



HOSTING

University of Hertfordshire **UH**



📞 16192 | 🌐 gaf.edu.eg

NEWS WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

The Telegraph

Log in



Coronavirus News Politics Sport Business Money Opinion Tech Life Style

See all News



About 16,000 migrants being held in just one Saudi centre, Ethiopian official reveals

Numbers being held in appalling conditions may be far greater than first thought

By Zecharias Zelalem and Will Brown, AFRICA CORRESPONDENT

15 September 2020 • 11:21am



UK total deaths | **41,788**
[Track the virus](#)



Start your one-month free trial
today
[Subscribe now](#)

Details are beginning to emerge showing that the sheer scale of Saudi Arabia's crackdown on African migrants is far greater than anyone imagined.

Last month a *Sunday Telegraph* investigation found that [hundreds if not thousands of mainly Ethiopian migrants](#) are being kept in appalling conditions in centres across the Gulf Kingdom as part of a drive to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Using smuggled phones detainees detailed horrific accounts of disease, beatings and suicide.

But recent statements from Abdo Yassin, Ethiopia's Consul General in Jeddah suggest that the centres highlighted by the *Telegraph* are just the tip of the iceberg.

Last week, Mr Yassin said that dozens of prisons are housing Ethiopians and that about 16,000 Ethiopian migrants are being held at just one detention centre at Al Shumasi, near the holy city of Mecca.

"Jeddah has over 53 prisons. Ethiopians are held in every one of them," Mr Yassin told the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. "If you take the one at Al Shumaisi...located around 60km from Jeddah, there are about 16,000 Ethiopians kept in the prison and the holding cells."

Last month, the Telegraph was able to communicate with migrants at the centres at both Al Shumasi and Jazan, a port city on the border in Yemen. It is unclear how many people are being held at the detention centre at Jazan.

However, satellite images of the Jazan centre show more than a dozen buildings there. There are believed to be several other centres across the Kingdom. Earlier this month, under international pressure from human rights groups, Western politicians and the United Nations, Saudi Arabia said it would investigate all of its [detention centres](#).

However, migrants told the *Telegraph* that since news of their plight went around the world, they have been beaten brutally by prison guards who scoured the rooms for smuggled phones. They say they were stripped naked and that some of them were put in handcuffs during the searches.

The Ethiopian government in Addis Ababa has come under mounting pressure at home to repatriate the migrants stuck in the centres after the *Telegraph* revealed that officials tried to stop the migrants communicating with the outside world, most probably to avoid a diplomatic fall out with oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

Last week, [nearly 150 women and children were repatriated to Ethiopia from Saudi Arabia](#). This was initially greeted as good news.

However, an Ethiopian government document from August shows that their repatriation was part of an arrangement between Saudi and Ethiopian authorities, which required migrants to purchase their own one-way tickets home from Ethiopian Airlines: something that the vast majority of impoverished migrants cannot do.

To make matters worse, Ethiopia's embassy in Riyadh announced on Monday that Saudi immigration authorities had voided the agreement, leaving Ethiopian migrants with no remaining avenues to escape the Kingdom.

"It is shocking to hear that up to 16,000 Ethiopian migrants might be languishing in detention in the Al Shumaisi facility. Human Rights Watch and the *Telegraph* documented horrific conditions in two other centres in Jazan Saudi Arabia where thousands more Ethiopian migrants may also reside," said Nadia Hardman, a researcher at the NGO Human Rights Watch.

"We repeat our call on Saudi Arabia to immediately release the most vulnerable and improve the miserable conditions for the thousands that remain."

Protect yourself and your family by learning more about [Global Health Security](#)

Global Health Bulletin

Get the latest coronavirus news and advice as the outbreak continues



Enter your email address to sign up

[Sign up](#)

By creating a Telegraph account, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and our [Privacy Policy](#).

Related Topics

Migrants, Ethiopia, Coronavirus, Saudi Arabia, Africa, Immigration



More stories



[What time is Boris Johnson's announcement tonight, and what will he say?](#)



[We can beat Covid without lockdowns, says top German virologist](#)



[Whitty and Vallance's attempt to dress down the lockdown sceptics was unconvincing](#)



[Is the UK heading for a second national lockdown, and what are the new coronavirus rules?](#)



[Lurch towards lockdown leaves Boris Johnson on brink of being well and truly stumped](#)



['Implausible': Scientists hit out at warning of 50,000 Covid cases a day](#)

Barnebys® Your search for art, design, antiques, and col



Oriental Bronze Figure on Marble Base FR3SH
Est. 400 USD

More from Global Health Security

❖Live | Coronavirus latest news: Rule of six must be scrapped and households banned from mingling, warns Sage advisor

By Jamie Johnson

► 22 Sep 2020, 10:33am



'My home was burning, it was like hell': The children traumatised by the Lesbos migrant camp fire

By Sofia Barbarani

22 Sep 2020, 7:00am



Pub curfew set to be announced as Covid threat level raised

By Sarah Newey

22 Sep 2020, 1:19am



Eating a healthy diet is too expensive for many Britons, research finds

By Jordan Kelly-Linden

— — — — —



Poorest countries left to 'sink or swim' in response to Covid, says David Miliband

By Anne Gulland

21 Sep 2020, 12:00pm

A Government message that educates and inspires would be more efficient than threats



PAUL NUKI

• 20 Sep 2020, 10:00pm



More from The Telegraph



Second Covid shutdown begins as Boris Johnson prepares to announce new restrictions



Churchill's home on National Trust's BLM list of shame



Travel latest news: What 'Level Four' shutdown status means for your holiday



No, we should not be giving the NHS a medal



First arrivals at Kent Army barracks converted into migrant camp



Politics latest news: Michael Gove reveals working from home U-turn ahead of Boris Johnson's lockdown address

The Telegraph

[Back to top ^](#)

Follow us on:



[Contact us](#)

[About us](#)

[Rewards](#)

[Archive](#)

[Reader Prints](#)

[Branded Content](#)

[Syndication and Commissioning](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

[Advertising Terms](#)

[Fantasy Sport](#)

[UK Voucher Codes](#)

[Betting Offers](#)

[Modern Slavery](#)

[Manage Cookies](#)

