

MMC North Africa

QUARTER 1 2020

A photograph of two men on a boat. The man in the foreground is wearing a white t-shirt and has his hands covering his face in a gesture of distress or despair. The man behind him is also wearing a white t-shirt and has his hands clasped near his face, looking out at the sea. The background shows a vast blue ocean 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 some 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 seven 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 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.

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Taha Jawashi (2017)

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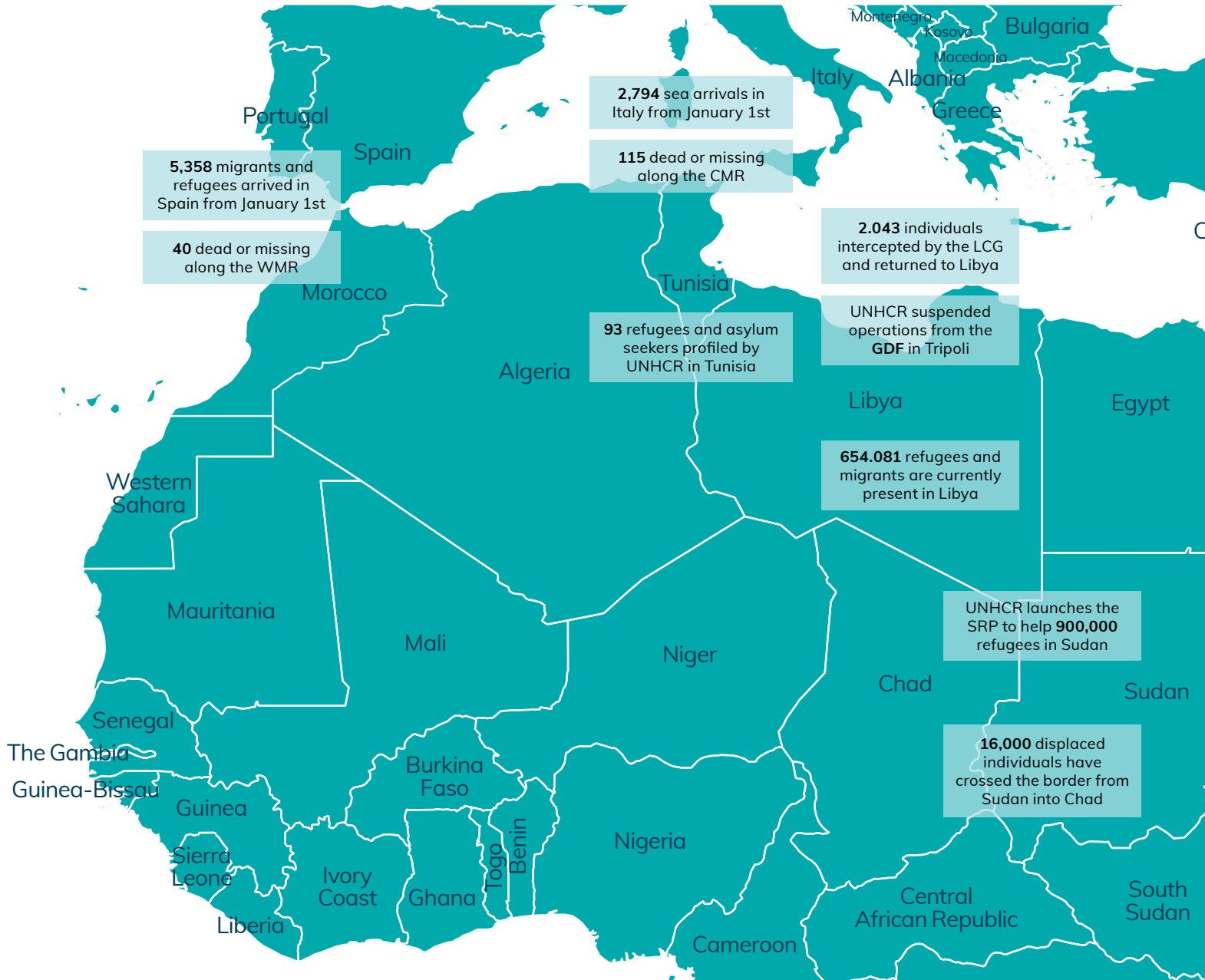
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

Quarter 1 - 2020

Key Updates

- With all countries in the region taking measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, **most border entry and exit points were closed as of the end of March**, with some exemptions being made for returning and repatriated nationals ([IOM](#)).
- Some [2,794 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea](#) from January 1st to March 29th, which marks a sharp increase from the 506 arrivals reported for the same period in 2019. The **majority of arrivals in Italy continue to depart from Libya (72%)**. The Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) continued to intercept refugees and migrants at sea: 2,677 individuals had been returned to Libya as of April 3rd, reports [UNHCR](#).
- The number of **refugees and migrants who were reported to have died or disappeared along the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) declined** in the first quarter of 2020 when compared with the same period in 2019 (115 down from 161), according to [IOM](#). The **Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) also saw a decline** in reported deaths and disappearances this quarter (40 down from 130).
- [IOM](#) estimates that there are currently **654,081 refugees and migrants residing in Libya** as of March 29th, of which 48,626 individuals are refugees and asylum seekers, representing a **slight increase** compared to figures from the last quarter of 2019.
- On January 30th 2020, [UNHCR](#) announced a **suspension of operations from the Gathering and Departure Facility (GDF) in Tripoli**, amid rising safety concerns.
- Due to a closure of Libyan airspace as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19, [IOM](#) **temporarily halted its Voluntary Humanitarian Return Programme**.
- [Tunisian authorities affirmed](#) **having taken all necessary measures to host a potentially large number of displaced Libyans, refugees and migrants** in a designated site close to the Libyan border. As of February 29th, Tunisia hosted 4,288 registered refugees and migrants, as estimated by [UNHCR](#).

Regional Overview*



*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration flows within and out of North Africa

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed migration from North Africa to Europe

North African arrivals in Europe

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) reports that 14,854 refugees and migrants entered Europe by sea from January 1st to March 18th, 2020. The number marks an increase in Mediterranean arrivals of almost 50% compared to the same period last year. This increase can be attributed to higher arrival numbers on the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR). In Italy, [UNHCR](#) reports that 2,794 refugees and migrants arrived by sea from January until April 5th, which marks a sharp increase from the 534 arrivals reported for the same period in 2019. North Africans continued among the most common nationalities to arrive in Italy, with Algerians accounting for the second-most common nationality (11%), and Sudanese fourth (9%). Although Moroccans were the second-most common nationality to arrive in the period of January to November 2019, they do not figure in the top five of the first quarter of 2020. According to [UNHCR](#), arrivals in Malta from January up until February 29th grew to 989 from 49 in the same period last year. The majority of arrivals originated from Sudan (32%), as was also the case for all 2019 (39%).

On the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), 5,539 refugees and migrants arrived in Spain¹ up until March 29th, which represents a 20% drop from the same period last year as reported by [UNHCR](#). In January and February, Algerians (first, 28%), Moroccans (second, 18%), Tunisians (eighth, 4%) and Egyptians (ninth, 2%) were among the most common nationalities to arrive in Spain.

Departures from Libya

Libya continued to be the main embarkation point for refugees and migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean within the first quarter of 2020. [As reported](#) for the months of January and February, some 72% of arrivals in Italy departed from Libya, followed by Tunisia (12%) and Algeria (11%). As of April 3rd, [UNHCR](#) reported that a total of 2,677 individuals had been rescued or intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) and returned to Libya. This is an increase of 163% compared to the same period in 2019. The main points of interception along the Libyan coast [for the months of January and February 2020](#) were Tripoli (1,063 individuals), Tajoura (271) and Sabratha (204). At the same time, [IOM](#) called for an alternative to return to Libya, as it reported on the deplorable conditions experienced by intercepted refugees and migrants sent to formal detention centres.

Missing refugees and migrants on the Mediterranean

Between January 1st and March 18th, 219 refugees and migrants were reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean, compared to 299 at the same time last year. Of these, 115 deaths and disappearances were recorded along the CMR, down from 161 in 2019. Forty deaths and disappearances were recorded

¹ This number also includes arrivals to the Canary Islands and the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

along the WMR, down from 130 in 2019. Following an alert raised through the [NGO Alarm Phone](#), [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#) writes that a boat carrying 91 passengers is still missing after departing from Libya five weeks ago on February 9th.

Mixed migration to, within and from Libya

Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Libya

As of March 31st, [IOM](#) estimates that there are 654,081 refugees and migrants residing in Libya, of which [UNHCR estimates \(as of April 3rd\)](#) 48,626 are refugees and asylum seekers.² This represents a slight increase from the number of refugees and asylum seekers (46,395) reported by [UNHCR](#) in early January 2020, as well as a slight increase in the total number of refugees and migrants reported by [IOM](#) in December 2019 (636,426).

Closure of the GDF

On January 30th, [UNHCR](#) announced a suspension of operations from the Gathering and Departure Facility (GDF) in Tripoli amid rising safety concerns. Earlier that month, shells had fallen near the GDF, with fragments landing inside a warehouse of the complex. UNHCR reported it had moved vulnerable refugees, who had identified for resettlement or evacuation to third countries, to other locations. Among them were 400 individuals that had survived the airstrike on the Tajoura detention centre in July 2019.

Relations with the European Union

Dunja Mijatović, the Commissioner for Human Rights for the Council of Europe, [called on Italy to stop its collaboration with the Libyan Coast Guard \(LCG\)](#), which intercepts refugees and migrants at sea and returns them to Libya. The Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and the LCG was automatically renewed on February 2nd, two days after Mijatović had sent a letter to Italy's foreign minister Luigi di Maio advocating the suspension of collaboration.

On February 17th, [the European Union \(EU\)](#) announced that it would launch a new Mediterranean operation aimed at monitoring the United Nations' Libya arms embargo and blocking any arms shipments coming from mainly the Eastern Mediterranean and through the Canal of Suez towards Libya. At the same time, EU ministers closed Operation Sophia, which was launched in 2015 with the aim to combat human trafficking from Libya and which later expanded to conduct rescue operations in the Mediterranean. These rescue operations are not included in the mandate of the new monitoring operation.

² UNHCR registers the following nationalities in Libya: Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Yemeni.

Movements to, within and from Tunisia

Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Tunisia

From January 1st until February 29th, 93 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered by [UNHCR](#) in Tunisia.³ This number includes individuals arriving by air (23), by land (58), and rescued/intercepted at sea (12). All arrivals by land crossed the Libya–Tunisia border and no new arrivals in 2020 had been registered at the Algeria–Tunisia border as of February 29th. UNHCR estimates that a vast majority (88%) of those who transited through Libya experienced some form of violence or abuse (e.g. torture, ill-treatment in detention, and sexual and gender-based violence), and may need psycho-social support.

In terms of locations of reception and stay, the governorates of Tunis (1,064), Medenine (899), Ariana (703), Sfax (564) and Gabes (299) host the largest numbers of refugees and migrants. Overall, the country hosts 4,288 refugees and migrants, with most originating from Syria (1,651) and Côte d'Ivoire (1,180). Of these, 50% (2,161) have applied for asylum in Tunisia. From the recent arrivals in the first months of 2020 (93), an estimated 78% (73) are seeking asylum in Tunisia, according to [UNHCR](#). This increased proportion of refugees and migrants seeking asylum among recent arrivals indicates a change in the profile and intentions of refugees and migrants arriving in the country.

Preparations for hosting displaced groups from Libya

As the security situation in Libya further deteriorated in early 2020, the Tunisian authorities prepared to host a large number of arrivals, including displaced Libyans and refugees and migrants who had been living in Libya. On January 9th, a delegation of officials from the city of Tataouine and the border town of Remada visited Fatnassia, the site chosen for a camp to host the anticipated arrivals. [The Tunisian national authorities](#) affirmed that Tunisia was prepared and had taken all necessary measures in the event of any movements over the Libyan border. However, on another note, there have been no updates on discussions at the national level about the passing of domestic legislation acknowledging the status of refugees and other migrants fleeing conflict and crisis.

Tunisians in Spain

In terms of movements out of Tunisia, as reported by [UNHCR](#), Tunisians were the eight-most (4%) common nationality to arrive in Spain in January and February 2019. Zooming in on the enclave of Melilla, [UNHCR](#) found that Tunisians were the most common to arrive in Melilla (22% of total) between January and December 2019. In March 2020, [Spanish media](#) reported on the poor and overcrowded living conditions in the migrant reception centres in the enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, notably in the centre for unaccompanied minors in Melilla. As a result of the reports, the Tunisia General Labour Union (UGTT) and the NGO Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES) launched an [appeal](#) to the Spanish authorities on March 27th, advocating for better living conditions in the Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes (CETI) of Melilla and for the protection of Tunisians sheltered there. In January, [FTDES](#) had already raised its

³ Total mixed migration numbers remain unreported for Tunisia.

concerns about the state of approximately 800 undocumented Tunisians living for an undefined period of time in the reception centre of Melilla.

Mixed migration in Sudan

In January, [UNHCR](#) launched its Sudan Refugee Response Plan 2020, which calls for increased support to help over 900,000 refugees and approximately 250,000 members of the host community. The main difference with last year's Sudan Refugee Response Plan, which focused on support and assistance for South Sudanese refugees, is the objective to provide increased aid to a more heterogeneous group of refugee nationalities. While the largest group of refugees remains the South Sudanese, UNHCR also calls on support for refugees and asylum seekers originating from the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

Ongoing intercommunal clashes in the town of El Geneina (West Darfur) since December 2019 have prompted some Darfuris to flee to Chad, [with 16,000 estimated arrivals](#) as of March 16th 2020. If tensions persist, [UNHCR](#) anticipates 30,000 refugees and migrants will be seeking protection and shelter in Chad. The Chadian border area of Adré (in Ouaddaï province) is already hosting 128,000 Sudanese refugees from earlier conflict.

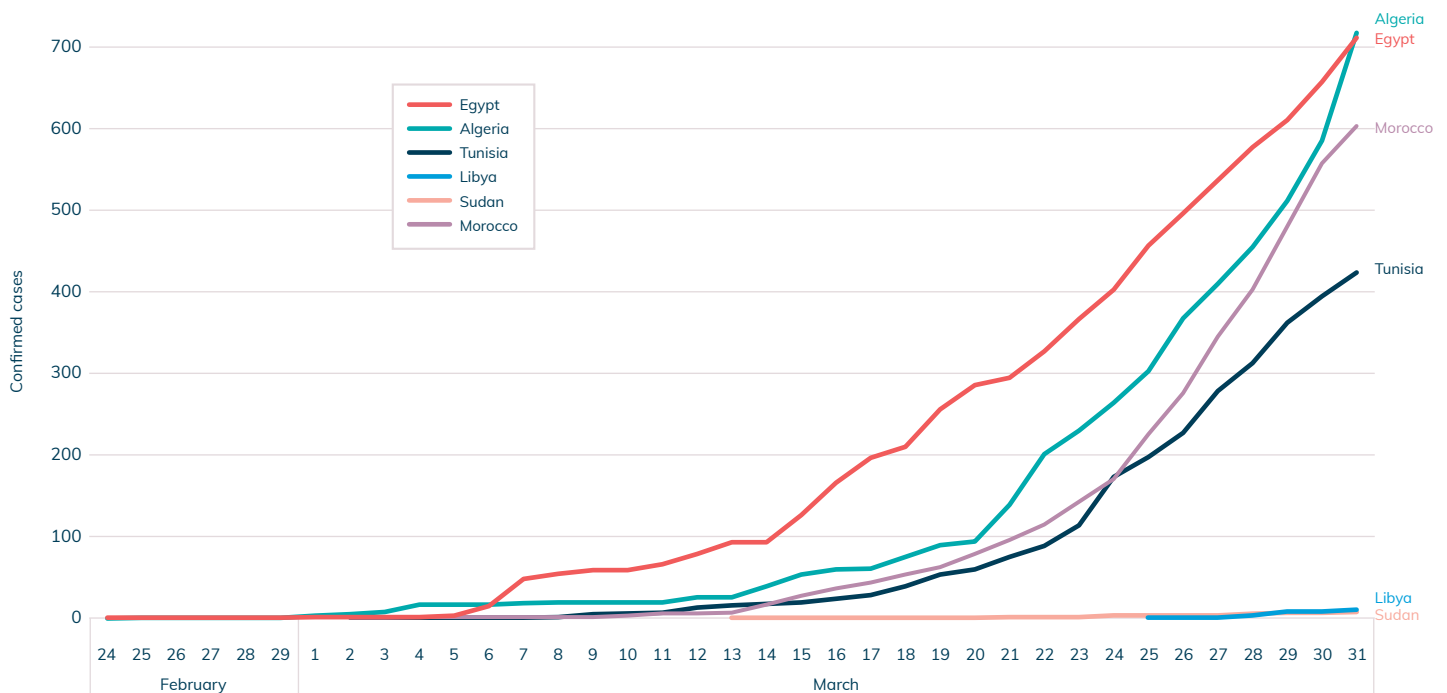
Since December 2019, police forces have started rounding up vulnerable refugees and migrants in the poorer neighbourhoods of Khartoum, [Aljazeera](#) reported. The arrest and detention of refugees and migrants, including Eritreans, Ethiopians and Syrians, in urban areas in Sudan has been a recurring practice over the years. To be released from detention, some refugees and migrants reportedly pay fines of 50,000 to 100,000 Sudanese pounds (USD1,100-2,200). According to [UNHCR](#), as of January 2020, there are 140,029 Eritreans, 93,502 Syrians and 14,034 Ethiopians in Sudan.

Thematic Focus: The Impact of COVID-19 on Mobility in North Africa

Situational overview

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in North Africa was detected in Egypt on February 14th. In the following two weeks cases were also detected in Algeria (February 25th), Morocco and Tunisia (both on March 2nd). As of March 31st all countries in the region had reported at least 1 confirmed case: Algeria reported the highest number of confirmed cases at 716, followed by Egypt (710), Morocco (602), Tunisia (423), Libya (10), and Sudan (7).⁴

Figure 1: COVID-19 Confirmed Cases in North African Countries⁵



The pandemic is undoubtedly impacting mobility to and through the region. To combat the spread of the virus, countries have enacted a variety of containment measures, including quarantine and confinement, travel bans and movement restrictions, reductions of the workforce, closures of schools and universities, along with the cancellation of public events and closing of public places.

⁴ The number of confirmed cases relies directly on the number of tests performed. Where in Tunisia 200 tests are being conducted daily (at a cost of 700 TND/test). In Libya 121 tests have been carried out as of March 31st, all of which were administered by the WHO and in the national CDC and remain free of charge to the patient.

⁵ Sources include Worldometers (Algeria), Covid-19.tn (Tunisia), and Covid-19-africa.sen.ovh (Libya, Sudan, Morocco and Egypt).

Mobility to North Africa

Land borders to North African countries have been closed in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, as reported by [IOM's interactive Mobility Impacts COVID-19 map](#). The closures of Libya's southern border with Niger at Tuommo within the Algatroun region (reported March 29th), along with Algeria's southern border with Niger at Assamaka (reported March 24th), will constrain the movements of seasonal workers from Niger to Libya and Algeria. Sudan's western border with Chad remains closed (entry points include: Kulbus, Tandulti, Beida, and Foro Burunga), impeding the movement of people seeking work in Chadian gold mines. Sudan's eastern border with Eritrea (Awad as of March 22nd and Lawa as of March 19th) and Ethiopia (Basuda as of March 19th and Humera as of March 17th) have been closed. Sudan's border with South Sudan remains largely open (points open for entry and exit: Abyei Diffra, Kiir Adem, Majokyinthiou, Eljof, and Kaka).

Mobility through North Africa

Nearly all borders within the region have been closed for entry and exit. On March 16th, Anouar Maarouf, Tunisia's Minister of Transport, announced that Tunisia had closed its land border with Libya, blocking the point of entry at Dehiba. Similarly, on March 15th, Libyan authorities closed the Wazin border with Tunisia. Sources near the border noted that the closure would be in place for 15 days to limit the propagation of COVID-19, although Libyan and Tunisian nationals could return to their respective countries. [A representative from the municipality of Dehiba reported](#) that nearly 130 Tunisians had repatriated via the Dehiba border following the closure.

While Libya closed its border with Tunisia to everyone except returning Libyans, Libya reportedly had different policies regarding its borders with other countries. As of March 22nd, [IOM](#) reported the border between Libya and Sudan at Karb Eltoum in Dongola to be open for entry and exit. With the exception of returning Egyptians from Libya, the border between Libya and Egypt at Tobruk, however, was reported closed on March 30th. [OCHA](#) reports that as of March 29th all of Libya's air, land and sea borders were closed (with exemptions for certain people and services).

Key impacts on refugees and migrants in the region: livelihoods, remittances, and detention

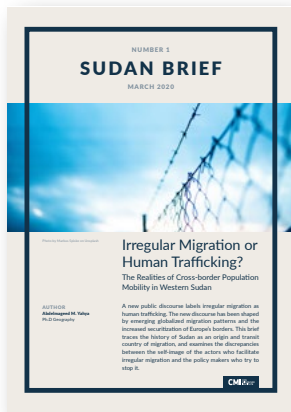
There is a specific infection risk for refugees and migrants in detention (currently estimated to be 1,500 in formal detention centres). [OCHA](#) underlines that detention centres in Libya are overcrowded and have poor hygiene conditions, making occupants vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. In Sudan, a COVID-19 surveillance system has been set up in refugee camps as a product of collaboration between [UNHCR](#) and the Sudanese Ministry of Health. Refugees and migrants in various camps received new hygiene kits, including an extra bar of soap.

Beyond impacting health and reducing mobility, COVID-19 will have innumerable social and economic consequences for North Africans abroad, along with refugees and migrants moving to and through the North African region. With many jobs in both formal and informal sectors being cut in Europe and North Africa (i.e. construction workers, housekeepers, agricultural work, and restaurant staff), refugees and

migrants will likely be out of work. The furloughs in Europe, leading to a reduced income or complete lack of income, may also constrain the ability of North Africans abroad to send remittances back to their families in their home countries, particularly affecting countries such as Tunisia and Morocco, which have large communities in Europe.

In Libya, increased prices for food and goods have already been observed, [OCHA](#) finds. In a key informant interview conducted by MMC in Libya on April 2nd, a Chadian migrant living in Ajdabiya stated, “The prices have increased due to COVID, we hope the rent doesn’t increase as well.” In Tunisia, in discussing the effects of COVID-19 on her livelihood, an Ivorian migrant in Tunis explained in an interview on April 1st, “But what solutions [are there] if we do not work? If we do not have money to support ourselves and to pay our rent? I know people who have been driven from their homes because they could not pay their rent.”

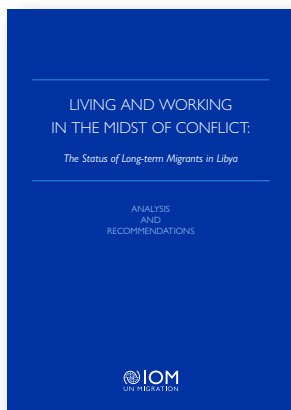
Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Irregular Migration or Human Trafficking? The Realities of Cross-border Population Mobility in Western Sudan](#)

Chr. Michelsen Institute | March 2020

The difference between irregular migration and human trafficking has become increasingly vague in the Sudanese context. The author argues this discourse has been shaped by 'globalising' migration patterns and increased securitisation at Europe's borders. This brief looks at the history of Sudan as a sending and transit country, irregular migration dynamics, and Sudan's migration policies.



[Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya](#)

IOM | March 2020

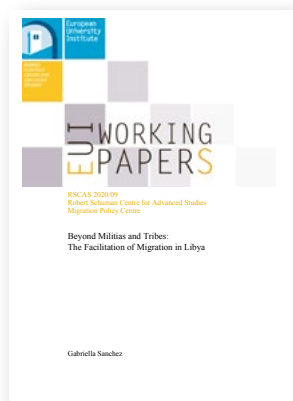
While there is extensive data available on people transiting Libya, this study sheds light on migrants residing in the country for more than a year. Focusing specifically on the themes of livelihoods, remittances and security, this research contributes to the Libya migration debate by distinguishing between transit and long-term migrants. At the same time, it recognises that protection challenges and vulnerabilities, including perilous desert and sea crossings, risks of exploitation and cases of human rights violations, concern all refugees and migrants in Libya.



[Mapping ENI SPCs migrants in the Euro-Mediterranean region: An Inventory of Statistical Sources](#)

ICMPD | March 2020

This study provides insights into where to collect statistical information on Arab expatriate communities, including mapping locations, movement trends and community characteristics. Chapters are organised by stocks of data on incoming and outgoing migrants per country (including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia), and per EU country for expatriate communities (including Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). The study concludes with proposing a way forward for more coherent strategies applicable to the Euro-Mediterranean region.

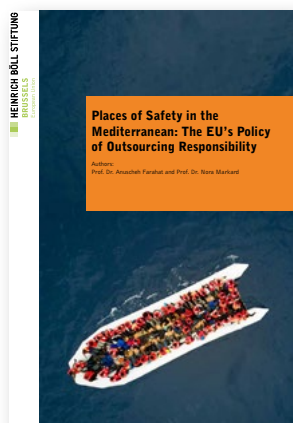


[Beyond Militias and Tribes: The Facilitation of Migration in Libya](#)

Migration Policy Centre | February 2020

This case study outlines the dynamics of migrant smuggling in Libya in the aftermath of the Ghaddafi regime. It draws from interviews carried out with law enforcement, border officials, ordinary citizens, migrants and people involved in the facilitation of their journeys into Europe in Italy, Tunisia and the border this country shares with Libya. Contributing to a small albeit growing body of scholarship, the case study argues that across Africa, the labelling of mobility facilitation strategies as migrant smuggling and their criminalisation responds

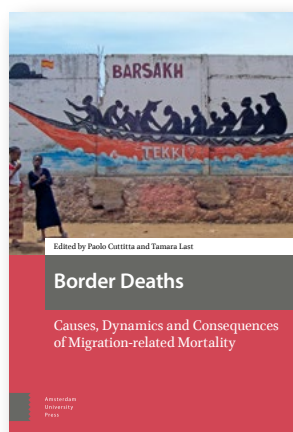
to EU-dictated migration enforcement and control measures.



[Places of Safety in the Mediterranean: the EU's Policy of Outsourcing Responsibility](#)

Heinrich Böll Stiftung | February 2020

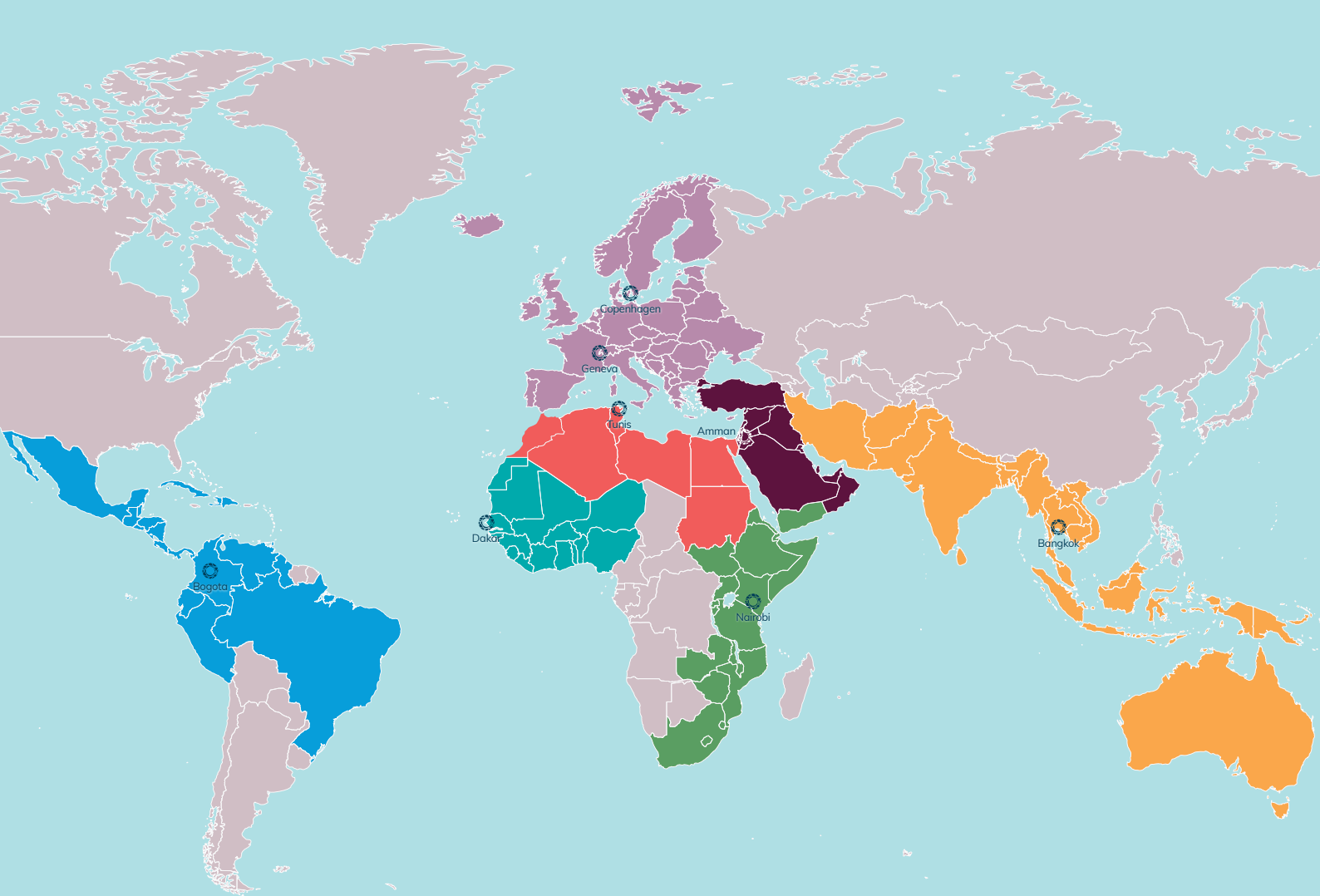
The authors assess the following questions from a legal point of view: Would the disembarkation of migrants and refugees in North African countries by EU state vessels, including vessels participating in a Frontex operation, comply with international obligations and European law? Thus, can Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia be considered “Places of Safety” for rescued individuals? Can private vessels, including NGO rescue vessels, be obliged to disembark rescued migrants and refugees in places which are unsafe? Can they refuse to follow such a command without breaking the law?



[Border Deaths: Causes, Dynamics and Consequences of Migration-related Mortality](#)

Amsterdam University Press | January 2020

This collection of studies highlights new concepts and perspectives that contribute to the ongoing debate on border deaths. Border deaths can be interpreted in various ways, and critical voices often hold states responsible for making safer journeys with less risks and challenges impossible for large parts of the world population. Statistics on border deaths are often widely misused for the purpose of supporting different, and often politicised, readings of the topic. The chapters in this book contest the misuse of such statistics, and at the same time question the way data on border deaths is collected, analysed and disseminated.



The MMC is a global network consisting of seven 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). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

For more information visit:

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

