

**MMC North Africa**

**QUARTER 3 2019**

A photograph of two men on the deck of a boat. They are looking out at the sea. The man on the left is wearing a white t-shirt and has his hand to his forehead. The man on the right is wearing a white t-shirt and has his hand to his mouth. The background is a vast blue sea under a clear 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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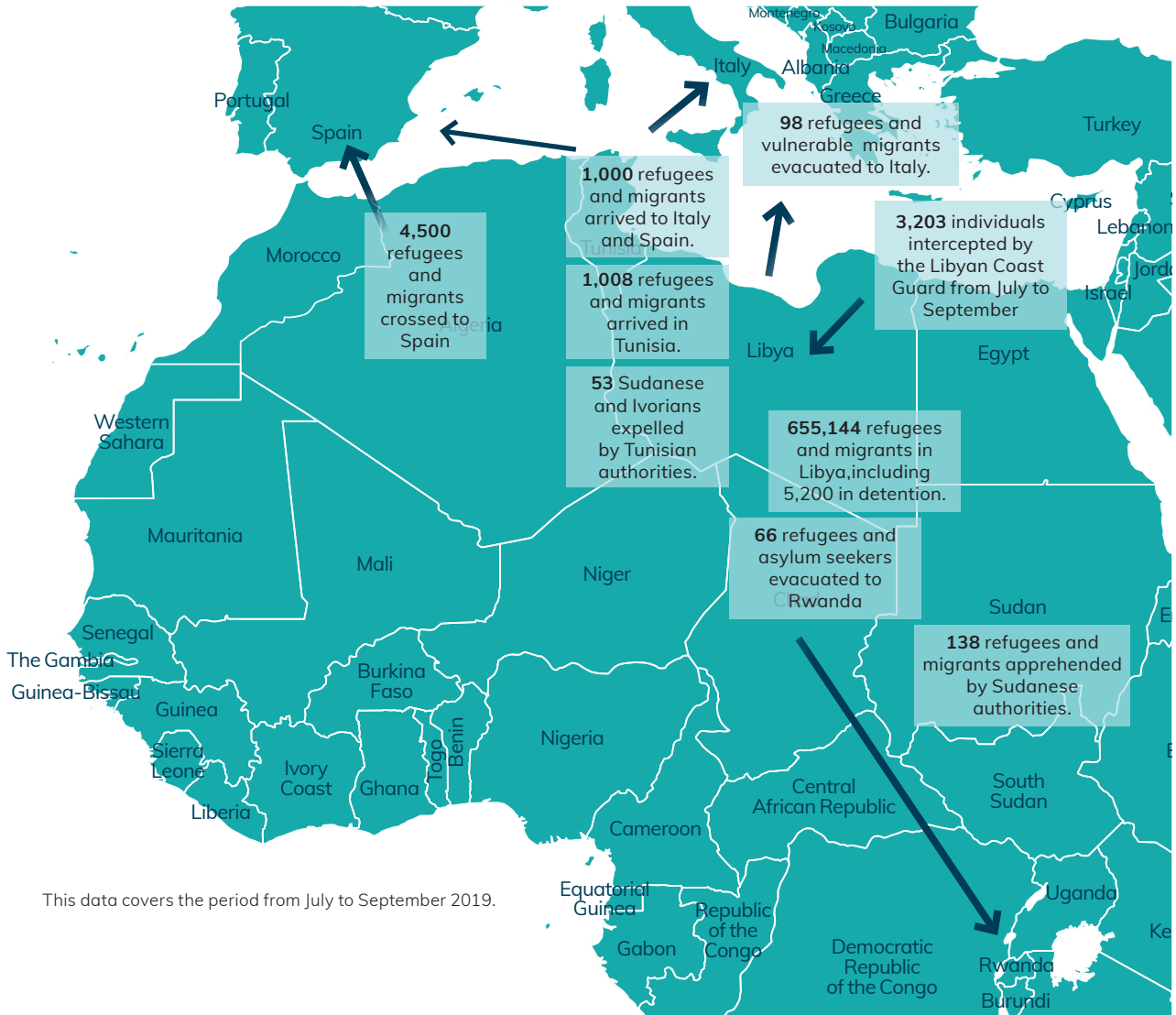
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

## Quarter 3 - July – September 2019

### Key Updates

- **Fighting around Tripoli continues to fuel displacement** and expose refugees and migrants to heightened risks. In July, 53 refugees and migrants died after the Tajoura Detention Center was hit by an [airstrike](#).
- **At the end of July, there was a 12% increase in the number of IDPs in Libya from the previous quarter** recorded by [IOM-DTM](#) to over 301,000.
- **Between July and September, 3,203 individuals were intercepted off the Libyan coast** and returned to the mainland, according to [UNHCR](#).
- **More than 1,000 refugees and migrants have died or gone missing on the Mediterranean Sea this year.** On 29 August, a boat carrying 32 people from the coast of Dakhla to the Canary Islands capsized. Nine survivors were rescued by the Moroccan Navy, but tragically 23 people lost their lives, and on 3 September, two young Algerian men were rescued from waters 40 miles south-east of Cabo de Gata, Almería. They reported that they had left Algeria five days before along with 15 others, who remain missing at sea.
- **According to the [Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights \(FTDES\)](#), attempts to illegally cross Tunisian land borders are on the rise.** In August, Tunisian authorities apprehended 53 individuals at the southern border with Libya.
- **In September, [Sudan](#) closed the border with Libya** and authorities apprehended 138 individuals attempting to cross the border irregularly.
- **[UNHCR](#) evacuated 164 vulnerable refugees from Libya** to Italy (98) and Rwanda (66). This follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding in September, to establish an emergency transit mechanism with Kigali.

## 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

### Mixed migration within and from Libya

[IOM](#) and [UNHCR](#), respectively, estimate that there are currently 655,144 refugees and migrants residing in Libya, of which 45,653 are refugees and asylum seekers, which represents a slight increase from the previous quarter.

Ethnic tensions in the south of Libya, where the Tebu tribes are opposing the Ahli tribes, continues since August, resulting in the identity-based killing of civilians and significant population displacements ([REACH](#)). The fighting is also restricting mobility as roads are either blocked or controlled by specific ethnic groups. [IOM-DTM](#) reports that tensions in Southern Libya have led to population movements of IDPs, refugees, and migrants to surrounding areas.

Armed fighting in the southern areas of Tripoli since April 2019 continues to destabilise Libyan communities. By the end of July 2019, the number of IDPs tracked by [IOM-DTM](#) increased to more than 301,000, marking a 12% increase from June, when IDPs totalled 268,629. The fighting around Tripoli also negatively impacts refugees and migrants in the country, including causing some to experience forced displacement within Libya and leaving the most vulnerable stranded. In early July 2019, an [airstrike](#) hit Tajoura Detention centre resulting in the deaths of at least 53 refugees and migrants and injuries to more than 130. The [United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres](#), expressed outrage at the attack and called for an independent investigation to bring those responsible to justice. Some 5,200 refugees and migrants are being held in DCIM detention centres across the country, many of which are located near conflict-affected areas. [According to UNHCR](#), 71% of those detained are registered as people of concern (PoC) for UNHCR.

At the end of September, [UNHCR](#) reported that 13,988 refugees and migrants were rescued/intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coast Guard and disembarked in Libya thus far in 2019, including 9,560 men, 2,118 women and 1,364 children. From July to September, 3,203 individuals were intercepted off the Libyan coast and returned to the mainland. Interceptions reached a peak in August when 1,380 individuals were disembarked.

In August, [Tunisian](#) authorities arrested 36 Ivorian and 20 Sudanese nationals, including three children and one pregnant woman, in Sfax and expelled them to the country's border with Libya. Reports claim that Tunisian authorities first brought the groups to Medinine, before transporting them to the border. This move was criticised by various NGOs, demanding that Tunisian authorities allow refugees and migrants to enter the country and receive adequate assistance. It is not clear why this forced expulsion to Libya occurred or whether it is a sign of a shift in migration policies, as this was the first instance of this type reported in the past two years.

Additionally, in early [August](#), Tunisian authorities arrested approximately 100 people on suspicion of planning an attempt to cross the Mediterranean to Italy, in a town bordering Sfax. A report from [FTDES](#) finds that attempts to illegally cross Tunisian land borders is on the rise, with 301 attempts in the first half of 2019 compared to 105 over the same period in 2018.

## Mixed migration along Libya's southern border

According to the Humanitarian Access Team (HAT),<sup>1</sup> the fighting in Southern Libya may be disrupting smuggling routes from West Africa. Anecdotal information from 4Mi monitors suggest a possible shift in routes. Smugglers, refugees and migrants travelling from Agadez in Niger, are now entering Libya through the southern town of Awbari rather than Al-Ghatroun before continuing to Sabha. 4Mi monitors also observed that while the influx of refugees and migrants has not seemingly decreased, the travel time to reach Sabha takes between 4 and 5 days, which is longer than previously reported.

According to [IOM-DTM](#), flows transiting through Algeria and Libya have remained relatively stable between January and July 2019, while there has been an increase of refugees and migrants passing through Morocco. This may indicate a shift from the Central Mediterranean Route to the Western Mediterranean Route (see also next section below). Nonetheless, DTM-IOM identified more than 800 individuals intending to transit through Algeria from Mali in [July](#) and [August](#) 2019. Most intended to access Algeria from Kidal and Timbuktu in Mali.

[On 26 September 2019](#), Sudan ordered the closure of its borders with Libya and the Central African Republic over unspecified security concerns. In recent years, media have claimed that rebels from Darfur, Sudan, had crossed into Libya to build up their military capabilities. At the same time, Sudan lies at the heart of migratory routes that connect East and West Africa to North Africa. In September, Sudanese paramilitaries captured 138 Africans including Sudanese, trying to enter Libya ([AfricaNews](#)).

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1 Humanitarian Access Team (HAT) (September 2019). Murzuq Situation Report. Unpublished report.

## Mixed migration from North Africa to Europe

On 12 September, [UNHCR](#) evacuated 98 vulnerable refugees out of Libya to Italy amidst ongoing conflict in Tripoli. The evacuees were from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, and included 52 unaccompanied children. Most of the evacuees had been in detention in Libya for more than 8 months.

Along the Central Mediterranean Route, sea arrivals to Italy from Libya and Tunisia have dropped. As of August, [UNHCR](#) registered some 5,100 refugees and migrants reaching Italy from Libya in 2019 and 1,300 Tunisians reaching Italy from Tunisia. This represents a drop of 75% and 67%, respectively, compared to the same period last year. UNHCR also reports that between January and August of 2019 around 26% of people arriving by sea to Italy departed from Libya, 36% from Tunisia and 10% from Algeria. This represents a significant shift from previous periods when the vast majority of arrivals to Italy had departed from Libya. Accompanying this shift in departure countries is a change in the nationalities of the people departing. The primary nationalities reaching Italy from all departure points were Tunisians (26%), Pakistanis (16%), Ivorians (10%) and Algerians (10%), whereas the primary nationalities arriving to Italy and departing solely from Libya were Bangladeshis, Sudanese and Ivorians.

Similar to the Central Mediterranean Route, the Western Mediterranean Route has seen a steady drop in the number of refugees and migrants trying to reach Spain, from either Morocco or Algeria. According to [UNHCR](#), between January and August 2019, 19,600 refugees and migrants reached Spain by crossing the Mediterranean, which represents a 44% drop when compared with the same period in 2018. This included approximately 2,900 individuals in [July 2019](#) and 1,600 in [August 2019](#). [UNHCR](#) attributes this decline to the increase in cooperation between Morocco and Spain on 'search and rescue' efforts and 'measures to prevent departures from North Africa.'

[IOM](#) registered 440 deaths on the Mediterranean between July and September. By far, the Central Mediterranean Route continues to be the most dangerous, with 317 registered deaths, as compared to 113 on the Western Route.

## Southbound mixed migration from North Africa

On 10 September, the Government of Rwanda, UNHCR and the African Union signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#), to set up an Emergency Transit Mechanism for refugees and vulnerable migrants evacuated from Libya. As per the agreement, Rwanda agreed to receive and provide protection to refugees and asylum-seekers who are being held in detention centres in Libya. In carrying out this program, on 26 September, [UNHCR](#) evacuated 66 refugees and asylum seekers to Kigali, Rwanda. The evacuees consisted of vulnerable Somalis, Eritreans and Sudanese.

Including this last evacuation, since the start of 2019, [UNHCR](#) has facilitated the departure of 1,540 individuals from Libya, including 1,169 individuals through humanitarian evacuations and 317 persons through UNHCR's resettlement programme.

## Thematic focus: Urban livelihoods of refugees and migrants in Libya

### Background

Libya has a long history of labour migration and has been an important transit and destination for refugees and migrants seeking economic opportunities to provide for the livelihoods of their households and send remittances home. Under Ghaddafi's rule, visa-free travel for sub-Saharan migrants was introduced to attract much needed labour to the country. As such, Libya became one of the main destinations for labour migration across the African continent. In the 2000s, it is estimated that 1.5 million refugees and migrants lived and worked in Libya. Many of them stayed temporarily, entering and exiting Libya on a circular basis. Despite the hostile environment, [DTM-IOM](#) reports that 72% of refugees and migrants surveyed in Libya were unemployed prior to arriving in the country. This indicates that Libya may still be perceived as an attractive destination for refugees and migrants, in terms of labour market opportunities. The most recent [IOM-DTM](#) estimates show there are some 655,144 refugees and migrants in Libya.

### Sectors of employment and risks

Despite remaining an attractive labour market, not all migrants and refugees are successful in their search of economic opportunities. [WFP](#) reports that one-fifth (20%) of the 2,545 migrants interviewed in July 2019 were struggling to find a job. Nearly 40% reported unstable casual labour as their main source of income, 22% reported earning income through small personal businesses, while another 9% said they are relying on support from family and friends to survive. More alarmingly, 178 (7%) reported depending on assistance from charities or humanitarian organisations while 229 (9%) described engaging in begging, scavenging and other risky activities to survive. Interviewed migrants also identified high food prices as a major concern (20% of respondents) and more than half of respondents voiced their worries about obtaining sufficient food to eat. Lack of education opportunities, discrimination and exploitation were also significant concerns voiced by interviewees.

When they find work, [Sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants work](#) mostly in unloading cargo ships, tending to farmland, restocking shelves, operating most aspects of construction and demolition, and managing waste and street clearance. According to a [UNHCR-REACH report](#), the majority of refugees and migrants in Libya work in the informal sector, due to their largely irregular status in the country. Most work long hours in a precarious environment, working mainly as daily laborers. Refugees and migrants from West and East Africa tend to work in more precarious jobs, compared to individuals from the Middle East and Asia who reported working in more stable arrangements.



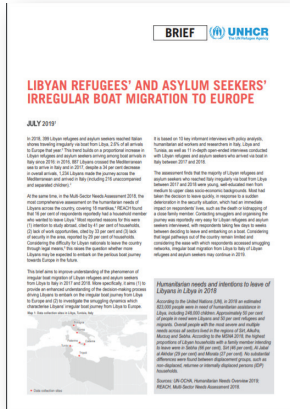
## Liquidity crisis

Following the fall of Ghaddafi and as a result of renewed conflict, Libya fell into a severe economic crisis. The economic crisis, coupled with general mistrust in the banking system and ensuing shortage of foreign currency, has led to a broader [liquidity crisis](#) in the country since 2016. According to an assessment conducted by [UNHCR-REACH](#) in 2018, refugees and migrants continue to form an important part of the Libyan economy despite the limited availability of cash in the country. However, recent [news reports](#) find that economic collapse has exposed the refugee and migrant workforce to increased protection risks, including extortion, kidnapping, robbery and not being paid for one's work.

The liquidity crisis in the country has also impacted refugees' and migrants' ability to [send money home](#) to support their families. Official money transfers abroad in Libyan dinars have been impossible since mid-2014 forcing both foreigners and locals to rely on the black market. This means refugee and migrant workers have no formal channel through which to send wages home, thus disrupting important remittance systems across the region. Moreover, this has resulted in refugee and migrant workers either having to stay in Libya for much longer than they previously expected or driving a larger proportion of refugees and migrants to attempt onward movements.

# Highlighted new research and reports

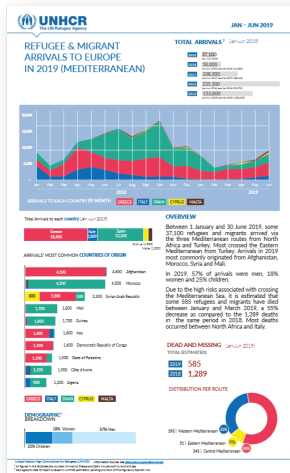
## Libyan refugees and asylum seekers' irregular boat migration to Europe



### UNHCR (July 2019)

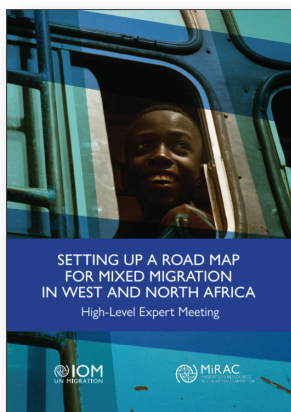
The brief aims to improve the understanding of the phenomenon of irregular boat migration of Libyan refugees and asylum seekers from Libya to Italy in 2017 and 2018. More specifically, it aims to provide an enhanced understanding of the decision-making process driving Libyans to embark on the irregular boat journey from Libya to Europe and to investigate the underlying smuggling dynamics.

## REFUGEE & MIGRANT ARRIVALS TO EUROPE IN 2019 (MEDITERRANEAN)



### UNHCR (July 2019)

This report seeks to highlight migration and forced displacement trends to Europe in the first half of 2019. Specifically, it notes that between 1 January and 30 June 2019, some 37,100 refugees and migrants arrived via the three Mediterranean routes (Italy, Greece and Turkey). Most crossed the Eastern Mediterranean from Turkey. Arrivals in 2019 most commonly originated from Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria and Mali. In 2019, 57% of arrivals were men, 18% women and 25% children. Moreover, due to the high risks associated with crossing the Mediterranean Sea, it is estimated that some 585 refugees and migrants have died between January and March 2019, a 55% decrease as compared to the 1,289 deaths in the same period in 2018. Most deaths occurred between North Africa and Italy.



## SETTING UP A ROAD MAP FOR MIXED MIGRATION IN WEST AND NORTH AFRICA

### **IOM (July 2019)**

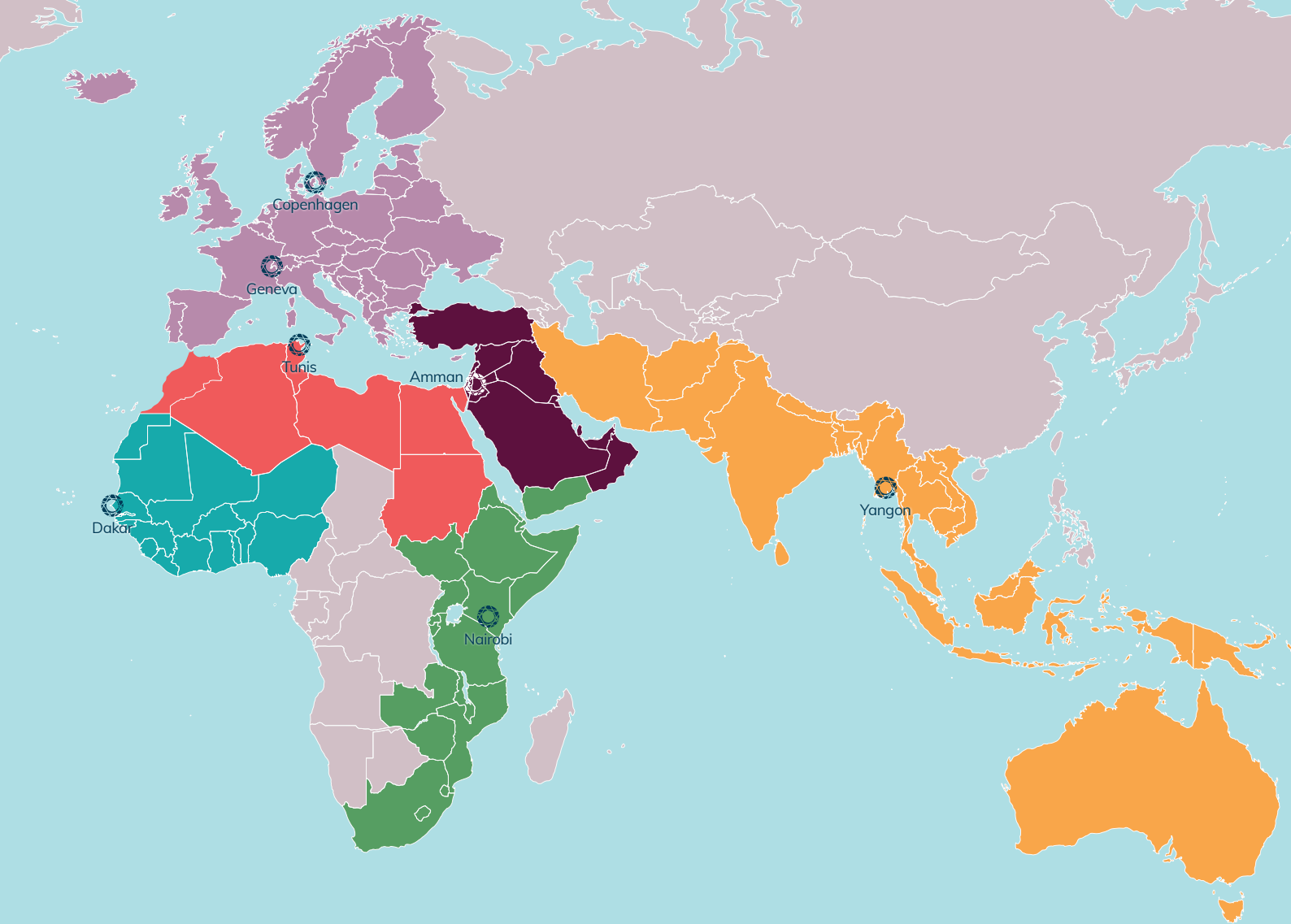
This report is the result of three days of dialogue and exchange of experiences, knowledge and opinions of high-level experts that met in Aswan in June 2019. It presents migration dynamics analysed by representatives of governments, academics and international experts, and aims to explore new concepts on contemporary migration phenomena and to highlight key proposals for maximizing the benefits of migration for migrants and societies.



## Realities and needs of migrant and refugee people in the governorate of Medenine since September 2018

### **REACH (September 2019)**

This study utilized 24 interviews with key informants (selected according to their expertise and knowledge of recent migration dynamics in southern Tunisia), 4 focus groups with representatives of the host community in Medenine and Zarzis, and 60 interviews with migrants and refugees arriving to the governorate of Medenine, Tunisia after September 2018 in order to understand the needs and challenges of migrants and refugees in the governorate of Medenine to improve understanding of the humanitarian situation in the region.



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)

