing and we trying our best to ensure each family member is accounted for."*

\*Not real name

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