

**MMC North Africa**

**QUARTER 2 2019**

A photograph of two men on a boat. The man in the foreground is wearing a white t-shirt and has his hand to his face, looking down with a somber expression. The man behind him is also in a white t-shirt, looking out at the blue sea. The background shows the horizon and the sky.

# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the North Africa (NA) region. The core countries of focus for this region are Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest. The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration.

For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

### **MMC's understanding of mixed migration**

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

#### **Front cover photo credit:**

Taha Jawashi (2017)

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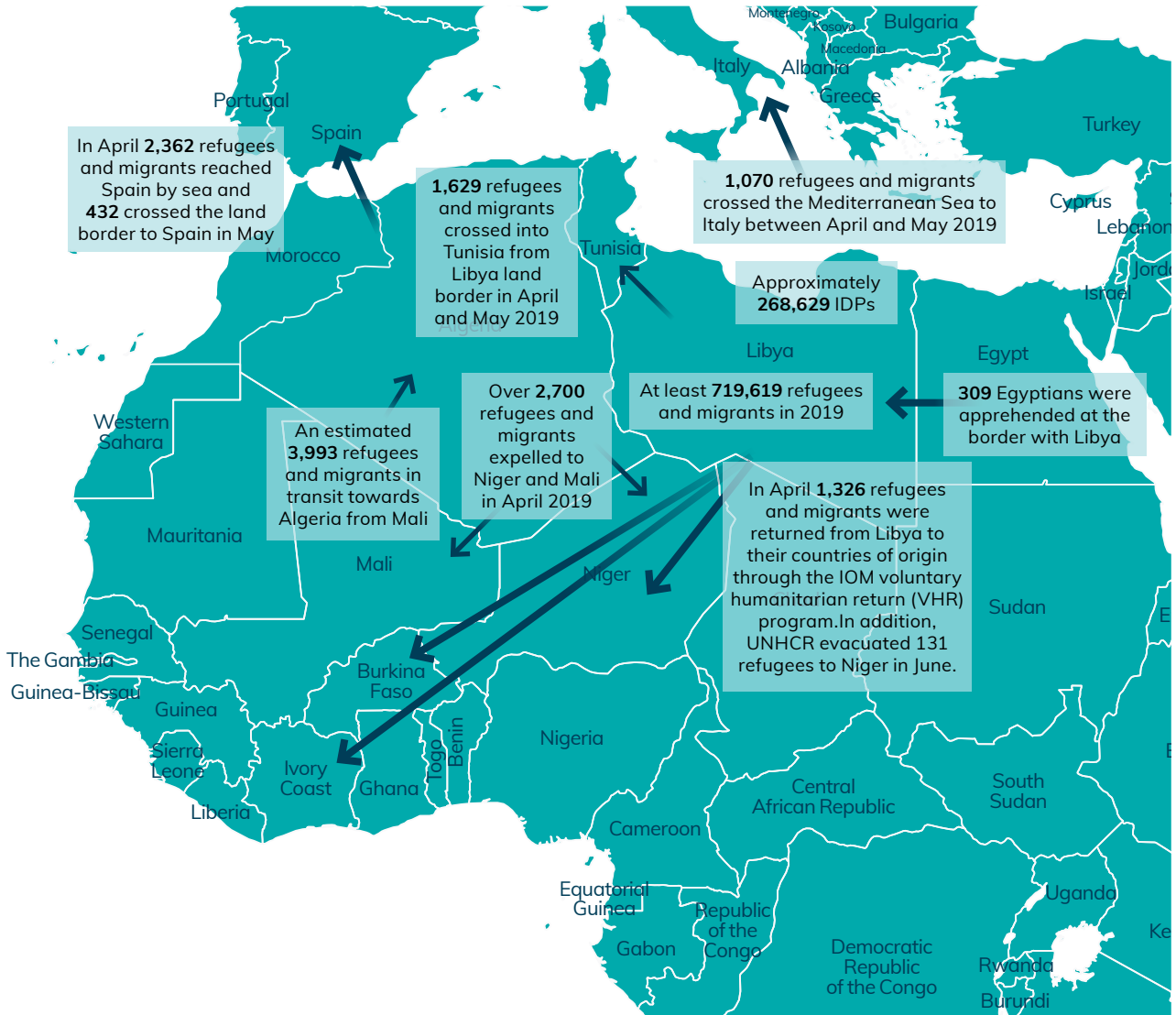
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

## Quarter 2 - 2019

### Key Updates

- **Escalation of armed conflict in Libya:** In April 2019, conflict between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Government of National Accord (GNA) escalated in and around the Libyan capital, Tripoli. Between April and May, this resulted in over 4,000 casualties and the internal displacement of over 93,925 people. Humanitarian conditions in Tripoli have severely deteriorated. Ambulances have been attacked and hospitals struggle to cover the needs of patients, according to unpublished reports by the Libya Humanitarian Access Team.
- **Attacks on detention centres:** In the most recent attack on a detention centre, on 2 July over 40 migrants were killed and 130 injured when the Tajoura Detention Centre on the outskirts of Tripoli was hit by an [air strike](#). As of 21 June, [UNHCR reports](#) that some 5,800 migrants and refugees remain in detention in Libya.
- **Thousands of families remain stranded in Tripoli's conflict-affected areas**, sometimes refusing to leave their homes for fear of looting. These families have no access to markets and face shortages in food supplies. Access to the capital is restricted, particularly in the southern neighbourhoods located close to the fighting, including Ayn Zara, Khala, Aziziya, Wadi Rabiya'a and Gasr Bin Ghashir, according to the Libya Humanitarian Access Team.
- **137 refugees and migrants died on the Central Mediterranean Route between April and June 2019.** On 10 May, approximately [70 people drowned](#) after a vessel off the coast of Tunisia capsized, in what was the most deadly incident since the start of 2019. Overall, [IOM has recorded](#) 343 deaths since the beginning of the year on this route.
- **Evacuations from Libya to Niger, European countries, and Canada:** In June, a group of 131 refugees were evacuated out of Libya to the [UNHCR](#)-run Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Niger. Evacuees were from Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan and included 65 children, some of whom had been held in detention for more than one year. Since the start of 2019, UNHCR has assisted 1,297 refugees out of Libya, including 711 to Niger, 295 to Italy and 291 who have been resettled to Europe and Canada.
- **In May, mixed migration increased from Libya to Tunisia**, primarily of Sudanese and Somali nationals, [according to UNHCR](#).

## Regional Overview\*



\*Arrows on the map only relate to key updates and do not represent mixed migration flows within and out of North Africa

# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## Mixed migration within North Africa

### Impact of conflict on movements within and from Libya

In June 2019, [DTM reported](#) that over 3,400 individuals were forced to leave their homes in southern Tripoli due to an escalation in fighting, bringing the total number of internally displaced to 93,925 since the onset of the clashes.

At least 780 refugees and migrants have fled to Janzour (southwest of Tripoli) and Qasr Akhyar (southeast of Tripoli) from other unstable neighbourhoods of the city.

Movement for an estimated 138,000 refugees and migrants has been partially or completely restricted by fighting, rendering them involuntarily immobile, according to a [DTM rapid assessment](#) (May 2019). The worst affected are refugees and migrants living in the southern neighbourhoods of Tripoli such as Abu Selim, Khallat al Furjan and Ayn Zara. Most report being unable to leave their homes and having severely constrained access to markets and food. Lack of job opportunities in these areas also adversely affects refugees and migrants who rely on daily wage labour.

Along the Libya–Tunisia border, approximately 1,629 refugees and migrants crossed into Tunisia in [April](#) and [May 2019](#). This does not represent a significant influx, despite the escalation of fighting in Libya since the beginning of April.

## Continued mixed migration to Libya and Algeria

As of May 2019, [DTM estimates](#) that 641,398 refugees and migrants are present in Libya, of which 65% originate from sub-Saharan Africa, 29% from North Africa and 6% from the Middle East and Asia. The top five identified nationalities are Nigerien, Egyptian, Chadian, Sudanese and Nigerian.

To the southeast, this quarter saw an increase in refugees and migrants crossing the border from Sudan and Chad. To the southwest, an increase in the presence of armed forces and occasional clashes in and around al-Ghatroun, located on the main route to Chad and Niger, was recorded alongside an increase in the number of refugees and migrants in the same area. Combined with fewer refugees and migrants recorded in Sabha and Murzuq, this may suggest that movements are being constrained along these areas of mixed migration routes. Moreover, [DTM](#) argues that a continued decline in economic opportunities in southern towns is driving mixed migration toward northern coastal areas.

In April, [DTM reported](#) approximately 3,745 new arrivals of refugees and migrants in Libyan coastal towns. This included, among others, 600 refugees and migrants who arrived in Benghazi in search of employment opportunities, some 500 migrants and refugees who arrived in the coastal town of Sirte and 750 persons in Ashshwayrif with the intention of continuing their journey onwards. Also in April, authorities apprehended

[309 Egyptians](#) in the northeastern governorate of Matrouh as they were attempting to cross into Libya from the Sallum desert.

Due to the difficulty of monitoring flows to and through Algeria, data are largely unavailable. In May, [DTM in Mali identified](#) approximately 720 individuals, amounting to 18% of recorded outbound flows, who had the intention to move to Algeria. These outbound flows were passing through the Malian towns of Gao and Timbuktu and continuing towards the southern Algerian towns of Tamanrasset and Bordj.

## Anti-smuggling operations in North Africa

In March in Tunisia, over [100 refugee and migrants](#) were apprehended during an attempt to break into Port La Goulette and travel irregularly to Europe, according to Tunisian media reports. Between 30 and 40 people were arrested inside the port, while 70 people were arrested outside the port. While it is unclear from the information available how those involved were attempting the crossing, there are some indications that they hoped to board one or more ships anchored at the port.

On 2 May, in the coastal city of Nador in northeast Morocco, a [ring of five smugglers](#) was arrested on suspicion of facilitating irregular migration. The smugglers were transporting five migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The Moroccan authorities seized maritime equipment including 15 rubber boats, 12 boat engines, two cars and electronic devices.

Also in May, Spanish police broke up a Bangladeshi-run ring smuggling more than [350 refugees and migrants](#) from the Indian subcontinent by providing them with fake passports. The refugees and migrants were flown into Algeria, from where they crossed into Morocco and were then taken by boat into Spain. The persons smuggled originated from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

## Mixed migration from North Africa to Europe

[UNHCR's Operational Portal](#) reveals that more than 3,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy and more than 1,000 arrived in Malta via the Central Mediterranean route between January and June 2019. This represents a significant drop in arrivals from the same period in the previous year, when approximately 4,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy in May 2018 alone.

Between January and June, [UNHCR reported](#) that approximately 21% of the arrivals to Italy originated from Tunisia, followed by Pakistan (15%), Algeria (10%), Iraq (9%) and Côte d'Ivoire (8%). This reveals that Central Mediterranean sea crossings are largely being carried out by refugees and migrants from North Africa, highlighting that North African countries are not only countries of destination and transit, but also origin. The most common countries of origin on the Central Mediterranean route differ from the most common countries of origin across the Mediterranean. During the same period, 38,000 arrivals were recorded across the Mediterranean. These are dominated by refugees and migrants moving along western and eastern routes to Spain and Greece, respectively. For instance, Morocco is the third-largest country of origin (10%) (western route), after Afghanistan (17%) and Syria (11%) (eastern route).

This year has thus far seen a significant drop in arrivals in Spain compared to arrivals over the same period in 2018. An internal European Union report obtained by [The Associated Press](#) suggests that increased measures to stem migration flows by stopping people before they reach Europe, specifically cooperation between Morocco and Spain, are responsible for this decline.

In terms of points of departure of unauthorized sea crossings to Italy, 34% (538 persons) departed from Libya, mostly from the coastal towns of Zuwara and Zawiya. [UNHCR](#) has also noted an increase in sea interceptions and disembarkation events off the Libyan coast since May 2019. In June, 668 refugees and migrants were disembarked in Tripoli, Al Khums and Zawiya, and over 3,000 refugees and migrants are estimated to have been intercepted by the Libyan coastguard.

While the aforementioned figures detail refugees and migrants who have successfully crossed or been detained, many do not survive the journey. As of [30 June 2019](#), approximately 667 refugees and migrants are either dead or missing since the start of 2019. This represents a considerable drop from 2018 over the same period, when 1,289 refugees and migrants were either dead or missing. In both 2018 and 2019, routes to Italy remain the deadliest for those attempting sea crossings. [In May](#), a boat carrying 75 persons departed from the Libyan coastal town of Zuwara and capsized near the Tunisian town of Sfax; 60 refugees and migrants were killed. The survivors, most of whom are nationals of Egypt, Bangladesh and Morocco, recounted spending over eight hours in the water before being rescued by Tunisian fishermen.

In [April](#), the Italian government signed a directive which banned charity vessels from rescuing migrants off the coast of Libya and disembarkation to Italy. On [29 June](#), Italian officials arrested Carola Rackete, the captain of the Sea-Watch 3, after it docked in Italy without permission. The vessel had been negotiating with authorities for two weeks, unsuccessfully, to disembark after it had rescued more than 50 migrants who had been floating on an inflatable raft.

## Southbound mixed migration movements from North Africa

According to [UNHCR](#), over 2,700 sub-Saharan refugees and migrants were arrested and removed from Algeria to the borders with Niger and Mali in April 2019. Since January 2019, more than 8,000 people have been deported from Algeria to Niger and to a lesser extent, to Mali. In terms of southbound movements from Libya, according to [IOM](#), 1,326 migrants were returned to their countries of origin in April via the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) program. On 19 June, [UNHCR evacuated](#) 131 refugees out of Libya to the UNHCR-run Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Niger. The evacuees were from Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan and included 65 children, some of whom had been held in detention in Libya for more than a year. Since the beginning of 2019, UNHCR has assisted 1,297 refugees out of Libya, including 711 to Niger, 295 to Italy and 291 who have been resettled to Europe and Canada.

## Thematic Focus: Libya's Detention Centres

Libya has long been a destination for refugees and labour migrants, as well as a transit country for refugees and migrants seeking to reach Europe. In recent years, Libya has become the primary focus of European Union (EU) policies focused on reducing irregular migration flows. As a result, a growing number of refugees and migrants are being intercepted at sea by the Libyan coast guard and are being transferred to detention centres in Libya.

Reports have circulated of extensive abuses and severe human rights violations perpetrated by prison guards and security personnel. In 2019, [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW), [Amnesty international](#) and the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR) reported disturbing accounts from both adults and children in detention. They reported abuses including beatings, whippings and use of electric shocks, perpetrated by prison guards. There is significant evidence that smugglers operate to varying degrees in collusion with Libyan detention officials.

According to laws and policies dating back to the Gaddafi era, foreigners without authorisation to be in Libya are liable to arrest, imprisonment, fines or forced labour, regardless of age (Law No. 19 (2010) on Combating Irregular Migration, Article 6, and Law No. 6 (1987) on Regulating Entry, Residence and Exit of Foreign Nationals to/from Libya, and amended by Law No. 2 (2004)). Immigration detention in Libya can be indefinite, as the law does not specify a maximum term, providing only that detention be followed by deportation. Furthermore, [HRW states](#) that there are no formal procedures in place allowing detainees access to legal representation or any opportunity to challenge the decision to detain them.

As of 21 June, [UNHCR estimates](#) some 5,800 migrants and refugees remain in detention in Libya. According to the [DTM detention centre profile generator](#), a majority (67%) are from East African countries, principally Eritrea followed by Ethiopia and Somalia. Approximately 10% are from West Africa and 277 individuals originated from Egypt. The majority of the detained population are male adults (83%) and 10% are minors. Of the 349 women, 20% were either pregnant or breastfeeding. Similar observations were also reported in a recent [UNHCR-REACH assessment](#) on East African refugees and migrants in Libya in April 2019. According to the study, East Africans smuggled into Libya are more likely to be subjected to instances of captivity.

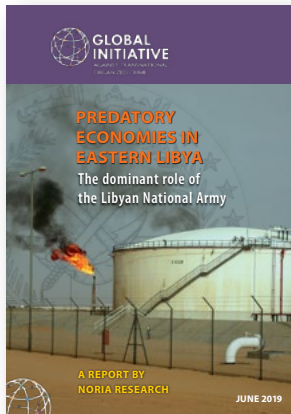


In 2019, MMC's 4Mi project in North Africa has interviewed 693 refugees and migrants in Libya, of which 16% (110) experienced detention during their migration journey, primarily in Libya (79% of the 110 respondents). In line with observations detailed previously by other sources, East African nationals were the most commonly subjected to detention. Out of 156 East Africans interviewed by 4Mi in 2019, 24% reported having been detained. This was the case for 13% of the 442 interviewed West Africans and 15% of the 95 respondents from Central Africa.

Following the escalation of fighting in Tripoli and surrounding areas since April, there are growing concerns for the refugees and migrants held in detention centres of which over half (3,200 persons) are in areas in proximity to frontlines and are either at risk or have been directly affected by the conflict. As [reported by HRW](#), some migrant detention centres are located near militia bases and are targets for attack during fighting. In one such instance on 23 April, armed men attacked with firearms detainees at the Qasr Ben Geshir detention centre, about 24 km south of Tripoli, and at least 12 people were injured. The GNA-backed militia members have allegedly forced some detained migrants to handle weapons, according to [unconfirmed reports](#). Most recently, on 2 July, more than 40 migrants were killed and 130 injured when the Tajoura Detention Centre on the outskirts of Tripoli was hit by an [air strike](#).

[Al-Jazeera](#) also reports deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the centres. Several refugees and migrants in detention have expressed fear of being caught in the crossfire and of running out of food. Detainees in Abu Selim centre have indicated that food supplies are dwindling as Libyan authorities have not been providing food and NGOs cannot reach the area. The centre holds approximately 400 detainees, including 30 children.

# Highlighted New Research and Reports



## [Predatory economies in Eastern Libya: The dominant role of the Libyan National Army](#)

### Global Initiative | June 2019

The report analyses the most recent Libyan conflict from the perspective of the LNA's involvement in the black economy. In particular, the report looks at the LNA's financing sources through use of a parallel Central Bank and Russian-printed dinars as well as its direct control of both licit and illicit economies in eastern Libya.



## [Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya in 2018: longitudinal trends and outlook](#)

### UNHCR | June 2019

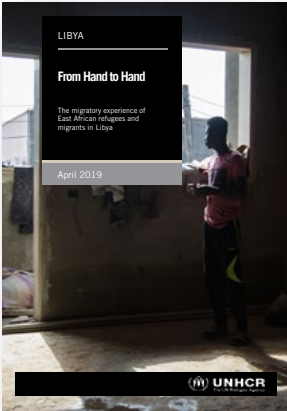
This report is based on six rapid thematic studies, conducted over the course of 2018, as well as a longitudinal analysis of changes in mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya since 2017, with analysis based on comparable indicators monitored in late 2016 and early 2017.



## [The human conveyor belt broken: Assessing the collapse of the human-smuggling industry in Libya and the central Sahel](#)

### Global Initiative | April 2019

The report explores trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya between 2011 and 2016.



[From hand to hand: the migratory experience of refugees and migrants from East Africa across Libya](#)

**UNHCR | April 2019**

The assessment explores the migration trajectories, smuggling networks and protection risks faced by refugees and migrants originating from East Africa while crossing Libya. The study is based on longitudinal data collected between late 2016 and 2018.



[No escape from hell. EU policies contribute to abuse of migrants in Libya](#)

**Human Rights Watch | January 2019**

The report documents the inhumane conditions, including severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, poor quality food and water that led to malnutrition, lack of adequate healthcare and disturbing accounts of violence by guards. The report is based on in-depth interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch researchers in four detention centres in Tripoli, Misrata and Zuwara.

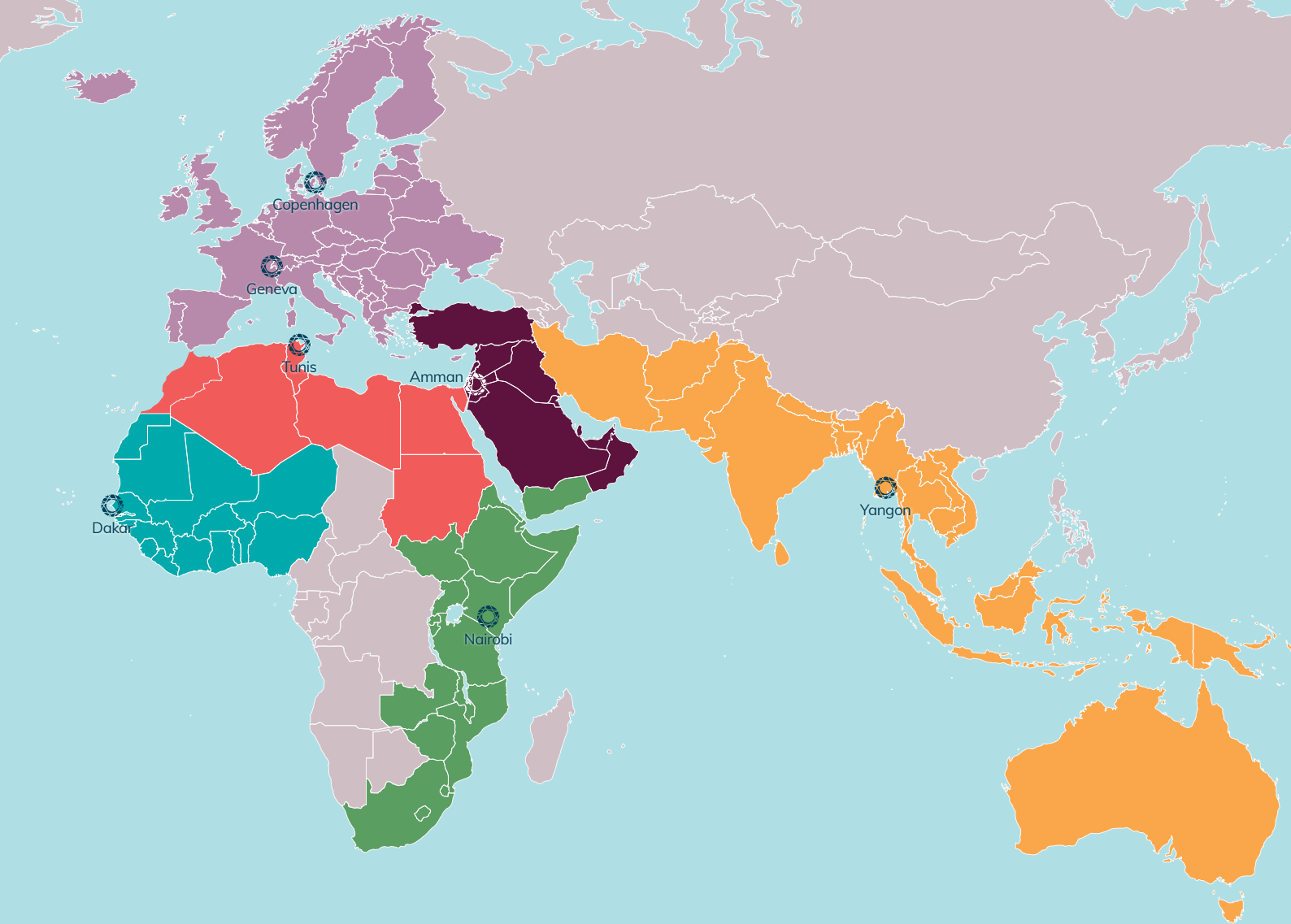
**MMC publications**



[The policy tap fallacy](#)

**Gabriele Restelli | June 2019**

This policy paper provides a critical analysis of the use of restrictive entry and asylum regulation as a migration management tool, using Italy as a case study. It proposes that such restrictions, rather than deterring irregular migration, tend to push more people into irregularity. While the outsourcing, or “externalization” of border controls may have contributed to the recent drop in sea arrivals, migration literature and evidence from the Central Mediterranean Route suggest that reducing access to legal pathways will have no significant effect on the number of migrants that reach Italian shores.



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and global and regional MMC teams are hosted by the DRC offices in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis and Yangon.

**For more information visit:**

[mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

